



**How I became, or think, I have become**

**Autobiographical Episodes**  
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**Wolfram Laaser**

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Translations into other languages cannot be guaranteed to always provide the exact meaning of the original German text although the translation system we use is likely to be the best available.

## **Foreword**

Distance learning experienced a rapid upswing after the Second World War and is now an important component of the education system not only in Germany but in almost all countries in the world. This development is humorously traced using autobiographical episodes from the life of a distance learning expert and media specialist. The author not only describes the genesis of theoretical concepts, but also takes the reader on a journey through numerous countries around the world to which he was invited to do academic teaching and consulting work. The background to the biography is his formation as an economist, which allowed him to present teaching content in new ways in teaching software projects and audiovisual productions.

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## Episode 1 *Childhood and Adolescence*

Something unusual was the place and time I was born into. The Second World War was already coming to an end. The pregnant women were evacuated from Berlin, which was overrun by bombing raids. So I was born as the son of Rudolf and Ingeborg in the small town of Arnstadt in Thuringia and not in Berlin.



*The parents*

After the end of the war, the little family - mother, grandmother, my brother and I - had to return to the destroyed Berlin. On the trek, they had teamed up with a woman and her five children. The return of my mother and grandmother to Berlin meant a great physical and psychological effort in view of the Russian army coming in from the east and the destroyed infrastructure. Gudrun Pausewang, the eldest of the five children, later described this trek in her book 'Fern von der Rosinkawiese'.

I did not know my father consciously, he was last stationed as a soldier in northern Germany and fell shortly before the end of the war. However, the exact circumstances of his death remained unclear. He is remembered above all by a photo in which he shows an impressive parade at a football game as a goalkeeper. He had started studying economics before the Second World War, but this could not be continued by joining the military.

My mother was uncertain for a long time whether he was dead or still alive. Probably to seek some support, she joined the Catholic Church and was active in the community, sang in the choir and helped prepare church holiday camps on the Havel. During the blockade of Berlin, both of us, that is, my mother and I, took the bikes to the poorest parishioners to distribute American care packages. This had a great influence on me, on the one hand, their willingness to help and, on the other hand, I noticed a certain naivety in my mother to believe everything that was told to her. I was reluctant to go to church on Sundays and instead wanted to play football on the nearby playground, later I also played in the club. The church visits and the steering towards a high school education made me in the social environment rather to

Outsiders, which earned me the nickname 'Jesus' and I was by no means happy about it.



*Myself*

I also rejected the restrictions imposed by the Church's exaggerated moral precepts, without being able to defend myself against them. My brother was much more willing to "go along" and he treated me accordingly. He also took me to the Catholic Scout Groups, to which he had been a member for a long time. My relationship was ambiguous. On the one hand, I liked the tent camps, but I found the authoritarian structure of the hierarchies, the uniform to be worn and the marching in step less attractive. After some time, I resigned from the Catholic Scouts.

A special highlight were visits of my uncle Julio Heilbron from Argentina. An older brother of my grandfather had emigrated to Argentina and married a mestizo there. From the connection came Julio. My grandfather, Lothar, was about 1906, like many emigrants went by ship to America and then lived for a time in Rosario in Argentina.



*My Grandfather 1902 in Havana*

When the First World War was imminent, he went back to Germany to protect 'Fatherland'. He then married in Berlin and died there in the early 1940s. There are still some photos, a nice portrait and a short story written in Spanish. My uncle Julio was a religious priest trained in Lourdes who had been sent by the Order to Argentina. He spoke French, which no one in the family knew, but he could still communicate with us. Particularly impressive was our joint visit to a football match in Berlin's Olympic Stadium. As he wore his black cassock as usual, he attracted considerable attention among the many spectators. In school, I was actively



involved in the lessons, but not noticed by particularly outstanding achievements. Instead, I asked my mother to buy me a banjo, which she did. I first took lessons with a music teacher, but this quickly turned out to be a failure, as I was supposed to play Schubert on the banjo with him. But I wanted to play in a jazz band Dixieland. I really learned it in private tutoring lessons from a young hobby musician. I played in a Skiffle band, musically not very nice, but for beer and cognac it was good enough, especially on Ascension Day (Father's Day) when we moved with our band from one excursion restaurant on the Havel to the next. It was a great time when I fell in love with my first real girlfriend. The school year ended our high school class with a riverboat shuffle, an absolute novelty for the humanistic Kant-Gymnasium. Unfortunately, during the drunken hug by our washboarder, my beloved melon went overboard.

## Episode 2 *The House at the Hundeklehsee*

My mother had saved some money, capitalized part of her pension rights and was able to purchase a small terraced house in the district of Grunewald as part of a state subsidy program. The Hundeklehsee lake was very close and the 'actual' Grunewald with its beautiful lake was only a few steps away.

The house was for us a central point, not only of living but also of communication with friends. My brother discussed religious philosophy or political topics in the relatively large basement room, which we were allowed to design ourselves. I painted a picture of Nolde on the wall, a friend who studied at the art school painted an entire wall with dancing figures, a friend Kurd immortalized himself with his portrait. On the ceiling I painted a huge, black spider web. Here I celebrated with friends violent parties, especially with some Argentinian interns, which my uncle Julio had recommended to me for care. So I was able to immediately apply my Spanish, which I had learned at a private language school. We celebrated with empanadas, played Argentinian and German or English songs with guitar and drank quantities of white Bordeaux. One of the Argentinians was a big fan of Freddy Quinn and, accompanied by the guitar and Bombo, sang almost accent-free 'Boy, come back soon' or 'una paloma blanca'. I myself contributed some moritates. For me, the discussions and celebrations were an important space that my mother had opened up for us.

This also concerned the freedom to hitchhike from Berlin to West Germany, as we said 'to hitchhike'. I visited my uncle in Weil am Rhein in this way. The accommodation on the way was given if possible in one of the many, easily accessible youth hostels, but this was not always feasible. That's how I got to know perseverance and the judgment of strangers. At about 16 years old, I already hitchhiked to the Loire, once even with a hearse.

### Episode 3 *Apprenticeship period*

For me, the decision about my professional future was now imminent. My brother has been studying medicine for two years, including some internships abroad. On the other hand, my mother said that I should rather look for something 'practical' in the form of an apprenticeship as an industrial clerk. I agreed, because I had no idea what I should study at all. I took the recruitment test at the two major electrical companies Siemens and AEG. From Siemens I received a rejection, at the AEG it worked. The apprenticeship in the very old factories in the Berlin district of Wedding and the unattractive training plan left me mostly frustration and boredom and led to poor assessments by the respective department heads. In protest, when there was nothing to do, I read the novel 'The Man with the Golden Arm' at work. I envied my brother for his prestigious study, medicine.

My situation changes abruptly when the higher-performing apprentices were promised a shortening of the three-year apprenticeship period, at least half a year. My commitment increased extremely and after 2 1/2 years I was an 'industrial clerk' with excellent grades. Finally, I was given a book by Ludwig Erhard from the AEG. I applied for a job in Buenos Aires. AEG was to build a new plant there. A director from Frankfurt interviewed me, but did not want to promise to be able to carry out a qualified job there. Other attempts to get a job in South America were also not crowned with success.

#### Episode 4 *My First Great Journey*

During this time I made a big trip to Turkey together with my brother. From the beginning, we were both very keen to travel and curious about other countries and cultures. So we took the train to Istanbul. The trip took a total of three days. From Istanbul we hitchhike or take Dolmuş, the Turkish community taxi, down the coast via Bursa, Izmir to Adana, near the Syrian border. Once we also slept in a small rock cave right by the sea. From Kayseri we walked with a small compass equipped through the bare, dry, deserted landscape, without signposts or roads. All we knew was that we wanted to go to 'eski köy' (old village) and we followed the compass. When the sun rose, we could only make our way through to a Marburg archaeology professor, to whom Ulrich had previously written, with luck and the help of two farmers. The next day we rode on mules with a local villager up to Mount Nemrut Dağı. There we saw the now famous Hellenistic sculptures of huge heads from the first century. We were surrounded by silence all alone. There was no significant tourism yet, but we were always welcomed very friendly as Germans. We briefly visited Cyprus and crossed the then still existing Green Line, which separated the Greek part from the Turkish part of the island. We then found a freighter that brought us back to Turkey from Famagusta. By bus we were able to drive across Turkey to Ankara for 10 DM and then travel on to Istanbul and finally board the train to Munich. On the train I wrote the following poem:

*So, we are back again*

So, we are back again, burnt by Cyprus sun. A fellow in the train called me a bum.  
My head is heavy and my legs have died but I'm still dreaming of Rakis shimmering light, of vast Taurus Mountains breaking the sea and the silent moments at the beach café.

So we are back again,  
New sounds are touching my ear.  
Only my foolish brain still thinks  
that Turkey is near.

#### Episode 5 *Marriage and Relocation to Kiel*

I met my later wife in the 'Eierschale' jazz restaurant. She had come with a group of young women from Hamburg on one of the trips sponsored by the Berlin Senate to maintain the connection between the former capital and West Germany. Berlin was divided by the victorious powers into a Russian, a French, an English and an American sector and was located in the middle of the Russian-controlled part of Germany, the later GDR. I borrowed 50 DM from an Iraqi friend after the first dance and wanted to make an impression with an invitation to a martini at the bar counter. Since she was housed with the group in a Red Cross house very close to our house, I was able to accompany her on the way back to her address. I took the opportunity and asked her to accompany

me the next day to a party at a friend's house in Berlin-Spandau. She agreed. The next day we took the S-Bahn and then the bus. My friend's house was right on the border with the Eastern sector. The other side of the road was already part of the Russian sector. To get into the house, we had to pass a baton and walk past some sandbags along the road to the house. It was pitch dark. My companion was terribly frightened, which was obvious, because we only saw the headlights that lit the fence and heard dog barking. She finally trusted me and we could start the party.

Later, we wrote to each other frequently and visited each other. She worked in Hamburg, where she had to record and send telegrams and telex messages at Post. She also visited me in Berlin. Unfortunately, there was little sympathy between my mother and her, which later often brought us into dispute about our attitude and obligations to her. My mother probably saw the girlfriends of her sons as competitors for the love of the sons. In a very simplified way, I see the distribution of roles within the family as follows: My older brother had to partly take over his potential role because of the lack of a father. His relationship with my mother was very strong. I myself had rather the role of the little joker, especially when it came to defusing tension situations. Of course, I could not accept my brother as a father's substitute and later showed myself to be more reluctant or competitive towards any authority. My friend was then transferred from the post office in Hamburg to the post office in Berlin and withdrew her desire for training in the social sector. The post office was in a red light area, which was not so clearly visible at first, but the way to the post office was almost just around the corner. After a visit to her parents in Preetz, she became pregnant and we had to make important decisions. We decided to get married and move to Kiel near the in-laws. I had already started studying business administration at Freie Universität (FU), but did not find my way around well and did not know how to study successfully here. The FU was quite far away and I lost a lot of time by bus and train trips and the search for the different lecture buildings. I had attended several lectures without being able to gain a clear idea about the correct structure of my studies. Of high entertainment value was only the lecture on descriptive statistics. I could see the students booing an older professor several times when he entered the lecture hall with a large ruler and left immediately due to the unfriendly reception. His didactics were not very stimulating. After a few minutes he came back, but the reaction of the students was unchanged, so that the lecture could not be carried out properly on the day. However, this was an exception.

Our wedding took place in a small circle of relatives and acquaintances in the 'Red Town Hall' of Schöneberg, followed by a meal in my mother's house. However, the general mood was not very resolved. In order to say goodbye to our Berlin friends and relatives, we had already given a farewell party in our party cellar. The day after the wedding we drove my father-in-law's car to Preetz in Schleswig-Holstein. My mother cried bitterly. I got along well with my father-in-law and had a very loving and good-natured mother-in-law. For a short honeymoon to Copenhagen, he even lent me his car, which I unfortunately brought back with a big scratch that I had caused in a Danish

parking lot. But he was accommodating and made no major accusations against me. In Kiel we found a cheap apartment, a bit away from the center. Our financial situation was extremely tense. When our daughter was born in September 1965, there were now three of us with a total income of about 800 DM, financed by my mother and my father-in-law. At the end of the month, we were the last source of money to redeem our discount tokens for shopping. We had two small rooms, where in one room was also the stove and the cot. The owner of the old house was a drinker and not very pleasant. He lived right below us. I went to the university by bike and then by bus. When the NDR wanted to report on the difficult situation of student couples with children, we were recommended by the Studentenwerk as an example. That's how I got my first appearance on TV. The baby looked very similar to me at first and was relatively uncomplicated. We were still very young and had to deal with a number of difficult situations.



Gradually we discovered our differences and our commonalities. My wife was impulsive and quickly decided what was right for her. I was more willing to compromise and try to solve problems rationally. My wife was generous, I was rather stingy. She looked very good and at the parties even some of my friends tried to dredge her. I was very jealous, but I didn't want to show it.

## Episode 6 *Studying in Kiel*

The beginning of studies at Kiel University was easier to cope with than in Berlin. This was due to the fact that almost all students, in addition to the lectures at the beginning of their studies, went to a private repetitor who taught them the basic concepts of economics (I had switched from business administration to economics) in a didactically good and humorous way. When asked about his preference for the various theoretical approaches, he liked to refer to Lenin's theory of imperialism, whose great body of work he had read in its entirety, and recommended that it be read. I also decided to take part in his repetitions for two semesters, although it involved additional costs. Some problems caused me the probability theory in the closing statistic. In my apprenticeship, I had practically only had a compound interest invoice, but no integral and differential calculus. I finished the exam with a 4 -. But then I bought a thick book on mathematics for economists by R.G.D. Allan and whenever I had time, I worked on the contents and numerous tasks contained therein. I even took the book to the beach, much to my wife's displeasure. In total, I have described about 1000 pages of paper. In the event of idle hours or loss of lectures, I made an appointment with other students to discuss or race with the 'duck' (Citroen 2CV) of a fellow student to the Baltic Sea or through the beautiful avenues and villages around Mönkeberg or Laboe. Once we landed with the duck in the road moat, but were able to raise the duck up again and continue.

If the budget was enough, I sometimes went with my wife to the restaurant Ihkate near our apartment. To get to the lonely restaurant, we had to fight our way through a piece of forest with meter-high snow in a hard winter. In the warm restaurant we always ordered a farmer's breakfast, which tasted very good. For a steak our cash register was not sufficiently stocked. The Baltic Sea was frozen at the low temperatures on the edge, so that you could walk across the sea. I was very impressed by the waves frozen in ice. During the semester break I was looking for holiday jobs to have something extra in the cash register. At the Howaldt shipyard I painted freighters, collected scrap or swept something together. Once we were allowed to clean a submarine. Kiel was an important naval base. Another relatively well-paid job was to wait in a restaurant on Plöner See. Here the excursion boats moored for coffee, so you often had to walk back and forth between the restaurant and the lake garden. On the last day I came to work a little later in the morning, after a job the day before until 1 o'clock in the morning. The host, who was only noticeable by his screaming and had the reputation of a quarterly drinker, then kicked me out on the last working day. Despite some problems, the time in Kiel was probably the most carefree.

When we were able to leave our daughter alone for some time, we decided to visit my wife's French relatives in Paris and Marmande. We placed our child with the parents-in-law for this time. My mother-in-law was from northern France and had a twin sister who ran a farm with her husband in Limours, near Paris. It was unusual and interesting for me to sit at a long table with a large number of people at meals and get to know most

## Episode 7 *Family visit*

of my wife's numerous cousins.



From Limours we continued to Marmande, where my mother-in-law's brother lived with his wife. We were able to sleep in the house and were spoiled by his wife with delicious soups. We had a good time. However, since the city of Marmande had little to offer, we borrowed her car, a Renault, to discover the surroundings. We drove over Monbazillac and Bergerac in the direction of St. Emilion, when suddenly an unpleasant noise interrupted our quiet drive. We went to a garage to ask what was wrong with the car. We were told that this was probably due to the clutch and the repair would take a few days. From the train station in Montouban, we called his uncle and asked him to come and get us. It took a few hours for him to pick us up with another car. There were two places with the same name and he had first searched for us in the wrong place. I was extremely embarrassed. With a rigid iron rod we dragged the car back to Marmande. It was pure fear because I had never done anything like that before. Having worked as a mechanic for many years in Africa on the Ivory Coast, his uncle examined the car the next day and found that only the oil level had been too low. We often laughed together about this adventure later.

From Marmande we hitchhike over Agen to Marseille, a stretch even with a large truck. It was exciting to sit in the cab and see the truck boarding through the small towns in the dark. Another driver drove the last stretch to Marseille on the 'route nationale' far too fast, dragging constantly on his steering wheel so as not to fly out of the curve. For my wife, the conclusion of this tramp track was that she would not do such a thing again under any circumstances.



## Episode 8 *From Marseilles to Marrakech*

But I didn't want to go back yet, I wanted to continue to hitchhike with destination Marrakech. We parted ways. She went back by train and I hitchhiked along the Spanish coast towards Valencia. I was able to make a long distance with a stopped car, until the driver came out as gay and had no interest in my take-away. From Algeciras at the southernmost point of Spain I reached the typically English-looking Gibraltar and from there I took the ship to Ceuta, which is still under Spanish sovereignty and is a duty-free enclave. Morocco only started for me in Tangier. It was fascinating to roam the narrow streets of the souks with the small kiosk-like stalls. Here there was still a lot of manual work and hardly any tourists. A Moroccan couple invited me to dinner. From Tangier I was lucky that after two hours, which I had waited in full sun standing on the road, finally a duck (Citroen 2CV) stopped. The driver was a young Schweitzer, his co-driver came from Australia. They also wanted to go to Marrakesh. Marrakech was beautifully oriental. Especially the tea, infused with fresh peppermint leaves, made the desire for beer forgotten. In the evening there were snake charmers, storytellers and traders at the large central square in the light of small truffles. I slept in a room where grain used to be stored. I slept well, but was completely overseen by insect bites the next morning, so it took a long time for the skin to recover. A consolation was that a few weeks ago the Irish folk singer Donovan had also stayed here. I loved Donovan's songs and played some of them myself.

Before I translated back to Spain, I hadn't been able to resist the lusts of trying something from one of the small Moroccan food stalls. Back in Spain, a nice teacher couple took me with them, who lived in Faro, so already in Portugal. They invited me to dinner in their apartment in the evening, and then took me to the hostel for the night. I was there alone except for one employee and had free choice of beds. At night I got a high fever and shaking rust. I had caught a hepatitis of the lighter type. My great happiness was that the teacher who had invited me the day before came by again the next day to see if everything was all right. He then brought me some medication. I lay in bed for two days until the fever subsided. Then I got up and ate a juicy steak and then continued my journey. First I hitchhiked to Sagres, where the Mediterranean and Atlantic meet, then on to the capital Lisbon. The old town was not yet destroyed by the later fires. I heard authentic fado and wandered through the narrow streets. From Lisbon we went back to Spain. In Badajoz I took a train to Madrid. On the long drive, a young Spaniard sang flamenco songs on the uncovered platform into the barren landscape flying by with a rough voice, as heard in the films of Carlos Saura. An unforgettable impression.

In Madrid, I met a diverse group of backpackers in the hostel who, like me, had little money at their disposal. When someone got a check from home, they invited most of them to dinner. On one of the few days I had spent in this hippy environment, I heard a young man playing blues on guitar in the style of Big Bill Broonzy. I was thrilled, but thought you'd never be able to do that, even in your life. From Madrid I returned quite directly to Kiel. My daughter seemed a little strange to me at first due to the long

absence. She may have felt the same way. I didn't leave alone for several years. I had probably finally inserted myself into my role and felt a great inner peace.

### Episode 9 *Economist at the Institute for the World Economy*

I completed my studies relatively quickly in nine semesters. Unfortunately, my father-in-law died shortly before my exam, he would have been happy. I would have liked to have moved to the University of Regensburg with a young professor during my studies, but our family and financial situation would not have shouldered this. An application for a DAAD scholarship to study at the London School of Economics failed for similar reasons. The situation on the job market was very favourable at the time of my exam, and I quickly decided to take up a position as a research assistant at the Kiel Institute for the World Economy in the field of 'Public Finance'. Working in an office room - reading only scientific literature without having a suitable discussion partner - was quite tiring. I also felt like a 'Schneider pupil'. I wrote my diploma thesis with Erich Schneider on the European Payment Union. Schneider had brought the mathematically formulated economics from Scandinavia to Germany after the Second World War. He was for a long time director of the Institute for the World Economy and was in his time the leading head among German economists. He died shortly after taking my diploma exam and starting my work at the institute. His successor was Herbert Giersch, then Chairman of the Council of Experts. By turning to Milton Friedman's neoliberal Chicago school and emphasizing empirical developments without detailed theoretical foundations, he was quite contrary to my views, which were shaped by the discussions that sought alternative concepts for economic issues.



#### *Strike also at the Christiana Albertina*

I worked intensively with three Greek fellow students during and after my studies on Marxist theories and read books by economists such as Lange, Sweezy or Baran. At the university, for the first time in the history of Christian Albrechts University, a seminar on Marxist approaches was offered by fellow students, to which the professors were invited by the students and not vice versa.

Another activity consisted in several small-scale talks with a social-democratic state politician on economic policy issues, but these did not lead to any concrete actions. Together with my wife, I participated in demonstrations to end the Vietnam War.

Giersch brought along a number of people from Saarbrücken and from the circle of the Council of Experts, who were quite uncritical in his line. The small group of newly hired Kiel students was therefore not overly motivated and already on the move to other employers. For myself, it was the first place and I wanted to bite myself through. I went to Bonn to the Tax Estimation Working Group and published an article which was voted 'Article of the Month' by the *Wirtschaftsdienst* magazine.

The institute was located next to the tax office and many employees ate there daily in the canteen. Then they walked a few steps along the fjord. I thought back then, I didn't want to have such a boring life, always running with the same routines.

During the breaks in summer, we drove away the boredom of being an isolated researcher in the nearby old Düsternbrook swimming pool in the Kiel Fjord, organised chess tournaments or went to a pub at the train station to 'kicker'. Our relatively low productivity and extended breaks led to the dismissal of three of the newly employed 'Kielern'. Added to this was the change in my field of work towards the concepts for calculating effective tariffs and the empirical determination of their effects. I did not like this topic at all and when a colleague came by with a job ad that did not interest him himself, I became curious.

When my daughter was in kindergarten, my wife had begun to realize her long-cherished desire to train as a social worker. But it was too complicated to coordinate kindergarten, training and work at the institute, so she had to stop training. Nothing stood in the way of a change.

### Episode 10 *Assistant in Berlin*

The advertisement offered an assistant position at the Technical University in Berlin in the field of 'Public Finance'. The chairholder was a young Frankfurt professor who had just been appointed, so I had no hesitation in accepting this position. The conditions were quite good, participation in the basic studies of economics, assistant at the chair of public finance and 1/3 of the working time for doctoral studies. I was even able to take a topic for the doctorate from Kiel, the cyclical effects of the public budget.

So I left Kiel and went back to my hometown with my wife and child. My wife had first gone to Berlin to rent us an apartment. During these days she lived in a shared apartment, which she liked very much. We then moved into a large old apartment with electric radiators and coal stove in Neukölln. It took me half an hour to three quarters of an hour by car to get to the university. My daughter came to the nearby elementary school, the change from Kiel to Berlin was no problem for her. My wife found an hourly job at the same school as a caregiver for students with special learning difficulties. We would have loved to have another child. When this didn't work out, we took a little boy into care and adopted him later.

At the Technical University, I noticed quite quickly that the chair was very conservative in my eyes, was at war with sophisticated mathematics and worked on the interpretation of terms and laws. Two of the four assistants had a similar assessment to mine, the fourth 'hanging his coat after the wind'. Teaching was different in undergraduate studies. The first semesters of the undergraduate course were conducted entirely under the responsibility of an assistant team. I got in right away, because teaching was more exciting than sitting in the office and reading. There were also a number of critical minds here. They tried to practice new forms of representation for the theoretical models and also new forms of organization. Student tutors were assigned to each assistant, who then carried out the classic exercise for the lecture. As a basis, a script for the corresponding content was developed and distributed. It was a real innovation, but several university teachers did not agree with it.

We argued with the chair holder in the seminars, among other things, about the problem of whether there were goods that could be clearly assigned to the public sector in themselves. Another point was my start of work. Since I took our son to kindergarten in the morning, I didn't want to be in the office at 8 a.m. already. I was therefore looking for other areas of activity outside the teaching area. I was elected to the Senate of the Technical University as a representative of the academic "Mittelbau", which meant many meetings until 10 p.m., without us as a left-wing minority being able to implement significant projects.

The chair-holder did not send us to scientific conferences once in the five years. I only took part in two educational trips of the Cologne Ostkolleg to Poland and Hungary, which were interesting, but were mediated by a friend and not by the chair. I took on additional teaching assignments at the Pedagogical University in the field of "Economy of Labour" and at the University of Applied Sciences for Economics in the field of "Tax

Policy" and was fully charged. At FHW, I tried to develop an approach for a critical consideration of the tax system and current tax policy. At PH, we were working on a reformulation of the study plan for the subject 'Economics of Work' in addition to the lectures, exams and consultations to be held. It was a busy time. Knitting during the lectures was totally 'in' for many students. I also once held a seminar lesson at the request of the students in a beautiful large apartment on Kurfürstendamm.

## Episode 11 *Holidays in France*

For my wife, the difficult task remained to educate our adopted son and eliminate his nutritional deficiencies. Our daughter, on the other hand, was relatively easy to care for.

During the holidays I went with my wife and children several times to Brittany to Quimiac, a small seaside resort near La Baule. We met there with a French family, whom we had met at a German-French family meeting in the Palatinate. Through the various holidays together, during which we spoke exclusively French, we soon learned to talk relatively fluently in French. We were sometimes 10 or 12 people when we went to a restaurant together in the evening and ordered large platters for the whole group with various seafood, snails, crabs, mussels, etc. with fresh baguettes and white wine or cider; It was a culinary delight. On other days we could eat homemade crêpes and galettes in large quantities.

In France, as well as in Norway, Holland or England, we occasionally encountered people who made us clearly notice their aversion to Germans. They either refused us a hotel room or insulted us. This aversion, probably stemming from the time of the Second World War, was transferred to us, the post-war generation. On a cruise ship of the Hurtigroute in Norway, an older man, accompanied by a younger man, even wanted to physically attack me. All the more beautiful was our long-standing friendship with the family from Le Mans.

## Episode 12 *promotion*

At the university, I was able to spend one year as an assistant for the doctoral thesis from the total of five years and was exempt from all obligations at the TU. I had already dealt in Kiel with the topic 'Measuring the cyclical effects of the state budget', in particular with the concept of an cyclically neutral budget. In order to conduct an empirical measurement of the effects of fiscal policy measures, I had to develop a small macroeconomic model, determine the parameters of the model equations used using statistical methods, and finally use the econometric model to determine the effects of a change in government expenditure or taxation. I was then able to use an excellent program of a statistics professor to estimate the equations. Since there were no personal computers, I had to hand in my programs on punch cards at the data center and pick them up when they were finished. The results were given to me by a small hatch.

The doctorate was completed in 1974 and my five-year contract ended. So I had to go back to looking for a job.



### Episode 13 *Unemployment and Applications*

Unemployment was a serious threat to our standard of living. We had rented a second one in the hallway directly opposite our apartment, so that our daughter could live there and she was not disturbed by her brother. Fortunately, I still had my teaching assignment at the University of Applied Sciences and conducted a course at the Volkshochschule to read the economics section of the daily newspaper. But that was not enough to cover our expenses. I was not spared going to the employment office in Sonnenallee. It was especially depressing to stand in the queue and see on yellow cardboard cards how the unemployment benefit was calculated.



#### *Unemployment*

The income from teaching activities was for deductions as well as a severance payment, which I had received in the amount of 10,000 DM from the Technical University. The latter, however, was inadmissible, as I unfortunately learned much later. From the many applications I wrote, I developed something like a neurosis, constantly in the mailbox, to see if a rejection or commitment had arrived. I even applied for a job in Kazakhstan, but this failed due to the poor knowledge of Russian.

I also introduced myself to the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, but one had probably expected an applicant for a job in Jordan to come to the interview with a tie. I thought the SPD near the foundation was more open. After all, I was already ready to accept a job at the adult education centre in Delmenhorst, but in this case I was considered overqualified. During this time, I was working on a book on a critical tax theory. Although it was never published, it was reflected to some extent in a working paper published at TU on “Concentration phases and tax policy in the Federal Republic of Germany”. This paper, strangely enough, was the only publication registered under my name in the Library of Congress opposite the White House on a subsequent visit by a friend to Washington. We just wanted to see for fun if we were immortalized there.

Then came the call for applications for a professorship at the University of Applied Sciences for Economics in the field of ‘Public Finance’. As a lecturer, I had good chances and was ranked number 1 by the University of Applied Sciences of the three candidates to be proposed to the Berlin Senate. The Senate decided after a long waiting

period for the third-placed candidate. One could only speculate on the reasons. Parallel to the hoped-for professorship, I also had a commitment from the GTZ (Society for Cooperation). It was the position of a debt management consultant for the north-west African country of Mauritania. My daughter was already eagerly studying pictures of the Sahara desert, while my wife was rather skeptical, because she thought that the French-speaking, foreign environment would not be suitable for the children and the two-year temporary job on the return to Germany could again lead to problems in the job search. The proceedings at the FHW dragged on and the GTZ pressed. So I canceled the GTZ because I was sure to get the professorship. I therefore first accepted a position in Hagen at the Fernuniversität, as a parking space, so to speak, until the appointment from Berlin would take place.

## Episode 14 *decision*

I hadn't heard from Hagen before and had to look at the map of Germany when I saw the job advertisement. It is located in North Rhine-Westphalia. So I took the train to Hagen. The position was advertised for a research assistant in a central institution for the development of distance learning materials with the perspective of a later permanent position as Academic Council. One focus of the future work should be the didactic advice to the specialist scientists. Fortunately, during my time in Berlin, I had published a small book about course design in further education together with two VHS lecturers due to my courses at the Volkshochschule, which was certainly beneficial for the application.

The director of the institute introduced me to the individual employees in a friendly and nice way, so that I gained a positive impression and agreed, even if the area of work did not correspond to my previous teaching activity and I did not want to take up this job in the long term anyway. I therefore looked for a room in Hagen and commuted every week between Hagen and Berlin by train: Friday evening to Berlin and on Monday morning back to Hagen, so that I could participate in the service meeting at 1 p.m. in Hagen. The driving time was about seven hours. The weekends in Berlin were always difficult, because we had to adjust to each other again and again. Especially the departure, which separated us every week, was very painful. Fortunately, there was a train that went directly from Berlin to Hagen: It was the Warsaw-Paris-Nord Express. On one of these trips, I sat in the compartment with some students who came from Warsaw and eagerly played poker. They smoked one cigarette after another. When they invited me to participate in poker, I immediately agreed, even though I had to learn the rules of the game first. When the conductor opened the door of the compartment for ticket control, he shook back due to the enormous smoke that struck him and renounced ticket control. In any case, this was my longest and best poker round, I almost missed the exit in Hagen.

My first impression of Hagen was sobering. In the evening, the streets were almost completely empty. When I wanted to drink a beer around 9 p.m., the chairs were already set up. In a big movie theater, when I wanted to watch a western, I was one of three viewers. Where had I just landed?

When my daughter visited me in Hagen and we took a walk in the wooded and hilly surroundings, we sat on a bench, drank a Coke and watched the walkers passing here with their loden coats and hiking sticks. I thought, 'My God, what a difference to the casual sloppy style of the Berliners'. The upheavals of the 1960s probably had no reach to Hagen. Nature was quite pretty in some places, but after each turn an old factory building appeared, which immediately destroyed the impression of an unclouded nature.

I wasn't the only employee commuting back and forth between home and work. In order

not to sit isolated in front of the TV at home, we played skat or met for bowling. I also got to know the local, disgusting-tasting strong juniper brandy, the so-called 'Hasper Maggi'. I also used the time to take a sailing course offered by the Yachtclub Harkortsee. Fortunately, on the day of the exam there was a lull, so that I no longer had to show the necks, which I could not do so well. When the news reached me that the Berlin Senate had appointed the third-placed candidate, I started the search for accommodation in Hagen. I quickly found what I was looking for and rented a 140 square meter apartment in an old but very nice villa district. The apartment had four rooms, plus a bathroom with an ancient bathtub, a large kitchen, a small guest toilet and a large balcony. The windows were still divided into small sub-windows in the old style, so that I had to stand on the window sill to clean the windows from the outside, which was not completely harmless. We still felt comfortable in the apartment and had a very nice view over the city.

### Episode 15 *The University and the ZFE*

Founded in 1975, the Fernuniversität was only under construction. The course material was conveyed by printed course units written with the typewriter of internal and external authors. The students had the opportunity to visit a regional study center to get help from mentors or to contact the members of the respective chair with questions. Attendance in Hagen was only required for some seminars. The exams could be written in different central locations. Distance learning was still new territory in the German university landscape. Many people could not imagine what this meant. Some people even confused the FernUniversität with the Volkshochschule. There were only a few experiences from the ultimately failed project 'Distance learning in the media network'. An important example, on the other hand, was the British Open University.



*Distance University in Hagen*

The Institute where I worked, the Center for Distance Learning Development (ZFE) had a specific character. His task was to support the departments in the preparation of the courses and the further development of the study system. In the Higher Education Act, the Institute was described as a 'sui generis' type. When the then head of the institute wanted to have clarity about the future structure, there was a vote among the staff of the institute whether they would prefer the status of an operating unit, similar to a library or a data center, or the status of a scientific institution with a professorial governing body. It was 50/50 until an employee showed up and voted for the status of a business unit. I was more in favor of a scientific institution. Until then, like some others, I was given a teaching assignment of 8 hours, which could not be interpreted as a mere assignment similar to a data center.

My first task at the ZFE was to analyse the courses of the Department of Economics from a didactic point of view and to make suggestions for improvement. The department had set up an acceptance procedure for the course units, in which the didactic opinion could be taken into account as an element, but did not have to. I first went to the university library to borrow books on economic didactics.



*At work*

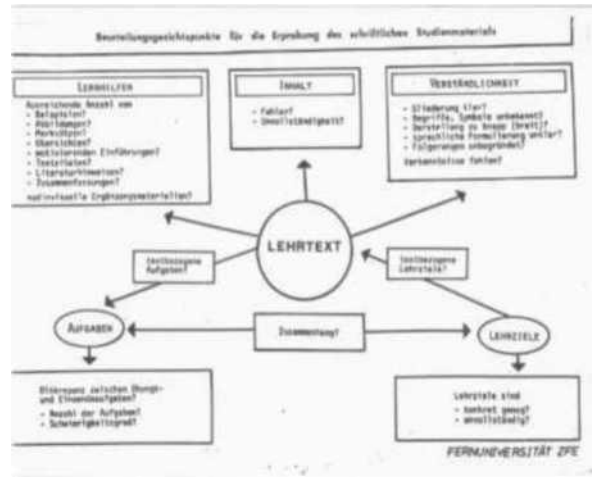


Unfortunately, after a quick review, I

could not find a book that would have helped me to review, for example, a course on monetary policy. I had to draw on my own teaching experience to make a meaningful contribution. My opinions had to be very precise, as any form of evaluation is an extremely sensitive area and an unjustified remark immediately leads to violent protests by the university teacher. After some time, I was able to develop an internal guide for the authors of economics courses.

This guide did not have the character of a manual, but commented on good and bad examples from the courses already used. It was found that hints for improvement are more targeted and gain greater acceptance among professors if they are given by an employee with the same technical affinity.

Already in the first year of study, there had been protests by the students against a course that was not adequate to their opinion, which penetrated into the ministry. The evaluation was therefore of great importance. A standardized questionnaire was developed by the ZFE and sent to the students, but did not give the university teachers any concrete indications as to what should be changed in detail. A course-specific questionnaire was already more precise, but could only be meaningfully formulated by distance learning didactics. They were still looking for a qualitative supplement. This is how the so-called textual criticism was launched. During the course occupancy, the students were asked whether they would participate in a course review for low remuneration. They had to put their comments in a duplicate and send them back to us. At that time, I developed a scheme with orientation points for the students. It was interesting that you could already recognize the main strengths and weaknesses of a course with 5 - 10 individual reviews.



The distance learning didactic section at the ZFE was a reflection of the faculties offered at the university. For many years I coordinated a small staff of highly qualified lawyers, economists, engineers, electrical engineers, mathematicians and educational scientists who focused on teaching and developing distance learning and were briefly referred to as distance learning didactics. The distance learning didactics worked closely with the other departments in the ZFE, i.e. they participated in both system development and media development. This broad range of tasks was usually carried out in the form of projects in which the didactics worked internally with the media designers such as graphic designers, programmers or AV technicians, externally with the respective university teachers involved and their assistants. Additional capacity was also provided by the student and scientific assistants.

In terms of staffing and job profiles, it was quickly possible to identify some potential sources of conflict that could only be avoided with great flexibility and willingness to cooperate. There was a tension between scientists and ‘non-scientists’. This concerned internal cooperation within the CFE. Through the work in the form of projects, the involved distance learning didactics was automatically the respective project manager. Some employees felt that this was too much hierarchy, especially since they also had a department head.

There was a not always easy-to-handle interface between the chairs and external authors versus the distance learning didactics - the group to which I belonged. This primarily concerned teaching, as some professors feared that the autonomy of university teachers would be lost if distance learning didactics could also influence the content of courses and acquire author rights. In addition, distance learning didactics was provided with positions that aroused desire in the department. The Institute therefore had to constantly justify its existence. Finally, there were also problem areas between the administrative area and the CFE, but these were mitigated by the fact that the CFE had handed over its original responsibility for the study centres to the administration. The Institute also had nothing to do with the technical production of the written materials and the dispatch.

The ZFE focused on the model development and implementation of innovative elements of distance learning. I got along well with my work and also found it interesting to work with both the graphic designers and technicians, as well as the faculty members. I got to know the entire courses of the Faculty of Economics, the largest department of the distance learning university in Hagen. I had a wide range of tasks from which I could largely choose my focal points myself. But I was also able to work on cross-disciplinary problems.

Together with a colleague, I investigated the relationship between work and studies. Other colleagues analyzed the living environment of the distance students in the form of in-depth interviews. Finally, there were also analyses on the drop-out, which, however, met with little understanding among the governing bodies, as the results were very disappointing at first glance. The discussions about the high drop-out had the positive aspect that the academic title was not to be regarded as the only study goal and therefore the drop-out had to be considered more differentiated.



## Episode 16 *The Sound Makes the Music*

The start was made and the enrolments for studies at the FernUniversität increased rapidly. The university now wanted to support autonomous learning even more in the media. Since it was not possible, like the Open University, to cooperate with a broadcaster, we started with simple sound image combinations in the form of a slide show. However, the distribution was impractical and too expensive. The transition to the use of sound cassettes meant a quantum leap. For the financial science course on 'Normative Theory of the Public Budget', I developed a model of a total of six audio cassettes as supplementary study material. The spoken word should reinforce and personalize the emotional bond between the lecturer and the student. The text virtually replaced the image to the sound, which did not mean that the text was read aloud.

The didactic concept then looked like this:

- Presentation of speakers,
- an overview of the function of the audio,
- additional comments on difficult parts of the course,
- Small tasks with a break from thinking
- Summary and outlook.

The structure of the audio was controlled by acoustic signals. The embedding of the audio in the text was indicated by icons in the margin column. The audio cassettes were well received by the students. Unfortunately, we could hardly win university teachers for the use of sound cassettes. I invited a colleague from the Open University to Hagen for a short visit and we found that we were working on similar problems, but from different angles. In addition to some contacts with the OU, there were relatively few international cooperations, the work with sound cassettes was not widespread at universities that offered distance learning, and if at all, then the radio was used, but this could not be combined with the study of the course material. I summarised my experience with audio cassettes in the article 'Some Didactic Aspects of Audio-Cassettes in Distance Education', which then appeared in Australia.

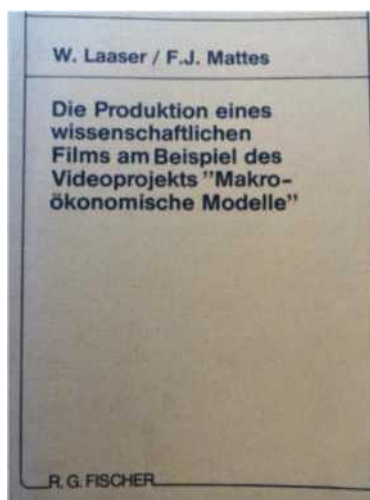


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Runn



### Episode 17 *Scientific Educational Films, an Unknown Medium*

Since the space in the residential building floor was not sufficient for the increasing number of employees of the ZFE and the distance learning was now also supported with educational films, the institute moved to a barrack building near the campus. For one room, the roof was raised to set up a small video studio. We started producing videos. The cassettes were sent to study centers equipped with Umatic recorders. The students were able to see them there or can also be borrowed individually. Since we had no training in writing a script and there was almost no literature on the subject, we were dependent on ourselves. I watched a number of Open University films. Of course, we were miles away from the possibilities of the BBC, with which the OU had entered into a cooperation. Our team consisted of the course author, a media designer, a studio technician, a graphic designer, a camera woman/man and finally me as coordinator and scriptwriter. I tried to deposit the technical text through images, but I realized that text and image must be conceived together from the beginning. Later I tried to assume visual scenarios in the educational films and only then, if necessary, to supplement text. This is a step that many scientists have taken.



*Video studio, director*

My first film was a four-part series on the subject: "Macroeconomic models". The colleagues described the film project as a "ben hur" because of its

Length. The individual parts of the video were between 30 and 40 minutes long. As an economist, I was familiar with the content of economics, so I also took over part of the moderation. I myself had the attitude that a special presentation for the presenter, such as special colors or patterns of the fabric of a jacket for an educational film are not

necessary. I had also refused to buy new glasses especially for this moderation. At the time, I was wearing Umbramatic glasses, the lenses of which were completely darkened due to the headlights used in the studio. I realized that it can also be important to pay attention to such aspects.

A cheerful event was the moderation of a relatively small colleague who had stood on a stack with the large Umatic cassettes to reach the moderation catheder. Unfortunately, the underlay was not stable, so that he disappeared from the screen in the middle of the recording. Of course, such misfortunes were not erased, but collected and presented at appropriate festivals. The work in the studio was quite exhausting, as there were many breaks in which you waited for the next action. I drank a lot of coffee and smoked like a chimney. In the lunch break we played table tennis in the Chinese way, that is, you form a chain with all the players, the first one hits, the next one has to return. If he can't do that, he'll drop out. The last two remaining players will play an individual for the win. The plate stood exactly in the entrance area, as it was the only open space available. Playing table tennis was a thorn in the side of the head of the institute, but there is no rule that prohibits it. The studio was actually too small for an acceptable quality of video productions. In winter I had to take a thick coat with me, in summer it got very hot despite air conditioning.

## Episode 18 *Between Economics and Educational Technology*

In order not to lose touch with my cooperation with the Department of Economics, I went for many years to the annual meeting of the traditional association for social policy and to the conferences of the working group for political economy. In the Association for Social Policy, together with three other economists, I had founded the first temporary working group on the topic of ‘Follow-up costs of development projects’ and published my chapter in the publications of the association.

### *Association for Social Policy*

The Folgekostenproblematik on the background of the Conditions for awarding contracts in the context of bilateral and multilateral cooperation



by *Wolfram Laaser*, Hagen

The economic situation of oil-importing developing countries deteriorated in the 1970s. The growth rate of the national product per capita fell from 1.6 to 0.9 p.a.<sup>1</sup> The outstanding medium and long-term debt of developing countries from public and private sources increased fivefold in nominal terms from the beginning of 1971 to the end of 1978. On the other hand, the per capita income of the industrialised countries ...

The working group for political economy was intended as a counter-proposal to the established and predominantly conservative association for social policy and was a good platform for critical, not exactly neoclassical economists. After a few years, I stopped participating in both organizations because I was not sufficiently involved in ongoing economics research in my work at the distance learning university and I had turned more strongly to media didactics and learning technology. At the distance university, the number of students increased continuously, so that computer-evaluable exercise and examination elements were searched for the courses with attendance figures of several thousand students. While other staff members of the institute dealt with the electronic recording of the tasks submitted by students, the so-called submission tasks, I wanted to contribute to the question of whether computer-evaluable tasks can be designed in such a way that they have a comparable degree of difficulty to the previous open tasks, which were not machine-evaluable. Naturally, I again took the course Macroeconomics as an example.

This resulted in an entire book, with challenging and variable design forms for the tasks of the course, but whose patterns can also be used analogously for other courses. The topic of task design has occupied me again and again later.

***Set of multiple choice queries embedded in a small story (Small, Small, Laaser, Martiensen: Multiple Choice Tasks in the Business administration)***

**Ein Arbeitstag von Raphael Berger (Auszug)**  
 Raphael Berger leitet eine Gießerei mit ca. 100 Mitarbeitern. Daneben betreibt er eine im Aufbau befindliche Gesellschaft, die sich mit der Entwicklung eines Computersystems (Hardware und Software) zur Fertigungssteuerung beschäftigt.

Mo 05. Juni  
08:00

Welche Rolle(n) nimmt dabei Berger ein?  
 Kreuzen Sie die betreffenden Alternativen für die Aktivitäten zu den verschiedenen Uhrzeiten an (dann weiter über die gelben Pfeiltasten).

Repräsentant  
 Führer  
 Koordinator  
 Informationszähler  
 Informationsverteiler  
 Sprecher  
 Unternehmer  
 Krisenmanager  
 Ressourcenzuteiler  
 Verhandlungsführer

Raphael Berger betritt das Gebäude und erfüllt schon auf dem Weg zu seinem Büro von Rolf Dahm, einem Mitarbeiter aus der Kalkulation, einen Hinweis auf eine Störung bei dem in Entwicklung befindlichen Computersystem. Danach geht er zu seinem Schreibtisch.

DK L. übertrag

With the beginning use of audio-visual media, interest in examining the efficiency of the still relatively expensive media mediation increased. I have carried out a small research project on the question of the extent to which a didactic and graphical revision of an already used course unit provides time savings and performance improvements compared to a corresponding video production. I selected a text on econometrics and, together with some colleagues from the institute, created the improved text version and the video version. A test with about 30 students of the Econometrics course showed that the revision of the text was not primarily performance-enhancing, but had considerable time savings compared to the current original version. The effect of the video version was also positive in terms of learning performance. The project, like many comparative studies on learning technology, had to struggle with the problem that the initial situation, here the written text, and the alternative, here the video version, is either pointless - example: Comparison of a print module with a text-like module

Video or, to stick with the example, or the video is created for comparison using its specific design possibilities, then the objection may come that one compares apples with pears. There is a dialectical relationship between form content. There is no form without content and no content without form. In our study, I took the very detailed teaching objectives as the common denominator of the different versions, but I was aware that it was an auxiliary construction.

### *ZeF International Publications*



Unfortunately, the publication in three consecutive issues of the Journal of Educational Research (ZeF) had relatively little resonance, as the editor died shortly thereafter and the journal was not continued.

## Episode 19 *Communication problems*

My first international conference was held in Newfoundland in 1979 on ‘Television lessons’. A colleague had given me the tip to submit a paper about video. The paper was accepted and I received the corresponding commitment to reimburse the travel expenses.

I planned to fly from Germany to Montreal to see Concordia University beforehand, and to talk to some scientists from teaching technology.

### *Conference in St. Johns, Newfoundland*



It was a hot summer in Montreal and when I arrived in Montreal after a long flight, I saw from the event brochures at the hotel that night at the jazz club “House of the Rising Sun” Chicago Blues by Luther Allison was on the programme. This was the first highlight of my trip. I was invited by Concordia University to eat at a restaurant with excellent French cuisine. Due to the high temperature, people were on their feet almost all night. Montreal is located in French Canada, which means that not English, but a French dialect, the québécois, is spoken. Sometimes it was hard to understand. I then took the bus to Quebec, where the huge St. Lawrence River is

located, and the next morning I walked alone along the banks of the river and let the power of the river affect me. Finally, I took another bus ride to the English-influenced Toronto, a real contrast program compared to Montreal. After that, I went with colleagues from Concordia University to an informal pre-conference meeting in Corner Brook. I met a larger group of Open University (OU) scientists there, including Tony Bates, who headed the Institute of Educational Technology at the OU and whose publications I had read. In the evening I sat with the British in the bar. They told each other joke after joke and I understood almost everything except the punch line. I was quite frustrated and now I want to tell you a joke. It was a joke from mathematics, set theory, and none of the group laughed and I had to explain the punch line again. I noticed that I would have felt the same way all the time as she does now. With that, the topic was done and more was taken.

Consideration for my language skills. From Corner Brook I drove with a Japanese and an American in a rented Cadillac across Newfoundland to St. Johns to the Memorial University of New Foundland. On the way, the American shouted "whow" at every corner, even if nothing exciting was to be seen. Only once did a moose cow trot across



the street, so the ‘Whow, that’s fantastic’ was perhaps acceptable. In St John you can sometimes see icebergs swimming by, but we weren’t lucky. Instead, we took a boat to a bird island near Petty Harbour and got quite wet on the way back from a heavy downpour. I became friends with the Japanese professor who worked in Japan for admission. Admission to prestigious universities is very important in Japan.

### *Petty Harbour*



The conference went well and was interesting for me. I remembered a lecture by Jon Baggaly about different camera settings on educational television. The campus of Memorial University was also very impressive. Beautiful to study, if you compare it with German universities. However, this is probably also due to the fact that the students are accommodated on campus here, while in Germany they usually study ‘on campus’, but live ‘off campus’. In distance learning, the campus is largely replaced by technical media.

### Episode 20 *Impressions from Cuba*



At that time there was still a longer planned private trip to Cuba, for which I had little desire, since I knew no one there and Cuba seemed to be interesting only from a political point of view. In Schönefeld, the East Berlin airport, I felt alone and lonely. A group of Cubans drank a lot of beer before departure. I did not understand a word of what they were saying to each other. Why fly to Cuba?

The flight was, as always, accompanied by the thought of a hopefully folding take-off



and a safe landing. There was a stopover in Gander in Newfoundland and I thought to myself, here you have been before and it went well. I thought about sending a postcard from Gander, but there were only stamps on the vending machine in larger numbers, so I cancelled the project. I'm thinking about home. Everything seems unreal to me.

During the second half of the flight, I had a conversation with a Cuban who spontaneously invited me to visit him in Havana. Raul had lived in the GDR for six years, was a quiet guy and seemed to me to be reasonably trustworthy. Despite his many years in East Germany, he spoke poor German. He was trained as a joiner and wanted to marry his girlfriend from the GDR. The flight captain reported, Havana 26 °C. We were there.

I quickly got through customs, Raul came last. I had been waiting with some technicians at the exit. They were picked up by Cuban officials. I could hear that the technicians from the GDR did not speak a word of Spanish and tried to break into Russian with their reception committee.

Then I waited another half hour for Raul to change money. We took a taxi to the center of Havana. At the destination, the Hotel Colina, Raul gave me 20 pesos so that I had some Cuban money. At the hotel, I was asked for a reservation confirmation from the 'Habana Libre' tourist office. It was 11 p.m. and the tourist office was already closed. Finally, I was able to move into a room. In the room the radio worked poorly and the air conditioning was loud, the toilet had no lid, in the thermos there was no water. Otherwise everything was OK!!

I went out of the hotel to get a first impression of the city. In front of a restaurant stood a long queue of people, otherwise nothing where you could get something to eat. At least I wanted to have an ice cream at Plaza Coppelia, an ananaseis. To buy the ice cream, I had to line up in a first line to get a corresponding receipt. Then I was allowed to line up in a second line to get an ice cream for 40 centavos. I went back to the hotel a little disappointed without food. The next morning's breakfast consisted of a slice of bread, a slice of sausage, fried eggs and milk coffee. The whole thing cost me \$3 or about 12 DM.

I started a city walk. First I went to the famous beach promenade, the Malecon. There you can still see a chain of beautiful old villas, but the colors have faded for a long time. Havana must have been beautiful.

***Havana, Plaza de la Catedral and Hotel Plaza***



Three times I was approached for currency exchange, but I still had the twenty pesos of Raul and therefore refused. The black market price was around US\$1 = 4 pesos, while the official price was set at 1 to 1. Tourists should only pay with \$ at the unit price, which is four times the local price in pesos.

I walked along the old broad avenidas towards the old town. The school children had just taken a break and were doing sports exercises with teachers on the middle promenade. There was no cafe or restaurant. Only the most beautiful hotel, Inglaterra, has been renovated. The other former magnificent buildings were just rotting in front of them. I stopped at an open bar. Next door was a bar with seats to eat. I almost only saw old people, retirees. There was fish soup and rice. Here, too, a waiting list determined access. At first I wanted to wait, but I thought I was too much of an outsider in this poor kitchen. Finally, I found a simple restaurant. The queue seemed short, but it took almost 45 minutes. I ate some fish with rice and drank a beer. I had a conversation with two old workers who were sitting at the table with me. It was hard to understand their language. They were dissatisfied with the economic system. For them, communism meant 'poverty for all'. They rack for a lifetime and earn about 150-200 pesos a month. The pension later amounted to only about 60 pesos.

Medical care was good, rent was low, everything else was expensive, e.g. clothes or furniture. After the two pensioners left the restaurant, other Cubans asked me to their table, Marines. We drank a beer. I shouldn't pay anything. One of the Cubans was a mechanic and studied at the evening school for his technician degree. One of the Marineros suggested I go somewhere else. Outside, he told me he wanted to leave because he didn't want to pay for the others anymore. For me, that would be something else. He worked in his father's shop, which was an optician. I wondered why he wasn't working that day.

We went through different bars. They were almost all pitch dark. There was nothing

going on here in the early afternoon. We ended up in my hotel bar. When my acquaintance came back from the toilet, he fell. He pulled up at the counter and wanted to continue drinking. I said it was finally over, went to my room and fell asleep immediately.

### Episode 21 *In the Footsteps of Hemmingway*

The next day I met Raul. He had brought along his brother-in-law, who had been in Ethiopia for two years. We took a taxi through Havana. Finally we found a nice restaurant with a terrace. We ordered two beers and boccaditos. The waitress brought us the beer, but said she got in trouble because she should have sold us only one beer. Raul had no idea what might interest a tourist in Havana. He had two months off, but he didn't get any money during that time. He made a somewhat phlegmatic impression. We drove to the restaurant "La Torre" with a view of Havana from the tenth floor. The concierge (el capitán) received a tip so that we were admitted, even if the restaurant was hardly occupied. Raul paid for the food in pesos, as tourists we would have had to pay the same price in dollars. Raul wanted me to buy him something at the grocery store. So that was the system. He didn't know what and how much to buy. For the next few days he gave me 50 pesos. We tried to buy tickets for the famous Tropicana Ballet, but there was nothing to do with pesos in the short term. However, I was able to visit the free 'Sabado de la Rumba', where you don't see the stilted ballet, but simple performances with many African words from the Yoruba language, a relic of the slaves who came here from West Africa. We split up around 4 p.m. I went to a cafeteria to eat something. At first I got nothing because I was sitting on a bar stool in the dining room and was not served there. I switched to another place and finally got quite burnt calamari after waiting again. Finding something to eat was not easy. I drank two more beers in a corner pub with a truck driver and in between a glass of Tabasco with seafood, a somewhat unusual combination. I went back to the hotel.



***Bodeguita del Medio***

I really wanted to get to know the bars that Hemingway is said to have frequented, the Bodeguita del Medio and the Floredita Bar. So I took a Mojito in the Bodeguita del Medio and a Daiquiri in the Floredita Bar in Hemingway style. I met two Italians. After the drinks, we were hungry and wanted to go to a central square, the 'Plaza de la Catedral', in the restaurant 'El Patio'. We had to wait a long time in a queue. A Capitano controlled whether you were a Cuban or a foreigner because of the payment in dollars or pesos. When he asked the Italians about the countries, they said they were from Roma.

The Capitano probably understood 'from Romania', which was still communist at the time, and let them in. I didn't say anything and went right away. We were able to pay in pesos and order a good meal. We laughed a lot at the misunderstanding.

## Episode 22 *Beach Life in Ibacoa*

The next day I wanted to book a hotel on the beach, but there was only one place in a bungalow complex about 58 km from Havana. The transit bus to Camp Ibacoa should cost \$10. I took the regular bus, which only cost 1 pesos. I had to wait an hour for the bus. There were no timetables. I had to change trains in Santa Cruz. At first I was wrong, then a man with a bicycle told me that I had to go to the bridge. I waited another 45 minutes. As I walked towards the camp, I heard a Cuban with a guitar singing a song by Silvio Rodriguez 'Andará Nicaragua su camino de gloria... y el águila daba su señal a la gente', a song referring to the Nicaraguan revolution and directed against the US as a supporter of the former political system. Finally, I arrived at Camp Ibacoa. The location was quite nice with some trees, but until my little wooden hut was free, another hour passed. The house had four beds, but I lived alone. Toilets and washrooms were in another house. I was tired.



On Sunday, a Cuban band played salsa. On the weekends, many Cubans came here. I went to the bar and ordered a beer. A bottle of beer cost \$ 1, so about 4 DM. I was angry and went to the Cubans who were sitting on a porch opposite the plaza. After a few minutes, a beer was on the table next to me. We discussed socialism and working conditions. We took turns drinking beer and tomato juice. When the many beer boxes were empty and the party was over, the brigade leader asked me if I could give him a box of Marlboro for his aunt. I picked up the box and wanted to give his buddy a small bottle of brandy I had gotten on the plane, but the other guy's hand was faster.

How will it be in this camp for cheap tourists, mainly Germans? My flu, which had settled on schedule, was running at full speed. Nevertheless, I went with some young Berlin tourists to a side beach to snorkel. There were wonderful colorful coral fish. The corals themselves were green-brown and relatively ugly. I collected small shells on the beach that have a hole washed out by seawater and put them on a nylon thread as a

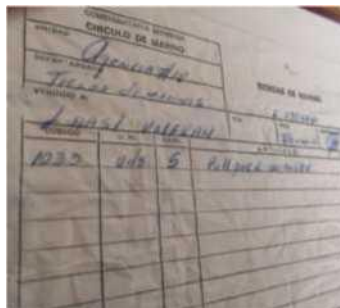
necklace as a gift for my wife. I had a proper sunburn.

In the afternoon, I took three different crowded buses to Havana to meet Raul. We drove to his apartment in Havana Alta. He lived there with his mother, father, brother-in-law, sister-in-law and their little child. It was a three-room apartment in a newly built area with three to four-storey yellow houses. In the living room were the TV and the brought radio recorder from the GDR. On the wall hung photos of Ché and Fidel. The parents were very nice. His father was a carpenter, his mother had trained as a teacher at the age of 40. It was really fun. We got along and I was in good shape despite the flu. At midnight I was back at camp.

### Episode 23 *Santiago de Cuba*

I befriended a young Berliner at the camp and we decided to take a trip to Isla de la Juventud. When we arrived on the island, we were able to check in at a relatively posh hotel. The beautiful hotel was almost deserted. We then went snorkeling. After I jumped from the boat into the water, a number of Barracudas came up from the seabed and circled us with some distance. After all, the barracudas are predatory fish with very sharp teeth, but they were just a little curious.

We did not stay long on the island, but decided to take the train from Havana to Santiago de Cuba. The train was very comfortable, but travelled at a snail's pace, so it took us 18 hours to get there. In the hotel we did not have to pay the overnight price with dollars, but with pesos, which was of course much cheaper if we exchanged the dollars on the black market. We made contact and while some members of the Wechslergang monitored the street exits and entrances, we were able to settle the exchange in peace. We got six pesos per dollar and were supposed to buy a t-shirt for them in exchange for dollars at Intershop. Intershops are only accessible to certain officials and tourists. We bought the T-shirt and handed it over secretly. The happy owner waved at us from a distance.



#### *Shopping at Intershop*

Santiago de Cuba seemed to me much freer and more relaxed than Havana. I met a group of musicians and accompanied them to a performance on Mother's Day. The clarinetist could play along freely without notes of classical music from the recorder. In the evening I went to the 'Casa de la Trova' for a rum. Here, old musicians played in a small room, equipped only with simple chairs and a pedestal, very beautiful folklore, but often with texts to glorify the leaders such as Fidel or 'Comandante Ché Guevara'. I drank a rum to the music and let my soul dangle.

### Episode 24 *Teaching in Frankfurt*

Since I was not located in Hagen, but in the ZFE, it was important for me to update my knowledge of economics. Then the call from a professor I knew from my work at the Berlin School of Economics came just right for me. He asked me to represent a new professorship at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University in Frankfurt. The subject area was labor theory / economics, which I had also taught in Berlin at the Pedagogical



University as a lecturer. I then applied for a leave of absence for one semester.

### *Honorable vocation*



In the semester I had to drive two to three times a week to Frankfurt and in the evening back to Hagen. In winter, with snow and ice, the journey sometimes took a very long time. In addition, there was time to look for suitable parking facilities near Frankfurt University.

The number of participants in the courses was still low, as the department had only just been set up. Moreover, the current job prospects for graduates were poor, as there was just a “teacher glut” on the labour market. The job market for teachers reminded me of the pig cycle known from economic theory (Cobbweb theorem). In good economic conditions, teachers are paid better or receive other benefits (official status, promotions, etc.). As a result, more first-year students decide to become teachers. When they finish their studies after about five years, they encounter a changed economic situation or an already saturated market. The result is the so-called teacher glut. However, the population development and the future need for teachers are relatively easy to plan, so that there should not be such strong fluctuations. In addition to teaching economic fundamentals, the analysis of concrete lesson plans was an important focus in my courses. Complete teaching units are offered by a number of publishers and public educational institutes. I also got some self-written lesson plans from a Hagen school. Despite their interest in the content, many students, especially higher semesters, were very frustrated, as they had little hope of being able to use the acquired qualifications professionally.

### Episode 25 *Back again*

During my visiting lecturership in Frankfurt, I had maintained constant contact with the institute in Hagen. At the ZFE, the prerequisites for a stronger commitment to the creation of supplementary audiovisual study materials were created with the establishment of a larger video studio according to their own plans.



*Video*



This made a move necessary once again. Unfortunately, the building was also a barrack construction, which had previously been used by the PH. The offices were not air-conditioned and under the slightly raised floor, dead mice were occasionally found, causing terrible stench. I had a nice large office, where I also had space for my changing student or research assistants. The ping pong game in the lunch break was stopped, but after closing time I rebuilt the ping pong table in the studio together with our sound engineer and we then delivered excellent and sweaty duels there.

### Episode 26 *Regeneration with Sports and Music*

There were other interesting activities for me, which I did not want to stop during the substitute professorship. About a year after I started working at FernUniversität, an employee told me that a group at the university had formed a band to play dance music. I said if it wasn't dance music, but Dixiland, I'd like to join in. I had already bought a useful banjo in a small shop in London Paddington during the Berlin years, which was now to be used again after many years. Since the other members agreed, the Fernuni Jazzband was formed. At the beginning we played with a rather unusual mixture of instruments, sousaphones, Hammond organ, banjo, piano, clarinet and trumpet. The only one who had the right experience in jazz was our trumpeter and bandleader, a psychologist from the field of education and social sciences. Our rehearsals took place in the basement of the villa, which for a long time was the seat of the rector and chancellor. We were able to borrow a piano from the Hagen University of Applied Sciences for an unlimited period of time, as no one else needed it. Our first appearance was at a carnival party of the FernUniversitätsverwaltung. Despite some musical weaknesses, the performance was quite encouraging thanks to our excellent trumpeter, who had dressed in an old one-piece pajamas.

*Fernuni jazz band*

The band quickly developed musically through the entry of various Hagen jazz musicians, partly on a permanent basis, partly on invitation to special performances or as a replacement for members of the band who were prevented from performing on the date. We played on many occasions in Hagen and the surrounding area, at the summer festivals of the FernUniversität and at times in two Hagen jazz clubs.

The band consisted, albeit in alternating line-up, for a total of 26 years. In addition to playing in the band with my beautiful penetrating banjo, I learned finger picking at home with the guitar in the style of Big Bill Broonzy, John Hurt or Lightnin' Hopkins. That was about the kind of guitar playing I had heard for the first time in Madrid and couldn't imagine being able to do it myself. Some wishes come true when you least expect them. The songs and rhythms of the first generation of blues musicians experienced an interesting revival much later, especially through Eric Clapton, Stefan Grosman and the Rolling Stones.

There was another hobby that I have practiced, wherever, since my youth: Playing football. I had always played in hobby teams in Kiel and Berlin. In Hagen, there were several alternatives to kicking, either in the sports hall with teachers from a nearby school, or with members of FernUni or with a group of employees of Sparkasse Hagen. I took advantage of all three alternatives in places, as far as my time allowed. At the weekend, there was still the opportunity to ask other groups on the large lawns of a public park if they could play.



### *AStA Football*

Through various contacts, a group of football players emerged, coming from a wide range of professions. We got along quite well and drove a few times to a conference venue about 100 km away from Hagen, which was also equipped with a football field and an indoor pool. It was always a happening. We drove early on Saturday to the conference venue to play a game in the morning and afternoon. When we walked through the building to the square in our loose individual sportswear and football boots and passed other seminar participants from companies or educational institutes, we received astonished looks and wonder. We enjoyed it and described our activity as a 'football seminar'. After two strenuous games and dinner, we went to relax in the indoor pool belonging to the conference venue, which we could use from 9 pm. Since we thought we were alone in the swimming pool, we decided to jump into the water naked. When we showed up, we saw a gesticulating scolding man on the other side of the pool. It was obviously the coach of a women's diving group that we hadn't seen because she had just been at the bottom of the pelvis. The women had a good view from there.

After the swim we drank some more beers in a nearby small pub and sang alternately accompanied by my guitar, which I had dragged along, Moritaten and Schlager of the 50s and 60s. I switched with a player. When the landlady also pulled out a microphone and started "I want a cowboy as a man", the day was over.



There was another spectacular event with the group. One of our teammates had contacts to Stralsund. What seemed impossible before, became possible again after reunification, a private meeting of a West German with an East German team. Soon after the reunification, we made contact with the LPG “Red Banner”, which had a team in the GDR Oberliga. The LPG was based in a small village, Trinwillershagen. The LPGs (Agricultural Production Cooperative) were agricultural enterprises that had emerged from the merging of several farms in the course of collectivization. The Red Banner LPG covered an area of approximately 20 square kilometres, including two buses, a ship and a beautiful football pitch. We were accommodated with individual families. My host was a place and hall attendant with a beautiful cottage and a refrigerator full of alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks. We had only arrived with 9 players by train and had already met the popular local drink, the apple grain, on the welcome evening. We borrowed two players from the LPG for the match. The game ended to the great surprise of the former Oberligist with a 3-3 draw. They didn't trust our hobby troupe to do that. We later invited the team from Trinwillershagen to Hagen. We learned that a West German administrator had been employed for the LPG and then stormed with the money of the cooperative. Unfortunately, we lost the second leg in Hagen. The village and the football field in Trinwillershagen later achieved a certain sensation through the meeting of George Bush and Angela Merkel, for whom Haxen were grilled on the football field. But that was negligible compared to our match.

### Episode 27 *We're Going on Air*

A qualitative leap took place when FernUniversität entered into a cooperation with WDR in 1983. We received a fixed broadcasting place on Sunday mornings from 8.30 am to 9.00 am. The broadcast had to be ready for broadcast and on time at the station's headquarters in Cologne. This was a great opportunity to develop something new on the medium neglected in university teaching.



We received a good price for every minute sent, which probably also corresponded to what other providers demanded. In the beginning, we had to outsource a lot to external companies, e.g. animations and graphics. Since we still used 3/4 inch tapes in production in these first years and cut them analogously, we drove to the vicinity of Frankfurt to use the machines of a low-cost supplier for the final cutting on site.

From the mid-1980s, some videos of the Fernuni courses were adapted to the broadcast format, but after that a new broadcast had to be produced every two weeks. Due to capacity reasons, we could not run in two tracks with different designs for videos and television broadcasts. The focus was now on pure TV production, but these were thematically linked to the course content and were thus considered as supplementary study materials. Our first videos contained tasks after longer sequences, which were either contained in a small booklet about the film or appeared directly on the screen and whose solution was presented by the moderator after a short break. Didactically, the television programs were subjected to more restrictions than the pure videos. The length was determined by the transmitter. Interaction with the viewer was hardly possible and the learning speed without recording was completely predetermined. One advantage of television was its reach, which also implied that it was aimed at a public outside the distance university and therefore designed 'stand alone' products that met with wider interest. The program could be from



the students are recorded or purchased as a video cassette. Together with various colleagues, I have examined the use and assessment of the videos as well as the television programmes. One result of the videocassette study was that in 1984 only about a third of the students had a video recorder available at home. The preference for content focused on ‘explaining difficult content’ and ‘demonstrating practical examples’. The video cassettes could not be integrated as closely as the audio cassettes in the course material. It was also shown that the use of audiovisual productions is a longer-term process, which must also be combined with a targeted PR work. The breakthrough of the medium video therefore only succeeded much later. Through the ongoing broadcasts, we gained important experience in the technical and design implementation of a wide variety of topics. I was instrumental in productions on econometric models, macroeconomics, operations research, English for Economists, statistics, human resource management, cultural management and decision theory and many others as a project manager, screenwriter, sometimes as a moderator. The television programmes could also be obtained on VHS cassettes, later on DVDs as supplementary study materials.



### ***Teaching modules on DVD***

Thanks to WDR funding, we were now also able to select locations further away from the studio. Through interviews with experts, the installation of archival material and the filming of real environments, the films could be made more interesting. We learned by producing. Unfortunately, an offer from the WDR to train us as freelancers came a bit late. After all, I attended a seminar on interview techniques and a second on documentary films.

Television is run as a mass medium, as the broadcasting extends very far in space. In this context, I have been able to introduce some questions about the use of our program in a regular study of the WDR. The result for our shipment then amounted to about 50,000 turn-ons. Unfortunately, the answers to control questions raised doubts about the

validity of the procedure, as the answers collected were partly contradictory. It is therefore not really surprising that the gas station attendant of my usually visited gas station asked if I was watching TV and would moderate programs for children. The investigation methods today (2020) are much more detailed and such results can be retrieved more easily from the server.



## Episode 28 *Visiting Fellow in Australia*

We now also had more foreign guests who visited our institute to see how distance learning was practically implemented here. I often looked after the visitor groups due to my good language skills and the overview of the various projects. One of the visitors was John Stanford, an Australian professor who wanted to get to know FernUniversität as part of a sabbatical.



### *Two friends*

Since he was an economist and I had a number of economic television productions behind me, we were able to exchange ideas well. John was employed at Queensland University in Brisbane and, upon his return to the university there, applied to invite me as a ‘visiting fellow’. It was, of course, a great opportunity to fly to the end of the world. I received the flight costs from Queensland University and the stay was reimbursed by the DAAD. On the return flight, I wanted to stop over in Indonesia, as it was my first opportunity to get to know an Asian country. So I start a journey with Qantas Airlines, which should take about two and a half days due to the time difference. In Abu Dhabi was briefly landed and in Djakarta there had been an unplanned stopover for technical reasons. I arrived in Brisbane around 6am on Saturday morning. When I entered the Arrival Zone tired and hopeful, no one was there to pick me up.

After a long wait, I took a taxi to the university in St. Lucia and tried to find someone to call Jon. When Jon arrived, a campus administrator had already quartered me in a beautiful cottage right on the Brisbane River. A family had lived there and had just moved out. Jon told me he wasn't expecting me until the next day. The University of Queensland is one of Australia's oldest universities and was founded in 1909. Australian universities are ‘on campus’ universities, i.e. students live in university buildings. Distance learning is offered in a relatively simple form for ‘external students’ who only come to the university on a few dates. The Department for External Studies is responsible for these students. In contrast, the distance learning university in Hagen could be described as completely off-campus.

The campus was very nice, the different faculties each had a building and lined almost circularly a lawn on which the students could chill in the warm temperatures. When I

looked out the window in the morning, I could see the pelicans swimming and diving on the river. They were almost paradisiacal conditions.

An essential part of my stay was the production of an economic educational film. At the time, neo-Keynesianism was a major issue among economists. It was an extension of the Keynesian model to include temporary imbalances caused by false trading. I first looked at the video studio and asked an economics researcher from the Department for External Studies if they had also produced educational films here. It was astonishing that the answer was 'no'. Classes were recorded, however.

I had taken some literature on the subject and we first discussed the content of a 20-minute educational film. It quickly became clear that we needed graphic sequences for the demonstration and wanted to show curve shifts and step-by-step construction in the diagrams. At that time, there was no convenient software to create this on the computer. So we went to a paper shop and bought a fairly large load of colored cardboard sheets, from which we cut out individual graphic components in Jon's kitchen, and later recorded them in the studio with an overhead camera. We then added some interviews and a moderation to the film. The result was quite appealing and was presented to some colleagues. We received positive feedback.

### Episode 29 *Academic rites*

For dinner I was invited by the college, got a gown and sat with some professors at the high table, in front of us in the hall the students. The students had to serve us. The ritual was very formal and conformed to English conventions. While German universities fought against the 'Muff unter den Talaren', ancient traditions were practiced here. My feelings about it were ambiguous. On the one hand, I felt honored, on the other hand, I said to myself that this seems a bit exaggerated and helps to support authoritarian structures. I had a similar impression when watching a cricket game. Players looked as if they were from the Victorian era in their khaki-colored ironed shorts, yet Australia has long been a multicultural society.

At home with Jon, he showed me his picture collection. He was an avid art collector. In a kind of barn, he had completely hung the walls with paintings that represented rather abstract painting. He once invited me to dinner with his friends and acquaintances in a beautiful Indian restaurant, where I ate Tandoree Chicken for the first time.

### Episode 30 *Left-hand traffic*

On the first weekend we drove to the sea to Surfers Paradise, where Lady Di reportedly vacationed more often. The sea wasn't overly warm, but I loved the high waves. Jon was too cold. Otherwise, I was on my own. There was nothing going on on campus during the weekends, so I decided to rent a car, an old Honda, to get to know the Brisbane area. Driving was not so easy. In Brisbane, there were hardly any subsequent turning possibilities once you had turned wrong, and of course left-hand traffic was a new experience. Once it happened to me on one of my trips that I was so busy converting the price per gallon into DM / liter that I turned into the right lane after refuelling in old habit. The road was empty at first, then a car came towards me and I thought what an idiot this ghost driver is. Until I realized I was the idiot.

From Brisbane I drove towards New South Wales along the Gold Coast to the Tweed River. It was a wonderful Sunday and I found a rental of sailboats. As the wind blew weakly, I dared to borrow a boat and sailed alone on the river for an hour. It was just fantastic. Another tour I made to Noosa Heads, also a beautiful seaside resort. When I drove back to Brisbane around 4 p.m., I passed a small national park and thought I'd take a quick look at it. There was not much to see, but the darkness came very suddenly and I could hardly see anything on the small paths. So I ran as far as possible towards the exit, as I was probably the only one in the park at that time. In the darkness, I heard a sharp bang again and again that sounded like a shot, which made me run even faster. With a lot of luck I reached the exit and sat down sweaty in my Honda. Later I asked Jon what those shots were, he laughed and explained to me that a native bird species, the Whip Crack, was known for such a bang.



**Category: Landscapes of Australia**

I then gave a lecture at Griffith University in Brisbane and was able to follow an invitation to a lecture in Toowoomba. However, Toowoomba is about 400 km from Brisbane and so the University of Queensland provided me with a car with which I drove alone to the lecture venue. The ride was very relaxing as there was hardly any traffic and the gentle hilly landscape was characterized by forests and wheat fields. I also visited a small immigrant museum on the way back.

### Episode 31 *Heron Island*

My last big goal was to see the Barrier Reef. The University of Queensland had a research station on a small island in the Reef and was therefore able to support me well in planning my trip. I took a Greyhound bus to Gladstone to take a helicopter to Heron Island. I arrived late in the evening in Gladstone, an industrial town, and took a taxi to the helicopter airfield. When I told the taxi driver about my destination, he told me a little smugly that the helicopters were already asleep. They wouldn't fly again until the next day. Since I had no accommodation planned, I sat down next to the landing area on a bench and waited. There was no one to see except me. I felt like I was in a western where the bounty hunters were silently waiting for something to happen. When I finally boarded the helicopter the next day, I could sit next to the pilot and had a wonderful view of the ocean. I could see very clearly long trains of giant tortoises, which were probably on their way to a spot in the reef to lay their eggs. Unfortunately, I also saw clearly how sewage was discharged into the sea from the factories in Gladstone.

#### *The reef*



Heron Island was an experience. I couldn't dive at the time, but I went to the sea with the divers in the morning to snorkel at the coral banks. The corals were like an endless colorful garden with huge shells on which you could stand comfortably.

I swam through colorful clouds of fish swarming around the coral banks. One evening I walked with a group of divers to circumnavigate the island. It took us about 45 minutes. The island is a 'drop into the ocean'. On the nocturnal way, one of the men showed me the constellations that are not visible from Germany, the Cross of the South and the Scorpio.

When I wanted to leave Heron Island by helicopter, I thought there was still some time left, I could go swimming in the sea one last time. Still in the shallow water I saw two large manta rays swimming majestically past me to the right and left. It just looked nice, although I wasn't completely free of fear either, as the rays can spread power surges with their tails.

During the trip to Heron Island I had my big suitcase with me. When I landed in

Gladstone by helicopter on my return, I learned that the bus to Brisbane would take only six hours. I therefore approached a woman who seemed to me to be reasonably solid and asked if she could pick up my suitcase for the time and bring it back to me in time, since I wanted to spend the time on the beach - if possible without suitcases. The woman was very surprised, but I was lucky. The woman was back with the suitcase on time. It was risky, but sometimes you have to trust strangers.

The end of my stay in Brisbane was an invitation from one of Jon's colleagues to spend a weekend at his home in Fingal on the Gold Coast. I was able to walk alone with his white shepherd dog Nora along the beach in the morning and marveled at the pentagonal basalt stones, which have volcanic origins and form bizarre rocks.

Episode 32 *Bali (disambiguation)*



*Old map*

On the way back from Australia I made a stop over in Indonesia. I flew over Denpasar, the airfield of the island of Bali. I took a taxi to Kuta Beach, a beach resort popular with tourists. I rented a small hotel with a square courtyard. The rooms were on the first floor and you could see over the wooden balustrade directly onto the courtyard. To the beach was just a few steps away.



*Javanese mask*

Kuta Beach was mainly visited by Australians, who made themselves heard loudly in the evening and at night. I swam in the warm sea, took part in some short excursions and looked at the small Hindu temples and Balinese dances, which usually represented some parts of the old god legends. The dancers were able to bend their fingers enormously far back and had gold-coloured, pointed extensions on their fingers. One dance I particularly liked, it was the monkey dance (kejak), in which the dancers imitated the sounds of monkeys, I also acquired a beautiful mask, as they were used in the listed role-playing games. It consisted of a reddish-colored face with protruding eyes, long-hanging, black hair imitation, and two large curved teeth of horn.





I had read in my little travel guide and also heard from other tourists that you could eat an omelet with a psychedelic effect in a restaurant and then go on a fantastic trip in peace, which was a great new experience. I thought I could try this and went to the said restaurant, ate my omelet with the Magic Mushrooms and went back to the hotel to rest in the room and wait for the effect. What I experienced was a real horror trip. I saw bright colors and wanted to leave the room, but couldn't, I called for help and thought I was going crazy. I got insanely thirsty and drank from the tap, which should really be avoided. After a long time, the hallucinations subsided a bit and I went to the lobby and asked two tourists if I would stay crazy now or if I would get out of this nightmare. Nicely, they calmed me down and the effect of the Magic Mushrooms slowly left me.

### Episode 33 *The Torajas of Rantepao*

After three days I left Bali, which seemed too touristy to me, and flew to Ujung Pandang on the large Indonesian island of Sulawesi. In the port of Ujung Pandang cargo ships were loaded, there was a tangle of voices and rumble of the carriers and I saw a scenery as it probably existed 100 years ago. The Buginese were formerly known as pirates and represented a different type of people than in Bali. I took the bus from Ujung Pandang to Rantepao for 12 hours to get to know the Torajas, a tribe with special customs. There were also two French women on the bus who had prepared their trip perfectly. So I joined you. The accommodation was done in very simple batches, in which you poured a few buckets of cold water over your head for a shower in the morning, which was quite refreshing after a first overcoming. So we marched to third in the direction of Tana Toraja and Keté through the slightly undulating, green landscape, which was characterized by many rice fields. Then we heard a quiet rhythmic dull knock. It came from the women who stomped rice for a funeral party and developed a common sound pattern. After a short climb, we saw the village with the peculiar houses of the Torajas, which are somewhat reminiscent of a Venetian gondola, as they have u-shaped roofs with two raised gables.



The wealth of a family is represented by the number of horns of the slaughtered water buffalo. The horns are attached to the front of each house. The whole clan arrived at the funeral. Because of the large number, extra houses were built for the accommodation of the arrivals. At the festival itself, we saw the water buffaloes being slaughtered. Little children caught the blood flowing out with bamboo canes. After the festival, the dead were taken in great procession to graves that had broken out of the rock halfway up.

### Episode 34 *A Song in Surabaya*

On the return flight to the island of Java, I sat next to an Indonesian official who was on

his way to Surabaya. He was very nice, bought big in the supermarket, but let the managing director pay everything, even a form of bribery. He invited me to Surabaya to stay with his family, which I gladly accepted. In the evening, the whole family went with me to a large restaurant, where an Indonesian band also played. Since I had told my host that I was going to play the guitar, he secretly gave a waiter a note that I should get on the podium to recite something. I couldn't push myself now, borrowed the electric guitar and sang some Skiffle songs for about 100 people, which obviously went down well.

### Episode 35 *Fear in Yogyakarta*

The next day I flew on to Yogyakarta. I had found a very nice little hotel and went to explore the city. I heard someone playing the guitar. I went on and saw some young Indonesians, probably students, trying their hand at Beatles songs in vain. We got into conversation. One of the students drove me on a moped to the beach in the afternoon, where I struggled to teach him how to swim. After that, I went swimming alone again, while the student went to a kiosk and waited there. The waves of the sea were quite high and when I wanted to swim back to the shore, the current pulled me back again and again. I started to panic because the beach was deserted and the wind drowned out every call. I thought the whole thing was kind of trivial, now I'm dying and no one's with me and my wife doesn't know exactly where I was right now. At the last moment I caught a piece of seabed and made it back to the beach. Later I learned that in my case it would have been better to swim transversely, since the cross grooves in the ground do not run parallel to the shore and have different lengths.

The next day, I took a car that two of the students had borrowed from someone, to the great Buddhist temple Borobudur with its impressive rings studded with stupas and getting smaller and smaller like a halved onion to the top. I climbed the many steps and had a wonderful view.



Afterwards, I visited the Hindu Prambanan Temple, which was built in 900 BC and represented figures of the gods and stories associated with them. Mostly Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma were worshipped. From Yogyakarta I took a comfortable train to Djakarta. The capital of Indonesia had a modern center with large supermarkets, but I also saw many very poor people living on the streets without housing. Nevertheless, I felt very

safe late in the evening. Then we went back home. The plane turned a long bend with excellent views of the volcanoes and then an interesting journey was over.

### Episode 36 *World Conference in Melbourne*

I returned to Australia twice. My second visit to Australia in 1985 was to Melbourne. A travel grant from the German Research Foundation (DFG) enabled me to participate in the World Remote Study Conference in Melbourne, which takes place only every three years and is organized by the International Council for Open and Distance Education in a changing member country.

I joined the International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE) as a personal member. This conference was the most important in the field of distance learning in the world. After the acceptance of my presentation, I was able to attend the conference for the first time and then attended many follow-up conferences of the ICDE.

I had put together a selection of clips of our video productions to illustrate different design forms of a scientific film. After the lecture, I was individually congratulated by many participants. It was more attractive than a slide show. At that time, the organization of the conference was dominated by the British Open University. Although there were elections for various positions within the organization, I had the impression that the ICDE was run like an English club at the time and that universities in other countries received little participation. The academic level was not comparable to what I was used to from the economics conferences in Germany. The good thing about the ICDE conferences was the mix of distance learning specialists or at least scientists interested in distance learning from almost every country in the world. I was able to reassure the institute in Hagen that it was also at the forefront of international development.

The conference ended with a bus ride to Phillips Island, where you could observe free-living koalas, mostly sleeping in the trees. On the beach we also saw a small species of penguins tripping on land.



*koalas*

### Episode 37 *Indonesia for the Second Time*

The return flight from Melbourne I connected with a stop-over in Djakarta to see also North Sulawesi and Kalimantan (Indonesian part of Malaysia). Djakarta seemed a lot more expensive to me this time than on my first trip. Apart from the modern center, I saw a lot of poverty. The slums are bleak, totally overpopulated, the garbage dumps are smoky. Only the old marina with the large freighters offered a beautiful picture.



*Marina of Djakarta*

I took a flight to Manado, a small town in the north of Sulawesi, already very close to the Philippines. In my little guidebook it was mentioned that there was a national park near Manado. While strolling through the city, I met a young retired sailor who spoke a few chunks of English. I asked him if he could take me to the National Park. He said he'd like to join me and we made an appointment for the next day. Since I did not want to take all my luggage with me for the short trip, I left it with a camera and an umbrella and left my remaining luggage in the hotel room, which I had shared with an American for cost reasons. The next morning I went with Sharif with one of the minibus taxis. We had to change trains several times and the route did not end. It was already afternoon when Sharif said we should still pass some relatives. I met such an Indonesian family, but was very concerned that there was no national park to be seen. We had to be a long way from Manado. It was too late to turn back. I had no idea where we could stay the night. Suddenly a sign appeared from the rain, Dumoga National Park. It poured in streams and I wondered where we were. We ran towards some barracks and ended up in a camp of biologists studying butterfly species in the rainforest. After I explained our situation, they gave us something to eat and we could stay the night and sleep on a cot. When the rain had subsided, I went out the door again and heard something like the barking of a dog. I asked the next day what I might have heard. The biologists explained to me that a large bird, the hornbill, would make such noises. The night was a bit restless, as teams were constantly moving out with the jeep and wearing helmets with a built-in headlight. They were looking for an Indonesian professor who must have gotten lost in the rainforest. I told Sharif that before returning to Manado, I would like to make my way into the rainforest at least briefly.



Sharif was a little scared and took at least one big stick with him. So we started right after an early coffee and went into the rainforest. After some time we heard strong leaf noise in the trees and then we noticed a large group of black monkeys. They followed us from above over the treetops, but then came closer and closer. I was a little worried, but Sharif was able to drive her away relatively easily with the stick. We went a few more minutes and then saw two hornbills flying at a short distance. They were big and colorful. Later I heard in a TV show in Germany that it is very difficult to find this extinct bird species. The Indonesian professor hadn't reappeared yet, but we had to go back to Manado.

On the way back to Manado, I kept thinking about what would happen if the American ran away with my leftovers. Originally, I wanted to be back the same day. When I arrived at the hotel, I learned that the American had left. Fortunately, he had left me the things, so that a stone fell from my heart.



### Episode 38 *In the Land of the Dajaks*

I continued my journey and flew to Balikpapan on the island of Kalimantan, which is half Indonesian and the other half belongs to Malaysia. According to my guide, I wanted to go to Muara Muntai in the interior and from there to Tanjung Issuy to the tribe of the Dajaks. To do this, I had to take a steamer, packed with people, animals and goods, up the Mahakam River. It was a long boat trip through the night, where I assured myself at every stop and asked if we were already in Muara Muntai. From there we continued to Tanjung Issuy. When I arrived, I took a small room in one of the wooden houses on the river. When I looked at the guestbook, I could see that according to the entry, the last tourists two women from Bremen had been here five years ago.

One morning I was sitting on the porch of my inn looking at the river as a man sat down next to me on the bench. At first there was silence, then I asked him if he understood English. He told me he couldn't speak. We were able to communicate through gestures. He told me that he had an accident in which he had a cut on his neck. I found it incredible how much we could communicate with each other, he who could not speak and I who did not know the language. I could only use a few words in Bahasa such as 'Salamat Siang, Apa khabar, khabar baik' (Hello, how's it going, I'm fine).

### *Carved Indonesian Monkey God*



I then took a small motorboat to a Dajak village, which was almost empty. Supposedly, the Dajaks were in the fields. The Dajaks live with their clans in longhouses. They attach themselves from small to heavy earrings, which pull the earlobes down long. I have also seen this custom with a tribe in Kenya. Before my return trip to Samarinda and Balikpapan I wanted to buy a mask of the Dajaks, which I had seen in a house.

I had cash with me. After finally agreeing to have a cup of coffee with her and enriching it with whiskey that came from a jar of pickled animal fetuses, the deal was perfect. My money was almost all and I returned to Djakarta via Samarinda. I took a taxi to the airport and

went to the check-in counter. There they looked at my ticket and told me that today was Sunday and the flight was booked only tomorrow. I was just wasting a day. What should I do now?

### Episode 39 *Indonesian hospitality*

I couldn't have gone to a hotel because I had spent my money. I remembered that at the conference in Melbourne I had talked to an Indonesian director from Djakarta for a longer period of time and that he had invited me without obligation if I came to Djakarta. I still had his address and took a taxi to his house with my last money. But it was already dark and the taxi driver did not know how to get exactly to the address. Finally we found the house and I rang the bell, packed with all my luggage.

At the door, a housekeeper appeared and said that the owner had traveled. But she said that he would come back with his wife in the early morning or at night. I told her that I knew him well and that I would like to wait for him in his house. He actually arrived with his wife around two o'clock in the morning and was quite surprised by the unexpected visit. After explaining my situation to him, he was very accommodating. I was finally able to sleep in a bed after an uncorrupted whiskey. The next day he bought gifts for me in the center and took me to the airfield in the evening. That was real hospitality. I had then written to him from Germany, but never received an answer. The black Dajak mask hung in our apartment for a long time, but had scared the children a bit.

### Episode 40 *Myanmar*

On the way out, I had already planned to spend a week in Myanmar, which was still called Burma under British colonial rule, before the conference. It was considered a closed country with very limited stay times for visitors and which had retained relatively authentic traditions.

I interrupted my flight in Bangkok. I had met a Burmese teacher at the ICDE conference in Melbourne and hoped to meet her again in Yangon (Rangoon under the British colonial system). After arriving in Bangkok, I took the next flight to Yangon and was picked up by the woman and her acquaintances at the airport. It was raining in streams. I was accommodated in a suite of the hotel 'Beach'. I had a huge room, but the former splendor of the colonial noble hotel had long since faded. At noon, the electricity went out for an hour. It was raining in streams. Nevertheless, I liked it well. Myanmar is different from Indonesia or Thailand. The vegetation is very lush with huge trees and banana trees in between. After my arrival I immediately got a flight to Mandalay. Mandalay is located in the north of Burma and has less rainfall. The teacher did not speak English very well, although she taught the subject. She showed me the large Shwedagon Pagoda with the huge gilded dome (stupa).

*stupa*



Around the dome, many small temples are arranged in a circle. In the temples, monks sat and explained Buddhism to the audience or prayed with them. It sounded like a singing song. In the evening I saw a traditional dance and music performance. It was great. The performance took place in a large restaurant. The restaurant was built like a huge stone ship. The bar closed here at 9 p.m.

Some wanted to buy my duty-free bottle of whiskey, but I'll probably drink the whiskey myself. The next day I will fly to Mandalay at noon and from there a few days later via Pagan back to Yangon. Friday evening I wanted to have a final dinner with Ky Mint, the teacher and her acquaintances in the restaurant. Before that, they wanted to show me the city.

However, the flight to Mandalay was not as unproblematic as I had assumed. The plane I was supposed to fly with failed at short notice. On the way it was almost constantly foggy and the relatively small plane was shaken thoroughly.

In Manderlay I climbed the 1600 steps to Mandalay Hill during drizzle. I was almost all alone. I saw the vast plain of Irrawaddy covered with rain, small white pagodas scattered all over. On the heels of the pagoda mountain I saw again and again larger stupas with huge gilded Buddha figures. I thought of Kipling's poem 'The Road to Manderley', which is about an English soldier thinking of his lover in Burma. At some point during the ascent, I laid flowers on a Buddha for a bit of happiness at home and on the road.



*Irrawaddy*

In Mandalay there were still many traditional craftsmen. The gold leaf makers, who beat gold with a hammer for five hours and measure the time with a water-permeable half coconut shell, the stonemasons who chisel out the Buddha figures, basket weavers, stickers and weavers. These are professions that can usually only be seen on museum or historical occasions in Germany. Also impressive was the fact that no garbage was visible, neither plastic bags nor e-waste. Even the paper was made of bamboo.

Travelling here, however, was a disaster, as you could never book anything in advance. I was supposed to be at the airport office at 11 a.m. to buy a ticket for the return flight directly to Yangon, as the time for the return was already running out.

After breakfast I took a rickety taxi to a pagoda town near Mandalay. The car lost gasoline while driving because the gasoline hose was brittle. Gasoline had to be bought in black twice on the way. Officially, there are only two liters per week. Fortunately, a bicycle mechanic had the idea to shorten the hose and reconnect it. I had to wait and died in the heat. On foot I then rushed up the beautiful pagoda hill and then down again.

When I was at the office at 11.15 a.m., I learned that there were no free seats available for the flight to Yangon and that there were only three free seats anyway, as the rest had been occupied by a group of officials who always had priority. What I could get was a flight to Pagan. From there, however, I would have to take a bus and train to Yangon, as there were no flights available from Pagan.

So I took the flight to Pagan hoping to be back in Yangon in time. I was a bit restless because I had heard that part of the track was under water because of the rain. Despite these transport problems, Myanmar was very impressive overall.

In the evening I was with two Spanish journalists at a village festival. We were brought to the party in the dark of the night with a rowing boat. The atmosphere was fantastic. In the middle of a tent danced a man disguised as a female god. In addition, an enormous rhythmic music was played. Around the dancing god the spectators clapped rhythmically and gave the god many banknotes. I thought this demonstration was an abuse of religion to rip off the poor people. People worship many gods here. The festival lasts three days.

I waited about an hour and a half for the flight to Pagan. I arrived in Pagan in the late afternoon.



*Pagan*

The old Pagan is a pagoda town, there are only pagodas as far as the eye can see. I climbed to the highest pagoda in the evening sun and let the atmosphere affect me. I was all alone, hanging on to my thoughts. I bought two small ducks decorated with gold leaf in the shop at the entrance to the museum park.



I took the bus for another six hours and then took the train for 14 hours to get to Yangon. The train ride was relaxing. The train passed numerous rice fields. Every corner of the earth was used. Because of the rainy season there was water everywhere in the fields. The farmers drove their white or brown water buffalo through the fields to loosen the soil. In Yangon I said goodbye to my acquaintances and flew to Bangkok.

Episode 41 *A Day and a Night in Bangkok*

I only had one day in Bangkok. I looked at the beautiful Imperial Palace, went by boat through the somewhat smelly canals, the Klongs, and watched a snake charmer working with cobras. The poison is removed before the performance, as the snake charmer explained at the end of his performance.

*Imperial Palace and Clonks*



In the evening I went to the infamous entertainment district Patpong. It was like a huge city full of brothels. I first fled from the women and men who harassed me to a bookstore and then to a jazz club that was nearby. At least it was quiet here except for the music. I got into conversation at the bar with a Spaniard who lived in Bangkok and spoke some Thai. He bought me some whiskeys and then asked me if I could get him tanks or sell them. He had heard that stocks of the People's Army of East Germany were sold in the arms trade. I couldn't give him any hope, which he didn't resent. After a few more whiskeys, I told him that I had to get back to the hotel as I had to get up at 5 a.m. so as not to miss my onward flight to Australia. He then drove me through the now empty streets to the hotel. Because of his limited ability to drive, I was quite afraid, but thank God it worked without any further incidents.

#### Episode 42 *Australia to the Third and the Man with the Boomerang*

I returned to Australia a third time. Jon had invited me to a conference in Surfers Paradise near Brisbane in 1987, when he was chairman of the Australian Association of Economists. The conference was held in Surfers Paradise, a hotbed on the Gold Coast. I gave a lecture on the use and design of videos in distance learning, focusing on the meaning of Gestalt psychology and perception theory.

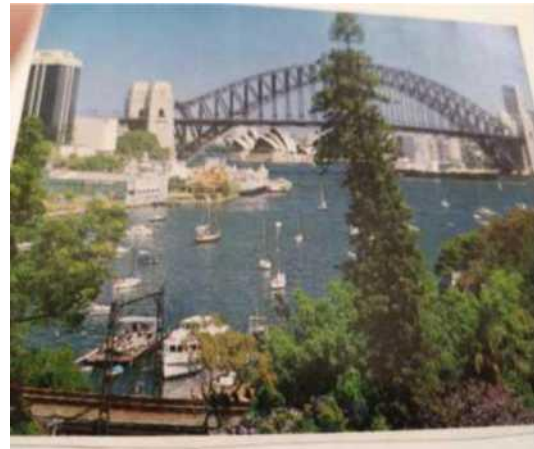
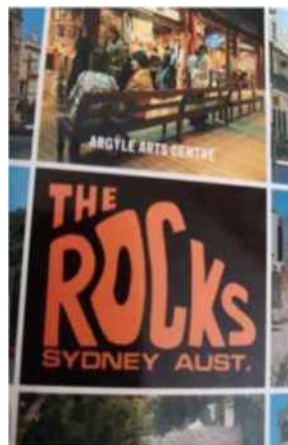
After the conference, I made another detour to Heron Island, but it wasn't like the first time. The water was drab due to the later season and thus also the view under water. I did a crash course in diving, but the certification by PADI is probably not always recognized. That's why I took a dive course with my son for several weeks later.

On the way back after the conference in Surfers Paradise I made a short stop in Sydney. Sydney is a very beautiful city and I liked it very much. So it was worth spending two more days here. I had rented a room for two nights at a cheap hotel near the Red Light District, perhaps even Sydney's cheapest city hotel. Across the street, an Australian blues band played. That started pretty well. I then strolled through the old trendy district

'The Rocks' with a pub from the good old days, which I particularly liked. I spent the evening in the jazz club in the rocks.



Somewhere along the way I read on a board the offer of a free lesson in boomerang throwing on Sunday at 11 a.m. at the old Yachtafen. I was there on time, waiting for the things to come. Then an elderly gentleman showed up with a bag full of wooden boomerangs. He threw a boomerang vigorously against the wind and actually



The boomerang made a flight curve and came back to him. With his instructions it worked then also with me to some extent.

Then I bought a light painted boomerang for my son. When we tried it later at Wind in Hagen, the result was devastating. The boomerang didn't think of coming back.

Episode 43 *Headwind*

My stays abroad did not find fertile ground everywhere in the Hagen Institute, but were

accompanied by envy rather than recognition. I therefore had to work very intensively in the times when I was in Hagen, in order to nip the criticism as much as possible in the bud. However, it came to the point that I should be allowed a maximum of two weeks' leave per year for foreign activities. However, I was able to successfully defend myself against such restrictions, as I was able to present the necessary invitations and letters to support my projects directly from higher authorities - either from the German Research Association, the German Academic Service Abroad or from the Ministry.

#### Episode 44 *Between Economics and Educational Technology*

During one of the interesting excursions of the Cologne Ostkolleg to Poland and Hungary, I also met an old fellow student who had meanwhile become a professor at the Gesamthochschule Paderborn. He later asked me, when we happened to meet at one of the annual economics conferences, if I would not like to represent his professorship at the University of Paderborn for two years, since he wanted to move with his family to Caracas for this time to work in a social science research institute. I found that this was a good opportunity to update my professional and pedagogical knowledge and to pursue some distance learning projects during the semester break. The Department of Economics at the University of Paderborn accepted my replacement professorship and I submitted a corresponding application to the Ministry via the Rector. The application was approved and later extended for another year.

The start was not easy. My last lectures were already several years ago and had different focuses. The professorship represented a high workload with 12 semester hours per week. I taught macroeconomics in undergraduate and graduate studies in foreign trade and international organizations and developing countries, supervised diploma theses and gave exam assignments, and all this out of the state, since there were practically no scripts or references from the absent university teacher. In the semester, I drove two to three times a week to Paderborn on the 130 km boring highway and at the end of a day in Paderborn was afraid to fall asleep on the return journey.

The lectures in the undergraduate course were not always pleasant. Most of the approximately 100 students studied business administration and were unmotivated to hear about economics. There was always a background noise in the large lecture hall, because some students talked to each other. Once, paper beads were also thrown forward. The work in foreign trade theory and in the seminars was different. Here the number of listeners was small and the communication was direct and good. I wrote an extensive script on pure foreign trade theory and a second on monetary theory to give students something structured. Time to think about a habilitation was not appropriate under these conditions.



A few years after my return to the ZFE, I was appointed Academic Director.

The strange thing was that during the Paderborn years I also had an excellent contact with the Universidad Nacional Abierta (UNA) in Caracas and was able to visit the representative during the semester break in Venezuela and stay in his rented house. So I taught economics in the semester and used the lecture-free time for international activities in the distance learning field.

### Episode 45 *Seminars and Conferences in Venezuela*

In total, I have been to Caracas four times to attend conferences, give lectures and conduct workshops and seminars.

The airfield of Caracas is quite far from the capital. The road from the airfield to Caracas led over the mountains, since Caracas is located in a valley. The Avila, the highest mountain, towers over Caracas. Alexander von Humboldt was the first to measure it. The runway to the city was smeared with oil, but I arrived well with the chauffeur of the university in the house of my colleague and friend. When the chauffeur picked me up the next day at the Universidad Nacional Abierta, he said to me 'your friend does not speak Spanish well', which I took as a compliment for me, as my colleague had taken an intensive course before leaving and had already worked at the research institute for a long time.

The Universidad Nacional Abierta (UNA) was founded in 1977 as a long-distance university and had a similar structure to the long-distance university in Hagen, but had no counterpart that would have corresponded to the ZFE. It maintained a large network of study centres, but was later not sufficiently funded to reach a level comparable to that of private universities. The main medium was the written material. In addition to two lectures, I held a workshop on the use of sound productions in distance learning. I had to get used to the Venezuelan accent. It was hard work, but it was fun. The participants were people who were already teaching at universities and were curious to get to know and apply the previously unused potentials of sound production for distance learning. I had recorded a demo cassette in Spanish together with our sound engineer in Hagen. The participants worked out a short production in small groups on a topic of their own choice. The results were then presented and discussed in plenary.

During another guest lecture at UNA, I produced an extensive sound production on the subject of "Entrevista de Personal" (Entrevista de Personal) with role-playing games together with some seminar participants. This production should also be used directly as study material. However, when we visited a regional study center in Valencia (Venezuela), we found that the production there was not known.

During another stay, I analyzed the first video productions of the UNA together with the participants. Unfortunately, the participants were later unable to implement their acquired knowledge due to economic restrictions.

In my free time, I once went to Chichiriviche with a rental car for diving, when the start of a conference had been delayed due to heavy rainfall. On the way I could observe

many black storks and other unknown bird species. I dived to 18 m depth, so you could already feel the pressure on the diving goggles clearly.

One weekend I read in the newspaper that you could take part in a two-day sailing trip. I signed up, went to La Guaira and boarded a spacious sailboat. Only the skipper and another tourist were on the ship. We drove in bright sun to a small island and anchored off the coast. I jumped into the water and swam to the beach. Large piles of huge shells were stored there. I took two of them and hoped that the owner could get over the loss. Then I swam back to the boat with the shells.



We arrived late in La Guaira, as there was a lull and the engine did not start. I could hear dolphins splashing around at night, accompanying the boat for a while.

Another exciting undertaking after finishing my work at the UNA was the flight to Canaima, a tourist nature park in the Gran Sabana. The arrival with the jet plane was spectacular. Canaima is surrounded by high table mountains that descend perpendicularly on the sides up to 1000 m to the valley. When the jet plane flew over the mountain edge and then pulled sharply down and thundered through the valley, then landed quietly after another loop, you had the feeling of riding a roller coaster. It was just terrific. But then I flew to the highest waterfall in the world with a small propeller machine. Unfortunately, the Salto Angel carried very little water during this time of year.

During another stay, I spent a few days in the scorching heat on the island of Margarita. Margarita was already a tourist attraction in the 80s. To explore the relatively large island, I rented a car and experienced a beautiful sunset in Juan Griego. On the beach I heard songs that were obviously mixed with African and European language parts and are typical of the Caribbean.

### *Newspaper clipping Caribbean island*



One day a German came rushing into the hotel lobby and complained that he had been stolen about 1000 DM on the beach, he came from Olpe, did not speak a word of Spanish and went swimming. He would have left his things on the shore, including the large amount of money. I tried to reassure him, but had to wonder about so much naiveté. Back in Caracas, my colleague from Paderborn took me by jeep to some

small villages on the coast (Higuerote), which were difficult to reach by car. Time seemed to have stopped here. The villages are inhabited by descendants of West African slaves who still live in a traditional way away from the white population. Unfortunately, there are also Venezuelans who prefer to drive drunk in their jeeps through these villages.

### Episode 46 *Fishing Piranhas and Flying Exercises*

I asked towards the end of my stays if I could get access to an Indian village in the Orinoco area. Since the university had research activities in Manapiare, I was eventually allowed to do so. So before my return flight to Germany, I decided to fly to Puerto Ayacucho and from there on to Manapiare with a small machine. Puerto Ayacucho is located on the Orinoco River. After the flight and checking in at a simple hotel, I went to a pub in the evening to listen to folk music. The pub was well filled and a band with quattro, harp and guitar played the typical fast sound of the Sabana. Suddenly, without notice, a tall strong elderly gentleman with a bright suit and a hat with a wide brim stood up and sang, his glass with rum in his hand, the song of the Gavilán (bird of prey) with wonderful intonation. I would have loved to have listened all night. But for the next day my flight to Manapiare was planned. Since I only planned to spend one or two nights there, I left my luggage in the hotel in a chamber and took only a small bag with the essentials.

#### *Indigena in the Orinoco area.*



In Caracas I had asked if there was any risk of malaria in Manapiare, which was denied. When I was accommodated in one of the small huts together with others for the night, I read on a pinned note that there had been several antimalaria campaigns in this area. Nevertheless, I went on a hike with one of the Indians the next day, where the Indian simply drank the water from a puddle of rain when thirsty. In the village, which consisted only of a few huts and the airfield with the lawn the size of a football field, I played football on the somewhat muddy ground, but unfortunately I got some insect bites. Before the evening, I rode up a river with a man they called 'El Gato' (the hangover) to fish for trout and piranhas. We were also reasonably lucky. El Gato killed the fish with the machete when he had them in the boat. The relatively large piranhas



gave a slight growl. On the way we also saw some river dolphins. After the return we grilled the fish, with the piranhas, in contrast to the trout, had a lot of bones. I spent the night alone in a thatched hut, but with a kind of cot and a toilet. When I used the toilet, I saw a palm-sized spider crawling down the wall. I immediately thought of the poisonous bird spider, took off a sandal and tried to get it done. But she immediately disappeared into the thatched roof. I couldn't do an eye at night for fear of snakes and spiders.



### Episode 47 *The Almost Missed Flight*

Also my trip back from Manapiare to Puerto Ayacucho was quite exciting. I waited already two hours at the edge of the airfield in Manapiare, until finally the propeller noise was heard and the tiny machine landed. There were no passengers besides me. I was in the co-pilot seat. When we had been flying for a while, I asked the pilot if he had ever had problems with the minimum landing areas. He said that wasn't necessarily the case, but a year ago Colombian gangsters forced him to fly to Colombia and he had to come home beaten up without a plane. Then he asked me if I wanted to take over the rudder carefully so that I could see how such a plane reacted. So I took the wheel, but hardly dared to move it.

We landed early in the evening and I went to the hotel to prepare my things for the return flight to Caracas with a connecting flight to Frankfurt. So I asked for my suitcase to be handed over. Then it was said that he was locked up in the chamber, the managing director had the key, but had already left. The next morning, I desperately asked to finally get my suitcase, whatever. I soon got a heart attack because I was afraid to miss not only the flight to Caracas, but also the flight to Frankfurt. At some point someone came with the key and I raced with suitcases in a taxi to the airport. It had just gone well again.

**Episode 48 *Petroleum in Maracaibo***

During one of my stays at UNA, I also received an invitation to hold a seminar at the Universidad de Zulia in Maracaibo. It was an interesting discussion, as the university had already made some films. I also heard that there was a Humboldt Society and learned that Humboldt had initiated the railway construction here. Humboldt still enjoys great respect. After the seminar, we went on a trip with a comfortable motorboat on the 'lago de maracaibo' to Sinamaica, a village of the Guajiras, who live in pile dwellings. But we didn't get there because the engine broke down, in the middle of the lake. We had to let ourselves be towed, but with the good rum, this phase was also good to survive. I was also told that the lake was quite polluted because the oil pipes are partially rusted through and oil leaks out.

### Episode 49 *First comes the PC, then the WWW*

With the beginning of digitalization in the early 1980s, the PC found its way into the offices of the universities. First, we practiced the implementation of relatively simple tasks, such as the evaluation of questionnaires or the recording of mathematical formulas in LateX. I started learning Turbo Pascal again and hired a computer science student to program a simple economic model to illustrate the effects of parameter changes.



With the emerging use of the Internet, the medium of video moved somewhat into the background due to the amount of data and lack of transport speed of the networks. The result was digital courses in pdf format, in which step-by-step layout characteristics of the structuring and memory aids previously contained in the printed courses, such as marginals, glossaries, keywords and graphic icons, were incorporated. An alternative to the courses converted by Word into pdf or directly programmed into html was the use of authoring systems that enabled complex multimedia products to be developed as stand-alone products using special programming languages. In order to satisfy the increasing demands on the storage capacity, the DVD was developed as a storage medium in addition to the more limited CD for distribution.

I was particularly interested in the embedding of audiovisual media. We found out relatively quickly how smaller audio-visual clips could be incorporated into the PDF course. The various media could thus be sent together on a digital medium, CD or DVD

or uploaded to a web server. This would have reduced the sales effort enormously. The student would then print out only what he needs right now. However, the university management at the time was not yet ready to consistently follow the path of replacing the classic printed study letter with digital media.

I led a series of projects that exemplified how the combination of text, simulations, animations and audiovisual elements can be used to broaden and deepen the understanding of a teaching content. These were major multimedia developments on which work was carried out, albeit with interruptions and not exclusively, for up to three years. The multimedia developments in which I was involved concerned land-use planning, control technology, intelligent strategies in the field of operation research and the production of macroeconomic models. The programs included practical examples, simulations, exercises and tasks for own understanding control.



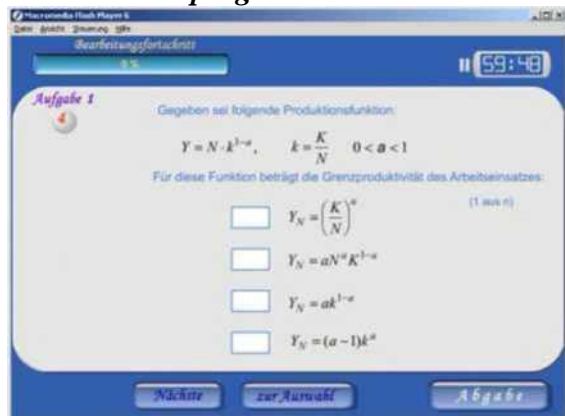
*ToolBooks*

The framework program was created with the authoring system ToolBook from Asymetrics, the programming of special elements (tasks, animations, simulations) with Macromedia Flash, Java or C++. I had familiarized myself with Flash and ToolBook to such an extent that I could understand the programming by my assistants from computer science or mathematics to some extent. I was fortunate to be able to work with excellent programmers. Thus, the complete production fit the macroeconomics with the model descriptions, self-control tasks and the simulation of the usually taught model variants on two 3 1/2 inch floppy disks. For teachers who wanted to develop variable and interesting tasks themselves, I created a website with many

Examples of tasks for which there were instructions for the application of convenient flash programming.

The modules allowed for a much larger and more attractive design of self-testing tasks compared to commercial products.

### *Exam trainer programmed with Flash*



I have translated or had translated two of my large multimedia productions into other languages in order to make them internationally known. The MacroToolbox has been translated into English, Spanish and Hungarian, while the CD Intelligent Strategies has been translated into Portuguese and Russian. Since the speed of the networks was still too low, the elaborate multimedia programmes for expanding and deepening complex teaching content were produced as a stand-alone product. The disk was a DVD. Some of my scientific publications, instructional videos and multimedia products have also been translated and published by the respective interested universities, in Hungarian, Spanish, English, Portuguese, Russian and Chinese.

## Episode 50 *New media*

However, the effort to produce a DVD could not be realized for every course. In contrast to the multimedia products, the bulk of the courses consisted of uploading a conventional script in Word recorded as a pdf to the learning platforms created with the Internet such as Moodle, Blackboard or WebCt. FernUniversität had developed its own learning platform, but it quickly got into the years and was replaced far too late by the already widespread open source platform Moodle.



***Wolfram Laaser***

The FernUniversität did not yet have an audio-visually supported medium for communication with the students. There was only, apart from the possibility of contacting the study center, if one was available nearby, to contact a responsible faculty member during the consultation hours, i.e. to make phone calls or write. Therefore, the first task was to develop text-based newsgroups, which were set up on the university's server and which students could subscribe to, in order to communicate with each other or with the teaching staff. There were also numerous developments at that time for the realization of text-bound computer conferences. However, the systems were very slow in the beginning and were soon replaced by PC-based conference systems.



***The moderator***

With the beginning of the 1990s, the development of networks made rapid progress in the transmission of sound and image. The possibility of videoconferencing was initially a special event at the international conferences on distance learning. One was amazed that one could, for example, hold a video conference between New York and Trondheim

directly via the network. However, at many conferences, the proud demonstration had to be cancelled due to technical shortcomings. With the video conference, a previous gap in the media spectrum of distance learning has been closed. I have outlined some scenarios for the didactic use and formulated basic requirements for an efficient design of video conferencing.



### Episode 51 *The Visitor from Argentina*

One of the many visitors who were interested in our work came from Argentina, Andrew Hamilton Joseph. We talked in English, which he mastered perfectly. I explained to him the function and the developments of the institute. When he said goodbye, I said to him 'tengo un tío segundo en Tucumán' (I have a second degree uncle in Tucumán). He was thrilled that I spoke Spanish and said that I should definitely come to Argentina for lectures. He took care of some invitations from various Argentine universities and I submitted an application for funding to the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), which was also approved. So I had to translate some of my publications into Spanish as soon as possible. For this purpose, I hired a woman who had worked as a secretary in Venezuela for several years. She made a lot of mistakes because of nervousness and her children made noise in the next room. In total, I had spent about 1000 DM on the translations and hoped that it would be enough for the trip. So I packed my large aluminum case and wanted to send it ahead, because I was worried that the suitcase could get lost and I would arrive in Buenos Aires without any documents. After the suitcase was sent a week before departure, I followed him.

I was pretty naive about Buenos Aires. I expected to see some Indians as well, rather than a huge modern city with European roots. I landed in Ezeiza and was picked up by 'Sunny', as Andrew Joseph was called by his friends. Sunny owned a small distance learning company, ULSA, which his father had founded. Short written courses on accounting and other economic topics for further training were created here.

My accommodation in Buenos Aires was at the Hurlingham English Club, a very nice old building for the English-speaking managers and a meeting place for the associated community. I had a wonderful view of the stylish English lawn.

#### *the Hurlingham Club*



My big suitcase was already in Buenos Aires, but I couldn't pick it up because it was a holiday and customs had closed. When I got him the next day, I got an impression of the cumbersome state bureaucracy. Until I could take the suitcase with me, it had to be marked at least ten different places. Sunny showed me his company and introduced me to his parents. His father was of Chinese descent. Sunny had four children and was married to a psychologist. However, they did not live in Buenos Aires, but in La Cumbrecita near Cordoba. Sunny was a dynamic and restless personality, more of a business man than a scientist. He made the contacts that were important to me. Whether he received fees from the universities or not has always remained obscure to me. In any case, it was a symbiosis with some limitations. Sunny was largely independent financially, at least I didn't have any major expenses. He had a Ford Falcon, drove very fast, and when a traffic light stopped him, he placed himself on an imaginary fourth lane, only to be the first to let off. When I asked him where he got his driver's license, he replied that he bought it in Montevideo and besides, he could only see in one eye. When he came to Hagen later, I showed him with my BMW how I had felt in his car.

### *Episode 52 I'm Getting to Know the Country*

I gave two lectures in Buenos Aires, one on "Financial Policy in the Business Cycle" for economics professors at the Universidad Nacional de Buenos Aires and one at ULSA on previous experience with distance learning in Germany. When I later spoke to two participants about politics and parties in Germany, the two ladies suddenly laughed out loud. I had wanted to say that in Germany there was a social democratic and a more conservative party, i.e. 'hay un partido socialdemocrato y un partido conservativo'. However, 'Conservativo' is a condom in Argentine parlance. It was a little uncomfortable for me, but one must not be influenced by it, otherwise one is afraid to speak freely at all. It should have been called 'conservador'.

#### *Lecture at ULSA*



In the evening we went to a tango bar in San Telmo, 'Bar Union', where a young 17-year-old woman sang tangos with a great voice, so I would have liked to listen longer, but that could not be done with Sunny.

We then left Buenos Aires for Rosario and Santa Fe. In the area around Santa Fé there was a short time before we arrived there, a huge flood, the damage of which could be clearly seen, as the water had only receded a little and the road was passable. In Santa Fé I was supposed to give a lecture at the Universidad Católica de Santa Fé and had prepared slides for the overhead projector. We were told that there was a device in the 'Centro de Tecnologia Educativa'. As time was running out, we walked through the pedestrian zone and dragged the overhead projector to the university like a trophy. So that was already the maximum technological achievement. From Santa Fé we continued to Paraná in the province of Entre Rios. Paraná is located on the river of the same name. Here I ate with Sunny in a restaurant by the river a 10 course fish menu, whereby I only until 7. Gang came. Each course was wonderfully prepared in different ways.

After discussing the design of a possible distance learning program with a group of biochemists, we continued to Reconquista in the north of the province of Santa Fé.

At the time of colonization, the indigenous population of the Guarani lived around Reconquista. The Jesuits tried to teach the Guarani. They built missions, which are building complexes in which the missionaries lived and taught the indigenous population. In the beginning, they were quite successful until their activities were banned by the Spanish King and the Catholic Church.



*Remains of a Jesuit Mission*

In the last century, many emigrants from Germany also settled here. I often saw advertisements for a beer called 'Bremen' and there were many German-sounding names in the phone book.

Near Reconquista, there is a regional station that dealt with the problems of smallholder farmers, who mainly worked in tobacco cultivation. The channel INCUPO (Instituto de Cultura Popular) was then supported by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and reached as far as Santa Fé. The program design was excellent and determined by the own editorial staff. I took an exemplary broadcast with me to use as an example of good educational radio support.

### Episode 53 *On the Way to My Uncle Julio*

Our journey through Argentina now went across the country to Tucumán. We slowly left the flat pampa towards the Sierra, which we still had to cross. On the way we saw some Nandus, the Argentine ostrich birds. My beloved Uncle Julio lived in Tucumán and I was happy to see him. But first, the beautiful Sierra was to be admired with hilly, brownish-colored mountains of medium height, covered with pampagras and punctuated by small rivers. A barren but very beautiful and photogenic landscape. There are still cougars here, but unfortunately they are decimated by hunting tourists despite the ban.



Sierra de Cordoba



Tucumán is the city of sugar cane, high entrance doors and the Declaration of Independence. In Tucumán I gave a lecture at the University of Católica, where my uncle Julio also listened in the back of the lecture hall. It was a very moving situation for me. I also met Carlotta, his sister, who was not well in health. Julio was greeted everywhere on the street, by the people reverently.



*Julio Heilbron*

At noon we were invited to dinner by a very large entrepreneurial family, who owned one of the large sugar cane plantations.

Julio had no personal wealth other than a cassette recorder. He lived in the monastery and showed me the stone-floored courtyard where he had played football with his confreres. I held another question-and-answer session for the students of the 'Colegios del Sagrado Corazon', of which he was the rector. He also taught philosophy of religion at the Universidad Catolica de Tucumán.

## Episode 54 *The Andes*

Our next destination was the Andes.

From Tucumán we drove through a long valley, darkened by the shadows of the dense rainforest. It is called Valle Tafí and is a rarity, otherwise no rainforest can be found at an altitude of about 1000 m. The ‘Tupamaros’, a Guerilla who fought against the military regime, had been hiding in this thicket.

We said goodbye to the pre-Cordillians from the Valle Tafí with a view of the six-meter-high Statue of Liberty, which shows an Indian with outstretched arms.

Our next target was the ‘Andes’ or ‘coding’. It almost blew me away to suddenly see this huge mountain. We drove slowly higher and higher until we arrived in Salta. In the evening we visited a well-known folklore restaurant: ‘El Gaucho’. The Argentine folklore has a large number of different rhythms, the samba, the tango, the chacarera, the milonga, to name but the most famous. In addition, there is ‘Andean music’, as is often heard in Germany by Peruvian groups in the pedestrian zone.

In Salta, I bought a woven tapestry depicting the water cycle from evaporation to rain from the clouds. He hung in our apartment a long time later. The second object I acquired was a Charango, still with a real armadillo corpus. If you swipe your hand over it, you could still feel the small hairs growing out of the tiny gaps in the tank. The charango has four double sides and sounds similar to a mandolin, but is played only by hand. I later took one or two Charango lessons in a music school in Lima to accompany some simple songs, for example ‘Poco a poco me has querido morenita de mi amor’.

From Salta we continued towards Jujui, already close to the Bolivian border. Due to its rock formation, the mountains have different layers of colour, brownish, reddish, greenish, black and yellowish. I bought from an Indigena a small glass with the sand from the different layers as a souvenir. In some seasons, you might be lucky enough to be able to take a train across the Andes from Jujuy with the ‘Tren de las Nubes’, but unfortunately this was not possible because the train did not run.

*Color shades of the Andes*



We drove to Cafayette, a small village at the foot of the Andes, where wine is also grown and then set course for Cordoba.



### Episode 55 of *Cordoba*

In Cordoba, I gave a very well-attended lecture at the oldest university in the country and discussed with members of the university the prospects for distance learning, which offered itself in terms of the size of the country and the sometimes very low population density. But also from Buenos Aires it was reported that at the latest with the opening of the universities under President Alfonsín, the courses were completely overcrowded and distance learning was also an option here.

### *Introductory lecture*



*Austral to fight inflation*

Unfortunately, one could not imagine a national distance learning university at that time. The objections and questions were always the same: If the distance learning course has the same quality as the classical face-to-face study course and to what extent the degrees are recognised. There were only a few initiatives. When I arrived in Argentina, I was just starting to set up a distance learning society to bring together the various initiatives.

Cordoba is one of the largest cities in Argentina. I loved the ‘media lunas’ for breakfast, the ‘empanadas’ with various fillings, the wonderful beef steak ‘bife de chorizo’ and the wine from the ‘mama juana’, a five-litre carafe. During my stay, I lived in ‘la Cumbrecita’, where Sunny lived with his family. La Cumbrecita was a small village about 100 km from Cordoba. We went to appointments often in the morning to Cordoba and in the evening back to his house. I had a small guest house just for me. At night, two owls watched over me, who liked to sit in the trees, just a few meters from the house.

This was my first trip to Argentina and many others should follow.

### Episode 56 *Cordoba, Rio Cuarto, Tucumán, Salta*

Due to the success of my first trip to Argentina, there was a desire for seminars and lectures at several Argentinian universities, since distance learning was still largely unknown, but the interest was great due to the opening of the universities after the end of the dictatorship. The lecture tour took me from Cordoba via Rio Cuarto and Tucumán to Salta in 1984, part of the route I had already met during my previous visit. I had made my return flight over Lima to make a detour over the Andes to Santiago de Chile after my Argentine seminars and from there to Peru before I would start my return flight from Lima.



The  
View of  
the



Condor

I didn't send my suitcase ahead this time. I wanted to fly directly from Buenos Aires to Cordoba. However, this was not uncomplicated, as the flights within Argentina started from a smaller airport. The transfer by taxi was sinfully expensive and I knew nothing about the existence of an airport bus. So I handed myself over to a taxi driver, who needed hours to drive from Ezeiza International Airport across Buenos Aires to the 'Aeroparque', so that I already thought I would miss the onward flight. Since there was hardly any time left for check-in, I was allowed to run with my hand luggage over the tarmac directly to the plane, climbed completely finished, overflowing with sweat up the stairs to the plane and see Sonny sitting comfortably on the square next to me. I was done for the first time. In Cordoba I also got to know the then director of the Goethe Institute, who did an excellent cultural work in Cordoba with a lot of initiative, far beyond the standard German courses that were usually offered by the Goethe Institute. He was enthusiastic about the idea of establishing distance learning in Argentina and supported me very much. We also had a joint appearance on public television. The show started very dramatically with a black screen and some tones from a crime trailer, until the spotlights turned on 'Spot on' and showed us with the presenter. In this show, I showed and commented on three sequences from our video productions. The Translation for the dubbing was kindly provided by the Goethe-Institut.

My first stop after Cordoba was Rio Cuarto, a small town and university with a veterinary school. For this trip, I had already provided some of our video films with Spanish voice over in Hagen and took them with me for a demonstration in the most

common cassette formats at the time, Betamax , VHS and Video 2000.

My presentation should start at 10 o'clock. But I was shocked to learn that there was no VCR available. I was quite stressed because my presentation was dependent on the video presentation. I asked if there might be a store that could lend us a Betamax recorder. There were phone calls back and forth. There was no Betamax recorder in the stores. However, a dealer had sold a recorder to a private household a long time ago. He also gave us the address of the buyer and we raced there by car. It turned out that the recorder existed. Grandfather got it for his birthday, but never used it. We were allowed to borrow it, grabbed it in the car and raced back to the university. I was actually able to start on time and use the video footage.

One application that was intensively discussed was the idea of developing a further education offer for the small independent beekeepers in the form of distance learning. I received the status of Guest of Honour, i.e. I was able to avail myself of the hospitality of the university at any time. Unfortunately, I did not have the opportunity to redeem this privilege later.

The next stop was Tucumán. Here I had the pleasure of meeting my uncle Julio again and also his sister Carlotta, who was already very ill. We went to Carlotta's apartment. The first thing Julio did was open a drawer and pull out a bottle of sparkling wine. This exceeded my positive expectations many times over.



I held a seminar on the use of media in distance learning, gave newspaper interviews and attended a project for the training of teachers in rural areas (Proyecto EMER). At a reception I asked if there would still be a Senor Grandi living in Tucumán. With Alfredo Grandi, I had celebrated my fetuses in my mother's house in Berlin about 20 years ago. Somebody knew him, so I made an appointment with him and we had a nice party with Asado (grill with different meat courses) in his house and sang the old songs, including those of Freddy. It was a nice experience.

Our last stop was Salta. I had planned a video seminar there. A camera was available, as well as the approximately 10 -15 participants. The goal was to create a small video production in one day, including script and recording. That was quite a challenge. Since Salta is already high in the Andes, and it was very cold, I had to warm up more often in my coat. Participants were eager to get to work. During production, the groups underwent a number of mishaps. One group accidentally deleted the recorded interview shortly before completion, another group wanted to design a title with a Commodore computer, but someone had stepped on a connector, so the owner of the Commodore first had to drive home to get a replacement plug. Despite this rather adventurous production method, a small film 'Pininos en Educación a Distancia' was produced.



### *Episode 57 About the Andes to Santiago de Chile*

I said goodbye to Sonny and started crossing the Andes from Mendoza with a

'collectivo' (collection taxi), with my large 35 kilo suitcase tied to the roof of the car. The weather was not very good, so the mountains with some snow leftovers looked a bit brownish, but still made an impressive impression. The border formalities were completed quickly. The hotel was already reserved, so in the evening I still had time to walk across the Rio Mapuche to the pub and entertainment district and listen to beautiful modern folklore in the Café del Serro. The next day I went to the central square, the Plaza de Armas, and looked at the cathedral. I think that it is a positive heritage of Spanish culture that the cities almost all have a beautiful, usually also shady central place to meet or sit on the benches to watch the hustle and bustle around them. At the same time, these places are also a place for protest rallies or revolutions.

I talked for some time with a street guitarist, who then promptly invited me to a birthday party in a slum, far from the center, for the same evening. I thought for a long time whether I should take the risk and then decided to try to get to the address. I was supposed to take a taxi to a meeting point and there they wanted to expect me and take me to the address where the birthday party was supposed to take place. So I took the taxi to the meeting point, where the taxi driver asked me astonished if I really wanted to get out of here, since it would be dangerous so alone. I said he could drive quietly, I'd be picked up. I waited half an hour and started to get scared and thought about a return trip, when finally the musician showed up and we celebrated a very nice birthday in a container-like apartment.

The next day I got a ticket for the Santiago-Arica route at the big bus station. It was a tour of 30 hours, only interrupted by a few breaks. In the double-decker bus, I had sat in the front row and had an excellent view of the Andean landscape flying by.

### Episode 58 *Crossing the Border to Peru*

To cross the border between Chile and Peru, a taxi was taken to Tacna, the Peruvian border town. I had to leave my suitcase alone on the side of the road in Tacna to find another transport option, which was actually very risky, but I knew that you wouldn't get too far with 35 kilos of suitcase weight. Finally, I drove a shared taxi to Arequipa and rested for the first time from the hardships in the hotel. In the evening I went back to the city for a bite to eat. Three Peruvians played cards in the pub. When I asked them what the game was called, they immediately invited me to drink Pisco Sauer with them, a kind of tequila. I came back to the hotel with swaying legs with some effort.

The next day I looked at the very beautiful city over which the Misti volcano towers majestically. Arequipa has been hit many times by earthquakes. The Monastery of Santa Catalina, with its simple but stylish architecture, was also impressive. It was rumored that there was a secret passage to a nearby men's monastery.

From Arequipa I took another Colectivo to Puno on Lake Titicaca. The lake is 3,800 m above sea level and is probably the highest lake on earth. We took a small boat for four to an island in Lake Titicaca, which is inhabited by the tribe of Urus.



#### *With the*

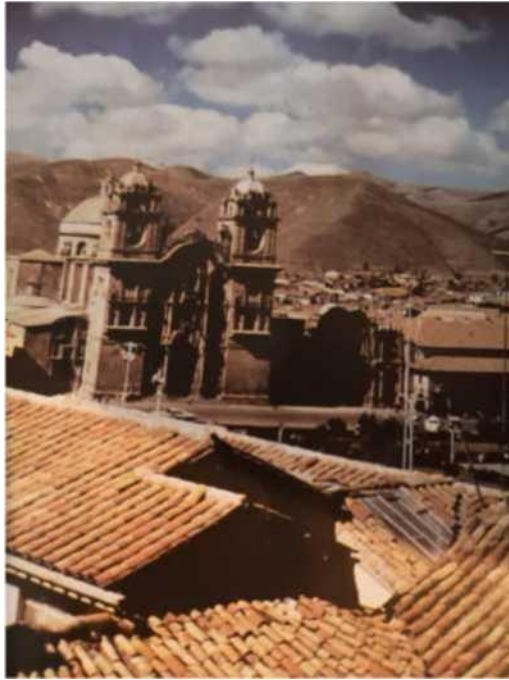
On the way to the island we, that is, an Italian, a Frenchman and I talked about current political issues almost immediately in English. After a while, the fourth boat occupant, an American, said 'Europeans always like to talk about politics, I can't understand that'. This attitude may explain some of the uninformedness of many Americans about what

is happening outside the US.

The Urus are known for their reed-woven boats, which were reinforced and enlarged in 1947 by Thor Heyerdahl with balsa wood to prove their seaworthiness in the Pacific. I bought a very nice little tapestry from the Urus and then said goodbye to Lake Titicaca.

Episode 59 *On the Path of the Incas to Machu Picchu*

My next destination was the small old town of Cuzco, usually the starting point for tourists who wanted to go to Machu Picchu. Cuzco was a very lively city with dance floors and restaurants where you could easily turn the night into day.



*Cuzco*

I had become friends with a young Frenchman, Bernard, who wanted to go the way of the Incas to Machu Picchu. We then decided to do the four-day journey together. In the evening we bought on loan backpacks, sleeping bags, a small tent and some canned goods to walk the way of the Incas. Early in the morning we took the train to the famous kilometer 82 to start the ascent from the valley of the Urubamba River to an altitude of 4400 meters. Over time, it became more and more difficult for me and the air thinner and thinner. Bernard had fortunately been trained in France with the paratroopers, so he took the brunt of the luggage. On the first evening we set up our tent on a grassy slope. I threw myself lengthwise on the floor and fell asleep extremely exhausted immediately. Some people had left with us, so we weren't all alone, but we depended on ourselves. On the way of the Incas there were neither restaurants nor any huts or kiosks.





Two Swiss had also gone with us, who made big eyes when we heated our can contents with a stove. For this they had a drug against the height with: Coramin. So we exchanged some food for coramin tablets, which helped me to continue the trek. In the following days we lost sight of the few other tractors. It always went on very narrow paths along the steeply sloping mountain slopes and one hardly dared to see into the depths.

Once a viper barred us from hissing and erecting the way. Bernhard took a large stone and killed her with it. But the terror had entered our limbs. As we approached Macchu Pichu, we spent the night in a rock cave up in the mountains. We also ate the contents of the last can. At night, I suddenly heard noises in front of the tent. I was too scared to see for myself what it was and woke Bernhard up. He took a flashlight, opened the tent entrance and saw something that looked at him with his light-reflecting eyes and then disappeared. It had obviously leaked out one of the cans or just smelled at it. Who exactly the guest was, we could not determine.

## Machu Picchu



At five o'clock in the morning we started the descent to the Inca ruins of Machu Picchu. It was touching because we were the only ones who were so early at the ruins. The buses with the tourists did not arrive until about 10 o'clock. For me, it was not the remains of the walls of the Inca period, it was rather the surroundings of the site that made a strong impression on me in the total silence, especially when the sun came out behind a small saddle in the mountain massif.

### *Look at the Andes*



### *The Sacred Valley of the Incas*



Very nice was also a stone flat condor from the time of the Incas. After climbing another

mountain at Pisac, we drove back to Cuzco to return the borrowed items. On the train, a Frenchman played a blues, but croaked terribly. I asked him to lend me the guitar. When the young Peruvian women heard my Skiffle songs, they shrieked, as in the days of the Beatles. It was a very nice and cheerful return trip. In Hagen, four weeks later, I heard that a car had been destroyed by a bomb – there were 45 dead. Arrived in Cuzco, we returned the equipment. Then our paths parted.

I flew to Lima and he had other plans. Drizzle is characteristic of Lima, but I was lucky. I rented in the elegant Miraflores district, looked at the colourful statues of Christ and Mary in the old Spanish-style cathedrals, crossed the market, put my hand on my wallet and took the taxis, mostly old VW ‘beetles’, which were called ‘fusca’ here, to the ‘Museo de Oro’ to buy a chain of Indian motifs for my wife. In the evening I visited a folklore restaurant and then I went back to Hagen.

### Episode 60 *Bogota-Caracas-Bogota*

Latin America didn't let me go. I received funding from the Goethe Institute, the OEA, the ICDE and the universities and was therefore not dependent on funding from the Fernuniversität or the University of Paderborn. In 1987, in addition to Venezuela and Argentina, this time the focus was on Colombia and Chile. I first flew to Bogota to prepare the seminary at UNISUR (Unidad Universitaria del Sur de Bogota). This meant looking at the premises for the undisturbed reception of the workshop products, determining the number of participants and the seminar times. Then I hurry to Caracas to hold a seminar for about 20 teachers who worked as media specialists, course authors or didactic consultants. It was fun and the sound productions were of good quality. You could see that there was already a working system and some experience here. I then gave two lectures on evaluation and the connection between written modules and the available audiovisual media. Then I flew back to Bogota to conduct the prepared seminar.

UNISUR is a distance learning system established in 1981 with the aim of making the 'Educación Superior', i.e. from 12th grade onwards, accessible to students from more distant regions and poorer strata. Furthermore, there was a close cooperation with the communities in which study centers were available. In addition to the creation of written course units (unidades didácticas), UNISUR also had some experience with ongoing educational broadcasts on the radio, about six hours a week. An older seminar participant, who had worked for an educational channel, created a very beautiful pictorial audio production that introduced into the structure of a written distance learning module. He used the metaphor of a car ride with stop signs, detours, commandments and prohibitions, etc. I myself could hear a radio broadcast during a taxi ride from the hotel to the seminar location, in which the vector algebra was vividly explained.

UNISUR later became the Universidad Nacional a Distancia (University of National Distancia).



*Mirador Bogota*

During my stay we made a trip to the underground Salt Cathedral in Zipaquirá and to Villa de Leyva, a place for collectors of fossils. The landscape is generally hilly and resembles a bit of Bavarian countryside. A trip by cable car to the ‘Mirador’ was of course also a mandatory task.

It turned out that the stay in Bogota was not completely harmless, when I waited in vain in the hotel for the chauffeur of the university. He had been kidnapped with his car, but remained uninjured, only the car was gone.

## Episode 61 *Respite in Ecuador*

I interrupted my seminar and lecture tour sponsored by the Goethe Institute and flew to Quito before holding another seminar in Chile. In Germany it was now 4 o'clock in the morning. I was groggy in my hotel bed thinking about home.

Quito is a beautiful old colonial town with many squares, small churches, and houses with wrought-iron balconies and portals. In the old very narrow alleys it smelled of urine. There was nothing going on here in the evening. I searched in vain for a restaurant with folklore. When I finally found one, there was no live music there at the beginning of the week. There were only three young men sitting at a table playing cards. Behind the counter was an elderly Indigenous woman. I ate two greasy empanadas, drank a rum, and left.

The next day I took the bus to Ibarra in the mountains, a total of three hours. At the tourist office I had been told that I could take the car train to San Lorenzo at 1 p.m. to the coast. In Ibarra I then learned that this train probably existed, but that the next one would only run in two days. I didn't have time to wait that long and took the next bus back to Quito and got on another bus that took me to the coast but wasn't as comfortable as the train would have been. In total, the bus journey took 11 hours. The bus drove through the fog-covered narrow serpentines of the Andes, past plateaus with grazing cows, then moving closer and closer to tropical vegetation with banana plantations, palm trees and dense forests. On the way an accident at the roadside, no wonder with the narrow winding and slippery roads.

In the evening around 9 p.m. I arrived at Esmeraldas. It was humid, the streets were full of blacks ('negritos'). There is a large petroleum refinery near the city, but it was not the destination of my trip. I grabbed a taxi to get to a hotel on the beach. On the bus I got some tips from a young chemist. At 10 pm I was finally in Sua, a small village with about 20 houses. Thank God I also got a room. I could only hear the sound of the sea, I couldn't see it in the dark. The kitchen was already cold, but they made me a large plate with pieces of fruit. Because of the constant bus ride, I hadn't eaten anything, but with a beer and some bread it was enough for that day. I turned off the hair dryer in the room for the night because it was loud and blew violently in my face. I was still listening for mosquitoes, but nothing happened. The area was a malaria area for a long time.

The next day I saw the place for the first time. The sky was grey and from time to time it drizzled a bit. It was very warm. I walked on the sand road to the beach. On the beach lay narrow canoes, further out fishing boats with motor. On the left, the beach ended with some high rocks. Suddenly, a huge flock of birds flew deep above the water to the

other end of the bay. They were seagulls, herons and pelicans. The pelicans constantly dived into the water to catch small fish. I love this picture, which I also knew from Australia. I swam, the water was wonderfully warm, the sand fine and gray. On the beach were some Ecuadorian families with children, tourists from Quito. I climbed over some rocks and came to another white beach. There were a few palm trees on the shore. It was quiet and quiet. In the afternoon the sun came through a bit. In the evening I went to Esmeraldas in search of some Caribbean music, as it was constantly dulled during the bus ride. But even this time I wasn't lucky, it wasn't a weekend yet. The taxi driver dropped me off at some kind of pier. Here, a kiosk with some tables was the only attraction. I drank some beers with three malaria fighters - administrators and accountants - then took a taxi back to Sua.

The next day I wanted to go to the island of Muisne, not far from Sua, because there the beach is supposed to be very beautiful. In the heat, I sat on the side of the road waiting 45 minutes for the bus. When I had almost given up hope, he came rattling. Taking the bus is extremely cheap. I went to the island by boat. I declined the offer to do a round trip for \$15. I had also pocketed only a little money and left almost everything except the bathing suits in the hotel. I balanced on a path that consisted of broken concrete blocks - remnants of a broken road construction. But when I arrived at the beach and swam in the surf in the sea, all effort is forgotten, it was dreamlike. I lay in the foam, one wave after another rolled up, the sun was burning, the beach seemed endless, palm trees, a few small bamboo huts, just idyllic and beautiful. I played football with a group of Ecuadorians. I almost got a heat stroke and had to rest in one of the huts in the shade and have a drink. Then I chatted, somewhat rested, with an Ecuadorian couple from the university in Quito. In the evening I went back to Sua. Arrived at the hotel, I ate a very good tasting grilled fish. ("a la plancha"). I had a terrible sunburn.

I got my things out of the room and took the bus to Santo Domingo for about four hours. There I wanted to visit the tribe of the Colorados. The Colorados dye their hair red with the powder of a seed pod and then cut off the hair on the sides. It looks like they have a leaf on their head. There are about 3,400 Colorados. Each of them had received 10 hectares of land from the government. In a dense tangle, bananas, coffee, cocoa, palm trees, papayas grow together with bushes that have red, white or yellow flowers. They live from what the plants give. Some of them also keep 2-3 small dark pigs and possibly some chickens. The houses are simply built of narrow logs, only the medicine men have larger more modern stone houses. The chief has been elected for several years, but says the old traditions are slowly disappearing. Important are their hot steam baths and herbal remedies. With a crystal ball they predict the future. On the table, besides stones, I also see some figures, including two Buddhas. All in all, the Colorados seem to be slowly coming up in society. They only marry each other. They complain about the illegal

settlements of the other Ecuadorians. Once a year they have a big meeting. There are still a large number of different tribes in Ecuador, but their area towards the Amazon is getting smaller and smaller by the settlers and oil companies.



## Episode 62 *Chile*

My next teaching and lecture station was Chile. This time I did not cross the Andes with the *Colectivo*, but flew by plane from Quito directly to Santiago. I had already published an article in the Chilean journal 'Tecnología Educativa' and was curious about the response.

I flew to Arica and was then picked up. The University of Tarapacá was relatively young and had only recently started offering distance learning courses. The experience in this regard was still largely lacking, but the motivation and curiosity were all the greater. On a day off, one of the seminar participants, a music teacher, drove me up into the Andes to the 'Parque Lauca', where you had a very good view of the high mountain ranges of the Andes. He told me that he would collect songs from the Mapuche Indians. On the farewell evening, he presented some of them that sounded wonderful.



The second university on my trip was the third largest Chilean university, the Universidad de Concepción.

The teaching business was characterized by student riots and political disputes. It was, as in Argentina, an end to the dictatorial system. I had been invited by the 'Centro de Administración Educativa' (CAE). The central institute offered a two-year postgraduate course for senior staff in school administrations. This course was linked to the efforts to decentralise the Chilean education system. My seminar had 31 participants.



Very interesting and depressing was an informal visit to the Faculty of Economics. It was like a question and answer game. At the time, the Chicago School's monetarist theory approach was the official doctrine. Keynesian models were not taught. I, on the other hand, emphasized the criticism of monetarism and the merits of comparative analysis. Even if you could not agree with me directly through comments and answers, I saw hidden signals of approval in the eyes of the approximately 15 lecturers present.

This gave me an impression of how much freedom of teaching was restricted here. Finally, we drove to the delta of the Bío-Bío river. The long flowing stream from the Andes was interrupted by two dams, which during their construction had led to protests by the Pehuenche Indians, who saw their fishing grounds impaired.

To see something from the south of Chile, I flew to Puerto Montt. It is understandable that this region around Frutillar and Valdivia has attracted many German emigrants because of its pleasant climate and fertile soil. In a small museum in Puerto Varas, it was documented how strongly agriculture was shaped here by the know-how of German immigrants.

German-origin farm



Unfortunately, there was no more time to visit the southernmost part of Chile around Punta Arenas, but I was able to get to know the Argentine side with the city of Usuahia, which is about the same latitude.

Before I flew to the last stop of my trip in Cordoba, I stayed one more day in Santiago. To relax, I took the bus to Los Andes, a small thermal bath at the foot of the Andes.

### Episode 63 **Back to Cordoba**

Cordoba was already familiar to me. I was now often interrupted directly at the Goethe Institute, so that I did not always have to travel from La Cumbrecita to appointments in Cordoba. My little room was right under the roof. I was able to take the elevator up to the top. At night, the institute was guarded by a night watchman, as technical equipment had already been stolen several times. In the evenings and on the weekends I was usually all alone in the building. If I wanted to call my wife, I had to go to a telecenter and usually wait for the operator to connect after waiting in one of the booths.

In discussions with the management of the Centro de Tecnología Educativa, with deans and the rector (then Delich), the consequences of the opening of the universities under the democratically elected government of Alfonsín were discussed. Access to the university should no longer be restricted.

The lecture halls at the University of Nacional de Buenos Aires were also completely overcrowded, so that a distance learning offer for first-year students and preparatory courses for prospective students (Preparatoria) had been developed there in the Department of Economics. In essence, written material was offered as the leading medium.

In Cordoba, people were skeptical. Nevertheless, 31 participants from different departments and institutions and in different functions took part in my seminar. I got along better and better with the language, organization and mentality of the target group.

My request to the DAAD to award travel grants to some lecturers for a visit to the FernUniversität was granted, so that the cooperation could be deepened.

Through the wife of one of the directors of the Goethe Institute, who was a tango singer, I quickly came into contact with the music scene.



Pancho Barosso

I had a regular restaurant where I liked to eat steak, on weekends I could listen to live tango in the Brujas bar, I met an excellent guitarist, Pancho Barosso, who later taught

me songs by Atahualpa Yupanqui and I found a group to play football on the many football pitches in front of the buildings of the Faculty of Economics. It was my third visit to Cordoba and by no means the last.

### Episode 64 *The End of the World*

On one of my further visits to Cordoba, I also wanted to see the south of Argentina. I flew over Buenos Aires to Trelew. From Trelew we took the bus to Puerto Madryn. In Puerto Madryn I rented an old Cadillac and drove to Peninsula Valdez. This peninsula is a well-known nature reserve, but now was not a season for tourists. At certain times of the year you can see the orcas here. I drove the sandy paths to different viewpoints. It was fun to do some spinning exercises with the big car. I could see a lot of penguins, sea lions and elephant seals here.

It was already dusk and deserted when I had to think about where I could stay the night. But I first went down a dune to the beach when I discovered crowds of large sea elephants. It was a nice experience to walk by the massive animals all alone. I did not know at the time that the animals would also become aggressive if they believed that the way to the sea would be blocked from them.



After my walk I saw from a distance a man standing on a boulder in the water and fishing. As it turned out, it was the lighthouse keeper. The lighthouse keeper and another man invited me to dinner. We ate the fish we had just caught and then I played on a guitar for the two men. I've never had such a delicious fish painting time again. I was able to sleep in a barrack belonging to the lighthouse. As a reminder of this stay, I took a tooth from the elephant seal that I had found on the beach. Actually, the Peninsula Valdez is known for the orcas, which come close to the shore especially to the young seals and penguins when hunting. But it was not the right time for me, but years later I could observe orcas near Vancouver Island in Canada.

From Trelew I flew on to Cafayate, which is already in Patagonia. Near Cafayate, Lago Argentino, a huge lake in the mountains, on which glacial chunks of the great Perito Moreno glacier swim around and receive a bluish shade by the light, is a real wonder of the world. Unfortunately, the glacier is getting smaller every year and I'm glad to have

seen some chunks of ice fall into the water under noise from the glacier front.

*Perito Moreno*



*Lake Argentino*

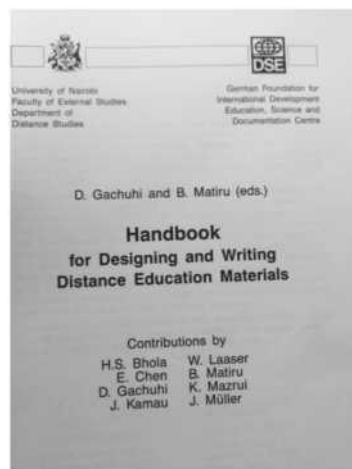


The last part of my trip to Patagonia was Usuahia. I stayed in a hotel in Usuahia with the beautiful title ‘Posada fin del mundo’. I booked a tour with an Austrian living there, who walked through the woods with a group. A canoe ride was included. The food was also interesting. The guide had collected giant champignons, which we then roasted as steak. It was very good.

The end of the exploration of the south of Argentina was a boat trip on the Beagle Channel, which Darwin also sailed. Darwin later brought some Native Americans to Europe to study the extent to which they could get used to a European culture. I enjoyed the ride in the bright sun with a bottle of white wine and a cocktail of the giant crab Centoya. The return flight was with an old military machine and I was already worried about being able to fly at all, as the ashes of a Chilean volcano reached here.

### Episode 65 *The DSE Workshops in Kenya*

The connections that gave me the opportunity to participate in a development project of the German Foundation for International Development in Kenya between 1985 and 1988 are beyond my memory. There had already been a project for two years in which African teachers were to develop a model unit for their respective subject area, which is suitable for distance learning.



A five-member management team consisted of an administrator of the DSE, an employee for the content and scientific quality check, two external trainers and a dean of the educational science department at the University of Nairobi. Since a management member left the team, I was hired as a replacement. The structure of the workshop was based on a draft handbook drawn from the experience gained in previous workshops. The concept of the event was excellent from the point of view of didactics. The participants went through chapter by chapter of the sections of the handbook (Handbook for Designing and Writing Distance Education Material for Basic Education and Development Training Programs) and at the same time had to write the corresponding parts of their course unit step by step, i.e. first a choice of topic, a collection of materials, teaching objectives, outline, tasks, etc.





### *The workshop team*

For each element, there were also short presentations by the management team and support in writing the individual sections.

The workshop took place in Mombasa at the Hotel Jadini Beach directly on the sea. This was of course a fantastically beautiful environment, which could only rarely be enjoyed, as the workshop program often ran until 10 pm. The participants came mainly from Kenya, but other East African countries such as Uganda, Somalia and Tanzania were also represented. The total number of participants was about 30.

In the evening by the pool you could hear different dialects, such as those of Kikuyus or Luos, otherwise the Africans spoke Swahili. In the seminar and in the course units to be developed, English was the common language of communication. The topics chosen individually by the participants were very different. They had to be written in English and ranged from physics to religion and language courses to environmental problems and the accounting of production cooperatives.

The support therefore focused more on the design aspects than on the content aspects. Overall, the motivation of the participants was very high. An exception was made by the African dean. He was designated as a facilitator for group work under the contract, but preferred to go shopping in Mombasa instead of supporting the participants, which did not prevent him from claiming his remuneration for tutorial work. A balancing act was necessary in order not to completely expose the dean and, on the other hand, not to present a negative role model to the participants of the workshop.

For me, the visits to the baboons that came to my room to nibble sugar or a banana were an experience. I lived in a small bungalow-like stone hut. Several times I could also row to a small coral reef to snorkel there.

One weekend we made a trip to Shimoni and Wasini Island, near the border with Tanzania. In Shimoni there were still remains of old Portuguese settlements and also some Arab graves, silent witnesses of the history of the country. Wasini Island showed us what a village in this region had looked like before.



*Shark bites*

I bought two dried shark bites there, which made a considerable impression on my return to our guests in Hagen.

### Episode 66 by *Hakuna Matata*

The workshop lasted two more years. The participants now came from almost all countries of East Africa, including Kenya, Tanzania, Zaire, Somalia, Uganda and even Namibia. It was a good opportunity for me to take my son with me, as the workshop took place in the same hotel and he should find his way around this beautiful environment quite well on his own. I had already flown ahead and he came after a few days. When I picked him up from the airport in Mombasa, we had to take the ferry across a small river to get to Jadini Beach. The ferry was full of dark-skinned Africans and my then 17-year-old son said that I had not even thought that there were so many 'blacks'. I think it's an important experience to experience the feeling of not being part of the crowd, but being an isolated person in a completely foreign environment. But he found his way around the hotel and quickly became friends with some of the staff. After a few days, however, he began to complain of visual disturbances and difficulty swallowing. We had both started a malaria prophylaxis with Resochin before the trip. Fortunately, there was a doctor from Zaire among the seminar participants, who advised us to

immediately drop off the Resochin with my son, otherwise there would even be a risk of blindness. We took the advice and after a short time the complaints were gone.

At the end of the workshop, I played on the guitar the song that the hotel band had always played on the weekends, entitled 'Jambo Bwana' (welcome Mr.). The chorus says "Hakuna Matata", i.e. no problem. I sang the few stanzas repeatedly and used the name of a participant in Hakuna Matata. It took a long time to mention them all, but it was a lot of fun.

Since I was to carry out the evaluation of a teacher training project after the workshop and also contribute the possibilities of distance learning, I had to spend a few days in Nairobi with two participants of the workshop. I had made friends with another seminar participant at the first workshop, who lived in Nairobi and had also invited me to his apartment in Nairobi. I asked him if he could take care of my son in Nairobi for the three days, maybe go with him to Lake Victoria. He agreed and so I put my son in Mombasa on the bus to Nairobi where he was picked up by my friend. So it had worked out well and I was very relieved, as I was a little worried if it had not been too risky. The evaluation report was compiled in intensive work and presented to the dean, who had already noticed unpleasantly in Mombasa. His desk was covered by two stacks of files, one for entrance (in) and one for exit (out). The stack for 'in' was very high, the stack for 'out' was almost empty. So he also signed some proposals for the project in an extremely slow slow slow-motion pace. For this signature he immediately claimed the co-authorship, which I strictly rejected.

I received a copy of the final report only with great effort and only much later.

### Episode 67 *Traveling with Matatus in Kenya*

There was a third and final workshop in Kenya, this time in El Doret, which is a little closer to Nairobi. During my stay there were elections. Those who wanted to be elected offered free beer, so that long queues of voters formed in front of some stalls. Unfortunately, the hotel bar was also heavily frequented by prostitutes, which meant that we were not as isolated as in the Jadini Beach Hotel in Mombasa.

The workshop was unproblematic, I regretted the ending very much, because the overall pedagogical concept was very good. The manual itself was structured like a distance learning module. I have revised the manual in Germany and made an attractive publication possible for the DSE. It was then distributed free of charge by the DSE to many interested persons in English.

After the end of the third workshop, I travelled through Kenya. The conference venue was not far from Lake Victoria. I took a community taxi 'Matatu' to Kisumu. At one point the matatu had to stop and everyone should get out and run a while ahead. The reason was a police check obviously known to the driver, which was particularly aimed at overloading the matatus. We were able to re-enter the Matatu on foot after a few metres. For the most crowded community taxis, the 'Matatus', the eloquence applied, which reads 'A matatu is never full'.

I had visited the nearby Tsavo National Park on my first visit from Mombasa and then later, together with my son, also the Amboseli National Park. Both parks have only fascinated me to a limited extent. You drive with Land Rovers through the savannah and when an animal is sighted, the drivers of other tourist cars also learn it and then the tourists stare from several cars at a poor lioness in the bushes. All you could hear was the crackling of the cameras. I found it beautiful when a herd of elephants passed us and, despite their huge bodies, walked almost silently.

Unfortunately, my time wasn't enough to drive to Victoria Falls. I took a boat to Homa Bay to have been on the lake at least once. A small highlight on the boat trip was the experience of observing a white-tailed eagle flying low over the boat with a chicken in its catches.

From Lake Victoria I started a longer matatu and bus trip with many vehicle changes until I arrived at Lake Turkana. The Turkana, unlike the Kikuyus, Maasai or Zulus, are still nomads.

### *Turkana*



In the guesthouse, I had a discussion with other people accommodated here about the value of development work. There were Norwegians who had set up a fish factory, young people from the American Peace Corps and I as a development aid worker in distance learning. Everyone was very sceptical about the successes of their own work. I think the added value lies especially with oneself, since such works broaden one's own limited horizon.

I tried to make some interesting wildlife observations on my return trip to Nairobi, but whether in the Tree Tops Lodge at night from an elevated position or in the Tomson Falls park, there was little to see as it was not the dry season and the animals could not be particularly attracted even with artificial water points or salt.

### Episode 68 *Video production in Medellin*

I have only been able to realize a video production abroad in a few cases (Australia, Palestine, India). This was due to the lack of technical equipment, the lack of experience of the staff of the media centres and the higher time required for the creation of a script, recording and editing.

In one case, however, I managed to produce some beautiful exercise videos during a seminar at the Universidad de Antioquia in Medellin, Colombia. I took our sound engineer with me on this trip, who was able to help me with sound and video technology and spoke some Spanish. The participants came from a wide variety of fields and brought with them very different competences (journalism, theatre, acting, educators, scientists). We also had access to the university's media centre. We introduced the participants to the design and production of educational films with short lectures. After that, it was about choosing a theme that we wanted to make the subject of production. Since one participant suggested a short text from physics, we chose the law of free fall as the core topic.

The approximately 25 participants were divided into five groups, with each group covering as wide a range of knowledge and experience as possible. My colleague from Hagen and myself accompanied the individual groups in all phases as far as we could: Scripting, shooting, editing and presentation. A video of about 10 minutes was to be produced, which included a real illustration, an interview or a moderation, a graphic sequence and, if possible, a small animation. So that was very demanding, but the participants rushed into the work with great enthusiasm and sacrificed their free weekend to finish the production. The result can still be seen today and offers more than just a filming of a lecture,

In Medellin we were accommodated after arrival in the Intercontinental, a luxury hotel with swimming pool and high prices. It was very impersonal and every little service was expensive.

I asked if there was no more suitable accommodation. Through the mediation of a seminar participant, we were accommodated in the apartment of an elderly lady. I helped the grandson with the schoolwork and when we came back hungry in the evening, she always had a refreshment ready for us.

I was therefore happy to have made the switch, because in Medellin, especially if you were staying in the Intercontinental, you could easily become a target for robberies. In Bogota, however, I once went the other way. I had a teaching stay at UNAD, the Colombian distance learning university. When I arrived from Miami at a 4 star hotel in Bogota, I immediately received a call from a woman I was supposed to have met at the Miami airport. So she obviously knew my name and knew the time and place of my arrival. That scared me a lot and I didn't close my eyes at night. When the driver of the university wanted to pick me up, I was already ready with my suitcase packed and moved to the better secured Intercontinental, where my lectures took place. The Dean of the Faculty of Economics then told me, when he learned of my worries, that he had a friend in Medellin, whom he had visited regularly by car. He would have gotten into a complete blockade of the highway by a guerrilla group and been kidnapped. After several weeks, he was released only by paying a ransom of \$10,000.

We celebrated the conclusion of our seminar with all participants in the building of the Goethe-Institut, which had also been involved in the financing of our trip. We were given straw hats and were thus considered Paisa (inhabitants of the province of Antioquia).



*Closing party*

It was a nice farewell, but the journey wasn't over yet. We flew from Medellin to Cartagena, a city that plays a role in many pirate stories. Cartagena has a very beautiful old town in Spanish colonial style. Throughout the day and also at night, drums were heard to the rhythm of the cumbia, a Colombian variant of the rumba. In the evening we watched the thick hairdressers, who cut the hair of the guests of the restaurant on request outside at the tables and rocked their buttocks fantastically to the rhythm of the cumbia back and forth.

The fact that Colombia is not a completely harmless country was also shown by the fact that bombs were detonated in the center at the time of our presence. When the taxi driver in Medellin drove us to the airport, he pointed at a low wall in a bend and said: "Here, a few weeks ago, the bodies of six people were laid out, shot by the guerrillas, as intimidation.

Nevertheless, the video workshop was an excellent project.



### Episode 69 *New Simultaneous Forms of Communication*

I'm back in Hagen. In distance learning, platform development made rapid progress. With the beginning of the 1990s, a space was created for the digitized teaching materials on the World Wide Web, which not only provided the teaching materials, but also increasingly contained communication and course management elements, such as registration and certification, self-testing tasks, questionnaires or links to other websites. The pages on the web were created using html editors such as FrontPage or Dreamweaver. A variety of alternative web platforms shot out of the ground like fast-growing mushrooms. However, the systems were usually not compatible with each other, so the maintenance effort and the familiarization took a lot of time.

The integration of the communication elements initially developed in isolation from the web platforms. The newsgroups were available to the students for exchanging texts. The email began to replace the written communication, fax or phone call step by step. I was not so much involved in the technical implementation of the new products, I was mainly interested in exploring the didactic potential and structuring videoconferencing, the potential of which is usually only imperfectly used.

With PC-based video conferencing, you became independent of the special studio equipment. When we presented the Rector of FernUniversität with a demonstration of the possibilities of a PC-based video conference at the end of the 1990s, he showed no interest in developing a general usage concept for this interactive and interesting medium.

Together with a colleague from the institute, we were the first in Germany to realize a virtual seminar on the Internet in a model way, which was a sign of the quality of the development work of our institute.

### Episode 70 *An Invitation from Japan*

Due to the call for an assistant professorship in Japan, I had applied for the position on the basis of interest. Despite an unsuccessful application, I received an invitation to a conference of the National Institute of Media in Education (NIME) in Chiba. This was very interesting for me, as I had already met some members of the institute at conferences on Educational Technology.

I took a few more days off to get to know more than the media institute. I was looking forward to the trip. The flight went via Paris to Tokyo. Shin'ichi Kaneko picked me up at the airport. I was accommodated in the guest house. In addition to me, some Americans also stayed here. It was already evening, I wanted to stretch my legs for a moment. The road signs were all in Japanese. I tried to remember the way, but suddenly it had become dark and I am worried not to find my way back to the guest house. After a few mistakes, I came back, thank God. If you ask someone about the way, there is also the problem that hardly anyone speaks even a few chunks of English.

The next day I saw a Japanese educational channel on TV in the morning. They were lectures by older teachers or professors who only spoke their text to the camera, probably with the help of a teleprompter. As a rule, only the 'talking heads' were visible. I didn't expect that in the high-tech country of Japan. The next day I took the train to the center of Tokyo. Even the ticket machines were difficult to understand without English instructions. In Tokyo Station I could hardly cope with the many exits despite my plan for walks to the tourist attractions. I went to the Imperial Palace. It was morning, bright blue sky. There was hardly anything to see from the palace, only some entrance gates and an old bridge. After that, everything was closed off. Japanese jogging everywhere, mostly with white cotton gloves. They also like to wear gloves when driving. I walked right through the park, then left. Here I found a beautiful Japanese garden. He took me to the Museum of Modern Art, where there were beautiful old Japanese paintings, wonderful landscapes, endless paintings in a showcase in grey, depicting the different regions and motifs. The Western section included Japanese painters influenced by Western styles, Impressionism, Expressionism and Surrealism.

I strolled on to a fountain, people strolled everywhere, it was Sunday. They ate their picnic from cardboard boxes, 'bentos', where everything was neat

It was arranged as follows: Fish, rice, vegetables. I was hungry and went to a restaurant. For a plate of curry rice and a beer I paid 20 DM. Then I wanted to do a city tour. It should start at the station. But it didn't start for a long time. We got colored plaques, were re-sorted and taken to the bus station. After an hour it was time. We took the elevator to the 40th floor. The view of Tokyo was great. Next door was the Tokyo Tower, the TV Tower. Especially the view towards the harbor was impressive.

***View of Tokyo***

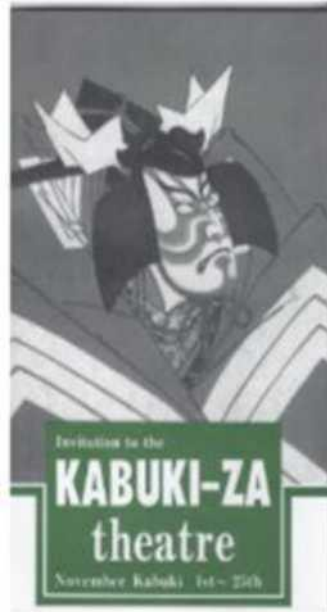


I see a huge silhouette of skyscrapers, highways, railways. Seen from above, it seems like an anthill. The streets run up to three floors above each other. Then we take a ferry across the river that flows through Tokyo. This is the Kannon Temple.



***Kannon temple***

There was a completely different atmosphere here. People throw money into the chests and hope that their wishes come true. Some women wear very festive kimonos. I walked away from the group. A small Kabuki theater had just finished the performance. The actors stood outside and were congratulated by the spectators: A beautiful picture.



Then we drove briefly through the main shopping street, the Ginza, and thus the city tour was finished. I ate a kind of meatloaf on the way back to Chiba at the train station and searched my way to the guesthouse. In my room I beat three mosquitoes dead at night, the stings did not swell, thank God. I got a spray from one of the housekeepers. The explanation, however, was only about gestures.

I took the train back to Tokyo the next day, it took about 40 minutes. Half of the people slept. Almost all men here wear dark suits, shirts with tie; Not very individual. I took the subway to Ginza. It reminded me of London's Picadilly Circus. I drank a coffee and went looking for a hard rock café to buy a T-shirt for my son with the coveted inscription. Fortunately, the store was open. I continued to buzz through the Rappongi district and climbed the steps to a small shrine. Here everything was quiet and quiet in the middle of the skyscrapers. After that, I lost myself in a modern business center. There was no direction, no street action. I asked a police officer and he accompanied me to the right road for a longer distance on the edge of a three-story highway. I ate from a small kitchen on the side of the road. It tasted good. A beer cost \$8.

### Episode 71 *The Conference in Chiba*

Monday night was a welcome dinner. There was food and beer on the tables. A short speech and then we went to the buffet. I called my wife from the office and then went back upstairs to the party. The ‘officials’ were already gone and the staff drank a high with sake and beer, ‘Kampai’ (prost). They would have loved to do karaoke, but suddenly it was over and I went to bed.

I was guided through the NIME Institute the next day, but found that the scientists were focusing on very specific topics that, in my opinion, offered little scope for application.

The actual conference started on Tuesday. There was simultaneous translation. My chair was marked with Japanese and Latin letters. The Japanese lectures seemed a bit confusing to me. During the discussion of the individual contributions, I got the impression that, perhaps out of respect, the questions did not relate directly to the content presented and the answers did not respond to the question.

I heard two very good lectures from an Australian, as well as an Englishman. An American lecture on Virtual Classroom Teaching was also interesting. But here, as so often, the computer is held responsible for all learning innovations. At noon there was Japanese lunch in an elegant wooden box. I had no idea what the food was. I roughly identified sushi, raw and baked fish, and some strange algae, one of which was particularly disgusting to our taste. I pushed some of the chopsticks into me and asked one of the American professors at the table if he knew what we were being offered, but he only replied ‘I don’t know what it is, but its delicious’. I couldn't understand this and took Immodium. In the evening the conference dinner was at the Hotel Springs. I kept to the very tasty lobsters. It was astonishing that even the staff at the university could hardly speak or understand English.

The next day was my lecture. Everything went perfectly. At 5 p.m., the conference concluded with a final discussion. We, the invited speakers, thanked you kindly. I had another meeting with Professor Sakamoto, with whom I had become friends at the conference in Newfoundland. He picks me up with a chauffeur at the guesthouse and we ate a Chinese 10 course menu together in the elegant Hotel Springs and drank sake and beer. He looked tired, was 63, and was vice chairman of the Japanese commission for entrance exams to the university. Maybe he will take over the Multimedia Institute next year.

### Episode 72 *Taking the Train to Fujiyama*

I packed my little red suitcase and took the Japanese express train, Shin Kann Sen, to Odawara. From Odawara I took the bus to Hakone to take a look at the Fujiyama. The landscape of Hakone is very mountainous with a lush, very varied vegetation. A lot reminded me of the Japanese paintings in the museum. Suddenly the Fuji appeared on the right, then it had disappeared again. I arrived at the Fuji-Guesthouse in the evening. Since all accommodations were occupied despite reservation, I had to stay in the youth hostel next door. Instead of young people, however, I only saw old Japanese shuffling around. I walked a footpath through the forest along Lake Ashi. The road was hilly. Everywhere two meters high bamboo poles grew, which made a rattling sound in the wind. I was all alone, thinking of Kurusawa's film 'Rashomon'. I couldn't read the characters on the side of the road. Two anglers came to meet me. The sun went down at about 5 p.m. I returned to the ryokan (simple hostel). In the village I was desperately looking for a restaurant, because there was nothing to eat in the youth hostel. Everything was written in Japanese. I felt like a burglar because I had to get close to the houses to see if it was a restaurant. Finally, I found a small restaurant. I sat at the bar and was the only guest. The owner just made sushi for his children. I ate something like meatloaf. Back in the ryokan, the bed was rolled out on the floor. I had thick mats and a pretty pajamas, but no chair. It was actually too early to sleep. The bathroom didn't look very inviting. One had a Japanese toilet, similar to those from France in earlier years, the other was 'western style' with toilet goggles to sit on. I tried to fall asleep under the thick blankets. After two hours I discovered how the light goes out completely, you had to pull the string twice. I slept well.



*In the*

After breakfast on my knees, I went back to Lake Ashi with some German and Taiwanese tourists. It was windy and cold, but a clear sky. I took the excursion boat, a magnificently recreated old sailboat with motor. After about 40 minutes I was at the other end of the lake. I ran to the old customs station of the Tokugawa regime. On a small hill stood a kind of manor house. Finally I was in Hakone-Mamoto and had a nice view of Mount Fuji.



*Fuji*

The cable car did not run again because of the strong wind. I took the bus to Gaura to see if the cable car goes there. But only one cog railway to Souunsan is in operation. I contented myself resignedly with this rack railway, but there was nothing to see here except mountains and valleys, not even Fuji. There was a small museum with old bowls with representations of horses and camels from the time before Christ. I also liked a beautiful glazed guard. The cup of coffee with a view of the mountains is nice, but costs 8 DM. I'm taking the train over Odawara back to Tokyo, then on to Chiba. I was tired and called my wife. Thank goodness she was home. In the guesthouse I discussed the further itinerary with Kaneko.

In the evening I joined a group of American visiting professors to get to know the old part of Chiba, around the Mukuhari station. Here, in contrast to the modern Chiba, you can still find small alleys and flat houses, but overall it looked quite demolished.



### Episode 73 *Hiroshima and Miyashima*

I was on the Hikari Express with blazing speed on the way to Hiroshima. Between huge urban landscapes I only occasionally saw small old houses with shiny black roofs and smaller rice fields. The train ran through seemingly endless tunnels from time to time. I was curious to see what awaits me in Hiroshima. I had to make do with my money. I had not yet received any reimbursement at the meeting. Fortunately, one of the professors from NIME still had 2,000 marks of German money, which he had advanced to me without a receipt. At the bank there was only 140 DM with a visa card.

After my arrival in Hiroshima, I got accommodation at the tourist information. The ryokan in Hiroshima was quite primitive. The toilet stinks and is too small for me. In the evening I ate a Chinese dish in a restaurant, The Chinese cuisine was slightly different from ours, but also very good. I also got along with the chopsticks in the meantime.

Hiroshima is a very beautiful city with huge business streets, rivers, an entertainment district with narrow streets and restaurants. There is no street prostitution. Especially popular was karaoke. With a music box you can replace the voice of the singer in a playback procedure with your own voice. But I didn't go in anywhere because I wasn't sure what to expect inside.

#### *Hiroshima*



I went by train and ferry to Miyashima Island, along with thousands of Sunday excursionists. There were many souvenir shops on the island, but especially the beautiful Itzushima shrine. I climbed the stairs to the temple. Women in precious kimonos sold prayer wishes. In front of the shrine, the families, especially women, ate their lunch.



I continued up the mountain, a hiking trail. There were hardly any people here. I walked over many stairs through the cool beautiful autumn forest with wonderful views of the temples and the sea. After two hours, I was completely sweaty. At the top of the mountain, baboons roamed freely, woolly creatures. With the cable car it went down again. Downstairs there were beautiful masks made of olive tree in the shops, but at a price of over 100 DM, I could not decide yet to buy. They also looked the same everywhere.

I went back to Hiroshima. I took the tram to the Peace Park. In the museum I looked at the pictures of the destruction of the city by the atomic bomb. Up to a radius of 5 km everything had been completely destroyed. In the park were memorials for the dead of the hospitals, the factory workers, the post office, the church and the children. It is shocking and I was glad that Germany was not represented among the listed nuclear powers. It was amazing how quickly the city was rebuilt. The thriving city looked like nothing had ever happened. However, during the US occupation, there was a ban on talking about the atomic bomb. That is why, despite the radioactive contamination, people have probably started rebuilding without knowing about it. Supposedly, the cancer frequency was now normal, but I'm not sure if everything you know will be published.

### Episode 74 *A Little Old Town*

I want to see or at least feel more of the old Japan. I first took a nice hotel room in the small town of Kurashiki, price about 200 DM, but with wonderful facilities. I also wanted to do laundry. From the hotel it was only a few meters to the old town, which is crossed by a small canal. Everywhere I see small dark wooden houses with several stacked roof gables. I went up the stairs to two small shrines, here you are alone without tourists. It was Monday and the museums were closed. In a small shop I saw a wooden mask, a Buddha head, which I liked, but costs 9,000 yen (about 130 DM).



*Kurashiki*

I hesitated and drank a cup of coffee in a bistro by the canal. Then I visited an orchid greenhouse with beautiful plants. Then I looked at a toy museum that was just open. I asked for a jazz club, there was one, but unfortunately it was Monday. I went back and bought the mask for 7,500 yen, I had traded down the price. I bought a nice little bottle of sake. After that, I returned to the hotel, I was tired of running and fell asleep.



Buddha with closed eyes

At 6 p.m. I got up again. It was dark and the shops were closed. I picked up two beers in one of the small shops, which were almost always open, and a few nuts from the supermarket. In a restaurant I ordered very good tasting meat skewers. Next to me, an elderly Japanese exterminated a myriad of different dishes. I envied him because I didn't know how to order the dishes. I always had to point

to what I wanted and was happy if they understood me. I ordered a bottle of sake, it was warm and tasted very good. I went back to the hotel and watched sumo wrestling on TV. After an hour I was tired and stuffed with nuts. I fell asleep.

### Episode 75 *The Old Canal in Kyoto*

I took the regional train to Okayama and then the express train to Kyoto. The accommodation was again in a ryokan, which was better than in Hiroshima. In the afternoon it rained heavily. I couldn't get into my room until 3:00 p.m. First, I looked at a temple. It was just praying, a beautiful picture. I slowly got wet because my umbrella only kept the rain off meagerly. What can I do? I took a walk from the brochures, but had to take the bus to the starting point. After a few attempts I found the stop no. 5. The bus was full. It rained nonstop. Nevertheless, the walk was still very nice. It led along an old canal with trees in beautiful autumn colors, red, yellow and in all shades of green.

I came to a small shrine. It was nice to be able to look at him in silence. The rain didn't stop. After an hour's walk, I was able to ask myself again about the same bus line, which then brought me back again.

In the ryokan I washed my laundry. I received a call that a student wants to practice his English with me. The contact was made via the tourist information. The student was a student. I met Yuki at the tourist office at 9:00 a.m. She was 20, studied international relations, spoke good English and had just returned from a trip to Turkey and across Europe. She was small and quite self-assured. She lived with other students near the old canal. At the moment, she only went to university for three days. There were only a few students in the course of study and the workload was probably limited.

We took the train to Sagano. It was dry and a bit cloudy, but cold. I had neither undershirt nor sweater on, a mistake. Sagano is rather rural with pretty little streets and temples. We saw some graves, which I also photographed. We hiked through a beautiful bamboo forest and drove back to Kyoto in the afternoon. We ate in the underground restaurant street at the train station. We wanted to go to the Heian Shrine afterwards, but the bus tormented itself through the crowded streets. When we arrived, everything was dark and the temple was already closed. We said goodbye and everyone took their bus. In the evening I went to a short program for tourists with tea ceremony, music, puppetry and geisha dance. It was very good overall, but lasted only 40 minutes. In a small kitchen on the side of the road I ate a hot dough filled with various vegetables and meat. It tasted very good. I was tired and went to bed.

### Episode 76 *The Imperial City of Nara*

I continued by train to Nara, the old imperial city. The large temple with a huge Buddha figure is impressive. Then I got lost. Instead of getting to the next temple, I came across a trail that was endless and constantly rising. I was alone, only from time to time I met hikers. There were warning signs everywhere warning of snakes.

### *Hiking on unknown terrain*



Unfortunately, I could not read the text. It was a little scary for me. The path did not stop. After an hour and a half I was up on the mountain with a magnificent view of Nara. Deer were running around everywhere. I had to go the same way back, but it went downhill faster.

Now I found the right turn. The other temples were hardly worth it. In Nara, I was looking for clogs for my co-worker, but they were far too small here.

I went back to Kyoto and lay down.

In the evening I wanted to try again with the Jazz Club.

I called before, I was told that the live music would start at 7.30 p.m. I went there by taxi, but the entrance cost 60 DM and instead of jazz, rock music was offered to a very young audience. I turned around and looked for a restaurant. My path led through the entertainment district. The restaurants were very expensive. After an hour's walk, I was back at the ryokan. At the station I finally found a small Japanese restaurant. I could point to the menu and lo and behold, it was good. I drank sake, ate meat and rice and small slices of pickled squid, cucumber, breaded shrimp and a soup with green leaves. I tried to talk to people and they understood my memorised phrases 'Totemo oishi deshta' (it tasted delicious), but I did not understand the answers.

### Episode 77 *Back in Tokyo*

My journey came to an end. I was on the train to Tokyo. The guesthouse was familiar to me now. Kaneko came to meet me. He had arranged everything. I had a final meeting at the institute. I emphasized once again that the institute is researching very specific problems, but in my opinion is not oriented enough to the current problems and developments in international distance learning. In the evening we took the Hatu bus to Kabuki Night. A performance in an old very beautiful theater on the Ginza. It was a simple comedy. The translation was done via headphones. Another panoramic view from the 17th floor of Tokyo by Night. Two beautiful weeks came to an end. Sayonara.

### Episode 78 *Earthquake and a Dead Boa in Costa Rica*

I accepted an invitation from the UNED (Universidad Estatal a Distancia), but this time not the UNED (Universidad Nacional de Educacion a Distancia) in Spain, which I had already visited several times, but the university of the same name in San José, the capital of Costa Rica. I stayed in a nice little hotel in the very center of the city. In the morning, the driver of the university picked me up. He called himself 'Categoria', which probably meant to him that he was first class and I had no reason to disagree. UNED is the oldest national distance learning university in Latin and Central America and was therefore not an absolute newcomer in terms of distance learning.

The university had a lot of experience in the production of written courses and had an extensive network of regional study centers. Especially in rural areas, the necessary computer equipment was lacking for the use of multimedia study materials. As a vision of the future, however, it was interesting for the management level to see what experiences had been made in Germany on the way to becoming a virtual university. There had already been some mutual visits between the UNED and the FernUniversität in Hagen. In general, however, Costa Rica is very strongly influenced by the United States, historically especially known is the relationship or dependence in the marketing of bananas by the United Fruit Company, very well described in a novel by Vargas Llosa. That's why I told myself on my first tour of the streets of San Jose that this is no longer Latin America.

In a seminar, I discussed with the lecturers a strategy paper for the further development of the university. One result was to combine the various media, print, AV and computer-based learning programmes, to involve the study centres more closely and to decentralise the responsibility structure.

On one of the seminar dates, the participants were already waiting for me in front of the building. I came with Categoria and asked why they were waiting here. They told me that there had just been a lighter earthquake. During the car ride, I didn't notice anything about it. Costa Rica is often affected by more severe earthquakes and in each room were appropriate warnings. Since there was no more tremor, I was able to start my seminar.

I made some trips from San Jose, including to Tortuguero, where from Puerto Limon I continued on an old river steamer, the 'Miss America'. It was a cozy ride overlooking some small crocodiles

(crocodilos) and a sloth. I stayed in a bungalow. The next morning, to my astonishment, I saw a dead boa hanging from a stake. It must have been discovered by the staff. The



boa is a choking snake.

The most beautiful beach was the one in Quepos on the other coast of Costa Rica. However, the waves were very high and when I did not pay attention, the wave buried me under itself during the return so that I was pulled over the seabed, and in the process received some scratches. One must always approach the sea with caution. I had already learned this in Indonesia.



After my stay in Costa Rica, I flew to David in Panama to the small University of Chiriqui, which had contacted the DAAD with the request for support in setting up a distance learning course.

### Episode 79 *My First Shark*

If San Jose looked like a middle-class provincial city, there was only some life in David on the central plaza. I only stayed two days to hold a seminar. At the end of the seminar I made an attempt to end the seminar with a kind of dream trip. I asked the participants to stand in a circle, close their eyes and tell them in a quiet slow voice, interrupted by short breaks, what topics we had covered in the seminar. Then they were allowed to open their eyes again. The small retrospective designed in this way was well received by the participants. I had previously had concerns that the experiment might be perceived as too childish, but I was glad that the experiment was received very positively.

On a free weekend I took a bus to the Caribbean side from Panama to Almirante and got into a small propeller machine to fly to the island of Boca de Toros.

#### *Boca de Toros*



The island was small. I could walk directly on a road from the airfield to the houses of the place. I took a room in a very old wooden hotel with balustrades, from which you could look directly at the sea. It was a hotel as one could imagine for the Caribbean at the time of the pirates. The name 'Punta Alemana' also indicated an earlier establishment of German emigrants.

After unpacking my things, I saw a diver's shop diagonally across the street. There was a light drizzle, but I thought, maybe I can still be driven to a beach with a motorboat. It was only afternoon and in fact I agreed with the business owner that he should drive me

to a small island with a beach and pick me up there after an hour. When we reached the island, a group of teenagers were snorkeling in the water. The motorboat dropped me off and drove away. When I got into the water myself for snorkeling, the young people also drove away. So I was all alone. There was a small coral reef not far from the beach that I headed for. I was just peeping on the bottom of the sea when a not very big shark flew by underneath me. I saw that he had a shark fin on his back, got a good scare and quickly swam back to the shore. The sun was already low. After calming down a bit, I returned to the spot where I had seen the shark, but it was my first encounter with a shark. Later, on a trip to Mexico in Cozumel, I saw a reef shark that was even filmed underwater by an American diving with me. On my last dive at all, in Costa Rica, I also saw two larger ‘white tips’ lying relatively lazy in the water. The most interesting was the first shark.

Since my flight was booked directly to Panama City and not via Costa Rica, I took the opportunity to see the Panama Canal and Panama City.

*View from the “casco viejo” of Panama City*

**Channel Funding Lottery**

Episode 80



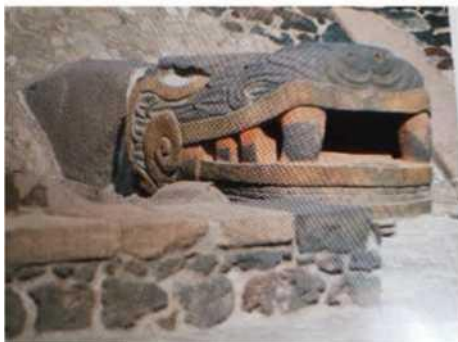
### Episode 80 *Mayas, Mariachis and a Poem*

In my mind, I was already in Mexico during my school days reading Karl May's adventure novels, but Karl May himself had only written about Mexico without ever having been there. In contrast, I was really able to get to know a part of Mexico through several visits in 1990-2017.

My first port of call was of course Mexico City, as almost all flight connections go through the capital. So to get to Guadalajara or Monterrey to the universities that invited me, I had to change planes and rush through endless corridors at the airport in Mexico D.F. with my luggage to get the domestic flight. I decided to spend a few days in the capital on one of my first trips before flying on to Monterrey.

#### *The Holy Serpent God (Teotihuacan)*

#### *Chac Mol*



I looked at the famous archaeological museum and learned that there are still about 20 different tribes of Indians in Mexico. I climbed up the many steps of Teotihuacan's pre-Atztec solar pyramid in the blazing heat and let myself be rowed through the floating gardens of Xochimilco. But most of all I was impressed by the mariachi in Plaza Garibaldi, as they wait patiently in their black suits with silver sequins until someone comes to buy their songs. I also quickly got used to her often sentimental music, which I initially found unattractive due to the obliquely inharmonious sounding wind instruments. Finally, I also found that even Jonny Cash had musical bonds with the Mariachis in 'Ring

of Fire'. My favourite recording was 'Me voy pa'l pueblo' by the 'Panchos', a group that had also become famous in the United States after the Second World War.



## Episode 81 *Monterrey and Guadalajara*

I then flew first to Monterrey, a large industrial city in northern Mexico, near the border of Mexico with the USA. In Monterrey, as far as distance learning was concerned, there was the private university ITESM (Instituto Tecnológico de Educación Superior de Monterrey), represented by satellite and regional centers throughout Mexico and beyond. The satellite programme was supported by presence phases in the regional centres. She followed the model of the private Spanish Universidad de Catalunya (UOC), which largely dispensed with written study materials and made the PC the core element of teaching at an early stage.

I was not invited to the private Instituto Tecnológico de Monterrey, but to the relatively small private University of Monterrey UDEM. In contrast to Chile or Argentina, Mexico had already gained many years of experience with distance learning in the context of de Tele Escuela in the school sector, but distance learning was still hardly anchored in the universities. Only ITESM was internationally known. During a later stay, I received an invitation to a conference distributed via satellite and was very impressed by the organization of media production with Flash, which was very systematically organized in a work-sharing workflow.

At UDEM, I met the Chilean social scientist Manuel Sepúlveda, who emigrated to Mexico. After a big conference at the Universidad de Monterrey, we played and sang songs to the guitar in his apartment together with some high-ranking conference participants, Manuel beat the rhythm with a bombo. Although he was a restless ‘workaholic’, he also took the time to admire his favourite team, the ‘Tigres’, with me in the football stadium. He fell asleep after 15 minutes. Then I told him about the game.

A reaction in many of my lectures was the argument that in Germany one was much richer than in Mexico, and therefore one could not invest money in elaborate media distance learning projects. I had been asked to give a lecture at the Goethe Institute on currency reform in the wake of reunification. I deliberately also showed pictures of the refugee flows at the end of the war, which were intended to make it clear from where something had to be rebuilt with my own strength, without the great help from outside. The Marshall Plan was subject to considerable reparations. A similarly difficult task is the ambitious project to modernize and unite the East German economy and society. It therefore depends more on the will and the political structures. Financial resources are not the main obstacle.

From Monterrey we continued to Guadalajara to the Universidad del Valle de Atemajac. There I gave a lecture and introduced the vocabulary trainer for English developed at

the ZFE and showed the newly created macro toolbox in a Spanish version. The participants of the event had not yet had any experience with multimedia products of a similar kind, but I could at least see some CD Rome productions of the University of Colima.

While strolling through the pedestrian zone of Guadalajara, I still saw professional letter writers with their typewriters, on which they wrote official letters, love letters or mourning messages for their illiterate or non-writing clients. Even the shoe shiners were still to be found here.

*scribe*



The history of the country is presented in a long picture gallery in the colonnades of the beautiful old center in the Hospicio Cultural Cabanas. In Mexico, the country's eventful history is always present.

The liberation of Mexico from Spanish colonial rule and the numerous revolutions are commemorated by paintings by the Muralist (wall painter) Orozco in the Palacio de Gobierno and a large statue showing Father Hidalgo tearing the chains of oppression.

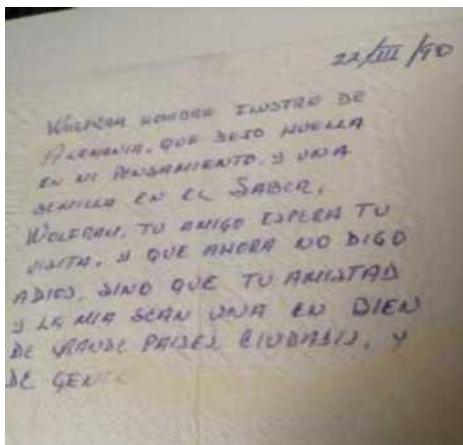




*Hidalgo painted by Orozco*

The farewell to the small university was accompanied by a nice gesture when a professor quickly wrote me a farewell greeting on a paper napkin.

On the occasion of a conference at the annual book fair in Guadalajara, I showed one of my TV shows about applications of virtual reality in 2000. Until then, the subject was still relatively unknown at the University of Guadalajara and therefore later dubbed in Spanish by a distance learning department of the university in good quality.





### Episode 82 *Chichén Itzá and Cozumel*

When I had a week between a conference in Guadalajara and a flash workshop, I flew to Merida on the Yucatan Peninsula to see the Mayan pyramids in Chichén Itzá. I climbed the steps of the pyramid and was impressed by the seated god Chac Mol, who is worshipped by the Mayans. The ‘Cenotes’, the deep wells into which Mayas had thrown virgins and children as offerings, also stimulated the imagination. The site of Chichén Itzá was purchased by an American archaeologist who brought many valuable pieces to the United States, but they had to be partially returned under pressure from the Mexican government.

I left Merida with a jaguar head cut from wood in my luggage and flew to the island of Cozumel for diving. I rented Alices Bed and Breakfast and ended up among divers wherever I wanted to go. I had taken my diving goggles with the ground glasses and a snorkel on the trip. On the dive boat were also Americans with perfect diving equipment, state-of-the-art suits, boots and elegant fins. I felt a bit unprofessional with my diving utensils in the plastic bag. When it went from the boat into the water, however, they were the first to reappear because their pressure compensation did not work. Otherwise, it was a very nice dive, in which the current slipped past the coral reef without any effort, similar to the ‘travelling’ of a camera. So I could comfortably observe the coral fish, a giant turtle and a reef shark. In the evening I was invited to grilled barracuda, which a diver had harpooned. The Barracuda tasted great.

Then I flew back to Guadalajara for the workshop. At first nothing was prepared for the workshop on my return, but one of the participants helped me very well with the organization of the workshop, so that the workshop could start on the planned date. On my next visit, my assistant was already a teacher in the regional branch of the Universidad in CU-Valle and also accompanied me on numerous trips across Jalisco when I carried out an evaluation of the regional casas de estudio and the state of distance learning at the regional university. During the long car rides we intensively discussed his planned doctoral project and by the way I got to know some Mexican swear words, which can always be interpreted in a friendly way, depending on the situation.

### Episode 83 *The Copper Canyon and the Continental Platforms*

Following a return visit by Manuel Sepúlveda to Hagen, I held, at his request, another seminar in Monterrey, this time at the major state-run Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo Leon. Unfortunately, the attempt to send a young employee to Monterrey for half a year to boost media production at the Universidad de Nuevo Leon failed, as the person

concerned had become somewhat queasy. Mexico is not an overly safe country because of the strong presence of organised crime, especially near the border with the United States. After another workshop, I took the opportunity to take a train ride across the Sierra Madre from Chihuahua to Los Mochis on the Pacific Ocean to take the ferry to Baja California. So I flew from Monterrey to Chihuahua and took the train over very high bridges and through numerous tunnels first to the railway station of Divisadora. The railway station is located at Copper Canyon, which is deeper than the Grand Canyon. I stayed in a small hotel from which you could see directly into the canyon, so that one soon became dizzy. Divisadora is also a settlement center of the Tarahua Indians, who offered food and crafts on the departure of the train. Arrived in Los Mochis I went to the harbor to reach the steamer to La Paz on Baja California. On the way, some boys called me 'gringo' and 'hijo de puta', which was not particularly friendly. From La Paz I took the bus to my destination Cabo San Lucas.

Cabo San Lucas is located at the extreme tip of the Californian peninsula. The small seaside resort is teeming with American tourists who make quite a noise in the water with their aqua scooters. On the sidewalks of the main street, Mexican sellers or landlords of real estate crowded and called the tourists their offers. When I approached one of the dealers in Spanish, he was quite surprised and spontaneously invited me for a drink. In talking to him, I realized how ambivalent Mexicans are in their feelings toward the United States. On the one hand, they admire them because they seem to you so much richer, on the other hand, they are very unsympathetic to them because of the often shown arrogance. Carlos Fuentes described this conflict in his book 'La frontera de cristal'.

Before I said goodbye to Cabo San Lucas, I took part in an exciting dive. I dived with some others to the bottom of the sea and could see a deep and continuous crevice in the bottom of the sea. The rift was caused by the collision of two continental platforms.

#### Episode 84 '*Tlaquepaque es bonito*'

Before I finally started my journey home, we went for a walk through the pretty suburb of Guadalajara, which advertises with the slogan 'Tlaquepaque es bonito'. Here you can comfortably drink a tequila with sangrita, listen to the mariachis and shop for craftsmanship. During a restaurant visit with Mexican colleagues, ant eggs and grilled locusts were also on the menu. I should try this because of the protein content. I decided to go for locusts, but I don't like to think about it. Fortunately, this is not a Mexican main course. I still miss the delicious breakfast at the hotel across the campus. It consisted of a stuffed omelet prepared directly on request, puree of black beans, tortillas, small cakes,

soups with goat meat and other small delicacies.

### Episode 85 *Towards a Complete Campus Management System*

At the University of Hagen, the development of the media continued rapidly. While the experiences with the digitization of texts and audiovisual media and the programming of specific applications with html, Javascript and Java as a supplement to the written modules were still in the foreground in the mid-80s and early 90s, the development of web-based courses only began towards the end of the 90s. This resulted in numerous forms of commercial and proprietary web platforms, which were usually not compatible with each other. The course management systems had their own data structures, which made it difficult to integrate with the work processes of the university administration.

A completely different field was the development of portable devices, such as laptops and mobile phones, which expanded and changed the use of media in various learning situations. With the increasing use of the World Wide Web at the beginning of the 20th century, the need for compatibility of the various applications and the avoidance of too many induction processes into the ever-changing learning environments became obvious. The university as a whole had to return to a unity and also give the student an orientation for his necessary technical equipment. It was too complex to create and update a different authoring system and an individual design at each chair. The exchange of data with the central administration systems had to be improved, as well as the systematic design of the websites of the faculties towards a uniform 'look and feel'. The networks became faster and also facilitated the way of integrating simultaneous and delayed communication possibilities. In this context, I was able to expand my knowledge beyond the use of individual media to include the overarching organizational and design aspects and formulated some development steps for the establishment of a virtual university.

On the other hand, the backlog of many universities and institutions in countries where I had given seminars and lectures was unmistakable. In addition to media development for distance learning, consulting on overarching issues of strategy became an increasing component of my work.

### Episode 86 *A Very Expensive Trip to India*

I wanted to give my wife a great trip, because otherwise I was always on the road in terms of service. When we saw an interesting brochure about a Kerala tour for about 10,000 DM for two people, we booked the trip despite the considerable costs. We flew from Germany to Colombo in Sri Lanka and had to fly from there with a rather rickety

propeller machine to Trivandrum in South India. On arrival, however, the first problems began. They didn't want my wife to enter because she was supposed to be on a list of unwanted people. It was oppressively hot and we waited and waited until the officers decided to let us both through.

At Camp Surja Samudra we were greeted by an alleged German studies professor and then had to hand in our passports first, as this was necessary for registration in the country. We were assigned a pretty bungalow built according to old models.

But it quickly turned out that the bungalow had open fronts and therefore had other inhabitants at night, namely in the form of numerous cockroaches and ant-like insects, which carried a leaf on their backs, the leaf cutter ants. At night, two Dobermann dogs ran free for protection, which also did not seem exactly comfortable.

We were not very built and were glad that the tour started first. We drove with an old but comfortable car towards Cochin. My wife was not very well, she could not tolerate the heat or the sometimes very hot food. The Hotel Malabar in Cochin was a treat, as we did not have to fight with insects and in the morning the Indian Post was pushed under the door. Unfortunately, the stay was very short, but we could see the tomb of Vasco da Gama, the famous Portuguese explorer.

From Cochin we went on a boat through the backwater, a small river landscape with many canals.



***Rice harvest in the backwaters***

Then we drove into the mountains past green tea fields. Here it was cooler and therefore a recovery. We saw how the working elephants lifted heavy logs with their trunks and laid them down again like a forklift truck in a desired place. They usually only listen to the orders of a person who is intimately familiar with them, the Mahut. In a nature reserve, I was also able to test what it's like to ride on the slightly commuting back of an elephant.

Oh, this planet of monkeys!

Disturbing on the trip was the constant nagging of a German couple, with whom we made the round trip together.

Back in Trivandrum, the surf hit a heavy wooden canoe against my knee. It was a wound on the shinbone and after a herbal massage the abrasive wound became inflamed. An Indian doctor was called, who arrived with a small suitcase, but carried nothing useful in it. We longed for the day of departure and got our passports back with some effort. Before boarding in Colombo, I had to lie down on a bench with chills and fever. My wife said, though, not quite seriously, that she would fly back alone if I didn't get up to board the plane. So we made it back to Hagen with some effort. I had to struggle with the inflammation for another six weeks.



Will I hold on?



### Episode 87 *Publications and Reports for a University in India*

I met Professor Puroshotaman from India's Bharathidasan University in Hagen when he was visiting the distance learning university in Hagen with a DAAD scholarship and wanted to see how media are used in distance learning and how logistics and administration are organized. He was head of the Institute of Educational Technology. I took care of him because he was a little shy in the unfamiliar environment. He was very serious about learning everything. We also talked about the publication of a new magazine in India. I promised him my support.

#### *Trichi Conference 1995*



After returning to Bharathidasan University in Tamil Nadu, he started publishing the journal and I wrote an article for the first issue of the Journal of Research in Educational Media in October 1993 on 'Design Patterns of Self Assessments in PC-based Courseware, Some Illustrations from Economics'. I was also on the editorial board of the magazine. The work for the magazine was important for Tamil Nadu, as there had never been anything like it before. I tried to attract well-known authors for contributions in order to give the magazine an international face.

Another component of my contact with Bharathidasan University was an expert assessment of submitted PhD theses, which always comprised about 300 pages. They followed a rigid outline. For example, a fixed block was provided for literature research on the topic. Of course, this is also an aspect for the thematic classification of a work, but in Tamil Nadu only articles or books with abstracts from collections were collected without discussing them or commenting on their importance for one's own work. The structure of the statistical hypothesis test was just as stereotypical. A critical reflection was bypassed. The second thing I noticed was that there were hardly any topics currently discussed in international conferences and contributions. Therefore, the assessment of the submitted work was a problem. What standards were correct? Was it fair to make our own criteria the benchmark? I had repeatedly sent suggestions for topics and improvements to the examination office of the university, but had not received any



feedback.

### Episode 88 A *Conference and Many Universities*

In 1995, at the invitation of Bharathidasan University in Tiruchirappalli, I was invited to a national conference on information and telecommunications technologies in education in India, but had previously given two lectures in Madras - one at the University of Madras (Chennai) and one at a college for teacher training in technical subjects. In Madras, my lecture was hampered by an approximately one-hour power outage, but I was used to such situations by now and there was always a solution. The second lecture I gave was at a polytechnic college. After the conference in Tiruchirappalli I was supposed to visit some smaller universities and colleges in Tamil Nadu.

Life in Madras took place mainly on the street. It was teeming with people, shops reaching to the sidewalk, pulled or motorized rickshaws, cars, load carriers, women in colored light saris, ox carts, men with turbans.



The whole thing together created unrest and resulted in a high noise level. It was quiet in the temples. Inside it was quite dark. Variously it smelled of urine. The elephants, which are often chained up in front of a temple, usually looked quite miserable. In addition, some dreary beggars joined at the entrance, who sometimes quite aggressively asked or demanded alms.

I tried to see as much as possible in the few free time I had. One Sunday I went to Mamallapuram near Madras. There you could see the sculptures of a giant elephant and a lion from the 7th century, carved from a single piece of rock.

*Mamallapuram*

I also looked for the sea and finally found a promenade on the shore with many walkers. On the shore, a number of children and adults enjoyed themselves in the water, but they stayed at the front where they could still stand. Apparently no one could swim, although the sea is so close.

From Madras I drove further south, to Madurai, to see the famous temple, which is covered with thousands of small figures. Then it was time for the conference in Tiruchirappalli. I was already expected by Professor Purushotaman. As he entered the entrance to the meeting room with me, we walked through a trellis of women who pelted us with petals, similar to our wedding customs.



**Reception of speakers**

This already indicated the high esteem that teachers experience. Also at the presentation of speakers there was a long and for me exaggerated laudatory speech. I still looked at some temples near Tiruchirappalli, called Trichi for short. Then I went to Coimbatore, a college of Bharathidasan University, for appointment reasons. In the morning at 6 a.m., all the students gathered in the courtyard for a common prayer, an impressive picture. From Coimbatore I continued to Kodaikanal to Mother Theresa Woman's University.



Kodaikanal is located high in the mountains at an altitude of 2,200 m on the border with Kerala. It was a 'mini' university or rather a research-oriented small institution. I lived in a small house on a steep mountain slope. The food was brought to me in long tall stacked cans and was very tasty. In the evening there was a very violent thunderstorm, so that the lightning just flew around my ears and the rain came down like a waterfall. I was afraid that the house would slide down the mountain. The other accommodations were further away, so there was nothing left for me but to hope that it would go well. I sat down at the door to

the mountain to balance my weight if it tilted, but that wouldn't have prevented anything in the event of an emergency. Thank goodness the emergency didn't happen.

I took the train to Pondicherry. Pondicherry was under French control until 1962. A relic from the colonial period that only the French-looking police uniforms were reminiscent of. When I got there with the suitcase, there was no one there to tell me where to stay. It was very early in the morning and only a small bicycle rickshaw with driver was available. Since I did not fit into the rickshaw together with my large suitcase, the suitcase sat in the rickshaw and was pulled by a man while I ran next to it. Definitely a strange picture. The rickshaw man took me to an ashram, which I didn't intend to do, but I had to reach someone from the university first. When that worked out, I was redeemed from the ashram and taken to a large modern hotel. It was a treat, but the view from the hotel room was directed at the poor houses of the non-privileged population and made the social differences clear to me again.

*View from the hotel window*



## Episode 89 *From Delhi to the Taj Mahal*

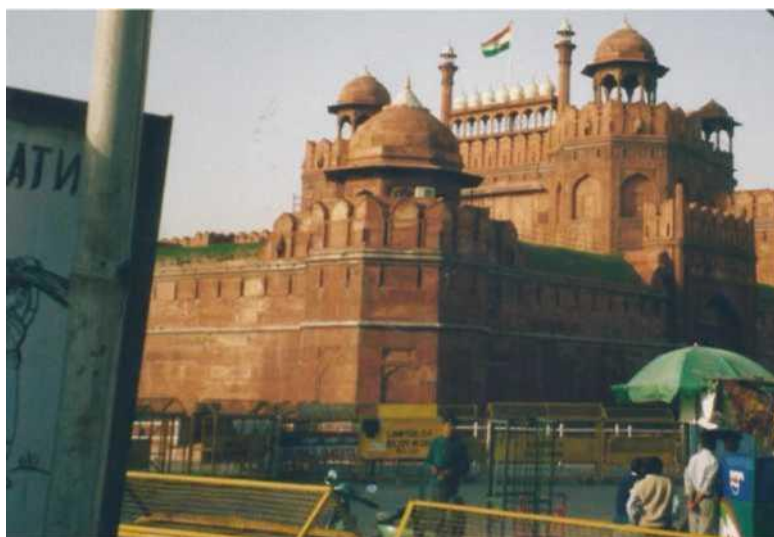
Many years later I was visited by a successor of Purushotamann in Hagen and again invited to 'Trichi'. Purushotaman died after a long illness. This time my visit should be connected with a stay in Delhi and contacts to the IGNOU (Indira Gandhi Open University), the major national Indian distance learning university. Through the conversations with some officials of the university, I had also met a very nice production manager of the television studio. He wanted to record an interview with me, but I offered him to record a small educational film on site with examples from my media production.

### *Interview in the studio of IGNOU*



I therefore quickly wrote a moderation text in the hotel and explained the examples that were recorded in front of the camera. The result was very good and I got along well with the staff. The production manager took a lot of time on the days I was in Delhi and explained to me all the buildings from the Indian Gate to the Red Fort. He told me that he came from a Muslim family and that he still remembered his childhood.

He recalled playing in the fort, the palace. His father had obviously held a high office, with the division into an Islamic Pakistan and a Hindu India, the influence of the Islamists in the government became less and less.



### *Red Fort of*

One evening he invited me to an open air concert inside the palace walls. The concert was about Sufi music, i.e. religious music, played and sung by

three different orchestras, one Pakistani, one from Morocco and one local. The singing accompanied by the orchestra increased in recurring phrases, with a song lasting 15 to 20 minutes. It was fascinating.

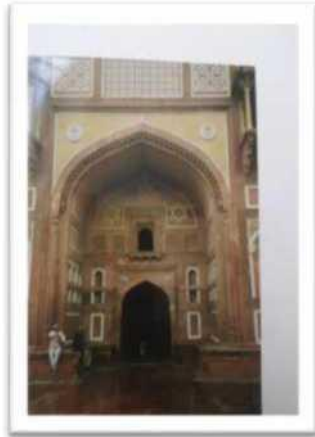
*Shield in Urdu and Hindi*



My host in Trichi had not expected my visit for incomprehensible reasons and I should stay a few more days in the extremely modest guesthouse in Delhi. I was a bit angry and asked him to allow me a transport to Taj Mahal, as I absolutely wanted to see the fabulous palace.

Taj Mahal





Fathipur

He told me that someone would meet me there and help me to find me right. I then rented a taxi and let me drive to Agra. On the way I saw a man with a chained bear on the side of the road. Unfortunately, animal husbandry is a very common but sad form of income generation. When I arrived in Agra, I actually met a very nice woman named Lovely Sharma. We drove to the Taj Mahal, which seemed to float in this weather. The Taj Mahal was built by a great mogul in memory of his great love in 1631. I asked Lovely to wait, as I wanted to let the palace act on me alone. Lovely Sharma was a professional sitar player and had taken over my accompaniment out of interest.





*player*

She suggested to visit the Royal Palace in Fatehpur, about 30 km away on the border with the state of Rajasthan. The Royal Palace was just as impressive as the Taj Mahal, but in a very different way. It was a palace with protective walls, but due to the rounded towers and arches it did not look as cold as European castles. The style resembled the Red Fort in Delhi and also dates back to around 1640.

After that, my return trip was planned, but Lovely asked if I didn't want to come to a wedding where she would play sitar. It was late in the evening, but I agreed. It wasn't a problem that I came along. So I experienced the bride and groom sitting on the podium and receiving the money gifts from the wedding party. Around midnight I said goodbye to take a taxi back to Delhi. It rained in streams, many cars were equipped with no or poor lighting. In addition, there were ox carts and loaded pedestrians.



It was a horror trip and I couldn't close my eyes until we arrived in Delhi after 250 km exhausted. I was finally able to fly to Trichi for the conference on quality in distance learning and return to Germany via Mysore after a last lecture. My conclusion after my third trip to India was: India is very beautiful, especially cultural, but also very exhausting.

Episode 90 *A Development Project for Al Quds Open University in Palestine*

My first invitation to a conference in an Arabic-speaking country came from Amman in Jordan.



However, the conference was hosted by a Palestinian 'remote university', Al Quds Open University in Jordan, not in East Jerusalem, where the university's headquarters were at the time, as it was expected that the Jerusalem conference would have been banned by Israel. Amman is a modern city, only the concrete castles in the suburbs of Amman, with narrowest streets built for the many Palestinian refugees, gave an idea of their dreary housing situation. Jordan aimed to become a modern Arab information society with early education of children in computer use.

During the conference, I met a psychologist who worked at Al Quds Open University and was responsible for international cooperation. He invited me and two other colleagues, a Dane and a Turk, to Ramallah in the West Bank after the conference. While the Dane was staying at the hotel, the Turkish professor and I could be accommodated by our host in his spacious apartment, which he lived alone, He showed us Jerusalem with the Al Aqsa Mosque, the Wailing Wall and the Dome of the Rock.



*Al Aqsa mosque*

We walked through the narrow streets of the historic old town, which are occupied by small Arab shops, and walked along the Via dolorosa, the Way of the Cross of Jesus. Something disturbing about this Christian and peaceful atmosphere of the historic old town was the presence of young Israeli soldiers everywhere with their submachine guns hung around them; A rather depressing sight. Surprising were the taxis - mostly models of the long Mercedes Benz 600 - which was probably best suited because of the family size or as a shared taxi.



*Lecture in Hebron*

We also visited the shrine of Abraham in Hebron, which is considered an important place of their religion by both Muslims and Christians. The shrine on a small hill, however, was not immediately accessible, but shielded from armed young Israelis, who first asked us why we wanted to go to the shrine and what religion we would belong to. He was allowed to go on. A statistics professor from Al Quds University who accompanied us said he was

also a Christian. As he was a Palestinian, the young soldiers were unwilling to believe him until he presented an Israeli-issued ID card that allowed him to visit Gaza, where the religious affiliation was 'Christian'. When they finally asked my friend, the psychologist, he said a little jokingly that he was about to convert to Christianity. The soldiers or policemen, however, understood no fun. He had to wait outside while we still had to pass a radar check. There was basically nothing to see except a house where some men leafed through scriptures. This senseless questioning is an example of authoritarian systems and reminded me of the sometimes harassing treatment by the East German border controls when leaving Berlin.



*The Israeli Wall*

The next day the two colleagues from Denmark and Turkey left, I still had a few days. In the morning I was woken up by my host with music by Elvis Presley and for breakfast there was an egg, flatbread and a selection of dips. It was a few days of carefree bachelor life. We drove to the Dead Sea, where you could not swim properly, because the salt water kept pushing the body upwards. Somehow, however, one came lying on one's back, paddling forward. It was a very unusual effect, but it was fun. I met a number of his friends and accompanied him to different families. During a visit, family members all sit in a large circle to chat. I felt the strong cohesiveness that exists here in the families. Very nice was also a spontaneous invitation when we passed a wedding party celebrating on the street by car. Similar to the Greek Sirtaki, the men danced in circles and placed their arms over each other's shoulders. We danced for a while.

This visit to the West Bank resulted in a prolonged cooperation and a lasting friendship.

Al Quds Open University had about 35,000 students at the time. There were two locations, Jerusalem and Ramallah. In addition, there was an extensive network of study centres in the West Bank and Gaza. It was immediately clear that a distance learning system offered an attractive solution to such a fragmentation of the country.

On my next visit to the university, my conversations with the university management were about the production of the teaching materials. The written material was outdated and

audiovisual self-produced elements practically non-existent. The university had submitted an application to the German Development Assistance (GTZ Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit) to set up a modern media centre. I discussed this project with the GTZ and promised our help with the technical planning. We were able to work out a list of devices, which were then quickly procured. The premises were available, but still had to be prepared for production. The next step was the training of the staff and the familiarization with the delivered technology. I asked two of my colleagues, who were significantly involved in the technical planning, to accompany me to Ramallah, which they gladly did. We wanted to record a lesson sequence to train the employees. This was not a problem-free project. First, we had to get to the filming location, a school where GTZ sponsored technical drawing was taught with AUTOCAD. For safety, we drove all the equipment on side roads to avoid obstructions caused by Israeli controls. A special concentration was required when editing the material, because we had to work with Arabic tone and we had to explain why we would choose one or the other setting on average.

But it worked well and should stand as a model for a type of educational film. Later, as part of an overall evaluation of the university together with a Canadian professor, I also took some pictures on the subject of marketing directly in Ramallah together with the staff of the media center.

That the unacceptable arrogant behavior of the young Israeli soldiers in Hebron had not been a coincidence, I experienced on my return flight from Tel Aviv (formerly Jaffa) to Frankfurt. I was asked when I checked in where I came from. I said, from Palestine, from Ramallah. The young soldier replied unequivocally that Palestine does not exist, only Israel. I replied, 'You seem to have a poor knowledge of geography'. He then told me that I was not cooperative and called another inspector. He wanted to know where I was and who I was in contact with. When I was still not 'cooperative' in his eyes, a new inspector came and wanted to know what was stored on my laptop and wanted an explanation of what multimedia probably meant. I complained about the treatment, especially since my flight was about to board. The next inspector asked me to take off my underpants behind a curtain. I also endured this humiliation and reached my return flight to Frankfurt with difficulty and hardship. I might have accepted some of the questions rather if it had been a flight to Tel Aviv and not to Frankfurt, which suggests that the inspectors were obviously only concerned with collecting data about me, but not with special aviation safety.

The stays in Palestine were an experience, albeit a sad one, as I saw the expulsion of the Palestinians through expropriation and urban sprawl in an intensified form every time I visited.

## Episode 91 A *Virtual University for Syria*

I had accumulated considerable experience in the meantime, so that I could adapt my teaching content well to the needs and the level of development of the target group. I gave my demonstration examples and lectures in German, English and Spanish. What became more decisive, however, was my increasing consulting activities at various levels such as organisation, media choice and curriculum. I received an unexpected invitation from the Syrian Ministry of Education. The aim of the ministry was to establish an online university in Syria. I had shared my flight and arrival time in Damascus, but when I arrived in Damascus around midnight, there was no one to pick me up. I didn't know the name of the hotel I had booked. So I asked at a taxi stand in the airport to ask the big hotels if there was a reservation under my name somewhere. Thank goodness it was determined pretty quickly and I was able to take a taxi to an absolutely luxurious hotel. So that went well again. The next day I waited for a contact with the ministry to know when and where the meeting was to take place. The conference was supposed to start on Monday, but I learned after some research that the conference had been postponed by one day because the Minister of Education was not available for a welcome on Monday. I took advantage of the time and had an employee of a commissioned travel agency show me Damascus, then a very beautiful city with attractive restaurants. Mosques and markets. I then went on a trip to the Homs area until we came to the castle of Richard the Lionheart 'Croque des Chevaliers', which was very beautiful. I saw in my mind how the Crusaders rode on their horses through the narrow entrance gates. On the way back to Damascus I could still see the monasteries of Armenian Christians carved into the rocks near Maaloula and Sydnaya. Unfortunately, they were later destroyed in the Syrian war.



## Croque des Chevaliers



The conference took place in a huge hotel in Damascus, with the process taking place in the back wing, which was not open to the public. The virtual Syrian university should be presented here including a circuit to Ohio State University. The Learning Management System was developed by the American University. However, it did not work even after several interruptions. My presentation was in the afternoon and I already had concerns about whether my multimedia presentation with video and simulations would succeed. I asked if I could technically check my presentation beforehand, but that was rejected. So I sat in the front row and had to go through a previous panel discussion about myself, which did not want to end at all. I kept looking at the clock because I was running out of time. Since the State Secretary from the Ministry of Education was sitting next to me, I overcame myself and told him that I absolutely wanted to give my lecture, because I would leave the next day. He then gave the moderator a signal, I said a few more words to the technicians and then it went great, everything worked out. Unfortunately, there was no permanent contact from the visit.

## Episode 92 *A Demonstration of Feasibility*

A larger project was proposed to me by the then rector of the University of Cordoba in Argentina in the early 1990s. I was supposed to advance distance learning at the university, as the then very small 'Centro de Tecnologia Educativa' did not provide any significant impetus. The first approach was to hold discussions with the largest faculties, together with the Secretariat Academica, to explore their interest in developing distance learning projects. Of course, the question of resources immediately arose. I quickly realized that neither the Vice-Rector responsible for the project nor the deans of the departments of law and medicine had an increased interest in the project. Only in economics was there some interest and from a number of lucrative projects also the funds to cover the necessary financing needs. I therefore reduced the project to the exemplary development of a distance learning course for an economics course.



### *Course program*

First of all, the objective had to be specified and the human resources allocated for this purpose. It turned out that we wanted to choose a course from statistics (applied statistics in research) as a topic with the aim of offering the course to interested practitioners or for scientific training for a price covering the running costs. The idea was to choose a relatively difficult area for further education and not a massively attended orientation course to show that even difficult content can be successfully taught with distance learning courses. As course authors, two lecturers had agreed to work on the project. I needed a graphic designer and a project manager on site. The partial release of potential authors was the biggest problem. Didactics or educators were not very highly regarded by economists. I then decided to give a lecture to the Professorship of Economists on the economic effects of reunification. This was, so to speak, the door opener to gain the necessary confidence in the project.

The written course could then be advertised with the first edition even after my five-month stay on site in 1992/93. The course was relatively expensive at \$1500, but was also



supported by assistance from some qualified tutors. The processing time for the 14 modules for descriptive and closing statistics was planned for two semesters. The project already recorded 80 enrolments in its first deployment, which roughly covered the running costs. So it was a real development project without special financial aid, which did not entail any major costs except for the exemptions. This has certainly been the reason why the program is still used as teaching material at the university with revisions to this day.

With the success of this pilot project, I was able to continue the further expansion of the newly structured Centre for Tecnología Educativa at the University of Cordoba. I then invited some employees of the project to Hagen with the support of the DAAD. In the next step, I analyzed my own teaching films from the FernUniversität Hagen, teaching films from the UBA 21 project of the University of Buenos Aires and from the University of Nacional de Cordoba together with the seminar participants. The Goethe Institute had three productions of FernUniversität translated into Spanish. The activities later led to a temporary boom of quite good video productions in the economics department of the Universidad Nacional de Cordoba, but was then reduced again for financial reasons.

## Episode 93 *Online Courses and supervision of final theses of the Maestria*

The work in the development of comfortable video conferencing systems slowly replaced the creation of pure sound productions. Although there was a brief upswing in digital ‘audio podcasting’, the medium did not have too much new to offer in didactic terms and was later replaced by vodcasting and conference systems such as Skype or Zoom, as well as social media such as Facebook and WhatsApp. However, due to its simplicity, the medium of audio is a very good basis for familiarizing oneself with the creation of audiovisual media in general.

In my work for the University of Cordoba, I held online seminars for several years in the ‘Maestria en Tecnología Educativa’ programme, which included all the elements of modern online learning. The planning of the seminar was discussed with an Argentine tutor in a video conference. We then developed a model design for the web platform Moodle, but each seminar also had some specifics that had to be adapted for the respective seminar. The seminar participants received a video in which I explain the objectives, structure and the various organizational conditions. In the next step, the participants and the online tutor were asked to introduce themselves to the other participants using simple software, such as Glogster or Prezi or any similar software (pre-knowledge, motivation, expectations). These files could be created before the beginning of the seminar. For this purpose, a flaw had to be set up on the learning platform (forum). Subtopics were then formulated on the various aspects of the general topic and basic texts were made available for introduction. The subtopics were worked on by groups of 3-5 participants, aiming for the best possible mix of different qualifications in each group. Another source of information was videoconferencing with international experts. The experts in my case were colleagues from the international educational technology scene, with whom I was well known or friends. They were willing to hold a 45-minute video conference for free. To prepare, you sent us a short CV, a few references to your presentation for the preparation on the part of the participants and some PowerPoint slides for follow-up.

Various forums were created for the communication between the participants, for casual, rather personal contact with each other, the café, for the contact with the tutor the advice on technical and organizational questions and to me on the content-related questions. In addition, the students were motivated to develop a database (repository) that can later be made available to them and others. The seminars were held from the point of view of the students, usually even lecturers, with very positive results.

Ratings provided. The activities in the working groups and in the plenary sessions with the presentation of the results were very intensive and constructive. For myself, the opportunity to act as a teacher was a very good experimental stage.

I drew some conclusions for myself. First, if you rely heavily on student collaboration in groups, the classic grading of performance makes no sense, since the product is not divisible. This problem is also not solved by assigning buttons about the role of the participant, as there are no standards for this. In addition, it also makes sense to distribute the organizational and content implementation to more than one person. The effort for the type of seminar described here is very complex and therefore cannot function as a general form of teaching. For this purpose, self-learning components, such as multimedia developments or training programs, are suitable, which are in use for several years.

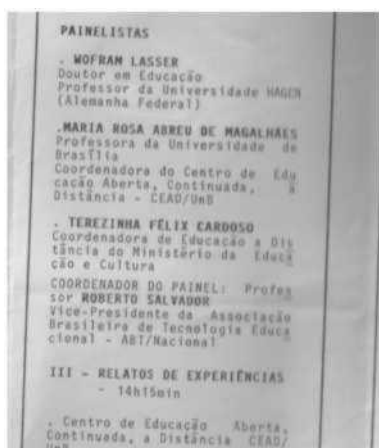
Unlike in Argentina, the resonance was in similar seminars, which I conducted from Hagen with the University of Murcia in Spain. The less attractive Blackboard platform acted as a learning platform. Students studied computer science and were less interested in a minor topic such as designing online courses. Motivation is therefore one of the central reasons for the success of online seminars.

Episode 94 *Brazil, a land of unlimited adventure*



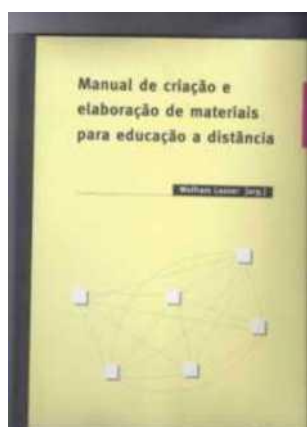
Through the regional centres of the Goethe Institute, I was able to expand my lecture activities to other countries in Latin America. Of course, Brazil was very interesting. In Brazil, efforts had already been made under the dictatorship to establish a distance learning system. After the end of the military dictatorship in 1985, the image of a national university was therefore negative. But there was an interest in changing it. I had prepared for the trip with an elementary school course in Portuguese, the course was held by an approximately 80-year-old Salesian who had spent over 20 years as a nun in Brazil. She was very attentive to grammar, but had a rather German-coloured pronunciation.

I gave my first lecture in Brasilia in a language jokingly referred to as ‘Portuniol’ (combination of Portuguese and Spanish language parts), which is just as comprehensible to the Brazilians. During my lecture there was unfortunately a constant going in and out of participants, which was a bit disturbing.



But it seemed even more disorganized when I got permission to attend a meeting of the Faculty of Education. I learned that somehow, despite the fact that almost everyone was talking at the same time, there must have been some kind of understanding among the teachers. However, I myself could not draw anything concrete from the tangle of voices.

The handbook on the design of distance learning materials developed for the Kenyan workshops met with great interest in Brasília. In the original version there were a number of illustrative illustrations of Africans, but they could be easily adopted, since at least in northern Brazil the appearance of the people is very similar to that in West Africa due to the former slavery. I then asked the DSE for permission to supervise the publication of a Portuguese version by the Centro de Educação Aberta Continuada a Distância (CEAD) of the Universidade de Brasília. The manual was then printed with a circulation of 1,000 copies. Later it also appeared in a Brazilian online version.



I was also interested in my paper on the use and design of video in university teaching, and a professor from the Department of Education translated it into Portuguese and published it on a website. I received a lot of inquiries because there seemed to be no literature on this subject in Brazil. At the University of Brasília, the first distance learning courses have just been developed and a special institute, the 'Centro de Educação Aberta Continuada a Distância', was under construction.

Brasilia, designed by the architect Oscar Niemeyer, was constructed from a bird's eye view, like the image of an airplane. The modern buildings with the parliament and the seat of government seemed rather cold to me, there was no promenade, hardly any restaurants, so that the city seemed almost empty. The parliamentarians and ministerial officials obviously flew in and out, but did not live there. It was therefore sometimes quite boring in the hotel. That's why I used the time to improve my Portuguese with the help of telenovelas shown on TV.



***Brasilia***

In 1993 and 1994 I was asked to conduct seminars at the University of Brasilia. Once again, this was an incentive to improve my debate in particular. Therefore, before the first seminar, I first flew to Salvador da Bahia for a one-week intensive language course with five hours a day of lessons. It was exhausting, but I still had time for the beautiful beach, strolled through the central square in the old town, the Pelurinho, and thought of the stories of Jorge Amado.



**Category:**

There was a little adventure on the first day. I was on my way to the hotel when a young man on the boardwalk, coming from behind, ripped the watch off my wrist. I was angry and spontaneously ran after him. He ran two policemen directly into his arms, they had already drawn their guns. I had to get into the police car next to the thief and report the same facts again and again at several stations. I got the watch back, but the bracelet was over. I received a free city tour with police protection. I then flew to Brasilia to start the seminar.

During my stay in Brasilia, I was accommodated this time in the beautifully located finca of the Brazilian professor, whom I had met in Bangkok. She lived at the finca with her parents. The father showed me the many tropical plants that he supplied with water in his garden via a self-built irrigation system. It was much more pleasant than sitting in the hotel.



**View from the balcony**

However, we always had to drive into Brasilia. Our talks revolved around the opportunities and prerequisites for setting up a Brazilian distance learning university. She had a lot of political contacts. However, the Aberta University was not built until much later.

At an internal party with a lot of samba dancing, a young man from the German Embassy tried to listen to me about the political attitude of the Brazilian professor. I was pretty shocked.

Another evening I was invited to a former Secretary of State of the Collor de Mello government, but it was a boring conversation, only the red wine was good. When the reception was over and I left the meeting together with some colleagues, we saw a larger number of giant frogs croaking around in the matt lantern light. I've never seen such large frogs. This is probably possible because this sober and lifeless city was built in the middle of the jungle and therefore probably has unusual visitors from time to time. We were not

tired that evening and went to a kiosk to play guitar and drink numerous beers. I alternated with a small, tenderly grown professor with his guitar. A bottle splintered, but we continued to play surrounded by some shards of glass. I was just worried about the beautiful guitar. Our music had attracted some 'night birds' who liked the music well. Early in the morning we closed the event. Overall, it was a counterpoint to the previous reception and, as a professor assured me years later, an unforgettable event.

On another visit to the university, I arrived in the Easter days and learned that there were also a few days of holidays at the university. Since I had always had the desire to get to know the nature conservation prayer Pantanal, I used the time to fly to Cuiaba and from there to Pantanal. When I landed Cuiaba, there was no one at the airport to take me to Pantanal. I waited for a few hours and asked everywhere if anyone had come for me, but to no avail. Instead, I was invited for a drink by a wedding party and with a guitar at hand, I heard some songs about the heavy fate of the mineros, the miners. Then the time was too short for me, because I wanted to go to the nature reserve on the same day. So I took a taxi for \$150, which took me on narrow sandy slopes to an excursion restaurant with wooden huts to stay overnight, Beira do Rio. I had arrived in Pantanal.

I was happy to have made it to this point. The restaurant was right next to a river. In the afternoon I went for a refreshment swim in the river, but the next morning I had to see that I was not the only one who bathed there, but that some crocodiles, Jacaras, also used the river. I got a scare afterwards, but I was told that the crocodiles were not aggressive in the rainy season. Probably from the many mosquito bites or food I suddenly got sick, had a high fever and diarrhea. I spent two days in my small wooden hut and already saw the birds of prey circling in the sky like carrion vultures.





Thank goodness the fever went back and I was able to fly back to Brasilia and start teaching in Brasilia.

A professor from the FernUniversität in Hagen, who had taught at a university in southern Brazil for several years, invited me to teach multimedia at the University of Florianopolis as a guest lecturer. There was a small group of knowledge chatters working on a videoconferencing system in the 'Production and Systems Development' department to reach the distance students with a network of study centres spread across Brazil. They were very interested in my visit and I was equally interested in their technological considerations. Working with the students was fun. Each time they carried the overhead projector from another lecture hall to my lecture hall. One aspect was very important to me in the classroom; Students should be able to take a critical view of predominantly American publications and recognize hidden ideological implications.

The work at the University of Florianopolis was combined with a visit to UniSul, a private university also based in Florianopolis, which had advanced much further in distance learning development and later developed excellent manuals on media use for authors.

Since the Florianopolis peninsula is located in the south, the German immigration focus with the town of Blumenau was not too far away. So I rented a car and drove over some high mountains inland to give a lecture there. The visit later led to a return visit to Hagen, during which the multimedia production 'Intelligent Strategies in Theory and Practice' was translated into Portuguese by a lecturer from Blumenau.

Staying in Florianopolis had the advantage that there were beautiful beaches everywhere, to which I drove with my rented car and enjoyed the high waves of the surf. My lectures took place in the evening and so there was often time for swimming. A nice trip I made on a later visit with a former seminar participant and her husband to Palmas. We drove by car to the house of a friendly, very cheerful woman on a beautiful beach and ate after the Swim a delicious homemade fish dish. In addition to the multiple visits to Florianopolis, I had contact with Brazil through two conference participations, one in Rio de Janeiro and another in Manaus.



View from the hotel to Copacabana in  
and the Pao de Azucar  
In Manaus, I looked at the opera house known from Werner Herzog's film 'Fitzcarraldo'.  
At the conference I had about 400 listeners, which of course was great.

In Brasilia there were still some meetings with the then Secretary of State with discussions on the structure of the national Universidade Aberta, which was under construction. In the Zusammenhang with my stays, I also accepted the invitation of a private university, which had been founded by Rotarians. However, the university made a religious, rather sectarian impression on me.

## Episode 95 *Consultancy*

In a broader national context, my work as a commissioner of a group of experts was to examine the current state of online courses and campus management systems in Portugal and make suggestions for improvement. It was commissioned by the Portuguese Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education. The commission consisted of an OECD project leader, a British professor, a Spanish professor from a private distance learning university, a Secretary of State from Rio de Janeiro and myself. The activity was very interesting. We visited the main state and private educational institutions in Lisbon, Porto and Aveiro. I am not aware of the extent to which the recommendations of the opinion were implemented, as a change of government took place shortly after the presentation of the opinion.

I also tried to analyse which obstacles stood in the way of a redesign of the respective university. It was desirable that the developing and emerging countries could at least shorten the individual development phases without propagating an unreflective transfer of foreign models. I had been very much involved in the formation of an independent regional organisation for South America at some ICDE conferences in this context, as I felt that a remote study network Latin America group within ICDE, and in particular vis-à-vis potential donors, could have a greater influence on funding measures, filling posts within the organisation and on the conference priorities discussed. I was allowed to participate in the discussions among the Latin American conference participants as a "co-opted" member due to my already extensive teaching activities. However, it turned out that there was no common interest representation in terms of distance learning, which was due to the fact that the countries preferred to contact directly the donors of interest to them, Spain, Portugal or the USA.

## Episode 96 *Bangkok and the Excursion to Pattaya*

One of the ICDE's world conferences was held in Bangkok in 1992. This time I did not give a lecture on video, but on 'Design, Production and Evaluation of PC-Based Courseware in Distance Education'. At that time, my interactive software for simulating macroeconomic models was already available on the PC in a floppy version.

On one of the last days of the conference, I met a friend and colleague from Venezuela, who I knew from my stays there. He told me that he had taught a Thai student in Venezuela who had told him that he had a taxi company in Bangkok. We talked about how it would be nice if someone could drive us around town. After a phone call, the former student offered to provide us with a taxi with driver for a day for free. That was of course very noble and we decided to take a Brazilian colleague with us and drive to the sea to Pattaya, a distance of about 150 km. Pattaya is a well-known holiday resort, but it is also known for its sex tourism. In Pattaya, I also saw a restaurant trimmed in 'Bavarian', in front of which two small Thai employees had to pose in lederhosen to attract visitors.



*Two small Bavarians*

It looked pretty perverse to me. To avoid the tourist hustle and bustle, we took a boat trip from the beach to a nearby island to swim and relax.

A larger Chinese delegation also attended the conference. I tried to get in touch with them, but the strange thing was that none of them spoke English, they had only one interpreter for the whole group, were very friendly and I was allowed to visit them in their hotel room, where they were accommodated to several people. I therefore assumed that attending the conference was a special advantage for them, but it had nothing to do with the issues discussed here.

## Episode 97 *From Bangkok to Beijing*

I had planned from the beginning to fly from Bangkok to Beijing and had received an invitation from RenMin University. When I arrived in Beijing, I wanted to exchange 100 DM for Chinese money, yuan, at a counter of the National Bank. The official or owner of the exchange office briefly looked at my 100 DM note and said that it was counterfeit

money and he was obliged to withhold the money. My protests and the request for the return of the ticket were futile. There was a huge crowd of people at the airport. The crowds at first seemed like a shock to me, but that was actually clear in the case of China.



I got a room in the university with relatively old buildings and got tea. Even after two days, I still received no invitation to a lecture, which I had offered. When an appointment was made after several attempts, it turned out that none of the professors spoke useful English. I then explained with table drawings, hands and feet what I wanted to represent. I then gave a lecture at Normal Beijing University, where the lecturers had much better English skills. But I also felt the great rivalry of the universities among themselves. In China, distance learning was still based on Radio and TV University (RTV), whose programmes were heavily used for teacher training and supported by study centres.

My stay was in October and it was quite cold. The coal stoves polluted the air quality enormously, so that I initially hardly got any air in my room. In the dormitory on campus, there was a coal stove in front of each room. This is an unforgivable burden on students.



Very 'Chinese', I went on a tour to the 'Great Square' with a borrowed bicycle. Hundreds of people were riding bicycles.

A nice experience was visiting the Great Wall of China and the tombs of the Ming Dynasty with a chauffeur and a university translator.

I had good contact with a top Chinese economist who wanted to translate my macroeconomic model, but the contact was unfortunately not continued later.

I then invited two members of RenMin University to Hagen. However, they were more focused on shopping than science.



*The Great Wall (disambiguation)*

## Episode 98 A *Conference in Shanghai*



My next encounter with the 'Land of the Middle' was in 1998. I was invited to a conference in Shanghai by Shanghai TV University. I gave several lectures on the evaluation of electronic media, on the seminar concept developed in Argentina and on the use of audiovisual media. Two lectures were translated into Chinese, and published in two different journals either only in Chinese or with additional English text, which I was very pleased about.

The conference in Shanghai was attended by the best-known scientists from the international distance learning community and I was proud to be one of them.

After the conference, I visited the historic little old city of Suzhou. The city is also famous for its gardens and shows how one probably lived in China before, still without the jungle of skyscrapers and highways.

A young Chinese assistant professor also accompanied me on a train ride to Hangzhou. Unfortunately, like many Chinese, he spoke English without 'th' and constantly talked to me, which was extremely exhausting. In the evening I walked around the big moon lake a bit alone and saw numerous bats whirling through the air.

I then spent a few more days in Beijing, which seemed much more modern compared to the previous visit with skyscrapers, similar to Shanghai. Memorable was a meal at which a snake was served. The waiter

came to the table before the preparation to have them examined. When I asked if it was poisonous, I was told that it was also called a four-step snake, since after a bite of it one could not walk more than four steps. The snake tasted great, although I dragged myself around from the many food with slight discomfort in the stomach.



*Episode 99 Shanghai, old and new*

Four years later, I unexpectedly received an invitation from Shanghai TV University to hold a workshop.

In Shanghai, Jessica was waiting at the airport, a narrow, pale person with glasses. It reminds me a bit of my project manager in Argentina. It is responsible for international contacts. We drove to the hotel 'Magnolia', which I knew from my last visit, a beautiful hotel in the middle class.

In the room, I tried to charge my notebook to listen to my four CDs, but the power was so weak that I could run the device for no more than 15 minutes. But after all, it sounded my familiar jazz and also some Eric Clapton.

At 5.30 p.m. I was picked up for dinner by a large, black Audi with darkened windows. To my great surprise, we went to a restaurant called Memory Jazz Club. The dinner took place in the *Séparée* with the rector and four employees. We talked well. I tried shrimp, rice, tofu and much more. There was also Chinese beer. It tasted very good. I also got along surprisingly well with the chopsticks. The son of the rector studied economics at Gelsenkirchen University of Applied Sciences. I asked the principal about it in detail. Then we went back to the hotel.

I fell asleep, but at one o'clock I was awake again. It was only in the morning that I could sleep for another hour. I had two eggs, which were specially prepared in the pan, two toasts and some noodle soup. Apart from me, there were almost only Chinese people in the breakfast room. It was self-service.

Then we went to university with Audi and driver. In front of the car was a large, yellow flashing light, like a police car. I asked and it was explained to me that the car was one of the state television, which was therefore equipped with special rights for emergencies.

The institute was housed in a state-of-the-art glass building with a huge entrance hall and shiny marble floor. The workshop was scheduled on the 11th floor. I went to a computer lab with about 40 PCs. I heard that just as many people should participate in the workshop. A beamer was also there. What was missing, however, were microphones. How should the groups make sound recordings when there is only one microphone? I called the problem, but the reaction didn't seem too clear. I also had to change the planned program, because first the workshop was to be held, then the lectures, not, as I had planned, alternately.

I tried to produce a flash file in Chinese. First, a little cartoon with a dialogue I had written

down at the hotel that night. I started my dialogue with Jessica. For the other files, the texts had to be exchanged with Chinese texts. Thank goodness there was a young web designer who had already worked with Flash. We made good progress. After two hours we had two nice demo files together. We ate lunch in a small restaurant: Eel, with rice, served in a bamboo cane.

In the afternoon, the lady came from the travel agency with the contract for the Yangtze tour, with flight totaling about \$400. Then I went with the designer Li through a new artistic district in the center of Shanghai. It reminded a little of a similar neighborhood in Hamburg (Speicherviertel) or London. Here old factories were converted into small studios, everything was still under construction. In a small shop, the owner offered pottery courses at horrendous prices. Only one studio had reasonably appealing modern, expressionist images, but not socially critical.

Afterwards we walked along the Bund, the famous promenade of Shanghai on the banks of the HuangPu River, which is characterized by skyscrapers and some English colonial buildings. On the other side of the river: the view of the high TV tower with the new district Pudong, which consists almost only of glittering skyscrapers.

Li wasn't from Shanghai, worked as a web designer, was 28 years old, had a good college education, had his own apartment, and earned about \$800 a month. Her friend was a programmer. She wanted more freedom in her work to develop her creativity. In the evening she usually watched TV, because she was too tired for others. She was very nice and helped me the next day very well, as she did not speak English very well, but understood better and had good computer skills.

I was free on Wednesday. The weather was already hot and humid on the first day, with occasional rain. On Wednesday it was at least dry, but I was still sweating continuously. This time I slept until two o'clock. Jessica said Wednesday was a good day to shop. I asked downstairs in the hotel for a city map, but there was only one in Japanese. I took a taxi to the Nanjing Road shopping street. Surprisingly, it worked, because in the hotel I had understood that the shopping centre was on a 'Nineteen Road', which I also tried to tell the taxi driver. But thank God he took me to the pedestrian zone. I always had my hotel card with me, otherwise I wouldn't have come back.

The taxi drivers were all wearing white gloves. After the start of the trip there was a tonnage: 'You take a company taxi...', almost like Lufthansa: "I wish you a very good flight."

I was dropped off at the Peace Hotel. The pedestrian zone was teeming with people. There were huge department stores, here is Shanghai like Tokyo or New York. But it's also different. In the cross streets outside the pedestrian zone, traffic immediately buzzed. In

addition to many cars, there were tons of bicycles. The drivers, however, did not pay much attention to pedestrians and cyclists. Traffic rules were only rudimentarily observed, evading only shortly before the crash.

I urgently needed a city map. For this I looked for a large hotel and went to the reception on the first floor. I got a nice big plan with English translation. I was finally able to orientate myself. The street names, if they exist, were bilingual. I walked for a long time until I came to People's Square. Here I also discovered the National Museum, a modern circular building. I went up to the 5th floor, where regional costumes of the various ethnic minorities of China were displayed, the women's dresses partly decorated with beautiful silver sequins. I struck, a chain, a doll and a set of postcards. Next to me, an American of African descent made a major purchase. She already had three big packages. But the things were also very nice and seduced to buy.

I continued walking through the endless streets and crowds and came to the Yu Yuan district, recreated from Old Shanghai, with its many small bazaar-like shops and stalls. It was also teeming with tourists in groups, with a Chinese guide at the front, a blue flag or a sunflower as a distinguishing sign.

Some groups of tourists also ran through the area with name badges, probably so that they can be picked up again at the right lost property office in case of loss.

I went to the beautiful Yu Yuan Garden. Here it was a little quieter, only a group of Frenchmen disturbed by their loud nature the tranquil tranquility of the artificial ponds and wooden verandas. I looked at the ponds, bridges, bamboo, stone dragons and rock formations. Everything was well thought out.



*teahous*

In the middle of the shopping area is the tea house, surrounded by water, two-storey. I ordered a jasmine tea with a large flower in the tea glass. There were two boiled quail eggs (I suppose they were quail eggs), tofu and rice wrapped in leaves. As a gift, a nice fan. Slowly I got really hungry. In this corner there were many small Yautse kitchens. As with pizza, the dough is torn into small pieces and filled with pork or crab meat and boiled in

boiling water. There was a long line of Chinese waiting in front of the kitchen. I lined up here. It took almost 20 minutes before it was my turn. I did it like my predecessor, held out a 10 yuan note and got about 10 Yautse balls filled from a round bamboo bowl into a small cardboard bowl. There was also a set of wooden sticks. The Yautse balls were very hot, but tasted delicious. They burst in my mouth when biting, so that the liquid almost ran out of my mouth. Unfortunately, I noticed that a lot of people were already spitting on the wall I leaned against for dinner. They like to do this, both men and women.

At Yu Yuan Garden, I bought a small, slightly modern watercolor from a friendly seller for \$10. After that was done, I took a taxi in the pouring rain and drove to the jazz club. Instead of jazz, however, there was only one band that played dance music, to which the young Chinese danced with practiced steps.

### Episode 100 A *Workshop with Students*

I was picked up on time and was able to do some more tests. The network for the computer lab was not activated, so I had to constantly switch between my notebook and a teacher PC. I was glad to have taken my PC with me, even though it weighs a lot.

At 9 a.m. almost all the students were there; I heard they were computer scientists. They looked at me very seriously. First, I showed a short demo film about the Fernuni, then the first demo in Chinese, 'Hello, Jessica', which we did on Tuesday. I had written the text in the hotel the night before when I couldn't sleep. The students were serious and vigilant, I don't know if I reached them. That's why I showed a funny spot called Bad Day, where someone smashes their PC out of anger that it doesn't work that way. The students laughed, the ice was broken.



I explained the task to them, showed them another demo in Chinese, and then they had to produce themselves. However, as in South America, they did not follow my instructions very much. They were more likely to play with the Flash program. Again and again I went through the ranks, admonished and helped. Actually, they were supposed to create a small teaching sequence, but inspired by the cartoons I had shown, they produced rather small, funny animations.

At the final presentation in the afternoon, I asked one of each group to come forward for the presentation. This was unfamiliar to them, and no one wants to be persuaded to do so. Here were the old teachers/pupils – patterns dominant, but my style seemed to please them.

The day ended, I think, very successfully. Due to the good previous knowledge in programming, the students were able to think very quickly into the software. It was also an experiment with an uncertain outcome for me.

I understood that tomorrow was the day of the lectures and quickly came up with a concept at the hotel. Instead, the workshop should continue the next morning. This surprised me in front of assembled students, but I quickly switched over, had them reprogram a multiple-choice task. That was something that appealed to their programming skills. It took the whole morning until they had mostly understood it and got their example up and running. Then I showed them my show via Virtual Reality and signed pink certificates of participation. In

front of the main building there was a graduation photo with all the students and the vice president.



In the afternoon I gave the expected PowerPoint talk about the virtual university. This was followed by half an hour of discussion. The questions remained relatively general. The level of knowledge had not yet been reached. Shanghai TV University had only written material and video lectures with MPEG4 via a network to study centers. The Shanghai Distance Education Group consisted of the university, a school programme and a web company; An interesting combination.

I was shown a huge recording room for mass lectures and a smaller studio with different conversation corners. Educational TV was not very different. However, the general television programs I could watch in the hotel offered much more than before and were almost on Western standard. On foreign channels, apart from Deutsche Welle, there was only one American sports channel. Germany was doing well in Shanghai, which was also clearly visible on the streets. All taxis were of the type VW-Santana, a co-production.

In the evening I sat down in a small restaurant, but there was neither a menu in English, nor did anyone speak English. So how to eat? The waitress asked around for help. Two Chinese students waved me to their table. I sat down with them. They had studied English in school for up to ten years and supposedly could read it, but it was hardly enough to speak. I ate what they ate, as usual, together from the common plates. In the background was a big TV with the opening ceremony of the Football World Cup. That suited me well. We saw the great opening match in which France lost to Senegal. There was great enthusiasm at the goal, so the Chinese showed emotions. The students wanted to share the bill with me, but I paid most of it and said goodbye quickly. Later they overtook me with their bikes and waved to me.

Episode 101 *Taking the Bus to Lu Dzi*

On Saturday I had booked a bus tour to Lu Dzi, departure at the football stadium. It was Children's Day. Many Chinese families made outings with their groomed favorites. I was sitting in the front of the bus next to a Chinese bank employee who was on a business trip to Solingen with colleagues ten years ago. He spoke at least a few chunks of English. We drove through Shanghai's endless miles of high-rise landscapes, past never-ending industrial parks. The land is flat.

Finally we came to the old, small town of Lu Dzi, a kind of museum village. She is from



The canals are crisscrossed with wooden rowing boats. Small stone bridges cross the canals, everywhere small shops with souvenirs, chains, edibles. There was also a lot of rickshaw. The weather was humid and hot. I walked through the small alleys and saw some folklore performances of older women in blue costumes. They sang children's songs and waved flower baskets. It sounded nice.

The time when I had to be back on the bus had been wrongly written down to me. I was already worried that the bus might leave somewhere else and lounged around at the entrance of the old town. Again and again I went back in between to maybe discover one of the tour group. In a pearl shop I met the travel companion. I took the opportunity to buy a beautiful necklace of freshwater pearls for \$20. The business owner had to extend it.

The second destination was a somewhat reconstructed large complex with an old high pagoda (Pemen). I was the only tourist here. I practiced archery with rather bent arrows on a target.

A Chinese man wanted to be photographed with me. You're still a little sensation. I bought some orange tropical fruits, the peel of which had to be peeled. They had a sweet and sour taste, in the evening at 6 p.m. I was back. I still wanted to eat near the hotel, but all the restaurants were crowded.

Saturday I went to Bund, Shanghai's boulevard. First, I went to the six-storey 'Friendship Store' on Beijing Road. It was still empty. Later, the tourist buses gathered in the yard. Here you could really shop endlessly, but I left it at some nice sets and a handkerchief. A nice salesman wished that Germany would win in football.

In the side streets, surrounded by screws, nuts and hoses, bicycle dealers have settled. On the sidewalks, in the face of the skyscrapers, clotheslines were still stretched and hung with very simple, cheap clothes. The entrances to the older houses were, as everywhere in socialism, dirty and run down, but I had the impression that overall it has become less compared to my last visit four years ago. Through a tunnel under the river Huang Pu I took a small cable car to the opposite bank. In the tunnel there were changing plays of light, lava, waves, heaven and hell symbolizing, to the other shore. Then the high TV tower and the glittering office buildings of Pudong appeared with up to 30 floors. It was oppressively humid and hot again. I drank a beer under a parasol, saw the silhouette of the waistband, in front of which old rusty barges passed by.

In the afternoon there was football in the hotel. I watched very good matches from Argentina, England and Spain all afternoon long. In the evening in the hotel restaurant I ate a rather bony seasoned turtle.



Episode 102 *The Three Gorges with a Chinese Travel Agency*

On Sunday I was preparing for the Yangtze. I had arranged a trip to Yangtze with a Chinese travel agency, with advice from some university staff. I was sitting in the airport waiting for the flight to Wuhan. During the radar control, the corkscrew was taken from me, because a blunt mini knife belongs to me three cm long blade. I could pick it up again later at certain opening hours on receipt after a previous call.

The flight was OK. Before departure, a young American got scared and wanted to get out. I calmed him down a bit. The rice fields looked like patchwork from above. We circled Wuhan for a long time. Now green hills and mountains could be seen everywhere. At the airport someone was waiting for me with a cardboard sign and my name. He did not speak a word of English. We took a taxi to the city. Although there were also high-rise buildings here, but the glittering touch of Shanghai was missing, you are just in the province.

We stopped at a temple complex with a five-storey pagoda “Yellow Crane Tower”. The travel companion bought me a ticket and pointed to the entrance. I didn't know how much time I had to visit. I left him my belongings, briefcase and plastic bag, and went off, past a beautiful pond and after some searching I reached the crane tower. On each floor of the tall five – or hexagonal wooden building, I had a great view of Wuhan and the huge Yangtze River. On one floor there was a large mural, which is supposed to represent the Yangtze in greenish circles and wavy lines. I'll see it on the surface the next day, but I didn't know that.

On another floor, old flower paintings were exhibited in classical painting style, beautiful. On the top floor of the tower I was alone, it was an extremely good feeling to soak up the great view in me.

On my return, the guide was still there with my luggage, thank God. I made a phone call to the Shanghai travel agency via his cell phone. I was told that I could eat something first, then I would be put on the express bus to Yichang. After 4-5 hours of driving someone would pick me up there again and then take me to the ship.

### *Flower pictures*



At the bus station I ate meat and rice and saw part of the match Brazil vs Turkey. Brazil won, as I learned later, with 2 to 1. On the bus I sat next to a student who has a very good English intonation, but was still difficult to understand. Her father worked at the dam, she studied English in Wuhan and now drove home. She made a somewhat old-fashioned impression. Like many others, she wanted to study abroad. We talked quite well, I couldn't sleep anyway. She said that many students live with a friend or girlfriend, but parents often don't know about it. In the dormitory, there are four of them living in one room.

At midnight we were in Yichang, a relatively small town with 400,000 inhabitants. With the pickup it worked. Over a steep embankment we went down to the ships illuminated with lamps. I thought of MS Watutin (ship on our Dnieper trip in Ukraine). The cabin was spacious with shower, two beds and toilet. I could use it alone. However, the ship was not a luxury steamer, the faucets were almost in your hand when you turned them on.

I slept for a few hours. At 6 a.m. there was a wake-up call. At 6.30 a.m. we went through a lock. It was still foggy on the river, a beautiful descent from Yichang. I was satisfied, had probably done everything right with the trip.

*Sluice*

At breakfast I sat at the table with a group of American tourists: 'Wolfram' is too difficult for them to pronounce, they want to call me 'John'. I refused the name change. The tour group had been promised a better steamer, so they nabbed about everything, 'everything here is terrible'. Even the fact that I suddenly sat at her table seemed to disturb her usual order. Some were also very nice and kept asking if I was traveling alone. In the morning we went to the not quite finished dam. 1.2 million people were relocated, a gigantic project that didn't look as impressive.

We were told in detail how the dam works. The difference in height can be overcome by the boats via six locks connected in succession. People should either go to friends or relatives, move higher up the mountains or move to southern China; It is hard to imagine, especially since the language in Guangdong is incomprehensible to the people here.

It was hot and humid and the sun was shining. I was happy when there was some shade and cooler wind in the evening. The air conditioner worked only weakly, sometimes it was also completely switched off. I can cut football. Although there was a TV in the cabin, but it had only one program and even that you could hardly understand, because the sound was disturbed. Maybe that was also quite healing, because otherwise I might have only watched the games instead of the Yangtze.

*reservoir*



In the afternoon we came already through the three gorges. Sometimes the rocks protruded steeply from the water, sometimes I saw gentle green hills, sometimes small fishing boats with the round canopies, from which the fishermen fished in the yellow flowing floods or caught crabs in the direction of the current with handnets. In the evening it was more pleasant. You sit on deck, your legs against the roe deer. A tour group from Taiwan played Mahjong, the Americans played Bridge. Others just looked at the quietly passing landscape. Everywhere motifs from Chinese painting were recognized, fine curved wavy lines buried in rocks, bamboo, delicate grasses.

On the second day, we took smaller boats to the 'Lesser Three Gorges' in a side arm of the Yangtze River. It was still early in the morning. The sun slowly pushed back the haze. We drove under the Dragon Bridge upstream, the water was tearing in places, greenish and clear in contrast to the often-polluted Yangtze. The boatmen had long bamboo poles with an iron tip to repel themselves from the edge or from the shallow river bed. The ride was fun. Boats were constantly approaching or being overhauled. With the current, this required a lot of skill. You had to use the current and look for the deeper areas. A few times we ran aground easily.

On the third day, the famous part was almost over. The Yangtze became wider. I sat on deck and read an American book about New Shanghai. In the evening, I went with some others to a karaoke room on board. Alternately, the Americans sang and a corpulent Taiwanese. I sang the song 'Alraune', which of course was not included in the Play Back catalogue. Afterwards, some Taiwanese invited me to drink sake. The next morning, I didn't feel very well. However, I don't think it came from sake, rather from a peach that I washed off with the hot tea water. By the way, at the time of the purchase, I had been turned on when changing currency, a total of six dollars.

The next day, the sun could not be seen at all. There was a thick fog over the river. The ship could only go very slowly. With four hours delay we came to a mostly abandoned city with half demolished houses. "Ghost City" they told us. We climbed the 700 steps to the temple above the city. This is where the god of the underworld lives. There were many depictions of the inferno. Again, people in hell are impaled, cooked or fried. The Chinese come here to ask for better conditions in the next life.



*hell*

The city at the foot of the mountain will soon be under water, the temple will remain. With a chairlift we went down again with a view of the dead city and our berth. My stomach was feeling a little better again. I'll take another Immodium. An American woman said that she had made travel notes, which she then fell over the roe deer. Slowly I got used to the American tour group.

In the evening we played cards. The Americans were from Wisconsin. Almost all of them were descended from German emigrants, but had hardly visited Germany so far. Some of them were stationed in Germany. They were called Schröder, Duffner or similar. They were very interested in Germany, many were retired teachers. An American asked if we were carrying weapons in Germany. When I said no, he said he felt much safer with a gun.

The delay in the fog worried me. What if we arrived in Chongqing too late? I didn't even have the return ticket for Shanghai, and on Sunday is my return flight to Germany. In the

night there was a huge thunderstorm, the lightning flashed like fireworks. I was still trying to get some sleep. In the morning we were suddenly in Chongqing. Everything churned around, packed, waited at the railing. The first groups disembarked, but where was someone with a sign for me? I slowly became nervous, asked the ship's crew, who did not understand me, showed contract and phone numbers. Nothing helped, they said they didn't have a cell phone. The travel companions of the American group had other concerns themselves. My sweat just went down like that. I was standing there with a plastic bag and briefcase. What to do? I went in the direction of Kay through the through boat, we were in the second row of investors. There was a table with a phone, a man called the numbers I told him, but no one called. When I almost resigned, there was movement in those around me.

A small person pushes through, "Mr. Laaser?" I was totally done, but relieved. Her name was Cyan and she thought the boat would be moored later. She had everything with her, ticket and instructions.

We climbed up the steep steps at the harbor, everywhere were load carriers, balancing large heavy baskets on a bamboo pole above the back, the steps up and down.

#### *Load carriers*



It rained lightly. With a car and driver we drove to the parliament building and the museum. The museum was housed in a primitive run-down house, more reminiscent of a hospital building. In the museum there were photos of Chongqing from the past hundred years. It is simply incredible how a large city with 30 million inhabitants has grown here in the last ten to twenty years. I bought a 200-year-old vase from the Qing Dynasty (before the revolution) for \$80.

The antiques were sold to finance the new museum. Then the little cyan asked me if I would like to see the stone sculptures in a more distant place, of which small photos are exhibited in the museum. For \$100 extra we drove with the driver about 170 km of highway. We drove past mountains, covered with green rice terraces, a fertile and beautiful landscape. The sculptures we saw on arrival were carved into the rock 800 years ago and tell stories about heaven and hell, family life and hunting. There are also huge Buddhas statues.

Particularly impressive was the giant sleeping Buddha.

### **Buddha figures**



To the exit there is a view of green ponds, bamboo and rice fields. It was nice and relaxing. We went back to Chongqing. Zuan wanted to show me an old silk factory, but apart from ancient machines and some silkworms nothing else could be seen. I was glad to finally be back at the airport. A big machine took me back to Shanghai. It was getting late. I only had about \$10 in local currency with me. At the exit of the airport, a Chinese man in a dark suit rushed at me to '\$20 to the hotel, new car not old'. I refused, even though a big queue is waiting for taxis. "\$15?" I said \$10 is OK. He called a dark car with a driver, not a taxi. I was afraid of being under gangsters. But everything went well. They dropped me off at the hotel and I paid the \$10 they changed right away at the hotel reception.

In the bar I ate a noodle soup at midnight. How did Germany play? I asked a group of Chinese people, they thought about it, but they didn't get me right. Then suddenly they pointed to a table on the wall. Germany will play again on 11.06., then I will be back at home in Hagen. I thanked you.



### Episode 103 *Farewell to Shanghai*

The next morning, the chauffeur picked me up in the university's official car at 8.30 a.m. for breakfast with the president of the university. He was formerly head of the Old Town District of Shanghai. We had breakfast in the classy restaurant of Yu Yuan Garden. He said that Bill Clinton had eaten here too, but was supposedly worse off with the chopsticks than I was. There were small tasty things, tea, meat and rice wrapped in leaves, sweet rice dish, noodle soup, yawts, small crabs, just delicious.



We talked about strategies for future university development. He was to plan a state-of-the-art complex with several universities based on the American model, a Brain Trust. I received as a gift a large calligraphy with the saying of Confucius, which describes the joy of visiting from abroad. After that we went through the beautiful Yu Yuan Garden again, everything was explained to me exactly. Then to the Wan Temple, where students and their parents made small offerings before the exams. Everywhere I got gifts, illustrated books, sayings of Confucius.

We said goodbye after an opulent meal. I drove back to the hotel and wondered how to transport all these things.

After an hour I went back to the Bund. Crowds flocked across the beautiful promenade. A wonderful view of the office giants of Pudong. I made a small boat trip on the Huang Pu. Shanghai installed the night advertising lighting. A wonderful sight. Then take the taxi back to the hotel. I changed \$5 for the last time. On the way to a nearby supermarket, where I wanted to buy a bottle of wine, I took another one-hour massage. I was knocked on. The masseuse massaged her back with her knees, squatting in my back. It did well and cost just over \$1. Saying goodbye was really hard. Another noodle soup at the hotel and Zhao Djian Shanghai.

### Episode 104 **Hong Kong is China**



Hong Kong, which was released from the status of the British crown colony in 1998, is then part of China again, but has a certain special status, which provides that the democratic structures may be maintained. Similar to Shanghai, Hong Kong is characterized by a sea of high-rise buildings. Since the skyscrapers are very close to each other due to lack of space, they had ingeniously created corridors about halfway up with small connecting bridges on which you could walk long distances without touching the ground.



I attended the 2004 ICDE conference in Hong Kong and had decided to take my son, who was 35 years old at the time, on the trip, as I was sure that he would also cope alone if I had obligations from the conference.

We had a room on the 13th floor of a high-rise building with beautiful views of the harbor, from which a ferry drove to the opposite shore.

At the conference, I gave a presentation on 'Multimedia for Web Courses in German and Chinese Perspective'. Unfortunately, my co-author from Shanghai, Jiang Weijing, was unable to attend the meeting. For this purpose, some curious colleagues from the FernUniversität had temporarily sat down in the lecture hall to follow my lecture.



Time passed quickly for my son as well. Once we went to Repulse Bay with one of the typical double-decker buses, which are usually only known from London. I wanted to swim in the Chinese sea at least once, even though the water was quite cold. Repulse Bay was protected from sharks by a net in the water. We then did what you do as a tourist, we drove up Victoria Hill with endless escalators, strolled through the Night Market and saw the great skyline in the evening, lit by a great fireworks from the roofs of the skyscrapers. Finally, we also took a day trip by hovercraft to the former Portuguese colony of Macao. The street signs were still visible here in Chinese and Portuguese.

*Macao:* Chinese and Portuguese



There were also many old buildings in the Portuguese style. We also took a quick look at the casino without wasting a Hong Kong dollar.

Back in Hong Kong, I heard loudspeakers of Argentine tango sung by Gardel while walking along the promenade. I couldn't believe it. A group of Chinese people danced tango. So everywhere something completely unexpected can happen, nothing is predestined.

### Episode 105 *Digitalization, Virtual University and Globalization*

At the end of the 1990s, the topic of virtual university dominated the academic community. The various web platforms had more or less the same range of functions. But it also became clear that digitalisation had to include administration. This meant that functions such as enrollment, certification, room allocation, examinations had to be merged into an overall concept. This concept has been referred to as a virtual university or virtual campus. Campus management systems were also interesting for conventional universities because they simplified many processes. The FernUniversität in Hagen was initially predestined for the necessary restructuring due to its many years of experience with the electronic media, but the impulses then came increasingly from the classroom universities, while at the FernUniversität the tooth of the time gnawed and the necessary adjustments were delayed.

My consulting activities shifted once again in their focus. In my lectures and articles, I covered the experiences and requirements of a virtual university. When the first comprehensive strategic considerations for the implementation of a network-based campus began in Europe at the beginning of the 20th century, many countries were neither technically nor organizationally able to develop qualified concepts of their own, since especially the infrastructure - as well as the organizational patterns - were not yet developed. The very concept of the virtual university bothered me, since a distance learning system is not virtual as an idea of something not concrete. Actually, a virtual university is not an abstract entity, but a real institution with professors, students and buildings, similar to what is now said of the same university as a 'digital university'. What is meant is simply that the university disseminates its teaching and administration through networks and a prerequisite for this is 'digitisation'. Unfortunately, the fuzzy definition is partly responsible for unnecessary discussions, but this kind of fashion terms can be used for marketing ideas and hidden ideologies. I have therefore repeatedly put myself on the side of critical analysis and differentiation.

In the case of development aid by the major industrialized countries, usually only equipment and software from the respective donor country are provided and the accompanying materials have neither been created in the country nor related to the target group of the respective students. A historical example was, and to a limited extent still is, the founding of the African Virtual University (AVU) in 1997. With the support of the World Bank, lectures by American universities in English were transmitted via satellite to Nairobi and some study centers. The offer was not perceived by the AVU countries according to the ideas of the founders by the students and the national educational institutions. The AVU approach was a counter-draft to the modest but locally inclusive workshopconcept of the DSE (German Foundation for International Development) and my course development in Cordoba, Argentina (top down vs. bottom up).

While there are models that describe stages of developments in distance learning, there is no deterministic sequence of specific generations of distance learning systems. For example, learning with smartphones has developed faster in Asia and Africa than in Europe. For this reason, one's own experiences can only be communicated to a limited extent and intensive dialogue is indispensable. I have been asked many times whether this or that course of the FernUniversität could not be used at the University in Costa Rica or Chile. However, it turned out that the courses were developed in a certain context and were therefore not used or only completed with little success without intensive supervision and adaptation to the importing institution.

## Episode 106 *Interculturality*

With the expansion of online teaching in the network beyond the national area, the topic of interculturality came back into focus, including the question of whether the distance learning materials should be adapted for the different countries and nationalities. For example, colors, fonts, inappropriate language, examples that come from a different context and many other things need to be adapted if a better global acceptance of a distance learning offer is to be achieved. I have analyzed in some online seminars for the Spanish University in Murcia along with the students differences in web design for different countries. In order to categorise countries, we used Hofstede's already 'classical' criteria to describe different cultures. Of course, the extent to which a course is localized is also a question of costs.

The problem was brought to my attention very concretely when I was a consultant for the European Community-funded project ELBEP (Eliminating Language Barriers in European Prisons through Open and Distance Education Technology). I was engaged by the Turkish Anadolu University, which was also the consortium leader of the project, in which Russia, Poland, Belgium, Greece and Germany were also represented. At the Turkish Mega University, a generally usable online program for learning basic knowledge of the Turkish language had already been developed. The portal should be translated and evaluated in four languages. Already in a first meeting of the project participants it became clear that a simple translation of the language portal could not be done without additional programming work and secondly that it would be desirable if the staff in prisons would also acquire knowledge of the language most important for their inmates, but here first the application example should be determined and only then the needs should be queried. For the target group mentioned in the project title, a specific language programme with contextual examples would probably have been more innovative. The project was then modified and various modules for language acquisition of a secondary language were developed in Russian, Greek, Polish and German. The project was created in the context of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008.

In any case, the project group worked very intensively. Meetings took place at greater intervals in different countries and ended after the final meeting with a small party in the house of a Greek professor, where a colleague sang a Russian song, a Hungarian could whistle an aria from the opera Carmen, the Turk performed a love song and the Greek and I contributed blues and folklore to the guitar. The cultural diversity was thus guaranteed and was a nice enrichment of the evening.

## Isfahan



I had come across the topic of interculturality through a contact with a Finnish scientist whom I had met at a conference in Tehran. We were the only invited foreigners and accommodated in the same hotel. After the conference, my colleague flew back to Joensuu, Finland, while I was still attending a study center at Iran's Payame Nor University in Isfahan. Isfahan is simply a beautiful example of Islamic architecture and can certainly be classified in the chain of wonders of the world.

A short time later, I received a request from Joensuu, Finland, to hold a workshop in Rokolahti on the application of Macromedia's Flash program, which was particularly well suited to the development of sound-based animations and interactive tasks. It was interesting for me that the participants at the beginning hardly expressed any reactions, neither positive nor negative. Only after a few sauna sessions did the participants, mostly doctoral students, become a little more talkative. I was told that this is a typical feature of the Finns, to communicate only the bare necessities.

### *Sauna in Finland*



I visited the University of Joensuu several times for lectures and a research seminar for doctoral students, in which, among other things, the importance of the cultural context for the future globalization of the education sector was discussed.

I was also fortunate that a professor from the university had committed to moderate a group at the ICALT conference in Kaohsiung (Taiwan), but was prevented from doing so. He then asked me to represent him in Kaohsiung, which I gladly did. However, the topic of interculturality played only a minor role at the conference.

## Episode 107 *The Importance of Pool Billiard*

The return flight via Malaysia was bizarre. I was sitting on the plane next to a younger man who, as I noticed after a while, did not speak English, but I could at least ask him about his country. He was a pool billiards player from Buenos Aires who had participated in a World Championship tournament in Kaohsiung. We talked very well in Spanish. In Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) we both had a waiting time of about 6 hours until our connecting flights. To bridge the time to some extent, we drove from the airport by express train to the center of Kuala Lumpur. The Argentine billiard player wanted to go to the Petronas Tower, then the tallest building in the world. When we arrived in the lobby of the building, two young employees told us that we needed tickets for the elevator because of the high demand, but they had to be pre-ordered. Although we explained that we did not have time because of our flights, they did not allow themselves to be softened. When we wanted to turn around very disappointed, I told them that my colleague had participated in the World Championships in pool billiards in Kaohsiung. This brought shine to their eyes and we immediately received two tickets. The view was not from the top, but from a bridge between two towers, but still very impressive. We strolled through a market and visited a palace before getting back on the train to the airport. Everyone then took their connecting flight after I promised to visit him at his billiard club in Buenos Aires if I were there again.



## Episode 108 *Distance Learning in the Eastern Bloc*

It was always a special experience to travel to a country that was then communist or called socialist. These countries were open to market economies to varying degrees. As a Berliner, I was no longer allowed to go to the eastern part of the city or to another part of the Russian-controlled GDR without special permission after 1961. The first trips to Moscow had to be completed with certain travel agencies in East and West, which allowed my wife and I to get to know Moscow and the surrounding area with a student travel agency (Interkontakt) under strict conditions in the mid-1970s. The exchange rate to the ruble was fixed and illegal exchange was strictly prohibited. You were only allowed to buy in so-called intourist shops against Western foreign exchange. Bridges and railway stations were not allowed to be photographed.



On the other hand, the tourists were presented with excellent state-organized events of ballet, folklore or music in a quality that was not reachable with us. An unencumbered dialogue was only possible much later.

On later trips, the lucrative exchange of foreign currency into rubles on the black market was already irritating, as the exchange was also now less intensively controlled.

A trip that led far beyond Moscow to the border with the Ural Mountains to Syktivkar, we made via a contact that a travel agency had made with the local German-Russian society. We celebrated at -25 ° New Year's Eve with a Russian family to whom we had been assigned by the travel agency. Due to the ruble exchange rate achievable, a bottle of sparkling wine cost us less than 3 DM. The price of vodka was also low. The New Year's Eve party in the apartment of our hosts was therefore quite humid cheerful and increased even more when a neighbor came in a leopard costume. At 5 o'clock in the morning, everyone took to the streets. Someone was playing accordion and we were sliding at high

speed into the New Year on a playground slide covered with a layer of ice. The host family wanted to emigrate to Germany, but we couldn't help you with that.

Another relationship with Russia came about by chance. A painter from Smolensk accepted the invitation of the Hagen Artists' Association and was initially accommodated with a host family for the duration of the exhibition. However, when we visited the vernissage on a Sunday morning, a friend asked us if we could accommodate a Russian painter for some time, the previous host would have refused to take him longer and already brought his belongings in the trunk of his Mercedes. In order to rectify the embarrassing situation, we agreed after a few questions.



It was a good decision. The painter stayed with us for three weeks, as we got along well, although I had long forgotten my knowledge from a Russian course during high school. I later visited him in Smolensk and learned a lot about the golden years of Russian painting and unknown painters like Repin or Aivasovski. One weekend we went to Vitebsk in Belarus to see the house of Chagall. Vitebsk is often seen by Chagall in the background of his pictures. The friendship I developed was a motivation for me to learn some Russian again. We stayed in contact to this day and his pictures have been decorating our apartment for many years.

In distance learning, Russia had not participated in the international discussion for a long time. There was only such a thing as correspondence studies, i.e. students received work orders and discussed the results with the supervising university teacher at greater intervals. They therefore did not develop a specific media concept. Distance learning as an independent development model did not exist until the turn of the century, i.e. very late. The Moscow State University for Economics, Statistics and Informatics (MESI) offered 740 online courses from 2010 onwards, and the offer has now continued to rise sharply.

The FernUniversität had set up study centers in Petersburg and Smolensk with funds from the Federal Foreign Office. I went with some colleagues to a lecture in Petersburg, but there were hardly any questions or discussion about the lecture. This was explained to me by the fact that the salaries of the academic staff were so low that the academics either went abroad or left the university to take up other professional activities in the private labour market, but at least had a low motivation to improve the media design in teaching, which is likely to be

associated with additional work.

I was confirmed in the assessment of the situation during a visit to Hagen by a Russian game theorist. She said that of the famous Academy of Sciences only a small group of old scientists remained (concerning the Yeltsin era).

However, the stay in Petersburg was brought to a positive end by a very good classical concert and an evening ride through the canals of the Russian 'Venice'.



*Kreml*

I came back to Moscow several times. Once at an ICDE conference where I happened to meet a colleague from Venezuela during a coffee break. However, he was at another conference that took place in the same building at the same time. We decided in our free time to visit the Bolshoi Museum, where the treasure of Troy should be on display. The entrance fee had to be paid in dollars and was therefore quite high. My South American colleague therefore asked if there was a

He gave and presented his Venezuelan business card to the cashier. Since the cashier obviously could not interpret the business card, we got a very discounted entrance. I had behaved quietly and nodded only approvingly.

Another visit was dedicated to a public service training institution that had asked for explanations on the design and production of written distance learning materials. I had created a Russian model version with a layout suitable for distance learning, but then never heard about the application again.

The last visit took place together with a small group of the private Austrian distance learning

institution “Worldwide Education”, where we searched for authors for a further education course “How to make Business in Russia”. One of the potential candidates was a professor who belonged to the DUMA (Russian Parliament) and received us in his office in the Duma building. The mediator who brought us into the building promptly demanded a ‘pleasure’ from us.



*Duma*

## Episode 109 *Eurasia Conference and New Contacts*

In the wake of the dissolution of the USSR and the independence of various states in 1990 and 1991, the European Community had an interest in strengthening the links between the new states and, among other things, setting up support programmes for information technology. The EURASIA conference, to which I was invited, took place in 1998 in Almaty, Kazakhstan. My flight plan included a change of plane in Moscow, which I used for the first time to exchange rubles. However, the plane to Almaty did not arrive in Almaty until around 5 a.m. due to unfavourable departure times. Although I, like other delegates who had chosen the same flight, had reserved a room, the hotel said there were not enough rooms available. Despite vehement protests, we had to adjust to double rooms. I asked the man standing next to me if he was willing to share the room with me. Everyone was tired and he agreed immediately. He came from Baku in Azerbaidjan and headed an institute for computer science there. Similar institutions existed in all former CIS countries. The official discussions about possible cooperations were always sprinkled with vodka. Alcohol consumption was limited only by the long pronounced toasts. A meal was also offered in a very nice yurt (large tent laid out with carpet).



*Kazakh yurt*

In the evening we went to a bar together with a Georgian colleague who ran a similar institute in Tbilisi (Tbilisi). That evening our man from Baku had drunk a little too much, so that we two others dragged him back to the hotel with some effort.

Shortly after the Eurasia conference, I received an invitation to Baku. I first gave two lectures for the employees of the Institute of Computer Science, but also wanted to give a lecture for students on my multimedia production about intelligent strategies, which I had translated into Russian with great effort together with a technician from Ukraine in Hagen.

I arranged an interview with the Director of the Institute of World Economy in Baku about the offer of a lecture design for students in the fields of computer science and economics.

My offer was only relatively unwillingly accepted, but finally accepted with the support of my colleague. It was then a very emotional event, as the students, about 70-100, barely understood English, but from the presentation with the projector could very well follow the sound-supported multimedia program in Russian. It was really touching to see the interest and enthusiasm among the young students. As I later heard, it was relatively common at that time not to obtain exams or other certificates by performance, but to bribe the university teachers. The commitment of the teachers was obviously very low. The weekend we spent in the dacha on the shores of the Caspian Sea, where I immediately seized the opportunity to swim in the sea. During my stay in Baku, I took an intensive Russian language course with a private teacher for one week, five hours a day. I flew back to Germany with a big bag of black caviar. Also from the colleague from Georgia, I received an invitation to Tbilisi. I had a huge apartment available, but was all alone and it was already autumn and very cold. I spent my time outside the conference playing guitar. Besides me, an Austrian was invited to a conference at the Institute of Computer Science. In the evening there was a meal together in a restaurant, to which we were driven by buses. There were a number of toasts pronounced and I found that the host was about the same age as me and had lost his father in World War II, just like me. It was also worth a toast. When I went to the toilet, I saw a banjo hanging on the wall as decoration in the entrance area. I took it in my hand and found that one side was not on the bridge. So I asked for a knife, notched the bridge and put the string back in properly. On the bus I sat next to the Austrian and we talked about music. He told me that after 30 years he had started playing music again with his old band Skiffle. Like me, he played the banjo and guitar. A guitar was brought from somewhere and we started playing a bit in the foyer. Shortly thereafter, we were asked to play in the hall on the upper floor for the conference participants. I played guitar, he accompanied me with the banjo. It was a brilliant evening which ended with 'When the Saints go Marching in'.

## Episode 110 *Distance learning in United States*

In contrast to Russia, distance learning was widespread in the USA for a long time and in 1990 there were already distance learning courses in all states of the USA, but not as in Europe as autonomous distance learning universities, but mostly as satellite-based lectures for the regional branches of the university or as a consortium of several universities with a central production and distribution unit. However, the development of the media used in distance learning hardly went beyond 'teleclasses'. The 1997 ICDE World Conference at PenState University, which saw itself as a pioneer in distance learning, was arguably the worst of the ICDE World Conferences I had ever attended. In many lecture rooms there were no projectors to show multimedia applications. The lectures from the American side offered little interesting. As accommodation, rooms were available in a dormitory, which were very simple. The toilets were communal and non-lockable, and posters hung everywhere banning smoking and alcoholic beverages. The students who used to live there had semester breaks. As a communicative event, there was a so-called "Jazz Icecream" in the pouring rain, where you should have fun with ice cream cones, badly played jazz and without beer or wine. I decided, together with some colleagues, to switch instead to a nearby beer pub. After the conference, I went with colleagues to Niagara Falls, which already belongs to Canada, where you could admire the beautifully built villa-like wooden houses on the way. The waterfalls were impressive, but not comparable to the Argentine and Brazilian falls of Iguazù.

*Niagara Falls*



*Iguaúzu*





I had visited the United States for the first time in 1984, on the occasion of a short trip to a fellow student who had been given a job as a regional consultant at the World Bank in Washington. He lived together with a Japanese woman in a large apartment in a central location comparable to our old apartments. We visited the beautiful museums, the house of George Washington and searched the Library of Congress opposite the White House to see if there were any publications recorded under our names. We hiked in the forests and mountains of the Appalachian Mountains in West Virginia. I borrowed his car and drove to the Hudson River and Baltimore, populated by people of African descent. On my return, I had a small rear-end collision, the damage of which my friend could settle through the insurance. I wanted to go to New York for a few more days and had some tips from my hosts.

In New York, I lived for \$16 at the YMCA near Central Park. I watched the musical "Sophisticated Lady" on Broadway and went to a jazz club with very good modern jazz in "Little Italy".

The most exciting thing was to follow my friend's recommendation and take a nightly look at Manhattan (Big Apple) from the old Brooklyn Bridge. So I drove late in the evening with an umbrella armed with the metro to the Brooklyn Bridge. Since the entrance was not easy to find because of street work, I asked a passerby where the entrance to the high bridge was. He said 'at that time you really want to cross the bridge'? I answered in the affirmative with a somewhat queasy feeling and let myself be shown the stairs to the ascent. I went to the bridge under the right and left driving along the cars. So there was no greater retreat area. Then a man from the other side came to meet me. He had a wooden stick in his hand. We looked at each other and let each other pass. Then I saw three people coming towards the other end of the bridge and immediately turned around and decided not to take any more risks. After all, the view of Manhattan was not bad and you could see the Twin Tower well. Another day I took the metro to Harlem, but with each station the 'whites' became less and less until I was the only one left among people of colour. In Harlem I quickly looked for a taxi overflowing with sweat to drive me through Harlem. The taxi was barricaded like a fortress. The taxi driver told me that it was very dangerous here and the tourists were sometimes pulled out of the car at a traffic light to get ransom or valuables. We drove past closed shops and saw many men idly hanging around.

What I really liked was the view from the Empire State Building of the New York skyscraper landscape. One slogan was 'The closest some of us will ever get to heaven'.

I got to know the other coast and the south of the United States together with my wife through a trip organized by a trade union travel agency. We visited Los Angeles, San Francisco and Las Vegas, the Grand Canyon and Yosemite Park, among others. From the



cities we liked San Francisco best because of its European character. We drove to the bay in San Salito and I remembered the beautiful song 'Sitting on the dock of the bay'. An insider tip was also the view of San Franzisco from the top floor of the Hyatt Hotel, but only from the ladies' toilet. I then adjusted a suitable moment and found that the guide had not lied.

Los Angeles was disappointing. Venice Beach was pretty dirty and the beach wasn't attractive. At night, the 'homeless people' gathered on the large lawn in front of the town hall very close by. A walk through the streets clearly showed the lack of minimum social security. A small oasis between high-rise buildings and highways was the small Mexican center in the middle of L.A.

The much smaller, deserted Las Vegas embodied what Arthur Miller meant when he called the United States a cancer of Europe. Already in the reception of our hotel "Golden Nugget" you could hear the one-armed bandits rattling non-stop. In the evening we went with the tour group on an evening walk through the reconstructed ancient Via Appia in Rome, also garnished with countless slot machines and through an Egyptian pavilion. I was fascinated by the sight of a travel participant from the former GDR, who wanted to take part in the walk despite a vein inflammation and walked limping through the Via Appia without dropping her video camera even for a moment.

A real natural wonder was the Grand Canyon, which we flew over with a small propeller machine. I could sit next to the pilot much to the annoyance of another passenger, who told me that he had been with the Air Force before, was over 70 years old and would improve his pensions through the flights, which did not exactly reassure me and I was happy when we landed safely again.



*Grand Canyon*

A workshop I held for Nova Southeastern University on programming and design in Fort Worth was aimed at scientists of a PhD program with distance learning components. The workshop took place in a large hotel and a PC pool was available for my group. It was astonishing that the group of 15-20 participants was well-informed about theories, but hardly had any practical experience in media development. When their unsecured work results were accidentally deleted by a wrong command, they wanted to blame me, even though it wasn't me who did the installation, but university staff. They pointed out that they had spent a lot of money and it would be my obligation to offer them something that would correspond to the money. They did not come up with the idea that the result could also depend on them. After the error was localized and was not my responsibility, the workshop took a calm course and a good conclusion. I was astonished by the excessive demands of the participants for our circumstances.

Episode 111 *"Do You know what it means to miss New Orleans"*

To relax a bit before the long return flight, I took a flight to New Orleans and rented a small guesthouse in the French Quarter. Many street names were familiar to me from the pieces we played with the FernUni jazz band, such as Bourbon Street or Canal street. I also rode the paddle steamer a bit on the Mississippi, but what I missed was good Dixiland music. The band, which played in the alleged cradle of jazz, the Preservation Hall, although Dixiland, but without enthusiasm. Finally, I found at least one band that played traditional jazz. The banjo player had played for some time in Frankfurt and later sent me the lyrics of a very beautiful blues 'Meet me where they play the Blues'.



Episode 113 *New challenges*  
Episode 112 *Adaptation tendencies at FernUniversität*

At the beginning of the 20th century, FernUniversität began to adapt more closely to the development of conventional universities by constructing new buildings for classroom events on campus and abandoning cooperation with public television. The changes were also recorded by the ZFE, which lacked the revenues from the WDR cooperation. The change was also facilitated by the retirement of the manager. Through the web with its new tools, the teaching seemed to be medial by the chair holders themselves. A central institute was no longer in such demand. This trend was partly reported by other comparable institutions at the conferences. Unfortunately, the responsibility for a strategic change of direction in Hagen was placed in the hands of people who were unfamiliar with the previous development of distance learning. Instead of the study letter, "lecture/capture", i.e. the recording of lectures, should now become the leading medium. You no longer needed to sit in the lecture hall, but could watch TV on the sofa. This method had already been used by the Chinese Radio and TV University to train masses of teachers. Whether one learns more and better with it is doubtful. Do you want to go back to the Fordist model? But it could have been different, before. FernUniversität has acquired its unique selling proposition through medial mediation. I had hoped that one would concentrate more on the specifics of distance learning, rather than on absorbing the highest possible number of students. The coronavirus crisis illustrates the need for intensive training and segregation of duties. Pure media institutes will probably no longer exist in the future, but institutes that do not stop at the invention of a new 'toy', but also examine and, if necessary, implement these innovations in their practical relevance.

In 2008, my career at FernUniversität ended when I turned 65 years old. I received a contract from the distance learning university for the development of interactive tasks in business administration. The work contract was then fulfilled at the end of 2009, as well as my work in the European ELBEP project.

At a conference in Turkey in 2010, a selected group of experts discussed the future of television cooperation at Turkey's Anadolu University, a mega university with more than one million students. The university was already familiar to me from previous invitations. On this occasion I met an old acquaintance from the time of my first major conference in Newfoundland, Jon Baggaley - that was already about 30 years ago. It was a very warm reunion. At the end of the conference, we were both approached by a young entrepreneur from Austria who ran a private educational institute in Wels and invited us to take a look at the Institute World Wide Education to possibly work together. I then flew to Austria and learned that for about 3,000 students in Austria via a distance learning system, in addition to specific courses, the company also opened up the possibility of obtaining a special continuing education master's degree. However, the government had decreed that from 2013 only universities or universities of applied sciences may award an academic degree.

The consequence for the company was to submit an accreditation application as quickly as possible in order to be recognized as a private university and to offer qualified master's and bachelor's degrees. They had already gone through two procedures without success and now wanted to make another attempt under the time pressure to achieve accreditation. Both my Canadian colleague - and myself - were impressed by the company owner's energy and vision. I was therefore happy to discuss the offer of a somewhat longer-term job for WWEDU (World Wide Education). I flew to Wels from time to time and was able to work at home. My task was to revise the previous accreditation application, to design a curriculum for a Master's programme in Educational Technology and to recruit and supervise course authors. I also redesigned the economic part of the course "Basic economics", as the content had been presented in a less attractive way. Teaching in the context of WWEDU was based on video lectures and not on written courses, which anticipated a development that the FernUniversität in Hagen did not begin to use until years later. In addition, WWEDU had developed a very comfortable system for the creation of electronic courses, which combined texts, tasks, flash files and video sequences very nicely. It was the best course development platform I knew at the time. The

Working together in a creative environment was refreshing. Since the owner of the company had converted an old cinema for music events, I put my visits in Wels preferably on an appointment for which a concert took place. Through my work for WWEDU, I also had the opportunity to participate in relevant conferences in Berlin, Dublin, Moscow, Aveiro (Portugal) and Cotonu (Benin). Apart from an earlier conference in Tunis, the meeting in Benin was the only one where I had to give a lecture in French.

## Episode 114 *A Disappointing Trial*

The accreditation application was a Sisyphus work, but made good progress. The curricula for the planned courses had to be drawn up, financial and personnel planning had to be submitted, the future course authors had to be pre-contracted and much more. I was the formal contact person for the accreditation company, which unfortunately was converted into a private institution by a public accreditation council during the application process. I noticed from the very first contacts that our efforts to establish a private Austrian distance learning university were not very well-balanced. Unfortunately, this impression was confirmed. When we filed an application for bias against an appraiser because of his participation in a competing company, this was rejected. Three of the appraisers were not more familiar with distance learning and so misjudgements in the appraisals were not surprising. There was also an appraiser who made manifestly inaccurate judgments about the governing body. A right of objection was given, but a written justification for the refusal by the accreditation company was not given, nor was the possibility of acceptance subject to conditions. The company WWEDU went bankrupt and an opportunity for an innovative private distance learning university (Austrian Open University) was frivolously missed. Looking back, it was still a very interesting activity for me, which ended in 2014.

Episode 110 *Everything Has an End Only the Sausage Has Two*

My last big keynote was in Catamarca, Argentina in 2014, the year I finished my work in Austria for WWEDU and a successor institution.

I had accepted a workshop at short notice from the Mexican University in Guadalajara in 2017, but it had cost a lot of strength. I have been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease since 2008. It was also a difficult year as my mother died that year and my wife began to suffer from increasing health problems. At first, I didn't feel much of my illness, I could play football, go swimming and I could continue to work. My illness progressed, slowly but steadily, so that the football game also made more and more trouble for me. In 2019, I then had a long and exhausting hospital stay, from which I did not recover in such a way that another professional activity could be considered. That's why I decided to write down some episodes from my life for interested readers.

In gratitude, I would like to close a gap for all those who have made my absence from home possible and for those who have made my presence far from home so interesting and enriching.

***Wolfram Laaser (born 1943)***

