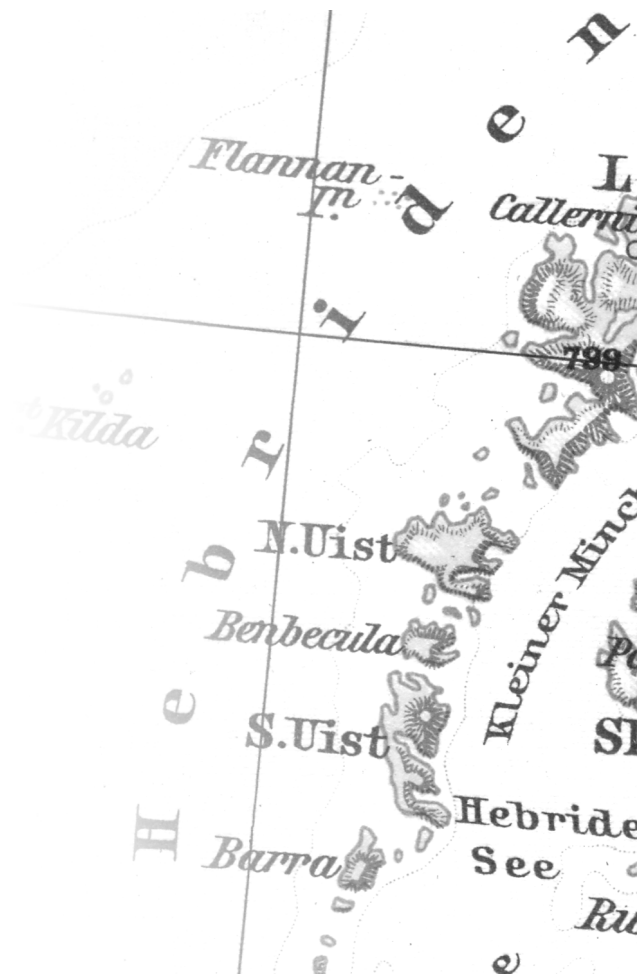
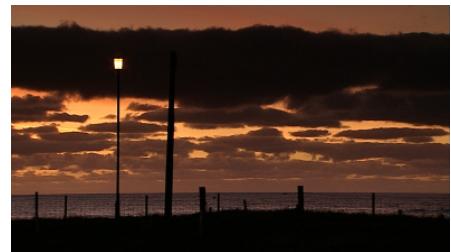


# TROPIC OF SHEEP

73 minutes / Digital Betacam / colour / Dolby stereo  
an FR ENTERTAINMENT production commissioned by  
Bayerischer Rundfunk and Telepool  
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The centre of the rim -  
living on the Western Isles

Tales from a remote corner of Europe, the Western Isles off the Scottish northwest coast: A family from London wants to try something new - and takes over a hotel on Barra. They think of the island as an exotic paradise. For the local Member of Parliament it's first of all a logistically challenging home. Marie from the Czech Republic came for work, now she somehow feels at home. Her boyfriend Andrej has got a different opinion. Crofter Iain has been working on the windy pastures of North Uist for all his life. But now, between lambing and sheep sales, he and his daughter Joan have to make plans for an uncertain future. They decide things their own way, step by step, following the rhythm of weather and stock, not forcing anything, not talking too much. The people are surrounded by the vast, empty, and grand landscape of the islands, a lucid backdrop of the challenges that they face. A way of life many dream of, but feeling rather differently from a dream. A portrait of a place made of wind, clouds, water, and light.



Angus is busy: The former sheep farmer and teacher turned into the Member of Parliament for the constituency "Na h-Eileanan an Iar" (former Western Isles) - and he is building a new house. For the most part his life revolves around organizing travel: How will the wood for the house get to the island? How will the sand from the beach get to the construction site? And: How will Angus get down to London today and back again in two days time? On a good day he does the journey in just under seven hours, but on a bad day ... never mind.



Joan left her old life behind. For years she has been a "loud London girl" - a model, a party-goer, a high profile PA working for big companies. But when her parents decide to leave the bustle of the city and to take over a hotel on the remote island of Barra, she decides to follow them.

Changing her life was not particularly hard for Joan - she has seen much greater changes before.



Marie from the Czech Republic lives on the islands since three years. She is in her mid twenties, loud, open-minded, hardworking, and fearless. Marie seems to blend into the local community with ease. The wages here are higher than in the CR, and now she somehow feels at home on this rock out in the Atlantic Ocean.

Her boy-friend Andrej experienced quite the opposite: When he tried to work as a fisherman, he got seasick, and he finds it difficult to mingle with the islanders. Now he works in the local garage and buys Czech beer in the supermarket. A decision has to be made.





It's lambing season on North Uist: Crofter Iain and his daughter Joan make their last round across the fields around their small farm. They count lambs and bring in all the sheep, which have difficulties lambing. The wind blows from the sea across the dunes, it is a chilly evening and the sun sets in a golden blaze to make way for a clear night. The Croft has been in the hand of the family for the last 150 years.

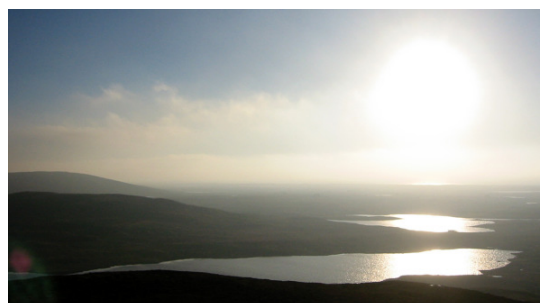
Iain is 70 - and still responsible for the whole business. He looks a lot younger though; he raises his calm voice and not until he repeatedly glides back into the past when talking about his life here one notices Iain's age. It's not easy for him to part with the tenancy of the croft, especially now, when the children seem to be reluctant to take over and when the conditions become more difficult every year. He postponed the hand-over for years now.



Two out of four children are still at home: John-Archie works as a technician at the army test range on Benbecula, Joan is a nurse at the local hospital. Gently and steadily the family deals with the recurring tasks of the croft. Especially Joan works with quiet passion. When lambing time approaches she takes her holiday in the hospital. She could even imagine to leave the hospital completely for the croft. Joan does not

speak to her father about this. The film follows the two through one "sheep cycle" and shows their thoughtful, cautious, and respectful search for a solution to the problems of change.

The vast and rugged landscape of the islands is the backdrop for these tales of arriving, leaving, and staying. The stories of the people might be very different, but they are held together by the conditions of island life - both a curse and a blessing.



with  
Angus MacNeil, Joan Irvin, Teresa Jenkins, Janina Jenkins, Alan Jenkins, Marie  
Klapetkova, Andrej Diatka, Joan MacDonald, Iain MacDonald, Guy Adams  
and many others

written, edited, and directed by	Ralf Bücheler
produced by	Florian Reimann Susann Funke
cinematography by	Stefan Linn
sound by	Konstantin Kirilow
sound (preshoot) by	Stephan Hilpert
creative consultant	Jörg Adolph
music	Sebastian Pille
title song	Sufjan Stevens
commissioning editors	Sonja Scheider, Natalie Lambsdorff
Bayerischer Rundfunk	
Telepool	Monika Lobkowicz

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engl/gael/cz with German subtitles (Digibeta)

### **Producer**

Florian Reimann, FR ENTERTAINMENT GmbH, Bavariafilmplatz 7, Geb.55/Raum 007,  
D-82031 Grünwald b. München / Germany, Tel.: +49 (0) 89 6491 4619,  
fr@fr-entertainment.de, <http://www.fr-entertainment.com>

### **Commissioned by**

Telepool GmbH, Monika Lobkowicz, Sonnenstr. 21, 80331 München / Germany,  
089 5587 6278, lobkowicz@telepool.de, <http://www.telepool.de>

Bayerischer Rundfunk, Sonja Scheider, Red. Film und Teleclub, Floriansmühlstr. 60,  
80939 München / Germany 089 3806 5461, sonja.scheider@brnet.de

### **Director**

Ralf Bücheler, Therese-Studer-Strasse 33, 80797 München / Germany, 089 38 32 98 99,  
0176 610 155 69, buecheler@royalfilmmakers.com

### **World sales**

Telepool GmbH, Amelie von Kienlin, Sonnenstr. 21, 80331 München / Germany,  
Tel. +49 89 55 876-210, kienlin@telepool.de, <http://www.telepool.de>



## Ralf Buecheler ...

... was born in 1975 and grew up in rural Bavaria. He studied European Ethnology, Social Anthropology, and German Literature in Munich and Swansea. MA. He now works as a filmmaker and studies documentary at the Munich Film & Television School. Ralf lives in Munich.



Selected films:

2003 *Provinzloop* (rural loop).

How time passes on a journey between countryside and city. Short fiction film, MiniDV, 11 min, colour. Written, edited, directed by Ralf Buecheler and Kathrin Lindauer. Produced by mediumfilm.

2004 *Mein rechter, rechter Platz ist leer* (Who's sitting next to me).

Life after the suicide of a loved one. Documentary, 16mm, 15 min, black/white. Written, edited, directed by: Ralf Buecheler.

Produced by University of Television and Film / Munich.

2006: *Die Formel Ost* (The Formula of the East)

The race still goes on: the Formula One of the German Democratic Republic - and the reunification of Germany. Documentary, MiniDV+35mm Adapter, 44 min, colour. Written, edited, directed by: Ralf Buecheler, Johannes Rosenstein.

40<sup>th</sup> Hof International Film Festival 2006

Produced by University of Television and Film / Munich.

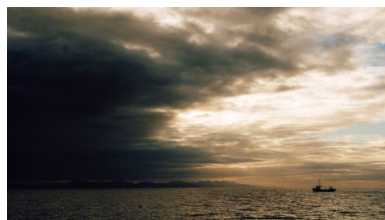
2009: *Tropic of Sheep* (Wendekreis des Schafs)

Tales from the edge of Europe, the Western Isles off Scotland. Stories from real rural life. A portrait of a place of clouds, water, and light.

Gerd-Ruge-Projektstipendium 2006, 1<sup>st</sup> Prize of "Dokuwettbewerb" by Telepool and Bayerisches Fernsehen 2997 (both awarded to the script)

DOK.FEST Munich 2009

Produced by FR Entertainment, commissioned by Bayerischer Rundfunk and Telepool



## Material on the accompanying DVD-ROM

this document as DOC and PDF in English and German  
complete dialogue list / subtitle list of the film

42 film stills and photographs / photograph of the director

trailer "Tropic of Sheep" (engl.) as DV / H264 in Quicktime format

list of protagonists and crew members as DOC and PDF in English and German