

Dr. Mariana Ivanova: Memories of Sorbian Landscapes in DEFA films: the Politics of Mobility, Relocation and Heritage in DEFA Films, 1973-1989

Recent discussions of DEFA films at the intersection of Memory, Minority and Environmental Studies have drawn attention to the unresearched position of films by Sorbian directors and pictures about the Sorbian communities in the GDR. The last publication on the topic, Grit Lemke's and Andy Räder's edited volume *Sorbische Landschaften/ Serbske filmowe krajiny* (2024) has shed new light on these intersections, while focusing primarily on Sorbian directors. The DEFA Film Studios for Feature and Documentary Films have also discussed and released a handful of films by non-Sorbian directors, which bring together questions of futurity, coming-of-age, the need for environmental protection and the preservation of Sorbian heritage. Such films are Rolf Losansky's two collaborations with Sorbian author and scriptwriter Joachim Nowotny, the 1973 youth film ... verdammt, ich bin erwachsen and the long-censored 1989 *Abschiedsdisco* that premiered after the fall of the Berlin Wall, as well as Kurt Tetzlaf's 1983 documentary *Erinnerung an eine Landschaft: für Manuela*, which is in dialogue with Losansky's work.

In my presentation, I will engage with the critique of displacement and relocation, as well as politics of mobility, memory and heritage in DEFA films set in Sorbian villages. I am interested in questions, such as: How are the destruction of Sorbian villages and the disappearance of century-old spaces, both domestic and social, depicted? How is mobility represented as both movement of younger GDR citizens from rural areas to the city as well as displacement and uprooting? How do these DEFA films juxtapose coming-of-age and youth experiences, such as first love, marriage, rites of passage to the erasure of the Sorbian minority's culture and traditions? What moved non-Sorbian filmmakers to engage with these topics and what can we learn from the processes of discussion, approval, and censorship within DEFA – specifically regarding these films? I will highlight influential critical engagements with these films, such as Michael Grisko's chapter in *Ich war nie eine Hauptplanposition...! Der DEFA-Regisseur Rolf Losansky* (2025) and Henning Wrage's article "DEFA Films for the Youth: National Paradigms, International Influences" in *DEFA at the Crossroads of East German and International Film Culture: A Companion* (2014), among others.

Biography: Mariana Ivanova is the Academic Director of the DEFA Film Library and Associate Professor of German Film and Media at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, USA. She is the author of *Cinema of Collaboration: DEFA Coproductions and International Exchange in Cold War Europe* (2019) and co-editor of *Science on Screen and Paper: Media Cultures and Knowledge Production in Cold War Europe* (2024).