

Abstract

English

The East German longitudinal documentary *Der Kinder von Golzow* (*The Children of Golzow*, Winfried & Barbara Junge, 1962-2007) offers unique insight into representation of ordinary lives and documentary filmmaking praxis in the German Democratic Republic (1949-1990) as well as after the reunification of Germany. This thesis examines changes in representation of ordinary people over the decades in use of past films footage edited together with footage from present time, a characteristic of longitudinal documentaries coined "time shuttling" by Richard Kilborn (2010). Here, I suggest that the varied use of "time shuttles" challenge state-tolerated representations of ordinary lives in the GDR. Both before and after the fall of the Berlin Wall we are given a "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) of ordinary lives in East Germany through time shuttles. In the GDR, this comes from a "top-down" relation between the state filmmakers and the rural protagonists, where the focus is on representing "them" and "their" Republic. In the transnational film environment after the reunification of Germany, a "bottom-up" relation emerges where the representation has shifted to "us" and "our" Germany.

Norwegian

Den øst-tyske longitudinale dokumentarfilmen *Der Kinder von Golzow* (*The Children of Golzow*, Winfried & Barbara Junge, 1962-2007) gir unik innsikt i representasjonen av ordinære mennesker og dokumentarfilmskaping i Den tyske demokratiske republikk (1949-1990) så vel som etter den tyske gjenforeningen. Denne masteroppgaven utforsker forandringer i representasjon av ordinære mennesker over tiårene gjennom bruken av klipp fra tidligere filmer i filmserien redigert sammen med nye klipp fra nåtiden, en egenskap ved longitudinale dokumentarer kalt "time shuttling" av Richard Kilborn (2010). Her argumenter jeg for at den varierte bruken av "time shuttles" utfordrer den statlig tolererte representasjonen av ordinære liv i Den tyske demokratiske republikk. Både før og etter Berlinmurens fall blir vi gitt en "tykk beskrivelse" (Geertz, 1973) av ordinære liv Øst-Tyskland gjennom time shuttles. I DDR kommer dette fra en "top-down" relasjon mellom de statlige filmskaperene og de rurale protagonistene, der fokuset er på representasjon av "de" og "deres" republikk. I det transnasjonale filmmiljøet etter den tyske gjenforeningen oppstår en "bottom-up" relasjon der representasjonen har endret til "oss" og "vårt" Tyskland.

[Words: 32269]

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Introduction

An earlier oft quoted fact about the documentary *Der Kinder von Golzow* (*The Children of Golzow*, 1961 – 2007) by Barbara and Winfried Junge is that it got into the Guinness Book of World Records for being the longest-lasting observation in film history¹. In short, this is a series of twenty films with a combined runtime of over 42 hours following 18 ordinary people from their first day of school until most of them had made it to their 50s. This long-running operation is standard procedure for what is collectively called *longitudinal documentaries* (hereby “long docs”²). Unlike similar “long docs” like the *Up* films (Almond & Apted, 1964 -) and *The Children of Jordbro* (Hartleb, 1972 - 2014), *Der Kinder von Golzow* started out in a country that no longer exists, the German Democratic Republic (1949 - 1990). The GDR was most known for a wall in Berlin that became a symbol of the divide between two ideologies and a long lasting cold war.

The *Golzow* films outlasted its country of origin. After what is commonly referred to as the *Wende* (the great shift from the GDR to reunited Germany), there were eleven more films produced observing the lives of ex-GDR citizens as adults carving new paths for themselves in a new state. All films of the *Golzow* series since 1979 used footage from the past to create a narrative in the present film. Over time this use of past footage became complicated, jumping in time between years and decades in a process coined *time shuttling* by Richard Kilborn (2010). Time shuttles, once they start appearing in the films, become distinctive instruments to present and represent stories of ordinary lives in a longitudinal space. This characteristic of the long doc coupled with the fascinating history of East Germany has led to me asking the following questions:

How does the representation of ordinary lives change over time in the documentary *Der Kinder von Golzow* (Junge & Junge, 1961 - 2007)? How do time shuttles affect the representation of ordinary lives in the GDR and in the reunited Germany?

These are the questions that guide this research into analysis of the early films followed by close readings of the final *Golzow* film of the GDR, *Lebensläufe* (*Resume – the story of the children of Golzow in separate portraits*, Junge, 1980), and the first of the new, post-wall Germany *Drehbuch: Die Zeiten* (*Storyline: The Times*, Junge & Junge, 1992) in Chapter 3 and

¹ With the release of *56 Up* (2012) this record is now held by the *Up* films (Almond & Apted, 1964-).

² This short version is used in other works on longitudinal documentaries e.g. Kilborn (2010)

4. While largely expanding on previous research, this thesis is original because it close reads a specific characteristic of the long doc form, time shuttles, to tackle the question of how ordinary people are represented. To do this, it is necessary to delve into two areas of research. First, defining what longitudinal documentaries are is crucial, as well as delving into how the topic of representation has been treated in such bodies of film in the past. This is the focus of Chapter 1. Here, I also briefly discuss my methods and introduce the films of the study. Secondly, a fair amount of historical, filmmaking and social context is necessary to understand *why* we see the representations we are seeing, this is the topic for Chapter 2.

This thesis hopes to expand on existing studies of representation of the ordinary in the German / GDR context for which most previous studies consider fiction films, as well as expanding on longitudinal documentary studies by introducing *thick description* as a concept to explain different representations within the longitudinal documentary format under different environments. This is the challenge of Chapter 4. In the very least, this study offers more literature on the *Golzow* films in the English language. Here, I hopefully lessen a “pain” highlighted by Sebastian Heiduschke, who at the end of a review of the German book *Und wenn sie nicht gestorben sind ...: Die Kinder von Golzow – Das Ende einer Langzeitbeobachtung 1961–2007* by Dieter Wolf writes:

And it painfully reminds us that, up to this day, neither sufficient English-language literature nor academic research have been published in English that would allow a broader international engagement with the Golzow epos. (Heiduschke, 2015, p. 679).

Chapter 1: Long docs as texts: form, function, and representation

1.1 What are long docs?

The connection of the word longitudinal to the films today considered longitudinal documentaries (in German: *Langzeitchronik* or *Langzeitbeobachtung*) originated according to Skillander & Fowler (2015) from a review of the film *28 Up* (Apted, 1984) of the *Up* series (Almond & Apted, 1964 -), stating that its longitudinal aspect offered a “rare [...] glimpse of the mysterious process of growing up” to “educators and psychologists” (Skillander & Fowler, 2015, pp. 127-128, cited from Dullea, 1985). Since then, as Skillander and Fowler clarifies, describing these films as longitudinal has been done by the filmmakers themselves as in the case of creator of the *Up*-series Michael Apted in interviews in the 1990s and since the 2000s also by scholars, most notably Richard Kilborn’s book on the longitudinal documentary form and function titled *Taking the Long View* (2010). In looking at three separate long docs (The *Up* films, *Der Kinder von Golzow* and *The Children of Jordbro*) at three separate life stages of production, his study has a solid amount of textual evidence to support his observations. Additionally, he briefly considers other possible examples of long docs (Table 1) and other texts of longitudinal qualities³. His findings therefore are a good starting point, as they remain the only study to date that takes this systematic framework approach.

Importantly, in writing about long docs’ form and function, Kilborn by default narrows down to some degree what long docs are. While *Taking the Long View* never suggests a strict definition on these kinds of texts as a genre, his observations are helpful guidelines to what kind of texts that may be sensible to approach as long docs. In the following paragraphs I will sum up the specific forms and functions of long docs he presents, which introduces terms used in the analytical part of this thesis and sets the necessary groundwork for which the rest of the thesis is based on.

³ For instance, the Brazilian documentary *Cabra Marcado para Morrer (Twenty Years Later)*, Coutinho, 1984) is mentioned as an example of this. Due to political developments and arrests, filming was stopped in 1964 and twenty years later the filmmaker returns to the material to finish the project, hence giving it a longitudinal dimension. Another example brought up by Kilborn in a discussion about *The Children of Jordbro* on 2nd October 2016 is Richard Linklater’s feature film *Boyhood* (2014) which shot footage of the same actors over 12 years to create a coming of age story with a “lived in” longitudinal aspect (Folkets Bio, 2016).

Table 1: Examples of longitudinal documentaries mentioned in Kilborn (2010)

Title	Director(s)	Start year	Last film (*ongoing)	No. films or parts (**= all parts made for TV) ⁴	Combined runtime (mins)
<i>The Children of Golzow</i>	Winfried Junge, Barbara Junge ⁵	1961	2007	20	2570
<i>The Up series</i>	Paul Almond ⁶ , Michael Apted	1964	2012*	8**	769
<i>The Children of Jordbro</i> ⁷	Rainer Hartleb	1972	2014	7	618
<i>Wittstock-Zyklus</i>	Volker Koepp	1975	1997	7	388
<i>Berlin – Ecke Bundesplatz</i>	Hans-Georg Ullrich, Detlef Gumm	1986	2012	62**	3300
<i>Born in the USSR</i>	Sergei Miroshnichenko	1991	2012*	4**	541 ⁸
<i>Born in South Africa</i>	Angus Gibson	1992	2013*	4**	245
<i>Growing up in Australia</i> ⁹	Jennifer Cummins	2006	2014*	10**	412

⁴ Whether all films of the long docs made for TV can be classified as film can be debated. Of these examples marked [**], I would argue that all these consists of TV-films apart from *Growing up in Australia* with its 2-part structure for each year which is closer to a TV-episode structure.

⁵ Co-director from 1992 onwards.

⁶ Only director for the first film *Seven Up!* (1964).

⁷ Also called *Jordbrosviten*. One of the DVD releases of the films up until 2006 goes by the name *Pizzorna från Jordbro*.

⁸ Russian version running time. The UK version of *Born in the USSR* has a runtime of 299 minutes.

⁹ Also known as the *Life Series* (see Films Media Group, 2018).

1.1.1 The longitudinal documentary form: revisitations, personal biographies, time shuttling

What is immediately clear from the examples brought up by Kilborn (2010) when put in a table with start and end date as well as runtime (Table 1) is the sheer size of the body of texts in each example. All consists of multiple films and start in a different decade than what they ended up in or will continue from in the future. Six of the long doc projects in Table 1 start out with their protagonists as children. How many films, how long the entire project needs to be and how long of a time it needs to cover to be considered a long doc is not strictly defined by Kilborn, instead some shared generic characteristics in form and function define them.

One formal characteristic is *revisitations*. Protagonists in the documentary, in all these cases ordinary people, are checked in on over time to figure out what has changed since the last time the film crew was there. The protagonists are revisited either regularly or arrhythmically over several films or programmes, often over decades. For instance, films following the formula of the original *Up* series by Michael Apted have a regular gap of seven years between each new film, as is the case of both *Born in the USSR* (Miroshnichenko, 1991-) and *Born in South Africa* (Gibson, 1992-) making a film when the protagonists are 7, 14, 21, 28 years old and onwards. Particularly in the case of the earliest long docs they do not start out planned as a film or programme series, rather they often start off as a single short documentary that gets expanded upon through decisions made by a broadcaster or film production company. Initially, the first film may only be expanded with one additional film, but if this film is considered successful another film might be given the green light, and before you know it you have a series of films spanning a long time-period. For instance, while the first short films of *Der Kinder von Golzow* or the *Up* series certainly posed the question of what was going to happen to their protagonists, neither were originally planned as part of a longitudinal project from the beginning, as this would require inordinate faith in the filmmakers. It may take years even for the directors to fully commit their future to these kinds of projects as was the case for Winfried Junge who only after the success of *Elf Jahre alt (Eleven years old)* at the International Leipzig Documentary and Short Film Week (later DOK Leipzig) in 1966 seriously started considering making it a large part of his career (Wolf, 2017, p. 35, Kilborn, 2010, p. 39). By this point he had already made his third film about the Golzow children. However, to even get to this point, he had needed to keep in contact with his protagonists and keep good relations, as their willingness to participate is the bread and butter of any longitudinal work. In the case of Volker Koepp's *Wittstock* films (1975-1997) the impulse to continue the revisitations came also from the

protagonists themselves, women working in a textile factory in the town with the same name, who after the fifth film *Leben in Wittstock* (*Living in Wittstock*, 1984) called the director asking why he had not continued filming (Wilke, 2012, pp. 128-129, from Göpel, 1992). A sixth film *Neues in Wittstock* (*New in Wittstock*, 1992) and the seventh and last *Wittstock, Wittstock* (1997) became the real ending to a project which originally was to end in the GDR.

Another characteristic of the long doc brought forward by Kilborn (2010) is that they partly can be identified as *personal biographies*. While long docs often have a societal approach, i.e. the *Up-series* ' attempt to look at the British class system or *The Children of Jordbro* (Hartleb, 1972-2014) and its reflection on the development of modern Sweden, this is rooted in the stories of ordinary people and their family life. The narratives of the films are structured around telling the story of the persons' lives and its developments and as such have similarities to reality-TV or soaps. However, due to the longitudinal aspect and the revisitations, the representation of ordinary lives is arguably deepened. A useful term here is the *infra-ordinary*:

Further, in place of the ephemerality of stars of reality television, the participants in longitudinal documentaries acquire a lasting presence that gathers and changes meaning over time with every revisit. Therefore what the revisit adds [...] is a deepening rather than an amplification of the participants being interviewed. It is not so much then that the ordinary becomes 'extra' ordinary: outside of the common order; more that it becomes 'infra' ordinary. The ordinary deepens as we (as viewers) understand the intricate shifts and continuities that coalesce to make up ordinary lives. This effect of deepening can be attributed to longitudinal studies [...]

(Skillander & Fowler, 2015, p. 129)

In looking at concepts in longitudinal studies in the social sciences and comparing them with processes in longitudinal documentaries, Skillander and Fowler coins the term *infra-ordinary* to describe the accumulative and deepening representation of ordinary lives over time in longitudinal documentaries. What is seen are not filmic biographies in the traditional sense, but, as Kilborn alludes to, the longitudinal element makes it far more personal. Not only do these filmmakers interview the protagonists about how they see their own lives, but these interviews are later referred to in part to see what has changed, what predictions were right and wrong – which can be played up for entertainment or be a dramatic part of the narrative. The protagonists often have a way to veto scenes that cross the line into becoming too personal on the cutting board (Folkets Bio, 2016), another crucial element to keep the protagonists participating over decades. Still, a tremendous faith in the filmmakers is necessary in their ability to protect the representation of the protagonists from becoming too personal, as in many cases these ordinary protagonists become minor celebrities, growing up in public. As the protagonists become media

personalities and more accustomed to the filmmaking process, they may feel a pressure to perform and fit a certain role, or putting on a “mask” (Kilborn, 2010, pp. 23-24). However, at the same time, the protagonists know – especially as the project becomes more invested in each protagonist over time – that they have some power to steer the filmmaker to represent them more favourably, as the filmmaker cannot do without them. The tug of war match between the filmmaker trying to get protagonists to reveal what is behind their mask while simultaneously the protagonist wanting to keep the mask on becomes a particularly intriguing aspect of the personal biography. This masking vs unmasking battle becomes particularly tense in the GDR context, as we shall see in Chapter 3 and 4.

As already hinted to, the narratives of the films are often complex because they are dynamic – and become increasingly so over time. Kilborn introduces the term *time shuttling* to explain how the narrative often in the films change between scenes of the past and the present. This is different from flashbacks in that these scenes from the past are often familiar to the viewer already, as they are scenes from previous films. As Kilborn puts it: “Long doc viewers thus become accustomed to being shuttled backwards and forward on this longitudinal time axis between sequences that depict a slowly unfolding present-day reality with others that recapitulate an already known past.” (Kilborn, 2010, p. 26). Time shuttles often juxtapose or contrast scenes between different pasts and the now. Through skilful editing, themes of change, constants, or stagnation in the personal as well as in the societal are brought forward in relation to the current situation. The earliest films in a long doc are particularly important here, as the long docs frequently time shuttle to scenes of childhood and compare them to the teenager and the adult.

Often the footage shuttled back to from the old films are the same as those time shuttled in previous films. An example of this is the story of Neil in the *Up*-films. Footage of him as a bright and lively child at age 7 exclaiming that he wants to become an astronaut is used repeatedly for contrast at age 21, 28 and 35 when he goes from quitting university to becoming reclusive and homeless and the filmmaker questioning his sanity (Bruzzi, 2007 pp. 64-75). Bruzzi’s study of these films, while not using the term time shuttling, observes that by the time of *35 Up* (Apted, 1991) and *42 Up* (Apted, 1998) much of the use of past footage was still the same, and much was excluded from later films. Specifically, several scenes of Neil from *21 Up* (1977) were used in *28 Up* (1984), but most of these were gone by the time of *35 Up* (Apted, 1991), however most scenes of Neil from *Seven Up!* (Almond, 1964), were still present in all

these films almost three decades later. For *42 Up*, reusing childhood scenes like Neil saying he wants to become an astronaut has a different, less melancholic effect as Neil's situation has become more hopeful compared to when the same scene was used in *35 Up*, when Neil's future looked bleak, for instance. While most footage in the *Up* series as in other long docs are only shown once due to practical reasons, scenes from the earliest films become constants that both work as reminders for the viewer and acts as a storytelling device to enhance the dramatic (and undramatic) turns in ordinary people's lives. As is evident in this example from the *Up* films and Bruzzi's study, the use of time shuttling gets the viewer involved in the "constant process of re-evaluation" (Kilborn, 2010, p. 27) of the filmmaking that becomes necessary as the lives of the protagonists change. While scenes from the first film casts certain elements of the narrative in stone (albeit these scenes are sometimes later trimmed in the edit), how the film shuttles in time – and which *times* it focuses on – largely depends on the present state of the protagonist and developments in earlier films ("highlights") that must be referred to. Time shuttling is a key formal aspect which will be expanded upon in Chapter 3.

1.1.2 Functions of the long docs: chronicling, incremental, dual perspective

In addition to these characteristics describing their form, Kilborn (2010) describes some special functions of the long docs.

Long docs have a *chronicling function*: they tell of the development of lives and societies over time. Yet, due to the subjective nature of documentaries in general, they have limits as historical sources. However, strengths of the long docs as chronicles include the timespan of the projects and its focus on ordinary lives over time, often underrepresented in history writing. Kilborn suggest that the term *oral history* (Kilborn, 2010, pp. 21-23) may be useful here to explain the chronicling mode of the long docs, as the filmmaker is using the personal stories told by the protagonists as the main source for the filmic text. Most of the time, as with oral history writing, the stories come from interviews. Some of the films may have an *ethnographical* approach, particularly in the starting phase of production, however according to Kilborn this more or less gets abandoned over time as the films become increasingly about the individual protagonist's histories. For instance, in the 1990s several *Golzow* films of individual portraits were made of protagonists which had been highlighted in the past. In Chapter 4 I argue for how long docs, while not ethnography, may use ethnographical methods in their representation of ordinary lives.

Long docs also have an *incremental* and *cumulative* quality or function. Each new film in a long doc project complement or adds to the previous films. Viewers then get an increasingly expansive picture of the lives of these people over the years – almost as if getting to know them (but only “know” them in this way) through “catching up” every few years. Because the films look as much to the future for its protagonists as the past, they offer no final authoritative verdict on any themes or persons. Indeed, many of the films end on a question on the state of affairs. In the process of catching up, which is done partly through time shuttling which reminds us of the past of each protagonist, a *dual perspective* is shown: the viewer reflects on both the present as well as its relationship with the past through scenes shown from previous films. This prompts *self-examination* in the viewer on their own lives. Through time shuttles, the viewer is prompted to engage in some degree of self-reflexivity in comparing the excerpts of the lives of people on screen with their own, as the effect of time on ordinary people flashes before us. Seeing the effect of time and how people change over time – both physically and figuratively – is for Kilborn (2010) a key aspect to the viewer’s interest in the long doc projects and their popularity.

1.2 Representation of the ordinary and the long doc form: Problems and previous perspectives

Much has been written about representation¹⁰ of people in documentary film theory and history. The issue of representing people as protagonists has followed the documentary film format since its inception and is tied to its development of different “modes”¹¹. Brian Winston (1988) argues that documentaries since the Documentary Film Movement led by John Grierson in the 1930s and 1940s have had a “tradition of the victim”. In films focused on a “creative treatment of actuality” (Grierson, 1933, p. 8), the British working class, who were rarely shown in the cinemas at the time, was represented on screen. Winston’s issue with the representation in these films is not that they are there in the first place, but that despite films of this movement such as *Housing Problems* (Elton & Anstey, 1935) giving some voice to these ordinary people through interviews (albeit coached in how to speak to the camera), it becomes an alienating, distanced

¹⁰ To clarify, I am not discussing here the film theory tradition of representation as the image standing in for what is seen (“re-presentation”), for which theories of realism, semiotics and indexical qualities are rooted in. Here, I discuss the somewhat different tradition of representation on screen as standing in for groups of people, in this case ordinary people in longitudinal docs standing in for ordinary people in the society these protagonists are from.

¹¹ For a review of different modes of the documentary, see Nichols (1991, 2010) and Sørenssen (2007).

look from a privileged point on these individuals. The interviews, the first of its kind in Britain, were “edited without consultation” with protagonists (Winston, 1988, p. 273) and the people observed are represented as helpless victims in the slums rather as people with their own agency. Through this representation, they become new victims in this filmmaking process, as well as for every revisit of the moving image.

Winston also attacks the *direct cinema* movement originating in the late 50s for how its goal to objectively document reality, through new lightweight camera technology, “allowed a degree of intrusion into ordinary people’s lives that was not previously possible” (Winston, 1988, p. 275). A red herring, through the attacks on both documentary film movements in Winston’s article and later book *Claiming the Real* (Winston, 1995), is that the filmmaker’s naïve belief in the objective nature of the image through different documentary film movements leads to a situation where this quest for objectivity – documentary as documentation – trumps the protagonist’s right to privacy, consent, and autonomy. Some later modes of documentary may have less of a traditional victim and more of an active and powerful player, as Bruzzi (2013) illustrates in the performative documentaries of Nick Broomfield. Here, the protagonists are shown as becoming actors performing for the camera with their own autonomy in which also filmmakers clearly perform for the film. Interview scenes of unmasking performances of filmmaker and subject in *Aileen: Life and Death of a Serial Killer* (Broomfield, 2003) reveals tensions between the quest for objectivity in documentary films and how this may be a futile endeavour within the text itself (Bruzzi, 2013, pp. 56-57).

Having discussed the long docs form, in which interviews are a core aspect, we can see that they could have the representational issues of the Griersonian and *direct cinema* traditions as well as having a performative element in which the actors have more autonomy. This may be linked to how, as I have mentioned earlier, these are personal biographies in which there is a tug-of-war between masked and unmasking performances by the protagonists. The degree of protagonist autonomy may also be linked to a desire of objectivity – or at least a strong narrative. While Wilke (2012) mentions neither Winston nor Bruzzi, her comparative study of the long docs *Wittstock* and *Der Kinder von Golzow* becomes partly a discussion and critique about issues of representation in long docs. A good point brought up here is the different methods used by filmmakers Volker Koepp and Winfried and Barbara Junge respectively comes from different viewpoints on the need for a “completeness” in the personal biography,

and thus, the narrative of the films. Volker Koepp is happy enough to let certain elements of the lives of the Wittstock women remain untouched:

The Wittstock films work with clear omissions and foci in the narrative. You hardly see the men of the protagonists, are rarely with their families and experience little about children and marriages. These omissions lay the focus on the areas which are told about (work, own wishes, and dreams) and ultimately lead to a concentration on the women themselves.¹² (Wilke, 2012, pp. 137-138)

On the other hand, as Wilke points out, Winfried Junge is heard behind the camera pushing his protagonists to open up about certain topics in their private lives. Pushing protagonists on such issues is far more common in long docs than the gentler approach by Koepp. This may be because when we first see Koepp's protagonists in 1975, the youngest is already in her late teenage years, which means that spectators have not been privy to previous developments in their lives nor expect to learn much of it. In *Golzow*, *Jordbro* and the *Up* films however, the filmmakers and spectators are there almost from the beginning of their lives, so there is a greater expectation and focus on capturing their whole lives – including more personal details.

This expectation comes from a desire precisely of wanting to see a representation of how life is like – both specifically for these protagonists and their individual stories but also a more universal representation of the human condition. This desire puts a burden on both filmmakers and protagonists to “perform” – creating tensions between them on what is to be unmasked or not – but only the latter risks becoming victims of this representation. Why would this extensive representation be expected of longitudinal documentaries? Barton Byg (2001) argues that there is an inherent claim of being representative in long docs such as the *Up* films and *Der Kinder von Golzow* because of its “celebration of the cinematic apparatus” (Byg, 2001, p. 127). What he points out here is a similar argument to what Winston (1988) is making: a belief in the film documentary medium's ability to speak to an unchanging, universal human condition.¹³ Byg

¹² Original citation: „Die Wittstock-Filme arbeiten mit deutlichen Auslassungen und Fokussierungen in der Erzählung. So sieht man die Männer der Protagonistinnen fast nie, ist selten beim Familienleben dabei, erfährt wenig über Kinder und Ehekrise. Diese Auslassungen legen den Fokus auf die Bereiche, die erzählt werden (Arbeit, eigene Wünsche und Träume) und führen letztendlich zu einer Konzentration auf die Frauen selbst.“

¹³ As technology and mode of filmmaking develops, this belief is according to Byg further strengthened. Here, he quotes Winfried Junge from the book *Dokumentaristen der Welt*: “[...] On the basis of improved technical possibilities we weren't looking for illustrations of opinions on the new personality, but rather wanted to discover both the old and the new among our contemporaries. They were given the opportunity to reveal themselves freely before the camera and microphone and could thus really be perceived. Without concealing ourselves from them, but rather in a trusting interaction with each other, we explored methods of observation in authentic, sometimes provoked, but never really scripted situations. We thereby sharpened our eye for situations of conflict that lent themselves to documentary, in which our heroes had to react, make a stand, take a position in deed and word. Thus documentary film showed the human being in a new and even for the

successfully points out how this confidence is also seen in the field of photography, specifically how photographers such as August Sander in the 1920s “[...] attempts to present a stable image of society with rather conventional, bourgeois methods.” (Byg, 2001, p. 133). He concludes that while the *Up* and *Golzow* films prefers focusing on unchanging aspects of the human condition instead of reflecting directly on the individual protagonists’ specific and changing aspects, it is unable to separate itself from the latter due to discoveries that has basis in the individual instead of the typical. Its representative quality is therefore “contradictory and unstable” (Byg, 2002, p. 127): attempts at discovering the typical in documentary images of ordinary people is met with resistance in the variety and individuality of everyday lives of the protagonists, because they are hard to put in a universal narrative. It is in this tension, according to Byg, that “truth” in (long) docs exists.

Uellenberg (2010), in perhaps the only reception study to date on any long doc, tests out the representative quality of *Der Kinder von Golzow*. In her thesis, she interviews 20 “West” and “East” Germans between 25 and 65 years old about their opinions on the *Golzow* films.¹⁴ Asked about the representativeness of the films of GDR ordinary life, the East Germans answered that what is shown is “typical” of the GDR and eight out of ten East Germans found it representative of rural life in the GDR (Uellenberg, 2010, pp. 92-94). No consensus was reached on the representativeness of the GDR among West Germans, but many West Germans felt that the *Golzow* films were representative of how life was like in rural West Germany at the time. While some West Germans felt that they had learned something new from watching the films, they also felt that their own knowledge from before was largely confirmed, with one interviewer stating: “Nothing new, the documentary confirms that the Osis were not aliens.”¹⁵ (Uellenberg, 2010, p. 94). *Der Kinder von Golzow* as a force to avoid alienation of the East after the Wende is the topic of Grüning (2011). Here, she argues that the representation of ordinary ex-GDR citizens in the films offer collective and individual experiences of the everyday which may foster acknowledgement of differences on both sides of what recently was a border between nations, which Uellenberg (2010) seems to confirm.

first time true manner; thus film encountered and opened up the world of the mind; thus did film achieve in this important point the force of proof.” (Byg, 2001, p. 143, cited from Herlinghaus (1982)).

¹⁴ One of the questions asked in the standardized interviews: “Sind die *Kinder von Golzow* repräsentativ für die Bürger der DDR? Wenn ja/nein, warum?” (Uellenberg, 2010, p. 103).

¹⁵ Original citation: “Nichts neues, die Doku hat mir bestätigt, dass die Osis keine Aliens waren.“ *Osis*, or Easties, is a nickname for former GDR citizens.

Long docs then may fail when aiming at representing the ordinary as universal, and create victims when such aims are pursued. But when attempts at universality are met with individuality in those represented, studies mentioned above seem to point to these types of documentaries having a strong relatable quality, in part due to their longitudinal aspect. However, the relatability of the representation gets more complicated when met with a desire for a certain representation from an ideological or political perspective, as we shall see in Chapter 2 and 3.

1.2.1 Comment on “ordinary” in the literature

Issues brought up here about representation in the long docs is also a potential issue in the literature about it. Although the literature on this topic frequently uses the term “ordinary people”, including this thesis, does not mean that these films necessarily encompass *all* ordinary people. The use of this term may therefore be misleading unless it is stated what precisely is meant with the use of the term when it is used. In the worst case, not explaining its use may lead to grand sweeping statements about the representational value of the films, avoiding seeing its shortcomings, for instance in how protagonists are arbitrarily selected from the beginning. The lack of a better word or a definition for what is ordinary is an issue that is rarely brought up in the research of these films. Is the term “ordinary people” a question of which class one belongs to in society? At what scale (national, regional, local) is the term best used?

Getting to these and other issues regarding the use of the term “ordinary” people or lives in long doc research is beyond the scope of this thesis, and I will not attempt at redefining this term here. However, I will occasionally point out in this research a difference in representation of the ordinary on a state level versus regional. This clarification is rarely made in the existing literature on these films. In the case of *Der Kinder von Golzow*, regional representation becomes rural – as opposed to urban such as in East Berlin during the GDR. The dichotomy between rural and urban East Germany is unfortunately lacking in several previous analyses of the *Golzow* films, which is particularly noteworthy in the early years of the film when the East Berlin filmmakers first got associated with the protagonists. A noteworthy exception to this lack of context is the reception study by Uellenberg (2010), where both West and East Germans interviewed found *Der Kinder von Golzow* to be representative of rural Germany on “their” sides, hinting at a borderless representational quality of the films. Occasionally pointing out

that there is a difference between the rural and the urban East Germany – and representation on state and regional level – is therefore important to prevent seeing East German in the past and now in a too simplified way.

1.3 Introduction to the *Der Kinder von Golzow*

Through the 46 years chronicled, *Der Kinder von Golzow* has seen most of its 18 children go from the first day of school in 1961, the same year the Berlin Wall was built, to finishing school and creating careers for themselves, to experiencing the *Wende*, which began with the fall of the same wall, and adjusting to life in united Germany since. It is the story of the German Democratic Republic, its end and afterlife told through the lens of ordinary lives in a small rural town, separated from Poland in the East by the river Oder. Spatially, the series has had to expand its focus from the sandbox next to the primary school in Golzow in 1961 to other regions in the GDR as the then young adults pick different career paths, and with the *Wende*, the series has expanded its lens outside the old GDR borders to foreign lands in the effort to follow the lives of the Golzowers. No longer constrained to the East, the small town Golzow loses relevance for the current lives of most of the protagonists, yet the films always return there to record the town's progress and the few that remained there throughout the decades.

The premise of the early short films was the new generation growing up without war unlike their parents and grandparents and the “New School” promoted by the GDR; every child would now have at least 8 years of primary school¹⁶ – though up to tenth grade was available to everyone. In the GDR era the documentary follows the children and how well they do in school, the career paths taken and the establishment of their own families. Early on, director Winfried Junge believed that following the Golzowers were going be a document of the progress towards a final version of socialism (Junge, 1995, p. 142). A central theme here is of change and progression in the new state and in the personal lives of the protagonists. Two particularly striking personal stories in a myriad of material are the life stories of Jürgen and Gudrun, both shown in the summary film *Lebensläufe* (1980). Jürgen is the central figure of the first film in 1961, who becomes Jürgen the painter and later the recovering alcoholic. Gudrun is the daughter of the “rags to riches” head of the cooperative farms in Golzow, Arthur Klitzke. Throughout appearances in the films she struggles with the burden sharing the Klitzke name,

¹⁶ According to the films, only two years of school were offered to many children growing up in Germany during WW2, that generation were the parents of the 1954-55 generation *Der Kinder von Golzow* follows.

as her father had to a large degree helped put Golzow on the socialist world map. The development of the Soviet-inspired cooperative agricultural farms, or “LPGs” (*Landwirtschaftliche Produktionsgenossenschaft*) as they were called – for which her father and several other Golzowers are a part of – is an important topic that is followed throughout these films.

With the decline and later fall of the German Democratic Republic, the focus is on the difficult changing times, particularly how it affected business and jobs for these East Germans now in their mid-30s. In these trying times, most have already started their own families. Secure jobs and LPGs of the past are now replaced with the free market in all sectors, leading to great insecurity in an East part of the new Germany that cannot compete with the West. Additionally, there is an increased reflection of what the meaning of the project is for “the filmmaker, the subjects and for Germany” (Byg, 2001, p. 129). With the removal of strict GDR state censorship, both filmmakers and protagonists unveil stories and scenes that the state did not want to be seen, as well as showing the performativity and staged nature of the earlier films through deleted scenes and 8mm behind the scenes footage. From 1994, the *Golzow* films become individual portraits of a few selected protagonists who have chosen to still participate, until the last two films released in 2006 and 2007 which acts as a summary and an end, the protagonists now in their 50s.

The Golzow films are as follows¹⁷:

Table 2: List of *Der Kinder von Golzow* films

Year	Original title	English title	Production company	Length (min)
1961	<i>Wenn ich erst zur Schule geh</i>	<i>When I finally go to school</i>	DEFA Studio für Wochenschau und Dokumentarfilme	13
1962	<i>Nach einem Jahr – Beobachtungen in einer ersten Klasse</i>	<i>After a year – observation in a first grade</i>	DEFA Studio für Wochenschau und Dokumentarfilme	14
1966	<i>Elf Jahre alt</i>	<i>Eleven years old</i>	DEFA Studio für Wochenschau und Dokumentarfilme	29

¹⁷ Not including bonus films that have made their way in the later DVD boxsets or films not considered part of the official series. These are: ...*Zum Beispiel Marie-Luise* (Winfried Junge, 1991, 41 min), ...*Zum Beispiel Willy* (Winfried Junge, 1991, 40 min), ...*Zum Beispiel Winfried* (Winfried Junge, 1991, 44 min), *Vielleicht bin ich ein Don Quichotte* (Randi Crott & Peter Sommer, 1995, 60 min).

1969	<i>Wenn man vierzehn ist</i>	<i>When you are fourteen</i>	DEFA Studio für Kurzfilme	36
1971	<i>Die Prüfung</i>	<i>The exam</i>	DEFA Studio für Kurzfilme	19
1975	<i>Ich sprach mit einem Mädchen</i>	<i>I spoke to a girl</i>	DEFA Studio für Dokumentarfilme	30
1979	<i>Anmut sparet nicht noch Mühe</i>	<i>Neither save grace nor effort</i>	DEFA Studio für Dokumentarfilme	107
1980	<i>Lebensläufe – Die Geschichte der Kinder von Golzow in einzelnen Portraits</i>	<i>Resume – the story of the children of Golzow in separate portraits</i>	DEFA Studio für Dokumentarfilme	257
1984 (TV) /86	<i>Diese Golzower – Umstandsbestimmung eines Ortes</i>	<i>These inhabitants of Golzow – adverbial phrase of a location</i>	DEFA Studio für Dokumentarfilme (im Auftrag des Fernsehens der DDR)	97
1992	<i>Drehbuch: Die Zeiten; Drei Jahrzehnte mit den Kindern von Golzow und der DEFA</i>	<i>Storyline: the times; three decades with the children of Golzow and the DEFA</i>	Journal-Film Klaus Volkenborn KG (Berlin) & DOK-Film Babelsberg GmbH	284
1994	<i>Das Lebens des Jürgen von Golzow</i>	<i>The Life of Jürgen from Golzow</i>	Journal-Film Klaus Volkenborn KG (Berlin) & DOK-Film Babelsberg GmbH	192
1995	<i>Die Geschichte vom Onkel Willy aus Golzow</i>	<i>The story of uncle Willy from Golzow</i>	à jour Film- & Fernsehproduktion GmbH	145
1996	<i>Was geht euch mein Leben an - Elke, Kind von Golzow</i>	<i>My life is none of your business - Elke, child of Golzow</i>	à jour Film- & Fernsehproduktion GmbH	125
1997	<i>Da habt ihr mein Leben - Marieluise, Kind von Golzow</i>	<i>My life there you have it - Marieluise, child of Golzow</i>	à jour Film- & Fernsehproduktion GmbH	141
1998	<i>Brigitte und Marcel - Golzower Lebenswege</i>	<i>Brigitte and Marcel - Golzow paths of life</i>	à jour Film- & Fernsehproduktion GmbH	110
1999	<i>Ein Mensch wie Dieter - Golzower</i>	<i>A human like Dieter - from Golzow</i>	à jour Film- & Fernsehproduktion GmbH	122
2001	<i>Jochen - ein Golzower aus Philadelphia</i>	<i>Jochen - inhabitant of Golzow from Philadelphia</i>	à jour Film- & Fernsehproduktion GmbH	119
2002	<i>Eigentlich wollte ich Förster werden - Bernd aus Golzow</i>	<i>I wanted to become a forester - Bernd from Golzow</i>	à jour Film- & Fernsehproduktion GmbH	142

2006	<i>Und wenn sie nicht gestorben sind... - Das Ende der unendlichen Geschichte</i>	<i>And they live happily... The end of the never-ending story.</i>	à jour Film- & Fernsehproduktion GmbH	278
2007	<i>...dann leben sie noch heute - Das Ende der unendlichen Geschichte</i>	<i>...ever after. The end of the never-ending story.</i>	à jour Film- & Fernsehproduktion GmbH	290

1.4 Methods and sources

This thesis modestly attempts to follow the approach of New Film History, explained by Chapman (2013, p. 30) as an approach where “[...] film is understood as a complex cultural artefact whose form and content are the outcome of many processes – ideological, industrial, economic, technological, social, aesthetic – that shape the final product.”. The central topic of representation and time shuttling in the long doc *Der Kinder von Golzow* is therefore understood because of these various processes. Chapter 1 is largely a look at the type of final product long docs are, in the sense that it looks at its underlying principles from a theoretical and filmmaking perspective. This helps narrowing down which cultural artefacts are considered and prevents the thesis from making holistic claims about representation in the GDR or in documentary films in general. Here, sources used are largely general documentary film theory, as well as more specific ones on long docs or long docs in general. From Chapter 2 onwards, the focus shifts towards providing background and context to the processes mentioned above by Chapman. In addition to using several excellent general histories of the GDR and DEFA, I have had the opportunity to visit archives to access documents which gives primary sources for several of these processes. In the Bundesarchiv, mainly relating to ideology, economic and industrial processes for all the films up to 1994 in this long doc, of which correspondences, plans for future films (*Drehplane, Drehbuch, Exposés* etc), as well as censorship documents (*Zulassungunterlagen*) were particularly illuminating. While these have been used sparingly in this thesis, it has given me a greater insight into the processes for which these films came about, helping me avoid some potential pitfalls in my arguments. I have also visited the Press Archive at the Deutsche Kinemathek – Museum für Film und Fernsehen in Berlin, which has newspaper clippings of West German writing on these films as well as post-wall newspaper articles. Additionally, the DEFA Film Library at the University of Massachusetts have been kind enough to give me access to some relevant material.

I have not as a part of this research accessed the Stasi archives. My argument is this: knowing whether protagonists or filmmakers were informants or not, and knowing even more about the personal lives of people involved than what is given in the series and writings about them may give more information related to the filmmaking praxis, but it also leads to a situation in which it is hard to look away from information on the verge of slander. While I was lucky enough to briefly meet a teacher that played in the early films while visiting Golzow and its museum dedicated to the films in January 2018, it does not seem ethically sound delving into personal information on the filmmakers and protagonists without having met most of them first.

For the analysis of films in Chapter 3 and 4, I have been depending on the 18-discs DVD release of *Der Kinder von Golzow*, released in 2017 with English subtitles by absolut MEDIEN. When citing specific lines from the films, I have used the English translation given unless there is a significant difference between the subtitles and original German audio.

Chapter 2: Background: Documentary filmmaking in and after the GDR

In the process of creating documentary series over decades, the minds behind the *Golzow* films had to weather many storms of political oppression inside the state-sponsored film industry. This naturally affected the outcome of the films, what survived past sketches and the editing room and what ended up in the cinema and occasionally television. This chapter gives necessary context to the film production environment the years before and in the German Democratic Republic, as well as the aftermath of die Wende on “East German” documentary film production. A major point of this chapter is to make clear that while there is a Socialist red herring throughout the entire existence of the GDR which influenced filmmakers, new approaches to documentary filmmaking did appear on the scene which changed the representation of ordinary lives in the state.

2.1 Beginnings in the rubble: 1945-1949

The brief post-war pre-GDR period would create a framework for GDR society and filmmaking. After World War II the Soviet Occupied Zone became Soviet Union’s slice of the Allied Occupied Germany “pie”. With minor geographical exceptions, this zone was to become the German Democratic Republic from 7th October 1949. After the devastation of World War II much of Berlin, where the major film production company of both the Weimar Republic and of Nazi Germany UFA (*Universum Film AG*) had its headquarters, was in ruins.

The Soviet Union quickly found itself in a dilemma with what to do with the occupied zone, but found three main goals (Stokes, 2000, p. 15). First came the payback. Payback of Nazi atrocities quickly escalated into an open hunting season on Germans and soon over 200,000 were put in secret “special camps” (*Speziallager*), from 1948 as a part of the Gulag (Merten, 2018). Another goal for the Soviet Union was to use the resources in the zone, material and intellectual, to improve the situation back in the mainland, which had suffered enormous devastation from war on the Eastern Front. As a part of a reparations agreement, substantial amount of plant and machinery was dismantled and moved to the Soviet Union, and scientists and engineers were forcefully moved to work on research and development projects there (Stokes, 2000, p. 21).

However, East Berlin's film industry under the new company name DEFA (*Deutsche Film-Aktiengesellschaft*) remained in the Zone as one of around 200 industrial plants that were not moved east (Allan, 1999, p. 4). Soviets saw re-educating the German people Germans after 12 years of Nazi propaganda as a crucial third goal, to recast the political environment to be more in tandem with the Soviet system (Stokes, 2000, p. 15) and, arguably, to cover over what the Soviets were doing in present time. Film had been considered since the 1920s in the Soviet Union as an important propaganda tool, and in this chaotic environment post-WW2, film industry somehow found renewed life in the dismantled Berlin rubble. Hence, DEFA had from 17th May 1946 the support of the Soviet Military Administration (SMA), the Central Administration for National Education (*Zentralverwaltung für Volksbildung*) and the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Germany (*Zentralkomitees der Kommunistischen Partei Deutschlands*) to start making films (Jordan, 2000, p. 15), less than a year after the end of UFA. However, this came at a prize. Due to not being moved east, DEFA had become a *Sowjetische Aktiengesellschaften* (SAG, "Soviet Joint Stock Company"), which led to the company being funded chiefly through Soviet capital disguised as German from 3th November 1947 (Allan, 1999, p. 4). Famously, the first feature film, the anti-fascist *Die Mörder sind unter uns* (*Murderers Among Us*, Staudte, 1946) was released already in on 15th October in Berlin in the Soviet Zone. The film shot in the rubbles left from the war with several amateur actors became the first in a row of films later coined as "rubble films" (*Trümmerfilme*, see Shandley, 2001).

Documentary filmmaking had started already in January 1946 with cameraman Reimar Kuntze shooting footage in the flooded S-Bahn tunnel in Berlin (Jordan, 2000, p. 15) and the first edition of the newsreel *Der Augenzeuge* (1946 – 1980) was shown 19th February the same year (DEFA Stiftung, 2018). Early documentary films borrowed much in its approach from the expository style of the newsreels. One example is *Einheit SPD-KPD* (1946) by board member of the new production company DEFA Kurt Maetzig which was similar in length (18 minutes) and content to newsreels, capturing events with a rapid editing style and an expository voice-over. In this case the heavy cameras were pointed at the conferences and meetings about the merging of the Communist Party of Germany (*Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands*, KPD) and the Social Democratic Party of Germany (*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*, SPD) into the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands*, SED), three years later to become the only party in the GDR. While this was a controversial political event that ended in a forced merger and about 5000 Social Democrats being put in jail (Opitz, 2007), the voice-over steers away from the political nature of this controversy, choosing not to make

any comment or reflections directly on the positives and negatives of the merger. Opening the documentary up for different interpretations of events could get you in trouble and opposing the new regime openly would risk putting you in jail with no contact with the outside world or your family.

While *Trümmerfilme* became somewhat of a genre within fiction film, shooting rubble was not of interest to the early documentaries and production of them was limited. Perhaps because, as one writer suggested, any lengthy documentary film would not say any more than the word “rubble” alone already did.¹⁸ However, constantly documenting rubble, being a largely negative symbol of decay and stagnation, would arguably be disadvantageous to the re-educating propaganda machinery that had to be optimistic of the now and the future, despite both the material drain and the brain-drain towards the Soviet mainland and elsewhere. Rubble imagery was thus only suitable if it related to the past and fascism such as in the *Trümmerfilme*. Hence, a larger number of documentaries were produced once filmmakers could easily shoot away from the rubbles and the outgoing convoys.

2.2 1949-1959: Presenting the ordinary through *Gegenwart* (present-now), a signal war and anti-West propaganda

The merger depicted in *Einheit SPD-KPD* (1946) that resulted in the political party SED, led to the founding of the German Democratic Republic on 7th October 1949 – a one-party driven state heavily influenced by socialist ideologies of the Stalinist Soviet Union. The third SED Party Congress in July 1950 put into motion the gradual nationalization of the industrial sector that was left in the new state. In quick succession, strong demands were put by the state on labour productivity and production quotas through in the form of the first Five-Year Plan (1951-1955) (see e.g. Blauhut, n.d.).

It became a task of DEFA to create films that dealt with the changed political climate in a way that suited the totalitarian party and promoted its policies. While already funded through Soviet capital, DEFA became from 1948 more SED-friendly with the replacement of board members, including Kurt Maetzig, to loyal SED players such as the “hard-line communist” Sepp Schwab (Allan, 1999, p. 6) to ensure that the films had the SED seal of approval. DEFA, now under the

¹⁸ Original citation: «Jeder langatmige Bericht ist unnütz, um die Situation des deutschen Filmwesens und speziell der Berliner Filmindustrie nach dem Zusammenbruch zu kennzeichnen. Ein Wort genügt: Trümmer.» (Jordan, 2000, p. 15, cited from Müting, 1947)

helm of the Ministry of Culture (*Ministerium für Kultur*, MfK), quickly became a vertical and horizontal monopoly in control of most aspects of production and distribution. It had no direct competitors and in the beginning was not influenced by western or eastern imports to any significant degree.

The economic model of GDR film production had many similarities with public service broadcasting companies as seen in the West (Stott, 2016 p. 26). The focus was heavily on educational value of the output rather than economic profit and themes set in the yearly production plans heavily influenced the output. These themes largely concerned ideological content, such as promoting and addressing socialism and “socialist personalities”. In his doctoral thesis, Feinstein argues that the personalities constructed in GDR films up until the mid-60s represented ordinary people as part of a “present-now” – *Gegenwart* – a representation of a society midway towards historical progress (Feinstein, 1995). His argument is in part based on how filmmakers themselves would use the word *Gegenwart* frequently to describe their projects to producers in DEFA and defend their final products to censors. Feinstein only looks at feature films in his doctoral thesis, but the term is useful also for documentary films, as these too had to argue that the GDR was legitimate and progressing, and particularly how this political progression of socialism was something that happened organically in the state. Representation was to be a “*Widerspiegelung des ‘Typischen’* (reflection of the typical)” (Creech, 2016, p. 196), thus focusing on the human condition and its unchanging aspects as it benefitted a narrative of progress in the GDR.

The result was documentary films that talked around the current political events that was neither progressive nor fitting desired “socialist personalities”. Taboo subjects were for example the *Republikflucht*, the mass-migration of millions of East Germans up to the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961, or the mass uprising on 16th-17th June 1953 following raised work quotas through the New Course proposed after Stalin’s death. Instead, DEFA documentary film production, which from 1953 had its own studio named *DEFA Studio für Wochenschau und Dokumentarfilme*, continued producing pro-SED propaganda¹⁹ as well as anti-fascist and increasingly anti-Western works, perhaps as a scare-tactic to all those who considered leaving the East behind. Non-believers of a better future under socialism who stayed back were likely

¹⁹ A good example of pro-SED documentary films is what was to become a tradition in the DEFA filmmaking: the decade anniversary feature documentary films of the GDR. In 1959 the Republic was ten years old, and a documentary film made in its celebration: *Daß ein gutes Deutschland blühe* (Joop Huiskens, 1959). An uncensored version with narration by the poet Stephan Hermlin was never screened in the Republic (Progress-Filmverleih, n.d.).

scared too, as outspoken opponents of this regime were, much like in the Soviet Occupied Zone, imprisoned (kept mostly in isolation) for having the wrong ideas. Thus, open critique of the state in the films was non-existent.

In some cases, the anti-western and anti-fascist propaganda were combined, such as in the case of *Urlaub auf Sylt* (*Holiday on Sylt*, Andrew Thorndike & Annelie Thorndike, 1957) on ex-Nazis hiding in plain sight in Sylt in West Germany, seemingly in the process of re-establishing the Nazi Party. Again, the approach is that of the newsreel in length and content. However, the difference here is the strong focus on the individual. The face of ex-SS-*Gruppenführer* Heinz Reinefarth is faded in with archival images of “revealing” documents and German atrocities in Poland in 1944, and unlike other documentary works the narration and voice-over is direct and tied to a specific historical period, representing Nazism as an anomaly and untraditional German.

However, in the latter part of *Urlaub auf Sylt* crowds of neo-Nazis are shown, forewarning about a growing danger in West Germany. To what degree existential threats to the GDR from the outside were real or not does not matter for our purposes here, what was noteworthy from early on in GDR filmmaking was how often this fear was pushed for in the propaganda. Decades later, the lasting peace becomes an argument for the success of the state itself. This is for instance seen in the *Golzow* films in which voice-overs remind the audience how long it has been since a war on the home front, often juxtaposed with Western “warmongering” in Vietnam.

Another important development of the decade was the first TV broadcasts from the state. Crucially for the GDR, this happened simultaneously in the Federal Republic. In what would become a signal war between the states until the end in 1989, West German TV signals could reach as much as 2/3 of the GDR while GDR broadcasts barely reached outside its own borders (Langenbacher, 1983, as cited in Raundalen, 2009, p. 70). Watched by and frequently catered to East Germans, these broadcasts ensured a way to stay informed of life outside the Republic, a western propaganda providing an antidote to their own anti-western propaganda. Despite gradual increase in local production, and various measures to avoid East Germans receiving signal, Western TV remained popular through the decades to come in the GDR (Raundalen, 2009, pp. 69-72). It is reasonable to assume that propaganda filmmaking in the GDR in the future would have to, and did, account for viewers who had a good level of knowledge of life

on the other side of the border. In the future, an even more realist socialist realism was therefore necessary for an idea of an East German identity to stick.

New demands in TV production led to increased production of film which led to the establishment of the *Deutsche Hochschule für Filmkunst* in Potsdam-Babelsberg in 1954 (since 1985 named *Filmuniversität Babelsberg KONRAD WOLF*) which would secure home-grown future talents in both fiction and nonfictional work. Winfried Junge became a student here the same year, and a decade later fellow long doc documentarian Volker Koepp would follow suit. In 1955 Dok Leipzig was founded, the first independent film festival in the GDR. This gave talents within the nation a necessary platform for their films – but crucially this also allowed filmmakers to see and become inspired by works made abroad.

2.3 The 1960s: 11th Plenum, “Babelsberger School” and presenting the ordinary through *Alltag* (everyday)

Around the time 26-year-old Winfried Junge was wrapping up his second “pre-film”²⁰ *Wenn ich erst zur Schule geh* (*When I finally go to school*, Junge, 1961) which was to become the first *Golzow* film, the climate in DEFA began for a brief time to relax with regards to censorship until it became stricter again. Although documentary filmmaking in the GDR generally enjoyed having less attention brought to itself compared to feature filmmaking, what was to occur in the latter half of the 1960s affected all filmmaking in the young Republic. The Soviet display of military power in the Hungarian Uprising of 1956 was only a teaser to the more terrifying display of power in the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 after the Prague Spring. These major political events reminded the GDR (and particularly the SED) of the importance of not veering too far away from established Communist party lines from a generation earlier. Nothing like the radical but brief Czech New Wave film movement ever found foothold in the GDR, because the GDR was from its beginning much closer to the Soviet politically and far more proactive in political oppression. Tendencies to veer too far off the standard socialist realist aesthetic and safe filmmaking was nipped in the bud prematurely through strict but unpredictable censorship (Allan, 1999). Self-censorship also likely played a key role, as the

²⁰ Shorter documentary works that had the potential to be expanded to feature length documentaries were called “pre-films”. These were shown ahead of the main film in a screening but after advertisements and newsreels.

state employed filmmakers did not want to risk losing a stable full-time job – one of the perks of state filmmaking – or worse fates.

Some, however, tested their luck. When the Berlin Wall was erected in 1961 it was not initially considered a complete taboo subject in films and GDR's star feature filmmaker Konrad Wolf made the later canonized *Der geteilte Himmel* (*The Divided Heaven*) in 1964 which passed censorship (Allan, 1999, p. 11). Kurt Maetzig, who by now had already had a long career in feature filmmaking, was not to be as fortunate with his political critique in the shape of a film named *Das Kaninchen bin ich* (*The Rabbit is Me*, 1965). This film and ten others, including the experimental (and partly shot in the still "surviving" rubbles) realist²¹ film *Jahrgang 45* (*Born in 45*, Jürgen Böttcher, 1966), which according to historian Seán Allan "might have heralded an aesthetic revolution in the GDR cinema" (Allan, 1999, p. 13), were banned. This decision which ended the careers of several directors, began with vicious attacks of Kurt Maetzig's film among others during the 11th Plenum of the Central Committee of the SED in December 1965 by Erich Honecker. In his speech, Honecker, in 1971 to become leader of the Republic, made the issue of these films clear:

[...] The matter is quite straightforward. If we are to increase productivity – and thereby raise our standard of living still further – we cannot afford to propagate nihilistic, defeatist and immoral philosophies in literature, film, drama and television. Scepticism and a rising standard of living are ... mutually incompatible. [...]

(Honecker, 1965, as cited in Allan, 1999, p. 13)

As the quote illustrates, any discussion around art in the GDR was not simply about art, but rather, about politics. The 11th Plenum event and the political climate in general would explain the apparent slow change to documentary style in GDR over the decades. This does not mean however that no new developments were made, but rather that strong inspirations from old "safer" ideas were still present. Much like in the West with the development of Direct Cinema and perhaps in part inspired by it through what filmmakers had opportunity to see at the Dok Leipzig film festival,²² focus in the GDR was on making documentary films even more "real".

²¹ Seán Allan calls this film documentary; however, I find this to be somewhat misleading. *Jahrgang 45* was the first feature film by Jürgen Böttcher and belongs in that mold, but has a strong and "unsocialist" realist bend which is "documenting" ordinary lives.

²² From Byg (2001, p. 142) citing an interview with Winfried Junge in Herlinghaus (1982): "Chris Marker's *Le Joli Mai* was a major inspiration for us. But even more indispensable was the familiarity with the films of Vertov, Flaherty, Grierson, Cavalcanti, Ivens, Romm, Simonov, Alvarez and the Thorndikes. All this was conveyed by way of Leipzig [Film Festival - BB], in their totality. The question is what we could do on the basis of all these stimuli, which techniques and methods we could adopt and, with the story of the children of Golzow, for and about the GDR, contribute internationally to the image of the contemporary documentary film."

Filmmaker Klaus Stanjek argues that the DEFA system from the 60s sowed the seeds for a specific “Babelsberger School” approach to documentary filmmaking:

Great attention is paid to the representation of people. In this type of documentary films there is a special respect for the individuality of the occurring people; they are not used as informers, experts or keywords, but as a rule with a perceptible human sympathy. The average people, the workers and the country folk, the neighbours from next door dominate these films, not the exotic nerds, the freaks or celebrities. The themes of these groups of films are the working world, the unspectacular daily life and the difficulties with it. [...] The authentic effect of real everyday behaviour is given a high priority in this group of films.²³

(Stanjek, 2012, pp. 16)

The interest and intent in showing ordinary people has similarities to what was made before, albeit deepened by the attempt to not merely show ordinary people as a part of historical events, such as in *Einheit SPD-KPD*, but rather observe ordinary lives “as is” *disconnected* from a sense of historical progress. Representation of ordinary lives through *Gegenwart* (present-now) had now been replaced by *Alltag* (everyday) (Feinstein, 1995, p. iv), which particularly became a “rallying cry” for artists and intellectuals from the beginning of the 70s onwards (Feinstein, 1995, p. 286). As Feinstein puts it:

This distinction [from *Gegenwart*] was of great significance, since mobilization towards the future was socialism’s organizing principle [...] By presenting an image of a static, existing society rather than a forward-moving one, GDR cinema participated in the formation of an alternative East German self-understanding whose resonance was popular and that the regime tolerated for its own purposes.

(Feinstein, 1995, p. iv-v)

Another important development is the focus on showing the *process* of making the films, perhaps in part to clarify to censors the honesty of this new output. Censors, like all film-interested Germans, likely had great knowledge from the German films of the Nazi period of how lies and distortions could be manufactured into believable documentary style films, and so showing the process became, after several waves of censorship already, an important part of the contractual makeup of the documentary films going forward.

²³ Original citation: „Große Aufmerksamkeit erfährt in ihr die Darstellung der Menschen. In den Filmen dieses Typs vermittelt sich ein besonderer Respekt für die auftretenden Menschen in ihrer Individualität; sie werden nicht als Informanten, Fachleute oder Stichwortgeber benutzt, sondern in der Regel mit einer spürbaren menschlichen Anteilnahme. Die durchschnittlichen Menschen, die Arbeiter und das Landvolk, die Nachbarn von nebenan dominieren diese Filme, nicht die exotischen Sonderlinge, die Freaks oder die Prominenten. Die Themen dieser Gruppe von Filmen behandeln die Arbeitswelt, das unspektakuläre tägliche Leben und die Schwierigkeiten, damit zurechtzukommen. [...] Die authentische Wirkung des realen Alltagsverhaltens erhält in dieser Gruppe von Filmen einen hohen Stellenwert.“

Additionally, as increased demand for documentary material came for TV production, *DEFA Studios für Dokumentarfilme* had to develop content suitable for a part of the media production landscape that was directly under the Agitation Department of the Central Committee of SED.²⁴ Not showing this process would likely be questionable by censors of this increasingly important client. Films which had elements that could be misinterpreted (i.e. lack of explanatory commentary) were particularly targeted by censors. Paradoxically, more cooperation with TV also made sure that the focus on representing *Alltag* versions of ordinary lives was increased for documentary projects. This was due to the “everyday” format this new medium had organically (Schreiber, 2000, p. 131).

Der Kinder von Golzow can be said to belong to the Babelsberger School, but other types of documentary films were also made i.e. about extraordinary people or circumstances. Walter Heynowski and Gerhard Scheumann developed anti-western propaganda to new heights. With the ongoing Vietnam War there were many opportunities to do so, a highlight from their output is the made for TV *Piloten im Pyjama* (1968). Captured by the North Vietnamese enemy, US Air Force pilots are interviewed in front on the camera while sweating profusely, seemingly admitting to war crimes and letting the audience know of the good treatment they are receiving. To be accepted as believable, lots of seemingly minute details are explained to us or shown about the making of this film, that end up becoming important to strengthen claims to authenticity. After the success of this series Studio H & S was created, an independent branch off the DEFA Dokumentarfilme. Productions from Studio H & S would later collect awards at the West German Oberhausen Film Festival (“Walter Heynowski,” 2009, p. 198), bringing further attention to East German documentary filmmaking in the West beyond Dok Leipzig.

2.4 The 70s: Brief attempts at further innovation and growing economic problems

In 1969 the new Chancellor of the Federal Republic Willy Brandt attempted to thaw relations between its state and the GDR through what was called *Ostpolitik*, which led to the Basic Treaty of 1972, in which both states finally recognized each other as sovereign states. This was desirable to the GDR as well, aiming towards becoming more legitimate to non-Soviet countries. This coupled with Ernst Honecker’s speech in December 1971 proclaiming that there

²⁴ The DEFA Filmstudio, unlike television, had the *Ministerium für Kultur* as a “barrier” department between itself and SED (Schreiber, 2000, p. 131).

should be no “taboo subjects for art and literature”, given a socialist standpoint in the films, led to a temporary sense of greater freedom (Raundalen, 2009, p. 64, Schreiber, 2000, p. 130). But this statement only confirmed once more that art was very heavily tied to a certain kind of politics, that of the SED, and so only tentative attempts to break the mould was made. There was, without a doubt, still a chance of becoming a political prisoner for expressing wrong opinions.

For documentary projects not tied up with the strictly controlled TV medium there were sporadic small window of opportunities to do something a bit different (Kilborn, 1999). Jürgen Böttcher and Volker Koepp, armed with lightweight camera equipment with zoom function, went seeking after ordinary people for their films, often working women. In both director’s filmography, explanatory voice-over which had been the standard gradually was replaced with interviews of the protagonists in films such as *Mädchen in Wittstock* (*Girls in Wittstock*, Volker Koepp, 1975) and *Wäscherinnen* (Jürgen Böttcher, 1972). For Koepp, women were of interest in part for their bravery and honesty, stating in an interview in 2004: “Women are more willing than men to say what they think. They are the stronger figures in art.”²⁵ (Schenk, 2004).

Giving more ordinary women, not necessarily the ideal “socialist personalities” in GDR society a voice on film, pushed documentary films further towards a sense of realism. These tentative attempts at changing the formula lead documentaries, until now purely considered as propaganda, to seem less obviously so, even if propaganda was not hidden deep. (Schreiber, 2000, p. 178) What was certain for these films however, were that representations of *Alltag* were to stay.

While these outspoken *Alltag* documentaries were accepted by censors, 1976 would prove a tough year for those invested in improving free speech even further. In what was coined the “Biermann case”, singer Wolf Biermann was expatriated for criticising the GDR on a concert tour in the Federal Republic. Written protests soon followed from a spectrum of the GDR culture arena that found a common cause to rally against, followed by an artistic drain out of the GDR (Allan, 1999, pp. 15-16). Paradoxically some of the brain drain in general was caused directly by the state itself from 1963 (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2011) through “selling” East German political prisoners with i.e. family ties to West Germany (*Häftlingsfreikauf*), which also brought sorely needed Western currency into an economically

²⁵ Original citation: «Frauen sind eher bereit als Männer, zu sagen, was sie denken. Sie sind die stärkeren Figuren in der Kunst.»

struggling state dependent on import. By 1989, West Germany had paid for the release of around 33,000 prisoners, with prices starting at 40,000 West German marks per head. (von Wedel, 2012).

This money was however not enough to buy the state out of its growing problems. The ambitious economic targets set by the state were not met at the end of the sixties, which had the ripple effect of supply difficulties felt by everyone in the 70s (Schreiber, 2000, p. 129). An example of this was the “coffee crisis” of 1976-79 where high coffee prices and lack of hard currency in the GDR led to shortage of coffee, a blow to Ernst Honecker’s “consumer socialism” programme. The cinema industry also felt a supply shortage: few new cinemas were built, reducing opportunities for people to see films, which worsened conditions for reception and employment (Schreiber, 2000, p. 131). Cinema attendance numbers also fell. By the start of the 70s, 90% of DEFA films had become unprofitable and to balance the books income relied on more western imports, particularly Hollywood blockbusters, which attracted the “predominantly young” cinema goers (Horten, 2016, p. 72).

An exception to this negative trend was the writing on film. *Film und Fernsehen*, a film journal entirely funded by the state, which quickly became the major hub for written film critique and analysis from its inception in 1973 until its end in 1988 (Stott, 1999, pp. 42-43). Initiated by Karl Gass in 1978, the annual *Festival für Dokumentar- und Kurzfilme der DDR* in Neubrandenburg became an important forum for the filmmakers themselves (Schieber, 2000, p. 181).

2.5 GDR Documentary filmmaking 1980 – 1989: *Perestroika, glasnost* and a televised mistake

Although the Biermann case of 1976 likely lingered in the back of the mind of many, the GDR documentary film scene of the 80s could be characterized by a more open relation between filmmaker, the state and the audience. Open relation between filmmakers, protagonists and spectators also became the focus of documentary filmmaking in the West which gradually developed towards what documentary theorist Bill Nichols termed “a performative mode” (Nichols, 1994, Nichols, 2010 p. 152). In the GDR, this natural evolution from more *Alltag* documentaries were driven by more liberal developments in the SED leadership as well as an outspoken Karl Gass, who in addressing filmmaking in the GDR cited the Marxist politician

Rosa Luxemburg: “There is nothing that is so damaging to the revolution as illusions, there is nothing that is as useful to them as that clear, open truth.”²⁶. Feeling jaded by unrepresentative “heroic builders of socialism”, filmmakers were now – to a stronger degree – more inclined to experiment and open itself to discussing contradictions in the Socialist state (Schieber, 2000, p. 181). Winfried Junge’s mammoth project *Lebensläufe* (1980) dealt in part with issues of education and alcoholism. Jürgen Böttcher made his most experimental film yet in the award-winning short *Rangierer* (1984), following railroad shunters with a handheld 35mm camera in their dangerous work, without commentary or interviews in a *cinéma vérité* style. Thus, both Junge and Böttcher proved that representations of ordinary lives and work, the topic of most GDR documentaries, still had room for innovation. Additionally, co-productions with Western countries such as France, the UK and West Germany became more common and allowed for more openness.

The openness was also, as Horten (2016) makes a good case for, a result of growing economic pains in the film sector. In a struggle for survival, balancing the books with financial profit became promoted to the chief objective – the previously desired ideological films became less and less important as they performed poorly in the cinemas. More Hollywood blockbusters were imported by the SED officials in charge of movie selection to make ends meet and by the early 1980s had lost control of the medium and its overall representation of the GDR and GDR identity.

Major changes in the still influential mother-state Soviet Union drove openness even further, on a grand scale. Gorbachev’s rise to power on 11th March 1985 soon led to a radical domestic reform: in 1986, *perestroika* (“restructuring”²⁷) became an open dialogue on possible bug-fixes with the Socialist system and its economic stagnation. The same year at the 11th Congress of Socialist Unity Party of Germany, SED congratulated itself on its achievements and re-elected Ernst Honecker for another term, a symbol of the lack of will to change despite a worsening economy. Instead of adapting to *perestroika*, Honecker patched the economy mainly through Western aid (Conradt, 2009, p. 22). Literature related to the *perestroika* was banned.

Gorbachev’s Russia and Honecker’s Republic were clearly at odds here. Relations between the two would not get easier as Gorbachev introduced another reform in *glasnost*, meaning

²⁶ Schieber, 2000, p. 181. Original citation: "Es gibt nichts, was der Revolution so schädlich ist als Illusionen; es gibt nichts, was ihr so nützlich ist wie die klare, offene Wahrheit."

²⁷ Direct translation.

increased governmental transparency. A more transparent GDR, with its claim of legitimacy tied to old ideas of Socialism, in part held in check by an extensive surveillance system at the *Ministerium für Staatssicherheit* (Stasi) with 90,000 full-time employees and 189,000 “unofficial collaborators” (Der Bundesbeauftragte für die Stasi-Unterlagen, 2018), would mean the death of it.

Perhaps the GDR, in light of *perestroika* and *glasnost*, was doomed either way. When the SED refused to adapt to these principles, open dissent grew into large-scale protests. A grand celebration of the 40th year of the Republic could not hide this fact – nor that the communist regime fell in Hungary in May 1989, starting a domino effect in other Eastern European countries. Soon the Republic gave in to pressure about lifting some restrictions on travel. The fateful moment would come when Günther Sabrowski, first secretary in SED, live on television on 9th November 1989 at 18:57 blurted out that new travel regulations, which allowed travel to West Germany, would, as far as he knew, be taken into effect immediately²⁸. As this surprising news were repeated on news broadcasts throughout the evening (Raundalen, 2009, p. 72-73), people started flocking the street – on the way towards the Berlin Wall.

2.6 A shock to society: Death of state filmmaking, birth of transnationalism 1989 – 1992

On the evening of 9th November 1989, the *Mauerfall*, the fall of the Berlin Wall, began. For many GDR citizens this was the first opportunity to cross this previously heavily controlled border, and from 23rd December 1989 West German citizens could travel into the GDR. From 1st of July 1990 all border controls around Berlin were abandoned and the final death throes of the republic were ended with the official reunification on 3th October 1990.

Although the *Mauerfall* was generally considered as a triumph for equality and liberty in the West, for ex-GDR citizens and the East German region, recovery, or rather, adapting to the major changes that came with reunification, would take decades and is arguably still ongoing. A good illustration of this are the changes GDR filmmaking now had to deal with, which film historian Marc Silberman (1994) gives an account of: in 1989 the DEFA monopoly had 50 full-time employed film directors and a total of 3500 employees in the entire complex²⁹. By 1992,

²⁸ Raundalen (2009, p. 72). Original phrasing by Sabrowski: “nach meiner Kenntnis... sofort, unverzüglich.”

²⁹ Of these 3500, about 860 were employed at the DEFA Studio for Documentary Films (Silberman, 1994, pp. 24-26).

the year after DEFA had been split into seven new corporations, the total number of employees was reduced to 750, many put on part-time or free-lance basis. Among those now without a stable job was Winfried Junge. The Kirch Group, a West German media consortium, bought the DEFA documentary studio in Berlin in April 1992 but sought not to produce any films (Silberman, 1994, p. 26). What was of interest to them was the real estate, bound to increase in value given time. In July 1992, the DEFA complex was dissolved and its remnants sold to the French consortium Compagnie Général des Eaux (Silberman, 1994, pp. 26), later to be known as Vivendi Universal (Halle, 2008, p. 60).

These changes towards much fewer employees, and accordingly, a much lower level of film production, had several reasons other than opportunistic investors. Firstly, there was a need to make film production more efficient with a changing economic structure not sponsored by the state. Secondly, East German cinema was considered risky business. Perhaps the most devastating blow to “Eastern” filmmaking was its lack of appeal on the free market: film-interested investors looked elsewhere, and access to the West meant both competing with more American films for attention but also the sudden access to video players and video rentals not previously available to East Germans changed viewing habits (Silberman, 1994, p. 24). In other words, East German cinema was no longer in any form protected from Western filmmaking and viewing culture. Currency reform in July 1990 from Eastern Mark to Deutsche Mark also created havoc for East German companies that tried to survive, as well as employers, whose spending power was now minimized and could hardly compete with Western studios. Because of currency reform cinema ticket prices rose “[...] four to six times from 1 to 1,5 marks to 6 DM [...]” (Silberman, 1994, p. 24) and 40% fewer tickets were sold in 1990 compared to the year before.

Those who, despite rational thinking, decided to continue filmmaking in the East region, had to find international partners. This often meant changing the filmmaking approach altogether. The consortium that bought DEFA, lead in its artistic direction by West German director Volker Schlöndorff, set out to drive the “East Germanness” out of the film studio, remarking that: “The word DEFA [...] doesn’t smell good.” (Halle, 2008, p. 70). A consequence of this outlook was the replacement of almost the entire East German staff. Schlöndorff’s proposal was to create „European film from Germany”: films in the English language focused on the American market with half of investments coming through sales of international distributions (Halle, 2008, p. 71). As Randall Halle argues, this kind of approach sowed the seed for progression towards a

transnational aesthetic in German cinema. GDR cinema never had global marketability as a major obstacle; in this new environment it was an essential question for survival. As a result, the significance of the director dropped in favour of producers and distributors (Halle, 2008, p. 84).

In the case of documentaries, the few filmmakers that survived outside of this wide-scale movement were those who had gone deep down the Babelsberger school route in documenting ordinary lives. There are perhaps two reasons for this. First and foremost, there was an interest in the initial years after the *Mauerfall* to see how “East Germany” really was like and had been like, and projects could therefore find funding through selling of broadcasting right particularly from TV networks around Europe. Paradoxically, the topic of East Germany later became of interest to the transnational cinema as well, the most famous examples being *Good Bye Lenin!* (Wolfgang Becker, 2003) and the Oscar-winning film *Das Leben der Anderen* (*The Lives of Others*, Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck, 2006). Secondly, particularly as the years went on, these kinds of films got a sizeable regional market as “GDR” *Heimat* – a sense of longing back to the good memories of the homeland past – grew³⁰. Unlike the documentary films made during the GDR lifetime however, these films did not have to negotiate representation of ordinary life through an awkward construct of a “socialist personality”; these films could move beyond such faux attempts at representing ordinary lives in a nation.

³⁰ Although *Heimatfilm* is more commonly associated with a genre of post-WW2 German film that looked away from the devastation and guilt surrounding the war, these new post-GDR films can be fruitfully seen as new *Heimatfilme* in their fond outlook on the past in the GDR.

Chapter 3: *Der Kinder von Golzow* and its representation of ordinary life in the GDR

This chapter takes a glimpse of the representation of ordinary lives in the seven films leading up to *Lebensläufe* (1980), the most famous *Golzow* film of the series, for which a close reading follows to unveil changes in representation. Additionally, this chapter analyses the use of time shuttles – a specific characteristics of long docs introduced in Chapter 1 – and how it affects how ordinary lives are portrayed in the GDR. However, time shuttling does not come into effect until 18 years into the project. For the analysis of time shuttles, knowing the process that lead up to them is necessary to understand – as choices made in the past directly influence the representation of ordinary lives and time shuttling towards the final decade of the GDR. This chapter concludes with a brief consideration of the years that followed until 1990 and try to describe how this representation of ordinary lives turned out and what it meant.

3.1 Six short films, the beginnings (1961 – 1975)

3.1.1 Choose your protagonists carefully: *Wenn ich erst zur Schule geh* (1961)

When director Karl Gass first came up with the idea of following a school class as they grow up, there were no guarantees being made for future films and no prior proof of this concept working anywhere. *Wenn ich erst zur Schule geh* (1961) was an experiment in the newly founded KAG Gass (*Künstlerische Arbeitsgruppe Gass*) under DEFA's studio for newsreels and documentaries in which young filmmakers were given opportunities to create shorter films for cinema release as “pre-films” ahead of main events. Winfried Junge, a 25-year-old fairly fresh graduate from the *Deutsche Hochschule für Filmkunst* was set to travel to a rural east town close to the Polish border that had suffered devastation from floods and WW2. Here, his task was to document the first day of the new 10-grade school in a farming *Kleinstadt* on the way to getting back on its feet (Junge, 2017).

This was easier said than done. Although Junge himself considered documentary work with children easy work (Junge, 2017), there remained the problem how to represent a new generation of 18 Golzowers in a way that was easy and entertaining enough to follow for 14 minutes. The solution was to focus on a few of them, not even socialist documentaries could realistically give every child equal space and focus in a two-reel format, although that would have created ample legroom for future documentaries in how growing up in the rural GDR as

an ordinary person would be represented. What Winfried could not have known at the time, as it was not budgeted to be a long-running series until *Die Prüfung* (*The Exam*, Junge, 1971), was how significant the choice of Jürgen as the “poster-boy” of the first film (Figure 1) would become for how the series would represent ordinary lives in the GDR, as I will get back to. For now, it is important to note that any longitudinal documentary is beholden to the foundation laid in early years.

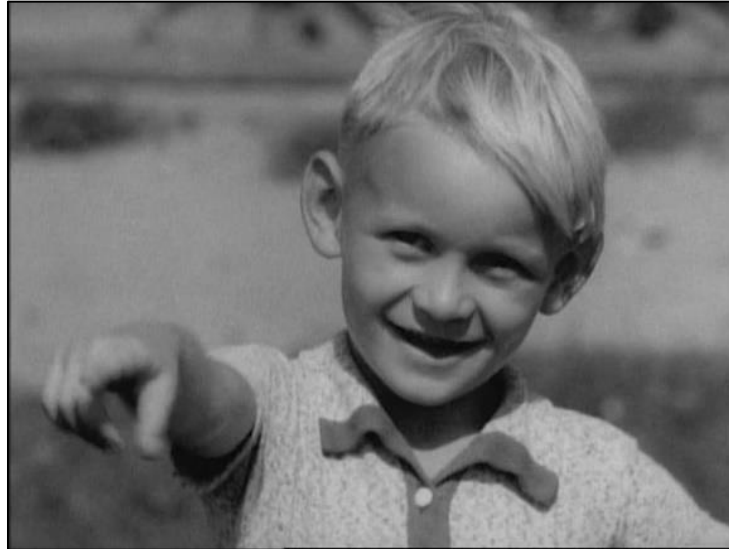


Figure 1: The first image of the first film, “Wenn ich erst zur Schule geh” (1961). Jürgen W. facing the camera

Close-ups of Jürgen W.³¹ in the sandbox and in the classroom, catch his antics as one of the more camera-friendly kids. In the first film, attempts were made to observe the first pupils from a distance as to catch them unawares while learning the first letter of the alphabet, shooting from outside pointing the hidden sound camera with fixed lenses into the classroom. However, this attempt at an observational documentary is clearly a scripted film to a large degree, not only in the use of “Voice of God” narration, which appears in all *Golzow* films. We hear what the kids are whispering clearly to each other. In trying to liven up a sequence in which Jürgen is in the classroom doing written exercises, a black cat is seen in the window. In quick montage we see images of the cat and reaction shots showing Jürgen’s expressions up close of observing the cat. We are “in” on this scripted moment with Jürgen, who clearly must have known of the camera’s presence with those intrusive angles from a camera without zooming capabilities.

³¹ There are two *Golzow* protagonists with the name Jürgen, but the protagonist often referred to as “Jürgen 2” in the films plays a minor role. Unless otherwise stated, Jürgen means Jürgen W.

This kind of apparent faux observation would quickly disappear altogether from the documentary series; however, these early scenes are often recalled back to in later films and interpreted differently. The approach going forward would be less intervening with individual scenes such as adding a cat into the *Golzow* petri dish, but rather move this experiment through different events and record the outcome. As the Golzow children grew older, direct interviews with the protagonists became fruitful and were used to great effect.

3.1.2 1962 – 1975: Towards complexity in representing ordinary lives

Although the first film was curious about the future for these ordinary kids, no statement was made about it, nor the success of the new rural school system that from 1960 granted eight to ten years of primary school, which was far more than what these kids' parents had had during WW2. This approach was too universal and therefore criticized in the approval dossier (*Zulassungunterlagen*) by the censorship dated 27.12.1961:

“Unfortunately, there is no connection with the style of the film to the question of the development of socialist education in rural areas (here in the specific example Golzow).”³² (BArch DR 1-Z/4661)

If future Golzow projects were to achieve the marks of distinction given to the best documentaries “*wertvoll*” (“valuable”) or “*Besonders wertvoll*” (“especially valuable”), which also had economic incentives behind them³³, the content of the films needed changing towards a more specific representation that benefitted state ideology.

Jürgen's photogenic face was still the first that met the audience (Figure 2, upper left), but in *Nach einem Jahr – Beobachtungen in einer ersten Klasse* (*After a year – observation in a first grade*, Junge, 1962) Jürgen shares the screen time more evenly with the other children although he is still the main protagonist. Central to the second film is a field trip in which the kids get up close to an aeroplane used for spreading fertilizers. The focus of the film is showing how this recent technology and cooperative farming approach in Golzow has already made its way into the “forward-thinking” Socialist school curriculum (Figure 2).

³² Original citation: „Leider wird dabei keine dem Stil des Filmes angepasste Verbindung zur Frage der Entwicklung des sozialistischen Schulwesens in Landgebieten (hier am konkreten Beispiel Golzow) geschaffen.“

³³ See i.e. the letter from Winfried Junge to director of DEFA-Studios für Kurzfilme H. Wrede dated 16. April 1972 and titled *Betrifft: Regie-Pauschale «Die Prüfung» / Prädikat: Besonders wertvoll* (BArch DR 118/4628). Here, Junge writes after having received an economic penalty fee for his project for going slightly over budget: “Please allow me to inform you about the calculation of my flat fee for the film “*Die Prüfung*”, which for me, although in accordance with the applicable rules, is very unfavourable and virtually annihilates the term “*Besonders wertvoll*” financially speaking.”



Figure 2: Images from “Nach einem Jahr – Beobachtungen in einer ersten Klasse” (1962).

Upper left: The first shot of the second film is also of Jürgen. Upper right: The Golzow children in the fields watching a fertilizer plane up close. Bottom left: close-up of Jürgen’s drawing. Bottom right: close-up of a textbook in class.

Although this content can be read as a direct response to complaints of the first film from the censors, other elements of the film make this influence much clearer. For instance, towards the end of the short, the grades for a test are read out loud in class for the filmmakers to capture. Here, the focus is particularly on those with bad grades such as Jochen, who also gets a note from another pupil reading “Jochen ist doof” (Jochen is stupid). In the context of the film this is shown as something innocent and amusing – no negative commentary is pointing fingers towards the rural school system or society. Instead it focuses on the antics of children who are behaving badly in class. This continues in the third film *Elf Jahre alt* (Junge, 1966): the filmmakers acknowledge that for example Brigitte is a struggling pupil, able to single her out from the rest of the class with a zoom lens for the first time. In this action she becomes a victim

of the camera, as the filmmaker must “document” the progress of the school system but without openly criticising the system of which Brigitte is a part of.

By this point, the main protagonist Jürgen has largely become of second importance as brighter kids such as Winfried, Willy and Marieluise get more screen time, showing hopeful products of the new rural GDR school system. The representation of ordinary lives has through showing school performance of individual children gotten more complex. Instead of focusing on one (Jürgen) or the group of Golzow children as one entity, the representation sees the complexity within the group at least in a binary sense. This is done by presenting winners and losers of this, at least officially, one-class Socialist system, through the newly acquired zoom lens.

In the end, the second film got the distinction “künstlerisch wertvoll” (“artistically valuable”, BArch DR 1-Z/856 [a]) and *Elf Jahre alt* (Junge, 1966) “Besonders wertvoll” (BArch DR 1-Z/776). The director of *DEFA Studio für Wochenschau und Dokumentarfilme* remarked for the second film:

[...] The close encounters with the LPG of the village and the parents as well as the relationships of the teacher to the children give a lifelike impression of the new socialist school.”³⁴ (BArch DR 1-Z/856 [b]).

It is reasonable to assume that Winfried Junge had learned how to appeal to censors after these first three films, using similar approaches to earlier *Gegenwart* films but also benefitting from recent technology, the zoom, to portray a desired socialist realism. A prolonged sequence in *Elf Jahre alt* (Junge, 1966) illustrates the connection to rhetoric of *Gegenwart* films since the 1940s, where the teacher tells the pupils of a famous dictum by Heraclitus, saying that you can never bathe in the same water in the river because it is always running. The film, through the teacher, tells us that the lesson to be learned from this is that you always must look to the future and learn and develop from that, not fixate on the past. This present-now and Socialist outlook on the ordinary would stay the singular focus until the seventh and eighth film.

Why? Partly because this phase of the longitudinal documentary was still the “easy work”. The protagonists were still children with unknown potential and universal relatability. There were also other good reasons to be “forward-looking”. The launch of *Sputnik 1* into space had since 1957 shown that Socialist technology could be world-leading, which not only gave hope for a better future for countries in the Soviet bloc, but also spread fear to the capitalist rival in the

³⁴ Original citation: «Die belauschten Begegnungen mit der LPG des Dorfes und den Eltern sowie die Beziehungen der Lehrerin zu den Kindern vermitteln einen lebensnahen Eindruck von der neuen sozialistischen Schule.»

West of a possible technological gap, of the United States lagging behind. On 19th June 1969, the day before the *Apollo 11* moon landing, which would turn things around the other way, present-now optimism was still high in East Berlin while discussing the next Golzow film, *Wenn man vierzehn ist* (*When you are fourteen*, Junge, 1969)³⁵:

It is going to be a movie imbued with the optimism of our lives, without raised pedagogical forefingers. With a lot of humour, the viewer will see the gradual growth of our children into the world of adults and our society.³⁶ (BArch DR 118/5239).

This optimism and “playfulness” which was reflected in the voice-over of these films would be put to a serious challenge once the series became more biographical and focused on the development of some of the Golzow children onto adults in the real world outside of school. This tone would also be challenged once it became necessary to discuss progress through showing the past and relating it to the present.

In the meantime, the next two films observe some of the Golzowers through important events such as 10th grade exams in *Die Prüfung* (*The Exam*, 1971) or observing preparations for and the ceremony of the youth consecration, the GDR-approved and atheist version of religious confirmation in *Wenn man vierzehn ist* (1969). Both films show a society creating outsiders: Marieluise is left out of the youth consecration as a Protestant Christian while i.e. Jürgen and Brigitte, who quit school after 8th grade, are only to be shown for brief moments until 1979. Marieluise becomes an easy target for the filmmaker in the sixth and final short film *Ich sprach mit einem Mädchen* (*I spoke to a girl*, Junge, 1975), the first film set out to tell the story of just one Golzower. At 20 years old, childless and not yet sure of her career prospects, she gets confronted by difficult, sometimes very direct questions and accusations by Winfried Junge – a trademark of his:

Marieluise: “Being a stewardess would not be bad.”

Junge: “But if you want to work in medicine and help people then all I might say is that being a stewardess seems very superficial. Maybe you only want to do that because it is a job for pretty girls. I might say you are full of yourself which is obvious if you want to be a stewardess.”

Marieluise: “Oh, no.”

Junge: “So it is not a superficial job?”

³⁵ This film was the first of two “anniversary films” in the series. *Wenn man vierzehn ist* celebrates the 20th year anniversary of the Republic.

³⁶ Original citation: «Es wird ein Film entstehen, der vom Optimismus unseres Lebens durchdrungen ist, der ohne erhobenen pädagogischen Zeigefinger, dafür aber mit viel Humor dem Zuschauer das allmähliche Hineinwachsen unserer Kinder in die Welt der Erwachsenen und in unsere Gesellschaft erschließt.»

Marieluise: “When you compare it to nursing, sure. [...]”

The story of Marieluise by 1975 is of an independent woman who according to herself has not caught the “virus”³⁷ – having babies at this tender age – which other women her age has gotten. But the angle of Junge’s film unmasks Marieluise as wasted potential, of one of the brighter children in her class tempted by superficial paths in life. She is not shown as a heroic builder of socialism, unlike other Golzow children who went into cooperative farming. Neither is she shown as a “loser”, as she is given space in the documentary to defend herself. Hence, the representation of ordinary lives has become more complex – by not portraying people at the edges of the Socialist class as too extraordinary or untypical.

3.2 The past as propaganda: *Anmut sparet nicht noch mühe* (1979)

[The GDR] was celebrating its 20th anniversary. Two Americans walked on the Moon. Other Americans dropped 1,400,000 tons of bombs over South Vietnam. The people of Golzow saw both. (Narrator Uwe Kant in *Anmut sparet nicht noch mühe*)

By the time of the seventh film three barriers were broken: *Anmut sparet nicht noch Mühe* (*Neither save grace nor effort*, Junge, 1979) became the first film in the series to become feature length and in colour, and it was also the first film which looked back at the previous films for more than a brief glimpse³⁸ through time shuttling. Time shuttling was one of the formal qualities of the long docs I introduced in Chapter 1, which in Kilborn’s (2010) systematic approach to what long docs are is the term he coins to describe how particularly later films are pieced together in the use of scenes from several pasts and the present, and how the film shuttles in time between these. After 18 years since the first day of school for the Golzowers and the first film, it becomes both a necessity and the interest in peeking through the old film footage. This is done through using many scenes from several past films to create a narrative, essentially shuttling the viewer in time between several time planes.

This in a sense becomes a “highlight reel” of the past fused together with the present, as a reminder for old viewers and a way of attracting new viewers to the project. For anyone with prior interest in the series the image-by-image comparisons of past and present which time

³⁷ Her wording in the film.

³⁸ *Die Prüfung* (Junge, 1971) has one ten-second „time shuttle” back to the first film, showing the Golzow children eagerly entering school for the first time. This is juxtaposed with a scene in 1971 in which this eagerness has gone – at the final year school has become a routine.

shuttles consist of serve several functions. They are important pieces of the narrative, which in the act of shuttling time create “particular set[s] of expectations” for the viewer of what has happened since last time (Kilborn, 2010, p. 26). The chosen scenes of the past offer a retelling of how things were in the past, often with a new narration, which may focus on other aspects than what the scenes were used in in the past. How old footage is used, and which footage is used depends in large part on the status of the protagonists in the present and which thematic connections that can be made between past and present. Time shuttles thus re-contextualize, compare, and juxtapose the personal biographies of the past and present, as well comparing changes in society and technology directly or indirectly. The degree to which this is done depends on the current status of state and protagonist. From this film forward, comparing the past and present on the editing board became the immensely complicated and laborious task of Barbara Junge, Winfried’s wife.

There was also another, more grim reason for the use of past footage: director Winfried Junge had no guarantee that there would be another film made. A continuation of the cycle on the condition of dramaturgical necessity was usually not granted to filmmakers in the GDR, and Junge had been told that *Anmut sparet nicht noch mühe* (1979) would be the last one (Wilke, 2012, p. 128). Junge made the argument that the films could continue until the 50th anniversary of the Republic. On 4th July 1986 the film minister agreed to this, saying:

[...] It is sought, of the existing and emerging film material in the making, that the story of the children of Golzow will tell of the 50th Anniversary of the DDR.³⁹
(Junge, 2017, p. 103).

From the start, it is evident that the 1979 film also had as a goal to be a highlight reel of the German Democratic Republic’s first thirty years – through the lens of the *Kleinstadt Golzow*. Like many other DEFA documentaries of the past, the first minutes of *Anmut sparet nicht noch Mühe* gives an historical context to the area of Golzow through archival footage as well as a tour around the area through aerial footage. The focus here is twofold: demonstrating technological progress in the Republic through improvements in Golzow, and the lasting peace. Focus is on the ordinary as well as the extraordinary: every household in Golzow now has a washing machine and Sigmund Jähn had in 1976 become the first GDR citizen in space. The lasting peace was a convincing argument for that the state had some merits, as particularly the older generations had not seen this long of a period without war on home soil since the times

³⁹ Original citation: „Es wird angestrebt, aus dem vorhandenen und noch entstehenden Material einen Kino-Film herzustellen, der die Geschichte der Kinder von Golzow bis zum 50. Jahrestag der DDR erzählt.“

of Otto von Bismarck. In addition, comparisons to the US and “their” Vietnam War was favourable to the image of the GDR. Words of narrator and poet Uwe Kant also referenced the last World War: “There once was a war. It crossed the river twice first towards Moscow, then back, completely transformed, bringing liberation and peace with it.”.

This is *Gegenwart* rhetoric on full display. In addition to delivering a narrative of progress, the story of Golzow becomes a story of the nation sprinkled with references to common shared experiences that go beyond the rural experience. In a comparable way to how the early films have universal elements to them in seeing the children getting older, these shared histories make the story of Golzow relatable to East Germans in general. This construct of a surface “GDR identity” within the film may be an attempt to bring the rural and the urban closer. But ultimately, due to strict censorship and the protagonists having little influence over the material, this representation becomes a product for and by the state and the bourgeoisie as with the Griersonian documentary tradition.

After this *Gegenwart*-style rhetoric of the first ten minutes, the opening credits roll and the film moves back in time to the beginning in 1961 and the first day of school, showing old sequences in their entirety with new narration. In this new narration, the past is used to give historical context for which evidence of technological progress can be seen. After all, this was an anniversary film. *Der Kinder von Golzow* had a unique position as a witness of the past with several decades of capturing moving images. Its witnessing power was strengthened by the reality that a Socialist country like the GDR due to its planned change (in i.e., Five Year Plans), could only represent change in retrospect (Panse, 2008, p. 68)

Largely what is portrayed is positive change. For instance, *Anmut sparet nicht noch Mühe* (Junge, 1979) is the first film that goes out of its way to paint the father of Gudrun Klitzke, one of the Golzow children barely paid attention to in the previous films, as a local hero. Arthur Klitzke, SED party member and chairman of the Golzow Agricultural Cooperative, is shown through a chronological view of the past footage from 1961, 1962, 1966, 1969 and 1971 to have helped place Golzow on the map in its agricultural progress: productive area is said in the film to have increased twenty-fold “with no end in sight” and new farming equipment have reached the LPGs.

The introduction of Arthur and in large parts Gudrun, a footnote in the previous films and a ghost in the archival material brought to life here, changes some of the narrative of the series. Firstly, as is said in this film, Gudrun becomes the first Golzower to join the Party (SED). Being

the daughter of a local celebrity, it is arguable if she is an ordinary person in this narrative, as she has some unspoken privileges both because of her father's position and her own open party alliance. Secondly, the narrative of the past is rewritten to include her story, mainly to show her as a studious person wiser than her age who were among the top students, who, like Marieluise, earned an A on the final exam in *Die Prüfung* (1971). The Golzow story has added another "winner": one more in line with the ideas of a model GDR citizen than Marieluise.

It's not until 1 hour 7 minutes that new footage of the Golzowers from mid to late 70s appear, when the film considers the career paths made by the other Golzowers. Jürgen, among those who had quit school early after 8th grade, has become a house painter in Golzow and by 1979 had gone into the Army. Brigitte, another who left school early and among the poorer students, gave birth to her son Marcel when she was 17 and works in a poultry farm. Winfried, portrayed as one of the brighter students in the early films, is a graduate student at the Institute of Technology in Karl-Marx Stadt. These are three stories out of a total of 13⁴⁰ followed in this film. The formula through all of them is to consider their developments with regards to jobs, spouses and children.



Figure 3: Images from “Anmut sparet nicht noch Mühe” (1979). Closeup of Brigitte in 1961 yawning (left), followed by a shot Brigitte in 1979 with her son Marcel (right)

At the very end of the film, *Anmut sparet nicht noch Mühe* (Junge, 1979) breaks its chronological formula for a moment. Brief time shuttles of around a minute each, comparing the child in 1961 with the young adult in 1979 (Figure 3, above), summarizes the changes in the appearance of the Golzow children, showing a dual perspective to leave the film on a reflective note, prompting self-examination in the viewer of his/her own life. If the minutes-

⁴⁰ There were not enough funds to continue following all original protagonists (Alter, 2002, p. 197).

long sequences of the past earlier in the film can be considered as “time shuttles as resumes”, these brief seconds-long black-white to colour comparison, often 18 years apart, can be seen as an attempt at one-sentence summaries, capturing the “essence” in a protagonist’s personality. For instance, the moment of Brigitte shows her yawning in class in 1961 (Figure 3, above), reminding the viewer of her poor school discipline, are followed directly by the images of her in 1979 showing the proud mother she has become. In less than a minute we have travelled 18 years and seen a narrative unfold about this ordinary person. Meanwhile, a similar brief time shuttle of Gudrun shows her as an unchanged, attentive, thinking listener to others in both time periods seen (Figure 4). What has changed however, as we see in the images, are her circumstances. At 25 she now must become an independent person, no longer able to hide behind her successful father’s back, moving into politics herself. Although the portrayal of Gudrun likely needed to be handed extra carefully by the filmmakers, some portrayal of vulnerability of Party figures was tolerated in the late 70s. As long as it was not her father.



Figure 4: Images from “Anmut sparet nicht noch Mühe” (1979). Gudrun and her father Arthur Klitzke in 1971 (left), Gudrun in 1979 (right)

Time shuttles such as this, as well as further tinkering with images of different pasts and the present, would become a key staple of the series with *Lebensläufe* (1980). *Anmut sparet nicht noch Mühe* (1979) was, as a “GDR anniversary film” in the *Golzow* series, a film that promoted a rather old-fashioned representation of the ordinary GDR citizen focused on *Gegenwart* rhetoric. This was done through the introduction of a chronological historical look at the Klitzkes’, background performers in the past films turned lead roles. Only a year later, both form and function would change to allow for a different, more complex and more interrogational representation of ordinary lives in the Republic.

3.3 Challenging *Gegenwart* of the past with representations of infra-ordinary lives: *Lebensläufe* (1980)

What makes *Lebensläufe* (1980) the most highly regarded film of the *Golzow* series? Is it its length of more than four hours, which gives time for an even closer look into the Golzow children? Or is it the sheer audacity of the project at this point, 17 years in, here portraying the lives of 9 of the Golzow children? My suggestion is that its regard is tied closely to the change in structure. Rather than having a structure in which the entire group is followed chronologically over the years, *Lebensläufe* (1980) breaks the film into biographical chapters, following one Golzower over time (1961 to 1980), until it moves to the next one. In total *Lebensläufe* (1980) consists of a 6-minute prologue, 9 chapters – each on a Golzow child – two of which are focused on in this chapter, and a 15 minutes long epilogue.

The prologue begins showing the Oder river on the border between Poland and the GDR. Landscape panoramas an early winter morning in 1979 with a faint sound of bird twittering reinforces the notion of peace in the region known for wars in the past. Junge's narration remembers the Heraclitus river metaphor introduced in a lecture in *Elf Jahre alt* (1966) of the always changing present through the phrasing "Everything flows, no one can bathe in the same river twice." and hence the need to look forward and not backwards because of the impossibility of going back. By the 3-minute mark the film goes back to 1966 to show this lecture in an abridged version, highlighting it as an important moment in the lives of the Golzow children. Whether the story of the river is something the children remember is not dwelled upon, but it functions as a segue for the film into the use of old footage. Paradoxically however, this return to the old footage through time shuttles is in a way trying to – and perhaps succeeding in – bathing in the same river twice. *Lebensläufe* (1980) and the previous film *Anmut sparet nicht noch Mühe* (1979) transports the viewer back to this specific, albeit reedited, past with moving images that most other GDR films cannot. There is a sense of necessity to revisit these images to understand the present, which challenges the notion of the present-now. It also provides the ultimate test of the optimism surrounding progress in earlier *Gegenwart* images and the notion of *Alltag* (everyday) in the present. Does the propaganda of the earlier years still work when it is repeated in time shuttles years later? Does the optimism of the past still hold true?

After resting on images of the frozen Oder river from the same film, images from the end of *Elf Jahre alt* (1966) are shown were some of the children say what they want to learn about for the

future, such as why there are wars at all, and not just peace. Here the prologue ends, leaving the question if they learned the answers to these hard questions open.

3.3.1 A builder – but a heroic socialist one? Contradictions through *Eigen-sinn* in the infra-ordinary story of Jürgen W.

After the prologue the story of Jürgen W., the poster boy of the first and second film is revisited (Figure 5, top). Our 30 minutes with him starts with the first frames, as well as the original music, from the first film in 1961. What is new is Junge’s commentary giving some behind-the-scenes info, such as that Jürgen was selected as a sample for the group because of his willingness to participate in front of the camera. This kind of reflexive commentary of past images is not that unusual. At 7 minutes and 25 seconds in however, the previously somewhat invisible presence of the cutting room is disrupted when Junge halts the images of the past on a freeze-frame of a close-up of Jürgen trying to answer the difficult question of what he wants to be when he grows up (Figure 5, centre). *Lebensläufe* has thus gone from recalling the past to analyse minute details of it for patterns that perhaps explain future progress, as if the film is asking the question: “What is evident in this image?”. After freezing this image for five seconds, the film shuttles forward to the present (1979), now as a 24-year-old painter and team leader “earning 600 to 900 marks per month depending on the job” (Figure 5, bottom). This edit in time, as well as a medium shot of Jürgen looking like a big question mark, seems to suggest that he never figured out the answer to the question put to him in the freeze frame about what he wants to be when he grows up.



Figure 5: Images from “Lebensläufe” (1980). Opening title card after prologue (top), freeze-frame of 1961 image (centre), Jürgen in 1979 (bottom)

But with *Lebensläufe*, the portrayal of Jürgen W. has become more complex than a time shuttle “summary” like the end of the film from the previous year and continues to delve deeper into the story on this man. After a brief scene of the present in which Jürgen W., as well as his co-worker and side-character in the Golzow films often referred to as “Jürgen 2”, receive prizes for their work effort at the 30th year anniversary of the GDR⁴¹, the film shuttles back to 1962 and the fertilizer plane which Jürgen W. drew (Figure 6, top). Here, the film seemingly paints the narrative that Jürgen had a wish to become a painter when he was young. When Jürgen is confronted with the actual painting of the plane in 1979 however (Figure 6, centre), his reaction is that of amusement and embarrassment, not regret of not becoming that kind of painter (Figure 6, bottom). Through these two time shuttle examples and the contradictions that follow them, Winfried & Barbara Junge shows that there is no straight-line narrative from what was captured in the past to present day, admitting in the narration by Winfried that these are simply the only images they had to work with. Jürgen’s life up to now, although seemingly the story of a “simple man”, cannot be limited to such cause-and-effect observations in time shuttles. Nor were the short films of the past able to capture the entire life of an ordinary child.

Instead, the film confronts several reasons to why things turned out as they did. This was not always the case. *Der Kinder von Golzow* had previously aired a somewhat antagonistic and judging commentary on Jürgen in the anniversary film *Anmut sparet nicht noch Mühe* (1979). Showing old footage of the 8th graduation ceremony in 1969 where Jürgen ends school after the 8th year, narrator Uwe Kant says: “Jürgen W. did not continue on to the tenth year. It is too bad and *not typical*. Whether they would succeed remained unproven and left to life itself, as life is not short-term.” (my emphasis). Having Jürgen as the first face of the series and as one of the most represented Golzow children early on was not ideal for representing a GDR which, in large parts throughout the early films, sold the idea that this Socialist school system would be a key to future progress, when Jürgen himself seemed to be stagnating. Later films then, once it was clear that he was not an ideal protagonist for this goal, portrayed Jürgen more as an outsider, an anomaly, sometimes cut out of the film altogether. To put it simply: failures were shown as caused by individuals, while successes showed the result of a Socialist system.

⁴¹ This scene is perhaps necessary to show that Jürgen is a competent worker, that the system rewards effort and that the system works in this regard.

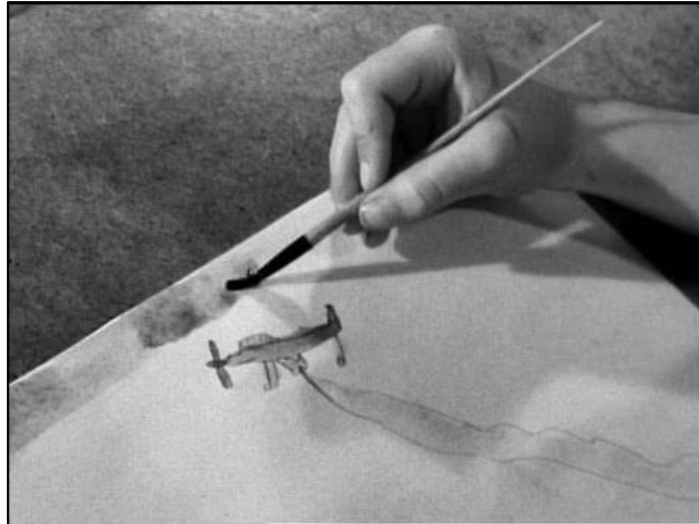


Figure 6: Images from “Lebensläufe” (1980). Jürgen hand drawing in 1962 (top), Jürgen holding the painting 27 years later, for the first time shown in colour (centre), the reaction shot of Jürgen confronted with the painting (bottom).

With a more open documentary filmmaking milieu in the late 70s and 80s as discussed in Chapter 2, this view is challenged. Here the school system, once most of the universe of this film series, is criticised for the first time to some degree. Previously unseen footage from 1966 shows a forced conversation between a teacher and Jürgen prompted by Winfried Junge who saw that Jürgen needed the attention of the teacher more. Junge explains in the voice-over that Jürgen could have used more help in his school years and that he had no help by parents from home. This informs earlier unseen footage of an interview with Jürgen from 1969 where Jürgen admits to being scared to go on past the 8th grade. *Lebensläufe* reveals however that he passed courses of 9th and 10th grade part-time while he was working as a painter. The more complex narrative of this film shown through dynamic use of time-shuttles as citations refrains from portraying Jürgen as an unusual failure in the system, but rather as an ordinary person who went his own way. 8 years of school was not his decision, but rather what was mandatory. Through part-time schoolwork and becoming a painter, he had made his own decisions and found his own path.

The biography shown of Jürgen is not atypical for this film. Although the situation of the present time is not criticized directly, restructuring the narrative of the ordinary life of Jürgen this way creates a deeper understanding of what ordinary lives are like – and its complexity. This is a result of the longitudinal aspect and time shuttling deepening the ordinary. Here, the term *infra-ordinary* (Skillander & Fowler, 2015) introduced in Chapter 1 is useful. The infra-ordinary quality is in part a result of attempting to capture the multiple layers and aspects of a ‘whole person’ (Skillander & Fowler, 2015, p. 132). Winfried Junge saw this as a goal for *Der Kinder von Golzow*: “In our films, which we always try to grasp the whole personality of the person, a presentation of the individual under only one specific aspect is inappropriate.” (Schenk, 2004, p. 174, as cited in Panse, 2008 p. 75).

In the story of Jürgen in *Lebensläufe* this is seen in the varied use of past film footage, revisits within the film itself. While Barbara and Winfried Junge structure the narrative of Jürgen around recurring themes, i.e. showing him playing with a ball in 1962 with images of him playing and discussing football with his mates in the present to highlight the importance of football in his current life, any such revisit becomes about more than red herrings of a long filmic project. Previously not seen images from 1976 shows Jürgen at one end of a beer-filled table sitting quietly, listening to the others discussing his qualities as a footballer. Junge comments in voice-over that he is a better defender on the pitch than as someone defending

himself. Later however, this apparent meekness in Jürgen that Junge presents is turned on its head when Junge tries to interview Jürgen while he is watching the World Cup on the TV. Junge's prodding attempt to talk world politics and his relationship to his wife with him is shut down quickly with Jürgen's curt replies and fierce look at him. Junge admits in voice-over that he perhaps went too far. Jürgen's quiet nature does not mean that he is going to be a pushover even with the state-owned DEFA cameras inside his living room, and Junge must admit in the end that after long days of work he deserves his peace in front of the TV. Even though he says little even when provoked, the filmmaker has managed to uncover more about the "whole person" that is Jürgen through showing contradictions in past and present. In this specific example what we observe is the German notion of *Eigen-sinn*⁴² – a "stubbornness" in response to authority and others in which individuality is created through distancing yourself from others and creating your own space. Jürgen stubbornly refuses to play along to Junge's tough questions in this scene – creating a space between him, filmmaker and the viewer that becomes an aspect to the representation of him as a "whole person". This scene may also be a case of rural "resistance" from Jürgen to (urban) "exploitation" by the Berlin-based film crew.

Symptoms of the *Gegenwart* documentaries of the past is not entirely gone from the *Golzow*-films at this stage however. This may be a result from, as Uellenberg (2010, p. 65) notes, a desire to be able to show a progressive development in a socialist sense with *Lebensläufe* (1980), which led the representation to seeing *Golzow* as a reflection of the Republic. Unfortunately for this premise, the protagonists – although often having many good sides to them – were not the perfect, aspiring socialists the GDR desired. In the story of Jürgen, the elephant in the room was his alcoholism. As Panse (2008, pp. 76-77) notes, showing Jürgen's alcohol consumption was important for other people in the village, who knew about his problems, to believe anything in the film and not dismiss it as propaganda altogether. The solution was a somewhat subtle one, showing him drinking beer or being surrounded by it in images in present time, but not talking directly about it. These images, especially connected to

⁴² This term was originally coined by historian Alf Lüdke (1995) who defined *Eigen-sinn* as specific behavioural patterns in German history since the Weimar Republic in which ordinary people creates "one's own space through momentary actions that were not thought through" (Richthofen, 2009, p. 11). In its original meaning this means both creating an individual space vertically and horizontally – that is – both from those "above" such as bosses and authority, and neighbour communities of ordinary people. In later GDR historiography however, as Richthofen observes, the horizontal aspect has somewhat disappeared causing a less specific notion of *Eigen-Sinn*, as a more general term for individuality in a totalitarian state. The big S is the modern spelling for the term, here I use the small s to indicate that I follow the original idea by Lüdtkke of the more specific behaviour.

time shuttling to his past showing how he has changed in appearance over the years due to alcohol, would have to speak for themselves. Although drinking on the job was “widespread” in the Republic and alcoholism common (Richter, 2011), the “beer scenes” in the present is shown merely as a pastime and tied to football culture. Although Jürgen had from 1961 to 1980 gone from the poster-boy of the show to not quite the heroic builder the series envisioned, some idea of an “honest worker” was still important to uphold through showing scenes with Jürgen receiving awards for his work. In the case of this film, showing him as an honest worker was important partly because this was true.⁴³ But the reality of the work culture, which adds to his unspoken-but-shown problems in his private life and taints the image of how an honest worker is supposed to be, are not touched upon. That was in the early 80s too risky, with honest worker practices seen as being a cornerstone for socialism to work, as countless Stalinist “steel worker films” had told viewers in the 1950s (see Heimann, 2000, pp. 48-91). Three years after *Lebensläufe* the DEFA documentary pre-film *Abhängig (Dependent)*, Schreiber, 1983) would be the first to openly discuss the problems of alcohol, in the country of the highest consumption of it per capita, and soon the topic of alcoholism became a media story (Richter, 2011).

In *Lebensläufe*, Jürgen is at the end of the segment on him shown entering the military, with Junge suggesting in voice-over that this would make him a “changed man”, but not talking directly about what would be changed. As later films would reveal, going to the military did not solve the problem with alcoholism for good. After the Wende, the issue of alcoholism in the GDR, as well as in the new Germany, would be confronted more directly in the film *Das Lebens des Jürgen von Golzow (The Life of Jürgen from Golzow)*, Junge & Junge, 1994).

3.3.2 Gudrun’s story retold a year later: *Alltag* and the Dividual

The chapter on Gudrun starts similarly to Jürgen’s on a freeze-frame from when she was 7 years old. As in a time shuttle in the previous film *Anmut sparet nicht noch Mühe* (1979, Figure 4), the film in which she became a lead figure, the freeze frame focuses on her studious nature. This becomes the recurring theme in the short glimpses from 1962 to 1969 that follows. Two minutes into her chapter, images of Gudrun in present day with a new agricultural machinery innovation for the cauliflower harvest are combined with images from 1969, by now old and more laborious technology. Now, as then, Gudrun is in the fields together with her father, the local celebrity. Initially, not much seems to have been changed in the representation: Gudrun is

⁴³ His work ethics become even clearer in later films, when it becomes obvious how much work he does outside of his “job”, some of it even as a volunteer.

portrayed as an honest, studious worker who may follow her father's footsteps one day. And technology-wise, the movements in time presents a narrative of progress.

But associative use of time shuttles reveals something more about this apparent model citizen in *Lebensläufe*. While the previous film only allowed for the outward persona to be shown, new images from 1969 takes us inside the home of the Klitzke's. A scene from the "everyday" of her life back then follows: Arthur is shown to be doing work while Gudrun impatiently asks off-camera when he is done for the day (Figure 7, left). Her father, perhaps true to himself but also aware of the camera, uses this opportunity to explain to Gudrun the content of his book of tables. As he explains, the camera pans left away from him, instead interested in capturing 14-year-old Gudrun's reaction. Once she fills the frame as her father just did, it becomes clear that this is not the kind of interaction she wants with her father at this moment. Looking dejected, her eyes look down in front of her as she is fiddling with a pen (Figure 7, right). For once, she is not listening – she too has her (quiet) *Eigen-sinn* moment.

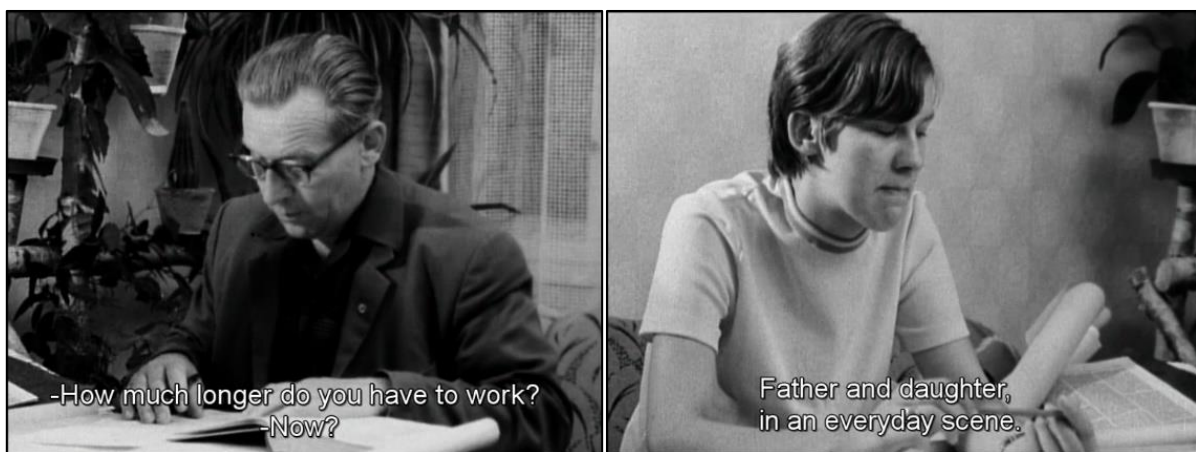


Figure 7: Images from “Lebensläufe” (1980). Gudrun’s father studying a book (left), Gudrun’s reaction to her father’s explanation of the book (right)

The future party official is shown more as an ordinary person through these 2 minutes of an everyday situation. While Arthur takes advantage of the images to steer its meaning towards persuasion and promotion of both himself as an honest worker and the value of his work, Gudrun is not part of any script, filled by a sense of boredom and disappointment in the moment captured, as well as being uncomfortable in front of the camera. It becomes a straight fight between old ideas of the GDR citizen and something new in the everyday which allows for a less ideal representation of an ordinary life in which people are represented in ways not

necessarily relating favourably to the idea of an honest worker. Both representations are captured with equal duration and proximity to the camera in the scene.

This scene is followed by another from the same timeframe where Gudrun talks positively of her father's willingness to always explain things to her. In this interview, she gets asked by a man if she would like work with machinery like her father. When she replies she would like to be a cook because "cooking is fun", the film shuttles to a scene six years later when she works as a cook. In the voice-over, Junge asks the question: "Had the man who put the question expected more?". Although Gudrun was shown as a cook in *Anmut sparet nicht noch Mühe* (1979), this is the first time where this "unambitious move" towards what is perceived as a simpler career is questioned. Like Marieluse in her earlier film, another bright student and childless, Gudrun in present day seems to not fit that well with old ideas of what ordinary people should strive for. Within the summary film that is *Lebensläufe* (1980) she is subtly portrayed as being on an individual journey. But unlike Marieluse in 1975, who we remember has a Protestant Christian background, she is not shown as an outcast here. Rather, it humanizes someone on the "inside" politically speaking into a "whole person".

When Gudrun is later shown – in previously not seen old footage – talking about how people compare her to her father and say to her that she could do the same, there seems to be a melancholy in the air when the shuttle forward in time to present day reveals that she has gone into politics herself by the present time. Her individuality, at least in front of the camera, has been lost somewhat with this move, now treading a fine line between being Gudrun the "whole person" and Gudrun the SED politician. When Junge asks what could be fun about going the political route (hinting to her own line from the past: "cooking is fun"), Gudrun, again fiddling with a pen in present day, reminding us of the girl in the past, tenses up and looks down in front of her (Figure 8, left) before lifting her head again to answer like a politician – avoiding a direct answer and talks instead about the collective good that results of the work. As she does this, the camera pans left to her father this time, again with a book in his hands, catching him looking at his daughter as she is answering, as if to make sure she is on top of this awkward interaction. Gudrun smiles back at him in as if to confirm this (Figure 8, right), and Arthur goes back to his book for a moment, before he looks at her again. For once, he is not really focused on the reading – but rather listening to her daughter – who by the end of the scene has stopped fiddling with her pen and has fully transformed into the politician like her father is with the camera's presence. The camera has however revealed this transformation, how her individuality is now

trapped between the official image and the everyday person. This is underlined in the composition: Gudrun is “trapped” between her real father and the image of him behind her on the wall (Figure 8).



Figure 8: Images from “*Lebensläufe*” (1980). Gudrun reacting to Winfried Junge’s difficult question (left), the pan left shows Gudrun’s father observing her answer (right).

The observation made here that one can see individualities in the “group film” *Der Kinder von Golzow* is not a new one. Panse (2008) looks at the “collective subjectivity” in the *Golzow* films both in the GDR and after, and ends her paper referencing Deleuze’s idea of the Dividual – individuality created *from* the collective. There are strong arguments to support this in her article and the scenes referenced above fit into that perspective. I would however make a distinction that this notion of the Dividual is not represented in the series from the start. Rather, it becomes possible once the series moves from a *Gegenwart* representation, which shows one representation of the ordinary tied to the present, to moments of *Alltag* which shows several due to associations with the past in time shuttles. If Dividual is the general idea of individuality in a society that is forcing “collectiveness”, then the *Eigen-sinn* as seen in both Jürgen and Gudrun are specific actions working against this. These moments of *Eigen-sinn* in *Lebensläufe* show that the *Alltag* representation also allows for more specific reactions *against* the collective.

In other words, while *Lebensläufe* occasionally attempts to be a representation of the GDR, what is seen simultaneously is a gradual process in the *Golzow* films towards complexity in showing individuality – or “Dividuality”. The films are going from representing the ordinary as a class collective in which Jürgen is its face, towards a more binary representation of the ordinary through groups of winners and losers of the system. With time shuttles as a driving

force, *Lebensläufe* (1980) makes representation more complex. Allowing for scenes of the everyday *not* anchored in the idea of planned change for the future allows for diversity and complexity in the representation of the ordinary. Showing the everyday does not reject the old idea of a better future, but seems to ask: “Change is planned, so what about the right now?”

The “right now” shown in *Lebensläufe* (1980) is, through time shuttles, a portrayal of something more than what is going on in the present time because it is put in context with a past. Using past footage in dynamic ways opens for a way of representing ordinary people in the GDR as living between two images of themselves – the official life and the private – but without the need for observing the protagonists unnoticed or stating context directly in voice-over. In playing with time, time shuttles may have many “universal” qualities to them, such as painting broad strokes of a generation or of humankind. As this chapter has shown however, they may also suggest and create specific individual narratives in a filmmaking environment stressing the collective.

In this chapter, I have shown how the use of and evolution of time shuttles have changed the series towards a deeper representation of ordinary lives. In the next, I present a method that allows for a broader reading of the effect of these time shuttles, as well as following the *Golzow* story beyond the GDR and to the first film after the Wende and the changes made to representation there.

Chapter 4: Representation on both sides of the wall: *Lebensläufe* (1980), *Drehbuch: Die Zeiten* (1992) and beyond

4.1 A method for describing ordinary life and its representation: introducing *thick description*

The previous chapter was, in part, a close read on how individual time shuttles deepen the representation of ordinary lives. These observations highlight the new individualities represented in *Lebensläufe* (1980) through everyday moments captured in the time shuttles, which in turn follows Kilborn's (2010) observation that longitudinal documentaries become increasingly biographical over time. But how do the time shuttles work in describing ordinary life? Can time shuttles be a source for a greater understanding of GDR culture beyond discovering individuals in this society?

At first these questions may seem a bit inappropriate for a series that does not claim to be a sociological or ethnographical study. I suggest, however, that this longitudinal project follow *thick description* as a method – a method most commonly associated with ethnography. Clifford Geertz was the first to use the term within that field, in order to explain that ethnographical method was not simply analysis of culture through “establishing rapport, selecting informants, transcribing texts, taking genealogies, mapping fields, keeping a diary, and so on” (Geertz, 1973, p. 6) but rather one that tries to find meaning in it – and this method of meaning-seeking he calls “thick description” (Geertz, 1973, p. 5). Rather than focusing on only the factual knowledge one can extract from observing a culture, Geertz simply made the distinction that ethnography should be composed of interpretation and commentary (and interpretations of this commentary) in addition to facts only which are “thin”, to “reduce the puzzlement” of “faraway places” (Geertz, 1973, p. 16). In his most famous use of thick description, Geertz (1973) interpreted cockfights in Bali as texts in society speaking about itself that could be read by the anthropologist to understand what it means being a Balinese.

Golzow was never far away from the filmmakers, nor is *Der Kinder von Golzow* a written account. Due to filmmaking practices such as limited 35mm footage and an arbitrary selection in protagonists it cannot be considered as visual anthropology either. Therefore, the filmmaker is not in an equal position to an ethnographer or social anthropologist whose observational work is more extensive and continuous. This does not mean however that thick description as a term is not useful for this study. Indeed, for this longitudinal film project it may be useful to approach

the large body of text holistically to summarize representation of ordinary lives on either side of the Wende.

The idea of “thick description” in film is not entirely foreign. Geertz himself seemed ambivalent of the idea of finding culture – and meaning of it – in “filmable behaviour” (Ruby, 2000, pp. 243-244). His concern comes from the uncertainty whether the camera is too naïve to pick up differences between what he calls involuntary twitches – which have no cultural value – and intentional winks full of cultural meaning (Geertz, 1973, p. 6, Ruby, 2000, p. 243). Does *Der Kinder von Golzow* find meanings in the culture it portrays through thick description? If so, what does that tell us? Does the *Golzow* films offer us “winks” – and can we separate them from twitches?

To answer these questions, Ponterotto’s (2006) analysis of thick description, a term which he argues has been confusing to many researchers, works both as a clarifier for what thick description is as well as giving five key characteristics that defines the essence of this meaning-seeking method that we can work with. These are as follows:

1. “Thick description” involves accurately describing and interpreting social actions within the appropriate context in which the social action took place.
2. “Thick description” captures the thoughts, emotions, and web of social interaction among observed participants in their operating context.
3. A central feature to interpreting social actions entails assigning motivations and intentions for the said social actions.
4. The context for, and the specifics of, the social action are so well described that the reader experiences a sense of verisimilitude as they read the researcher’s account. [...]
5. “Thick description” of social actions promotes “thick interpretation” of these actions, which lead to “thick meaning” of the findings that resonate with readers [...]
(Ponteretto, 2006, p. 542-543).

Although Ponteretto talks about thick description as a written method, much of what is said here has similarities to the characteristics of the longitudinal documentary that Kilborn (2010) classifies, which I summed up in Chapter 1. In the following subchapter, I bring up again the Gudrun example from the previous chapter and tie it together with Kilborn’s characteristics to explain this – and to explain why the use of time shuttles in *Lebensläufe* can be fruitfully seen as thick description. From there, I go on to look at how the film may have Geertzian winks to its audience.

4.2 Longitudinal documentaries as thick description: *Lebensläufe* (1980)

Towards the end of the story of Gudrun in *Lebensläufe*, Winfried Junge gives us what amounts to a *thin description* of her story in the voice-over: “It’s the story of a cook who people said should help govern the country.” It is the one-sentence version of the story that has unfolded without context or “thicker” meaning attached to it, which does not assign “purpose and intentionality”, as Ponteretto (2006, p. 543) would put it, to her career change. It does not, unlike all the images seen before this statement, attempt to understand Gudrun’s motivations and intentions for doing so but instead states a cause and effect.

What the time shuttle example in Chapter 3 reveals however, through *Alltag* scenes with her father in the past and present, are several interpretations of why this change occurs in her life: the film hints at Gudrun not living up to her father’s expectations, pressures on her public persona, and the resulting two personas emerging as the filmmaker puts Gudrun and her dad in a similar situation as seen before. Although she is reluctant to be in front of the camera, we can register her, and her father’s emotions and Winfried Junge asks Gudrun directly about her thoughts. Her thoughts in the present is confronted by footage of the past in the edit. The past footage works to contextualize and give meaning to the present, showing us that Gudrun is living a “double life”. This is possible through the time shuttling which adds to what Kilborn calls the *incremental quality and function* of longitudinal documentaries explained in Chapter 1. These are the driving force that adds a larger context, a *dual perspective* as Kilborn argues, to what otherwise are normal interviews. Or, to use Ponteretto’s five characteristics of thick description: in recording the interviews the camera along with voice-over shows the social action of being forced to live a double life, while time shuttles before and after such scenes shows motivation and context.

What about Ponteretto’s last two points? Can representing this culture of the “double life” bring forward a sense of verisimilitude in the spectator – well described enough so that we can find “thick meaning” in the ordinary *lives* in the GDR? I will argue that it does. Firstly, Kilborn (2010) sees *self-examination* as an important function of longitudinal documentaries: seeing ordinary people’s personal biographies over decades in quick succession highlights life’s “ebbs and flows”, which triggers spectators to contemplate their own reality. That is, the larger narrative with all its time shuttles is in a way universal enough that most can relate, focusing on years in school, being a teenager, becoming an adult and establishing relationships and families and finally death itself. Hence, the films are relatable in a way for most spectators even

if one does not have knowledge or relation to growing up in the GDR. We establish a personal connection with this protagonist's life whose scenes are flashing past us.

Secondly, staged scenes with Gudrun in *Lebensläufe* makes the spectator very aware of her double life in openly showing how the protagonist is performing. One way this is shown is in the way Junge, and perhaps Gudrun herself, feels the need to capture certain elements of her life that did not make it into the previous films due to practical reasons. Even if this means adding clearly staged scenes. In one such staged scene, Junge tells through voice-over as we see Gudrun on her way home to greet her mother working in the garden: "We see a scene with her mother according to her own script."⁴⁴ If one had the illusion that the film was not staged in any way, that illusion is broken here with the *Verfremdungseffekt* of this scene. But why would *Lebensläufe* break the fourth wall here? This addition to the "script" shows a side to Gudrun that she would like us to see about her: a more 'Typisch' daughter in touch with her humbler and rural pre-SED farming roots. Her mother and her parents farm had not been shown in the *Golzow* films before, instead Gudrun had been seen either in an office or industry environment or shown as an observer *of* rather than a partaker *in* farming. As spectators, we become aware of this missing piece of information earlier in the films, bridging the gap between her double lives, if we choose to believe it. More importantly, we become aware of the film's need to set the record straight, to provide a more balanced or universal representation of Gudrun. As Panse (2008, p. 79) puts it when discussing documentary filmmaking in the GDR at large: "[...] in the GDR the ordinary subject had to carry the burden of objectivity." The evolution of Gudrun's double life that has been described to us in detail through time shuttles earlier in the film, explains this action between filmmaker and protagonist of "patching" the script with a clearly staged scene of a minor detail as a meaningful response within this environment. In other societies this is perhaps not as important, because ordinary people there do not have objectivity burden upon them. As spectators we are challenged with her challenge to come to terms with how the films portray her and the negotiation with the film which puts us in her and the filmmaker's shoes.

What is observed in Gudrun performing this "patchwork" staged scene, is the need or desire for a GDR filmmaker to represent his protagonists as Dividuals rather than individuals, in a society

⁴⁴ English translation on the DVD subtitles, which may be confusing in that it may suggest that she actively wrote this scene into the script, which is unlikely. Original voice-over in German, with the previous sentence for context: "Auch wenn der Weg weit, und sein letzter Teil ein Fußmarsch ist, kommt sie am Wochenende gern nach Golzow Heim. Mit Mutter spielt sie's uns nach eigenem Drehbuch vor."

that strongly encourages a certain kind of ordinary person. We grow to understand her previous reluctance in front of the camera, as with all the other Golzowers, is not only due to the presence of it – but also because of its position as a messenger to and for the state. Staged scenes therefore become an exemplum in the thick description of the greater picture of GDR’s culture of representation and its limited tolerance of different ordinary lives, as such alienating scenes were deemed necessary.

Similarly, the story of Marieluise in *Lebensläufe* (1980) becomes a thick description of unrewarding work culture in the GDR. As mentioned in Chapter 3, in previous films she was portrayed as a good student who at 20 years old had not found a desired career path after her studies. But where *Ich sprach mit einem Mädchen* (1975) saw her as tempted by “superficial” jobs such as being a flight attendant as a sort of desperate side of her character, *Lebensläufe* describes through time shuttles a society where her talents are not being put to good use. In present day, she is doing shift work examining circuit connections at a semi-conductor factory, as “there are still no machines to do this job”, as Junge says in voice-over. The camera observes Marieluise looking bored and unmotivated in a monotonous and stultifying job (Figure 9, left) before a time shuttle takes us back to happier days getting an A in chemistry in *Die Prüfung* (1971, Figure 9, right).

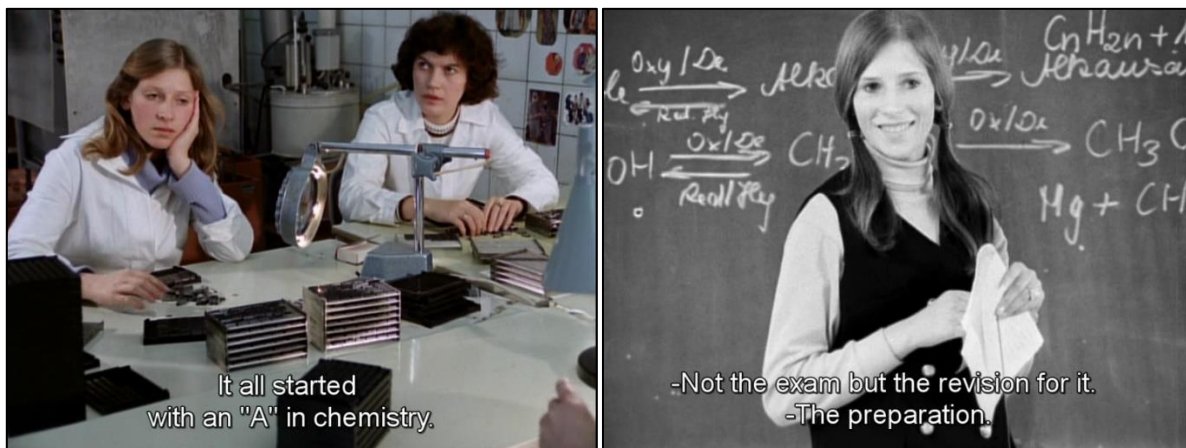


Figure 9: Images from “*Lebensläufe*” (1980). Marieluise bored at her job in the present (left), Marieluise in her final exam in 1971 (right).

Although Marieluise later in *Da habt ihr mein Leben – Marieluise, Kind von Golzow* (*My life there you have it – Marieluise, child of Golzow*, Junge & Junge, 1997) would later reflect on this – regretting her choice of a career in chemistry – this time shuttle brings forward contrasts between school and working life. In school, as Marieluise mentions in the voice-over over the

1971 scene, working hard is rewarded as “I would have failed it, had I not studied.”. In present time, she is stuck in a superficial job fit for robots, finding personal challenge only in learning Polish from her co-workers. Her lack of challenges in this culture is reflected in a later scene. Sitting next to a piano, Winfried Junge interviews her about playing the melody *Anmut sparet nicht noch Mühe* (Junge, 1979) as a child in an earlier film. Marieluise, seemingly unprompted, comments that this song was easy and “[...] below my level. I could do a lot more than that” as if to emphasize that her extra capabilities were there, but not wanted by the filmmakers either. DEFA’s desire for her to play the “easy” and GDR-approved Children’s Hymn in the previous film becomes an allegory for her working life and the limitation in what the state wants from her and lack of opportunities to grow as an ordinary adult. Through what can be called an *Eigen-sinn* moment for Marieluise she carves out a space for herself as an individual from the “lesser” and rural GDR-driven school collective. Through time shuttles which interpret this moment, it becomes clear that this is not a Geertzian twitch, but in fact a “wink” in the form of *Eigen-sinn* to the camera – ripe with cultural meaning – which we have understood because it was just described to us through time shuttles. That this is a wink and not a twitch is also evident from the tug of war of masking and unmasking the protagonist which has been ongoing between Winfried Junge and Marieluise since the first films. Junge, often provoking in his questions, have tried and succeeded in getting behind the mask of official GDR persona put up by Marieluise in the past, particularly when asked about her future career in *Ich sprach mit einem Mädchen* (1975). This time, Marieluise’s *Eigen-sinn* statement is a provoking one showing how she has grown in confidence and found an individuality, refusing to let Junge depict her as a superficial girl anymore. Junge can do nothing but move on to a different question.

All this being said, *Lebensläufe* (Junge, 1980) does show some Golzowers such as Winfried, now finishing his engineer degree, enjoying their career choice. However, stories such as those of Marieluise and Brigitte – who partly due to weak health dissects chickens at a poultry farm for a living in 1980 – creates a more nuanced and thicker description the relation between unglamorous ordinary work and workers. There are no real heroes and work is, in the words of Brigitte: “Okay.” Instead of representing ordinary people driven by an inner motive to lift the state through meaningful work, work is sometimes portrayed, as in *Lebensläufe*, as a mind-numbing necessity.

Due to change in the use of time shuttles as seen in these two examples, *Lebensläufe* allows for a thicker interpretation through using previous and current “evidence” in the biographies to

reflect on GDR culture and ordinary life in general. Winfried Junge himself argued that the “time factor” and time being an “interpreter” lead to a more dialectic approach. In an application to the “West-German” Hamburger Filmbüro e. V. for project funds to continue the *Golzow*-series dated 16th September 1990 he writes:

The longitudinal documentary because of its principle of constant recurrence of the same people in changing circumstances of life, opened a new dimension to the genre of documentary films and enabled so far unknown propositions. The «time factor» and «time as interpreter» make it possible to visualize development processes – development as a process – and introduce a great deal of dialectic into our work.⁴⁵

(BArch DR 118/9317, p. 9).

Would the use of time change once the GDR was no more – and would it affect representation of ordinary life and the thick description of it? This is the topic of the rest of this chapter as we move past the end of the GDR.

4.3 Changes in time shuttles and a different form of thick description: *Drehbuch: Die Zeiten* (1992)

4.3.1 1980-1991: An anniversary film and a changing environment

Between *Lebensläufe* and *Drehbuch: Die Zeiten* (1992) much had happened both on the national stage, in the filmmaking environment and in Golzow that would affect the latter film. The German Democratic Republic fell in 1989-90 and «East German» interests were no longer protected from the international market. Winfried and Barbara Junge had made the direct-to-TV⁴⁶ 9th Golzow film *Diese Golzower - Umstandsbestimmung eines Ortes* (*These Golzowers: Adverbial definition of a place*, Junge, 1984) in cooperation with the strictly controlled DDR-TV. Winfried would later call this film “all about the 35th anniversary of our Republic” (BArch DR 118/9317, p. 12). Although this film, much like *Anmut sparet nicht noch Mühe* (Junge, 1979) celebrates the long-term peace and progress locally in agriculture, three story developments are worth noting here. The story of Brigitte got an abrupt end as she died of a heart failure in April 1984, later her story was to continue with her son Marcel. Jürgen the painter joined the Golzow cooperative farm and Gudrun became mayor of the neighbour

⁴⁵ Original citation: «Die Langzeitchronik mit den Prinzip der ständige Wiederkehr zu den gleichen Menschen in sich laufend verändernden Lebensumständen erschloß der Gattung des Dokumentarfilms eine neue Dimension und ermöglichte bisher unbekannte Aussagen. Der «Faktor Zeit» und die «Zeit als Interpret» erlauben, Entwicklungsprozesse – Entwicklung als Prozeß – sichtbar zu machen und brachten ein großes Stück Dialektik in unsere Arbeit ein.»

⁴⁶ A 94 minutes TV version aired on DDR-TV 6.9.1984. A 103 minutes cinema version was later released in June 1986. (BArch DR 118/9317, p. 18)

community Genschmar. The films end on a visit by Kim Il-sung and Erich Honecker on 31st May 1984, there to see the now internationally renowned progress and success of the cooperative farms in Golzow.

As noted in Chapter 3, by 1986 Winfried and Barbara Junge were able to secure a guarantee from the state film department that the *Golzow* films would continue up until 1999. This meant that the Golzow project received a special financial grant for shooting footage for every year leading up to that – and plans and side projects were launched for additional films in the years between 1986 and 1999. At the 5th Congress of the Association of Film and Television Producers (*Verbandes der Film- und Fernsehschaffenden*) 19. - 21. April 1988 Winfried Junge presented two alternatives for additional films before 1999: either 12 shorter individual portraits, one to be aired each year starting with a portrait on Winfried, or, what he himself preferred, a single film working as a continuation of *Lebensläufe* for 1989 before the final film in 1999 (Wolf, 2017, p. 242).

With the abrupt changes to the filmmaking environment and the death of GDR and DEFA, none of these ideas came fully into fruition. Partly to secure stability through a rocky period post-state financing, the idea of a TV series was reintroduced (Wolf, 2017, pp. 242-244), this time as a 10-parter of 90-minute films or as 13 parts of which each part had a running time of 50 to 90 minutes.⁴⁷ These ambitious ideas were hard to sell in the new market situation. In addition to problems securing funding from “West German” media companies such as WDR and NDR, attempts elsewhere such as France (LA SEPT, BArch DR 118/9316 [a,]) and the US (United Artists, BArch DR 118/9316 [b]) failed. An agreement to make a feature film for 1992, *Drehbuch: Die Zeiten*, was reached through financing mainly from co-producers Journal Klaus Volkenborn KG but also the Hamburger Filmbüro and the Federal Ministry of the Interior (BArch DR 118/9327), however the future of the series beyond this film was still somewhat uncertain. Not until 1995 would the situation stabilize, all films since were produced by à jour Film- & Fernsehproduktion GmbH and financial backing came steadily from both state and local government.

⁴⁷ Surviving relics of the TV-series idea are the straight-to-video 3 short films of around 40 minutes each collectively known as *Drei Portraits* on Marieluise, Willy and Winfried released in 1991 (Wolf, 2017, pp. 232-233). These are largely neglected in the literature on the Golzow films as later films incorporate these into them and not considered part of the official *Golzow* films.

4.3.2 Changes in representing ordinary lives in *Drehbuch: Die Zeiten* (1992)

“What have I dared to do? Record others’ lives? Presented life? Made personal things public? If I had the chance to start such a film again, would I? »

(Winfried Junge’s voice-over in the epilogue of *Drehbuch: Die Zeiten*)

In several ways, the 4,5-hour long *Drehbuch: Die Zeiten* acts like a final chapter: it portrays the end of the GDR for which the series had had as a home for 39 years, but also the end of DEFA and the filmmaking practice there. It is not only the new political environment allowing free speech that leads Winfried Junge to a higher degree reflect on his own role in the series, it is also a result of an uprooting of his personal situation – no longer with a secure state job and, like his protagonists, having to adjust to a new life. *Drehbuch: Die Zeiten* is as much a reflection about the methods of representation of the ordinary lives he and his wife has followed for so long as an observation of the “new” lives of their protagonists.

In reflecting on his methods, Winfried Junge, whose voice-over we hear throughout this film as in *Lebensläufe*, drags himself into the story. From the opening shot of fireworks in Hamburg celebrating the first year of reunion (*Tag der Deutschen Einheit*) on 3rd October 1991 with a group of Golzowers, it becomes clear that the tone of the film is now different as Winfried Junge says: “I do not like fireworks. As a child in Berlin I saw the gleam of “Christmas trees” that bombers used as targets.”

In the previous films, very little is known about Winfried Junge – certainly nothing as personal such as this, telling about a personal trauma in his childhood raised during WWII. Rather than coming off as something vain, something Junge was concerned about in his filmmaking as the films were not about him (Panse, 2003, as cited in Panse, 2008 p. 79), this approach makes a previously unclear presence behind the camera more ordinary. Later, in a scene with Jürgen – now trying to make ends meet with his own farm after the farming collective was shut down after the reunion – Winfried goes even further, showing himself in front of the camera (Figure 10).



Figure 10: Images from “Drehbuch: Die Zeiten” (1992). A zoom out reveals the director in front of the camera together with his protagonists.

By this action, the gap in power relations between the ordinary person filmed and the filmmaker is lessened. When Winfried asks Jürgen whether he thinks it is right that he should sit there in front of the camera with him, Jürgen replies: “It’s fine.” Prompted further to expand on this, Jürgen responds with a rhetorical question: “Well, people should see who undertook this with us here, right?” and confirms that he finds it better and “easier to talk”. In a later unpublished interview, Winfried Junge revealed that the protagonists found Winfried asking questions from behind the camera “unfair”, in addition to the fact that Winfried always came prepared to the interviews, while the protagonists had no time to prepare for answers to often difficult questions

(Panse, 2003, as cited in Panse, 2008, p. 78). With expensive 35mm film rolling, little time was made for protagonists to weigh their answers before uttering them, preventing it from becoming visual ethnography, although several protagonists tried to stall for time for as long as possible. With scenes such as this in *Drehbuch: Die Zeiten* (1992), Winfried put himself, as far as his project would allow him without making it about him (Panse, 2008, p. 79), in the shoes of the ordinary people he portrays and to a stronger degree than in the past having to relate to their challenges of performance and representation in the presence of the camera.⁴⁸ He does however, come prepared as always.

To his credit, Winfried makes it clear that this attempt to be more in their shoes pales in comparison to the actual struggles of someone like the early “poster-boy” Jürgen must deal with. When he asks Jürgen about what he means when he thinks that it might be good to end the Golzow project with this film, Jürgen reveals that his family struggles with the hearsay that he has had advantages being involved in the project, such as, according to this film, false rumours about DEFA building his houses for him and that he is in it for the money. Through this disclosure, a very different and occasionally uglier picture of the rural collective not talked about openly in the previous films in the GDR is revealed.

Other distinct changes are also made to the series that affects its representation. Instead of a biographical division separating protagonists into chapters named “1. Jürgen” and “7. Marieluise”, *Drehbuch: Die Zeiten* (Junge & Junge, 1992) is separated into themes, such as the first one named “Part 1: Once upon a time there was a wall” interviewing several Golzowers about the past and “About tomatoes and the end of the GDR. A talk behind the house.” In the latter, the focus is purely on Jürgen, this time visibly angry when asked about his current situation in the summer of 1990. The reunion has rendered “East German” marks almost worthless and as a result Jürgen is unable to make a profit in competition with the free market for his vegetables. Jürgen’s dreams of finally going on a vacation – for which he feels this new political environment has promised him – are shattered due to these new economic realities. Barely able to control himself and his gesticulations (Figure 11, top) when asked if he feels a

⁴⁸ In the words of Winfried Junge in the article „Golzow als dauerndes Refugium“ (1993): “Nach der Wende konnte ich ihr Leben nicht mehr einfach ins Schaufenster stellen, ohne selbst an ihre Seite zu treten. Gerade heute, wo alle vergessen wollen, daß sie mal DDR-Bürger waren, muß ich die gleiche Ehrlichkeit aufbringen wie meine Figuren. [...] Ich kann nicht, wie mein Kollege Volker Koepp, vornehm zurücktreten und die Menschen vor der Kamera zappeln lassen, fast wie aufgespießte Insekten.“

better time is about to begin, he says: “What then? What is better here? I always said: I don’t need the West, not me. I have my own. And now we’re being shit on? I don’t need it.”



Figure 11: From “Drehbuch: Die Zeiten” (1992). Not seen before in the Golzow films: a very frustrated Jürgen (top) and protests (bottom).

Not only is the anger and frustration different from the limited range of emotions represented in the GDR, which at its “worst” showed passive negative emotions such as boredom or disinterest in school or work, but scenes such as this are also different in their direct attack on a system that does not benefit the ordinary. This change in what is being represented is further underlined by the next scene showing a protest the current situation for farmers (Figure 11, bottom), 7 weeks before the end of the GDR. Scenes of protests were, naturally, off-limits in

the years before – so is the reveal of inequality in the GDR in this scene that each politician in charge of the farming policies earned almost ten times more than each LPG farmer. These spectacular scenes are a result of the changing times and not a product of the change towards a more reflexive documentary form, but their inclusion speaks of a change in what can be shown. This direct commentary in the present means that the film is no longer limited to more subtle critique in associative time shuttles, as we saw in *Lebensläufe*. We do not need a time shuttle back to a younger Jürgen to understand the heightened meaning of vacation and travel to East Germans culture in this time, this is all in the scene in the present in his backyard because it is described openly and shown with his clenched fists. However, this does not mean that time shuttles do not have an important function in representation in *Drehbuch: Die Zeiten* (Junge & Junge, 1992) and in the future films.

This can be seen in how the filmmaker himself talks to and references the past in this film and where the focus is in the time shuttles of the past. Now able to speak more directly about “how things really were”, each time shuttle becomes a rediscovery allowing for another interpretation of events not limited by strict censorship. In large part this opportunity is in this film used to explore and reflect on the making of the series.⁴⁹ An example of this is a lengthened description of the problems of staging in the first film coupled with 8mm footage showing how the classroom became a film studio, as well as showing the 16mm “behind the scenes” footage for the third film (Figure 12, top). Later, after saying in voice-over “Since I feel like a clown anyway, why don’t I tell the whole truth?” Winfried Junge shows an ending that was made for the series in 1985 with Jürgen’s son’s first day of school (Figure 12, centre), which, given that it is now 1992, is quite embarrassing. In addition to getting to know and see one of the directors behind the project as an ordinary person making mistakes of his own, the series takes another turn in its use of time shuttles. With VHS technology available as well as the protagonists having more room to provide their commentary on the series themselves, Winfried Junge takes the opportunity to visit Winfried the protagonist with a copy of *Lebensläufe* (1980). Armed with a remote, Winfried the protagonist is seen pausing and fast-forwarding on the images of himself and asking his sons if they want to see scenes of him again (Figure 12, bottom).

⁴⁹ From the filmmaker’s perspective, this was also done in part to help bring interest back into the project and secure funding, as Winfried Junge reveals the article „Golzow als dauerndes Refugium“ (1993): „Nach der Wende hatte ich dann irgendwann das Bedürfnis, wieder mal mit einem neuen Film auf unser Projekt aufmerksam zu machen und Neugierde auf mehr zu wecken. Ich würde gern bis zur Jahrtausendwende ein Dutzend abendfüllender Einzel-Lebensläufe fertigstellen. Dazu brauche ich Geld. “



Figure 12: Images from “Drehbuch: Die Zeiten” (1992). Behind the scenes footage from “Elf Jahre alt” (1966, top), Winfried Junge the director and the planned ending in 1985 (centre), Winfried the protagonist in the present watching a time shuttle of himself from 1966 (bottom)

In future films such as *Da habt ihr mein Leben – Marieluise, Kind von Golzow* (Junge & Junge, 1997) and *Brigitte und Marcel – Golzower Lebenswege* (*Brigitte and Marcel – Golzow paths of life*, Junge & Junge, 1998), these “time shuttles within the present image” scenes would become central to the overarching narrative – for instance in *Brigitte und Marcel – Golzower Lebenswege* (1998) which ends on her son Marcel watching the tribute in *Drehbuch: Die Zeiten* (1992) to her mom after her death, both getting his opinion on its authenticity as well as capturing him coming to terms with the loss of his mother on camera. In *Drehbuch: Die Zeiten* (1992), the film within a film sequence with Winfried is more of a curiosity that attempts to bridge an earlier gap between the filmed and the film, to portray their sense of – or lack of – ownership to the material. While this scene (Figure 12, bottom) has little commentary from the protagonist on the representation of him, *Drehbuch: Die Zeiten* (1992) is markedly different from past films in that the filmmaker allows protagonists to voice their critique of the project while being filmed. In one scene, Marieluise’s father complains that a speech he had at Marieluise’s wedding in *Lebensläufe* (1980) was cut short. In a later scene, there is an attempt to right this wrongdoing by the filmmakers by showing him – a man who always had something to say – over 5 minutes talk about the state of the GDR from previously unseen footage from 1984 in its entirety, despite his slow speech (German not being his mother tongue). By doing this, as well as bringing the film to the protagonists’ home and asking Jürgen and the others if it is about time to quit and what they get out of it, the series has become more of a product for and by the Golzowers, not the state. In addition to the behind-the-scenes possibility to veto scenes that was always granted to each protagonist near the final cut (Panse, 2008, p. 79), more open dialogue on the content of the film is shown to the spectator. This turns the ordinary people represented into whole persons with agency beyond rural GDR stereotypes. They become less distanced from the film, seemingly able to in a larger degree control the description of their culture based on their own experiences without censorship causing problems for filmmakers or the filmed.

4.3.3 “Top-down” to “bottom-up” thick description?

By infusing commentary and other interactions between the film and the filmed, “thicker meaning” of “East German” culture and its ordinary people have gone from what I would call a “top-down” thick description to a “bottom-up” thick description. In films before *Drehbuch: Die Zeiten* (1992), Winfried Junge as an East Berlin director in a state-driven film company is safely behind the camera to interpret “rural” scenes through voice-over not reflected on himself.

By not exposing himself and because of the gap between filmmaker and the filmed as a state emissary from Berlin, the language of representation is of “they” or “them”⁵⁰. The burden of objectivity is also on “them”. Due to censorship, description, and representation beyond the “script” given by the GDR happened mainly through associative use of time shuttles. However, the thick description that results from these work in relation with ideas of representation such as *Gegenwart* and later *Alltag*, both of which the state tolerated, hence its description of GDR culture is “top-down”.

After the GDR, the filmmakers are put in a similar situation as several protagonists, without a job and with an unclear future. Winfried Junge steps in front of the camera and through revealing the process of the creation of the film as well as personal anecdotes, he is shown as a somewhat ordinary “East German” who lets himself be vulnerable with the protagonists, although he can never fully immerse himself into their situation.⁵¹ Here, the films are capturing his own doubts of the direction of the project as well as critique from the protagonists. In this way, the Golzow project is portrayed more as a joint venture, and becomes “bottom-up” thick description because its culture is described from a “we” perspective, no longer tied to a state but looking onto it – and talking directly about it – from below.

This is also in line with the changed spectatorship situation. While some past films such as *Lebensläufe* (1980) were screened in other countries⁵², its main spectatorship was ordinary GDR citizens themselves and it was also financed by this state. After the *Mauerfall*, financial backing and viewership had skewed more towards those on the outside – particularly westwards – who were interesting in exploring this mostly unknown culture. The burden was no longer on only the protagonists but also filmmakers to present this objectively in a way that gave meaning to people unbeknownst to “East German” culture. Where there was previously a dichotomy between state emissaries as filmmakers from urban Berlin and rural protagonists, with the Wende the dichotomy is now between the West and the East. Thick description then naturally

⁵⁰ Another use of “they” representation was seen in the anti-fascist early GDR newsreels of *Der Augenzeuge* immediately after WW2 (Mückenberger, 1999, p. 59). Here, it is used to point to Fascist perpetrators among the population (“they”), at the same time “absolve” potential guilt in those watching (“we are not them”). Mückenberger notes that this emphasis on “they” is not seen in feature films of the 1940s.

⁵¹ Here I find Crawford’s (1992, pp. 68-70) description of the anthropological process illustrative – as a relationship between “becoming” and “othering”. In the case of *Drehbuch: Die Zeiten* and beyond compared to the GDR films, it can be argued that Junge have gone from a more distanced relation to the “others” that are the protagonists, to actively trying to become the “other”.

⁵² Although no fully comprehensive list of places the films were screened exists, Wolf (2015, pp. 151-154) gives a detailed overview over which cities each film has been screened in film festivals and retrospectives in Germany and abroad up to 2013.

had to adjust to make meaning for a new time and new audience, and in putting himself as another ordinary person into the mix both behind and in front of the camera, the method went from “them” to “I and them” – we, or “our”. Instead of the approach of “this is the story of these people in Golzow” it becomes more of a “this is our story of Germany”. What this new representation achieves is a description thick enough to, to paraphrase Barbara Grüning, “offer [...] a cultural meeting ground by narrating the recent past from the perspective of everyday-life.” (Grüning, 2011, p. 44). The only reception study done to date on the *Golzow* films seems to confirm this. Manuela Uellenberg interviewed West and East Germans about how they perceived the series. In her results, she found that nine out of ten East Germans saw the focus of the films as making the “German-German” story comprehensible (Uellenberg, 2010, p. 91). The West Germans interviewed however saw the focus more as filling a “deficit” in their knowledge of the everyday in the GDR. The methods of the *Golzow* films then, which I have called thick description, has provided both clarity to those who were in the know but also being descriptive to a meaningful degree those who were not.

Grüning also argues that the “East German” identity seen after the reunification paradoxically did not exist before it. Here, I would make a distinction between spoken and “unspoken” identity. In its nonlinearity, *Lebensläufe* (1980) unveils an unspoken side of a rural East German identity that goes against the officially constructed representation of the ordinary through time shuttles. After the Wende, now able to speak more freely, and the filmmakers more able to show it, identity is spoken about both in the present and when discussing the past.

4.4 *Der Kinder von Golzow* after 1992: Reclaiming representation, bottom-up thick description as oral history and the *past-now*

Back in the original plans made during the GDR, the *Golzow* series were to end in 1999 with a summary film of most of the protagonists much like *Lebensläufe* (1980), celebrating the country’s 50th anniversary and the Golzowers path towards a new millennium. But when the year 1999 rolled around, no *Golzow* summary film was being released that year after all. Instead, five individual portraits in the 90s after *Drehbuch: Die Zeiten*, among them one on Jürgen (*Das Lebens des Jürgen von Golzow, The Life of Jürgen from Golzow*, Junge & Junge, 1994) and one on Marieluise (*Da habt ihr mein Leben - Marieluise, Kind von Golzow*, 1997), were followed by three in the early 2000s. The final two films - collectively known as *Das Ende der unendlichen Geschichte* (*The end of the never-ending story*) - were released in 2006 and 2007. These summed up the lives of several of the Golzowers and ran for over 4,5 hours each.

Drehbuch: Die Zeiten (1992) had been structuring its use of new and old footage around themes. As the 90s went along the *Golzow* films went back to a more strictly linear approach much like the *Up*-series (Almond & Apted, 1964-) and *Anmut sparet nicht noch Mühe* (1979). Instead of frequent use of time shuttles, the final two films for instance starts in 1961, moves through the 60s to the 90s and finally the 2000s at the very end. Only in brief moments does the film go away from this formula through i.e. use of still images from another decade than what is currently approached. Due to lack of footage for several protagonists particularly in the latter half of the 90s onwards – often due to them wanting to leave the project - the latter films become largely about the GDR period and the immediate aftermath of the Wende once again. 15 years after the filming of *Drehbuch: Die Zeiten* (1992) has however meant more time to reflect on what was and more time to restore imagery not seen before particularly from the 60s and 70s.

While the final films answer questions of viewers on how the surviving protagonists are doing in the mid-2000s, and – as Kilborn (2010) notes – satisfies our curiosity of the visual changes to the faces of the protagonists who are now in their 50s, these films are to a large degree reconsidering the past. For the first time the filmmakers know for certain that this is the end of it all, a project that has been with them almost their entire adult life. With the comfort of 15 years and several additional films from the major events of the Wende, the representation of ordinary lives of a generation in the GDR have, to a large degree, been reclaimed by the ordinary persons themselves, and the filmmakers have through a reflexive mode dealt with past sins and questions about their position regarding the protagonists. The later *Golzow*-films could therefore continue to describe “East German” ordinary life beyond the stereotypes that became popular after the *Mauerfall* associated with it.

This was perhaps necessary, as other filmic texts of the time by West-Germans from transnational production companies offered outsider perspectives to ordinary life behind the wall that bordered on representing ordinary life in the GDR as something strange and extraordinary. *Goodbye Lenin!* (Wolfgang Becker, 2003) has several scenes of *Ostalgie* – arguably a western construct (Boyer, 2006) – which is nostalgia for certain “weird” aspects of the GDR, while *Das Leben der Anderen* (Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck, 2006) reinforced the narrative of the GDR as an Orwellian regime in which every aspect of ordinary living was laid bare due to surveillance. In the later *Golzow* films the summary of the past remembers the good with the bad but without seeing it as a strange landscape behind a wall without real individuals or any connection to other cultures. Instead, as in earlier films, thick

descriptions reveal that what may on first observation seem strange quirks about GDR life is in fact so very ordinary and universal. Or, in other words, meaningful and relatable. “Nostalgic” images of the Golzow children from the past enhance the ordinary: while footage of the children singing and walking in the fields from 1962 or playing in the snow during the long winter of 1966 may have been good *Heimat* propaganda in its time – it is not these images’ relation to socialism which is remembered fondly when the later film shows these scenes again. Instead it is that these protagonists once were kids who did that – and would not we all wish to be kids again. Similarly, the film remembers the GDR youth and how they were influenced by Western culture in styles and trends. This is a part of the bottom-up thick description which is still ongoing. Footage of the past has been reclaimed by those who were in front of and behind the camera during the GDR, rather than SED officials who spoke of a false identity from a distance or, with the Wende, various non-GDR actors speaking on behalf of something that had passed which they had not experienced.

What the later films make clear is that over these decades there has been, to use a term by Baer (1992), a double “legitimation crisis”. Through use of informants, anthropologist Hans A. Baer found that, as this thesis has shown, there was a contradiction between “the ideals of socialism and the realities of GDR social life” (Baer, 1992, p. 320). I would extend this idea to that the post-GDR films show a new legitimation crisis between the ideals of capitalism and the new realities of the social life of East Germany. Like the gradual move in representation from *Gegenwart* to *Alltag* in the GDR, post-GDR representation has changed as well. Perhaps the transition that is seen over the 15 years after *Drehbuch: Die Zeiten* (1992) is a representation from the new everyday post-GDR to what *was* ordinary. As the GDR fades into memory, the Junges use the final two *Golzow* films to capture new stories – arguably histories – of several Golzowers who played minor roles in earlier films. There are also old stories entirely retold. *...dann leben sie noch heute – Das Ende der unendlichen Geschichte (...ever after. The end of the never-ending story*, Junge & Junge, 2007) revisits the story of Gudrun despite having no footage from beyond 1991, as she left the project soon after losing her job as a mayor of the neighbour town Genschmar. But with more than a decade after this story has wrapped up, Gudrun is revisited with new and old scenes from the past. This time around she becomes even more ordinary in front of the camera, showing a woman – who like everybody else – has had to navigate life through making tough choices. While the camera is not present when her choices are made, seeing Gudrun in ordinary events such as the school days, the final exam, the dance after, the reunion years later and later lack of boyfriends and children speaks to her character.

Her strong focus on having a career in politics and proving herself meant that having her own family had to wait – despite the parents’ wishes for her to be married at 28. In 1991 her story ends, she is alone and left with nothing, having made the wrong choice – unable to adapt due to SED’s bad reputation. Her tragedy is not unique – nor is the film making it out to be that. Nor is the GDR wiped away from the representation and from her story.

Instead, the story of what once was *is* her life story in the film. Representation of her and the others thus become *past-now*: representation of a dying ordinary identity soon to become history as they have little room in the current environment. Gudrun’s previous double lives which were both in the present are, as with the others, replaced by a “double” life consisting of a GDR past and a new present adjusted to post-GDR conditions. There is an inverse proportionality in representation between protagonist and the presented: while the Golzow stories told in the last two films mainly consists of the period up and to the Wende⁵³, what becomes a greater part of the lives of the protagonists themselves is the new life that came after the uprooting of the Wende. With topics such as work conditions almost becoming taboo in the capitalist environment post-GDR (Alter, 2002), little representation is given to the present ordinary post-GDR protagonists in the 2000s. With Gudrun, due to practical reasons, none. The large volume of past footage now presented linearly is a reclaiming of the story of the ordinary lives that becomes a form of oral history, due to the filmmakers being largely interested in the protagonists as historical witnesses. The last scene with the protagonists of the entire *Golzow* films underlines this. In a scene not shown before, already 16 years old footage by this time, those protagonists that made it are gathered back at the same sandbox in which the series started in 1961 (Figure 13). In front of them, a yellow ball with a “DDR” logo. Unlike previously made endings, this is both literally and figuratively a reminiscence of the past tied to the GDR rather than forward-looking as it shows the protagonists when they were younger, and in the case of Jürgen W. before he passed away at age 52.

⁵³ In the story of Eckhard and Bernhard in the final film, two protagonists rarely given screen-time previously, 1 hour and 25 minutes are devoted to their lives up to the year 1992. The next 15 years are given 30 minutes.



Figure 13: The final scene with the protagonists from Das Ende der unendlichen Geschichte (2007).

At the very end of the entire *Golzow* series, as the car in which the camera is mounted on drives away from the school and Golzow, there is a transition from the nostalgic music written for the films in the GDR to synth music by current children of the Golzow primary school. While two Golzowers still live in Golzow, no connection is attempted between them and the new children at school. The previous scene and last time shuttle left them and the others at the sandbox where the whole thing started, offering a visual contrast to the previously oft mentioned ever-flowing Heraclitus river metaphor. While representation through time shuttles previously spoke of a present and future, they have now changed to become a part of a past – a Golzow and German history⁵⁴.

⁵⁴ Alternatively, «a social history of German socialism” (Byg, 2001, p. 128).

5. Conclusion

In this thesis I have analysed films in *Der Kinder von Golzow* (Junge & Junge, 1961-2007) on either side of the end of the German Democratic Republic for their representation of the ordinary. Two films are given a closer treatment: *Lebensläufe* (1980) and *Drehbuch: Die Zeiten* (1992) are shown through historical-political context how they represent “East German” ordinary lives in diverse ways. After a chapter on the films’ political, productional and historical context in which *Der Kinder von Golzow* was made, I use Kilborn’s (2010) term *time shuttling* as an analytical tool in Chapter 3 to uncover how the *Golzow* films of the GDR developed over time a representation of ordinary lives that went beyond the state-tolerated *Gegenwart* (present-now) and *Alltag* (everyday). By showing the same protagonists from different times in the past in comparison with the present, the viewer gets described “whole persons” – and more specifically *Dividuals* – individuals within a society in which ordinary lives are largely seen through the collective. In several examples, I show through using a strict definition of *Eigen-sinn*, that behaviours are observed in which ordinary persons carve their own space for their own individuality, despite of a system which wanted to represent the “typical” in a grander narrative of state progress, such as the ordinary as heroic builders of socialism.

Additionally, I show that time shuttles as well as other characteristics of longitudinal documentaries coined by Kilborn (2010) work similarly to Geertz’s approach of thick description as clarified by Ponteretto (2006). Chapter 4 goes on to give examples of how scenes with time shuttles “thickly describe” some notions of culture in ordinary lives in the GDR as well as after the *Wende* such as living double lives in the GDR and the search for a spoken GDR identity after. Because the culture is described in a way to us that is full of meaning, it means that we can separate – to use Geertz’s terms – filmic “winks” from “involuntary twitches”. The camera is thus not, as Geertz questions, naïve - it can recognize behavioural patterns filled with cultural meaning such as *Eigen-sinn* and put them in a larger context through editing.

Partly to answer potential critique that this use of thick description is mere semantics, I expand on this idea of thick description by coining the terms “top-down” and “bottom-up” thick description both to clarify changes in how ordinary lives are represented as well as recognizing the historical-political context for which any description or representation comes from – which in the case of the GDR goes through a major change with the *Wende*. “Top-down” is my term for thick description pre-*Wende* that comes largely from time shuttles – “revealing” more about the ordinary lives than what was perhaps wanted, but still tolerated. This in part is a result of

SED officials gradually losing control of its films' representation due to worsened economy that coincided with a more open filmmaking practice. Additionally, through observational and expository "modes" as well as the filmmakers being state representatives, the films in the GDR period distances itself from its protagonists through a "them" and "their" Republic description, in which the protagonists, represented as rural socialists, have the "burden of objectivity" (Panse, 2008).

"Bottom-up" thick description comes from the filmmakers being freed entirely from previous censorship, leaving filmmakers able to be more reflexive about their filmmaking – particularly in looking back at the lost GDR past. It also comes from the fact that the filmmakers are now in a similar situation as many of their protagonists after the end of DEFA. The new language of representation is of "us" and "our" Germany, made clearer by the fact that director Winfried Junge steps in front of the camera for the interviews in present time. The "us" representation is also due to a changed filmmaking praxis: filmmakers are no longer seen as state emissaries or outsiders on a mission from the urban capitol to "uncover" rural ordinary life under socialism, perhaps not even to the protagonists themselves, having formed strong relations with the filmmakers over the decades. To the new outsiders, this time the West, the filmmakers seem as part of the witnesses themselves to what was the GDR, a role which they also choose to play with Winfried Junge becoming more personal.

Finally, I finish Chapter 4 with a brief consideration of the films from 1994 to 2007, showing that through long-term "bottom-up" thick description the film series has found a way to reclaim a GDR identity for which previously was defined by the state through a socialist collective. In this, there is arguably a longing for the past in the form of representing the ordinary as *past-now*. The focus is capturing an oral history of their past, to get their accounts of the GDR and the immediate post-wall years and is less interested in representing their lives in the present and in speculating about their future, the protagonists now in their 50s.

This thesis gives an example of how changes in representation of ordinary people ties to and is affected by its ideological, historical and filmmaking (industrial) context. To describe this change, I have analysed the *Golzow* films for their representation, use of time shuttling and have attempted to use the term thick description to summarize change in representation with the *Wende*. Hopefully, this attempt to describe what such large bodies of filmic work *do* with regards to representation of ordinary lives can encourage others to find ways to describe how moving images of longitudinal dimensions work on a macro and micro level. For future

research, a natural starting point would be to see how well these ideas hold when tested against another longitudinal “GDR” documentary – Volker Koepp’s *Wittstock-Zyklus* (Koepp, 1975-1997) about women working in a textile factory, for which very little research has been made and even less has been written about in English. Other long docs such as Rainer Hartleb’s *The Children of Jordbro* (1975-2014) and Michael Apted’s *Up*-series (1964-) may also be interesting comparison texts. It would also be interesting to compare the representation of children in the original *Golzow* films with the recent *Die neuen Kinder von Golzow* (*The New Children of Golzow*, Simone Catharina Gaul, 2017). While it is uncertain if *Die neuen Kinder von Golzow* will become a longitudinal documentary project, the premise of this film is similar to the “original” films: observing first grade schoolkids, in 2017 focusing largely on children in the class from Syrian refugee families who have now moved to Golzow.

Representation of different forms of ordinary lives over time in moving images is understudied and relevant to today’s media culture. Through studying long docs, we may create tools that help us describe the longitudinal aspect of current media presences for ordinary people on social media, YouTube, etc. An ongoing project by Petraitis (2018) for instance looks at how longitudinal and transmedia documentaries write alternative historiography through the representation of the everyday by filmmakers or protagonists themselves, asking amongst other things what these documentary forms contribute to cultural memory.

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DR 1-Z: 4661, 856, 844, 759, 776, 881, 1008, 1129, 1450

DEFA Studio für Dokumentarfilme

DR 118: 736, 3195, 4628, 5239, 5240, 5241, 5242, 9316, 9317, 9318, 9319, 9320, 9321, 9322, 9323, 9324, 9325, 9326, 9327, 9328, 9329, 9330, 9331, 9332

Films

21 Up (Michael Apted, 1977)

28 Up (Michael Apted, 1984)

35 Up (Michael Apted, 1991)

42 Up (Michael Apted, 1998)

56 Up (Michael Apted, 2012)

Abhängig (Dependent), Eduard Schreiber, 1983)

Aileen: Life and Death of a Serial Killer (Nick Broomfield, 2003)

Anmut sparet nicht noch Mühe (Neither save grace nor effort), Winfried Junge, 1979)

Berlin – Ecke Bundesplatz (Hans-Georg Ullrich & Detlef Gumm, 1986-2012)

Born in South Africa (Angus Gibson, 1992-)

Born in the USSR (Sergei Miroshnichenko, 1991-)

Boyhood (Richard Linklater, 2014)

Brigitte und Marcel – Golzower Lebenswege (Brigitte and Marcel – Golzow paths of life), Winfried & Barbara Junge, 1998)

Cabra Marcado para Morrer (Twenty Years Later), Coutinho, 1984)

Da habt ihr mein Leben – Marieluise, Kind von Golzow (My life there you have it – Marieluise, child of Golzow), Winfried & Barbara Junge, 1997)

Das Kaninchen bin ich (The Rabbit Is Me), Kurt Maetzig, 1965)

Das Leben der Anderen (The Lives of Others, Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck, 2006)

Das Lebens des Jürgen von Golzow (The Life of Jürgen from Golzow, Winfried & Barbara Junge, 1994)

Daß ein gutes Deutschland blühe (Joop Huiskens, 1959)

Der Augenzeuge (1946 – 1980) [newsreel]

Der geteilte Himmel (The Divided Heaven, Konrad Wolf, 1964)

Der Kinder von Golzow (The Children of Golzow, Winfried Junge & Barbara Junge, 1961 – 2007)

Die Geschichte vom Onkel Willy aus Golzow (The story of uncle Willy from Golzow, Winfried & Barbara Junge, 1995)

Die Mörder sind unter uns (Murderers Among Us, Wolfgang Staudte, 1946)

Die neuen Kinder von Golzow (The New Children of Golzow, Simone Catharina Gaul, 2017)

Die Prüfung (The Exam, Winfried Junge, 1971)

Diese Golzower - Umstandsbestimmung eines Ortes (These Golzowers: Adverbial definition of a place, Winfried Junge, 1984)

Drehbuch: Die Zeiten (Storyline: The Times, Winfried & Barbara Junge, 1992)

Eigentlich wollte ich Förster werden - Bernd aus Golzow (Actually I wanted to become a forester - Bernd from Golzow, Winfried & Barbara Junge, 2003)

Einheit SPD-KPD (Kurt Maetzig, 1946)

Ein Mensch wie Dieter – Golzower (A human like Dieter – from Golzow, Winfried & Barbara Junge, 1999)

Elf Jahre alt (Eleven years old, Winfried Junge, 1966)

Good Bye Lenin! (Wolfgang Becker, 2003)

Growing up in Australia (Jennifer Cummins, 2006-)

Housing Problems (Arthur Elton & Edgar Anstey, 1935)

Ich sprach mit einem Mädchen (I spoke to a girl, Winfried Junge, 1975)

Jahrgang 45 (Born in 45, Jürgen Böttcher, 1966)

Jochen - ein Golzower aus Philadelphia (Jochen – a Golzower from Philadelphia, Winfried & Barbara Junge, 2001)

Leben in Wittstock (Living in Wittstock, Volker Koepp, 1984)

Lebensläufe (Resume – the story of the children of Golzow in separate portraits, Winfried Junge, 1980)

Mädchen in Wittstock (Girls in Wittstock, Volker Koepp, 1975)

Nach einem Jahr – Beobachtungen in einer ersten Klasse (After a year – observation in a first grade, Winfried Junge, 1962)

Neues in Wittstock (New in Wittstock, Volker Koepp, 1992)

Piloten im Pyjama (Walter Heynowski & Gerhard Scheumann, 1968)

Rangierer (Jürgen Böttcher, 1984)

Seven Up! (Paul Almond, 1964)

The Children of Jordbro (Rainer Hartleb, 1972 – 2014)

Und wenn sie nicht gestorben sind... - Das Ende der unendlichen Geschichte (And they live happily... The end of the never-ending story, Winfried & Barbara Junge, 2006)

Up-series (Paul Almond & Michael Apted, 1964-)

Urlaub auf Sylt (Holyday on Sylt, Andrew Thorndike & Annelie Thorndike, 1957)

Vielleicht bin ich ein Don Quichotte (Randi Crott & Peter Sommer, 1995)

Wäscherinnen (Jürgen Böttcher, 1972)

Was geht euch mein Leben an - Elke, Kind von Golzow (My life is none of your business - Elke, child of Golzow, Winfried & Barbara Junge, 1996/1997)

Wenn ich erst zur Schule geh (When I finally go to school, Winfried Junge, 1961)

Wenn man vierzehn ist (When you are fourteen, Winfried Junge, 1969)

Wittstock-Zyklus (Volker Koepp, 1975-1997)

Wittstock, Wittstock (Volker Koepp, 1997)

...dann leben sie noch heute - Das Ende der unendlichen Geschichte (...ever after. The end of the never-ending story, Winfried & Barbara Junge, 2007)

...*Zum Beispiel Marie-Luise* (Winfried Junge, 1991)

...*Zum Beispiel Willy* (Winfried Junge, 1991)

...*Zum Beispiel Winfried* (Winfried Junge, 1991)

