

**Interview with director Florian Kunert  
about the process of making the documentary “Progress in the valley of the people who don’t know”  
conducted by Poh Lin Lee, Nice, 13.November 2018**

Poh Lin Lee: When did you start thinking about the title? Did it come to you at the beginning or at the end of the process of making the film?

Florian Kunert: In a very early stage I already thought about the title because I knew I wanted to talk about the valley of the people who don't know. Progress was the name for the production facility of harvesting machines during the GDR.

Poh Lin Lee: Do you remember yourself when you heard this phrase, the valley of the people who don't know, because when I hear it, it's so evocative and I wonder, like did you grow up with it?

Florian Kunert: Yeah, this is what I found interesting about the title in German “Tal der Ahnungslosen”, it is very known in the East of Germany because everybody knew, we are in this part where the Western TV signal doesn't reach, but in the West many don't know this title. So it's familiar but also not. It also puts a value on the title, you know. But that value of those people who don't know has been removed in the Eastern understanding, so they just identify, yes we are in the valley of the people who don't know without a feeling or being conscious of this evaluation.

Poh Lin Lee: So do you think they took on that name at some point?

Florian Kunert: I asked many of the people I work with and they all said they don't find it derogatory, but identify with it because this is how they lived in the GDR.

Poh Lin Lee: Yes. Yeah. So in some way is it some kind of legacy or honouring of that time and their experience?

Florian Kunert: Yeah, this is how I understood. Or this is how I would like to understand it.

Poh Lin Lee: Or it gives a title for how you would refer to that period of time?

Florian Kunert: This is a big question, if it can refer to the time without talking badly about it. I mean this is what everybody has reactions against that there is a meaning put onto this if you talk about the past. So it's the same with the title, when you hear the valley of the people who don't know, it has a meaning, but not for everyone.

Poh Lin Lee: Okay. Does it have a different meaning if someone externally names it as opposed to people themselves claiming that title?

Florian Kunert: This is what I wonder, yes. I think this will be one of the discussions that will be raised. To spark exactly this discussion, I also chose this title, because there was a lot of people who were against the title because of the meaning that it puts onto those people. I'm also one of them, you know. That's why I felt myself entitled to choose this title, because even though it does show them with the finger, it is also true. So yeah, I did not want to hide from that.

Poh Lin Lee: So you start the film with the question, in a way, in the title?

Florian Kunert: I'm very sure when people read this title, many people will already feel set back. But I think the film discusses then this metaphor so thoroughly that it can't stay superficial and you can't get away with just putting blame.

Poh Lin Lee: Okay. So it's kind of a question but it's also an invitation to go much deeper into exploring this question?

Florian Kunert: Exactly. The film itself is provocative the whole way through, so is the title. And we tried to edit it in a way that - it's always edging on, "Oh this is too much provocation," but then it always snaps back into reflecting about it. The way we edited it was always constructing something and then it gets deconstructed as soon as it got too much or it gets reflected upon. That was our working method. That was why it was so difficult in the

edit to achieve this very thin line between being very provocative and drawing out the memory of the GDR and drawing out the legacy of the GDR in a provoking way without overstepping the line. But then always come back and invite to reflect.

Poh Lin Lee: Remember I'm going to ask questions that are curious to me. If you feel like you want to go in a different direction with the interview, just stop me and we can realign. But I guess my curiosity would be like what did you draw upon to know if that, when that provocation tipped over into too much? Was it something like you relied on your team together in discussion, or did you have something else that you drew upon to navigate the edge?

Florian Kunert: Well this was the difficult part of the whole shoot because it was not just that I as an outsider was trying to navigate the edge. It was also that I am at the same time victim of this. So this was what made it very difficult for me to draw a line and there has been lines breached during the shoot. I have been over-sensitive sometimes, which was unnecessary, but I hope that in the edit, latest at the edit stage, there was enough time, reflection and distance to what happened to really find a reflected way of putting it in the film. But definitely during the shoot this was the biggest challenge for me to realize, alright, there is an edge, and that has been breached a couple of times during the shoot.

Poh Lin Lee: Can you think of a particular example, just to illustrate it?

Florian Kunert: For example, the scene when we shot the GST military camp. It was a mandatory military camp for every GDR citizen, every student, every worker to attend it once a month, which was a military education that you got, you shot rifles, it was basically a military camp. And we re-enacted this together with former workers from Progress and Syrian refugees and this was obviously very delicate because the Syrians have this war background. That's why I was very scared of our shoot whether it is re-traumatizing or too much for them to let them face this military conditioning that citizens in the GDR had gone through. At the end I put a lot of pressure on myself during the scene, and at the end what helped was making space, sitting down, talk and answer questions. What questions do you have while doing this?

Poh Lin Lee: This is before shooting?

Florian Kunert: That was before the shoot. And then even during the shoot we gave space and time to questions like how's everybody feeling? If somebody is not comfortable, it was always the narrative of "we go somewhere together and we come back together". So it was always about how can we navigate the team very close to this memory that we want to talk about and then safely come back. The difficult thing or my responsibility was that often the protagonists weren't aware of what is happening. And when they later found themselves emotionally turmoiled it was my responsibility to end on a good note that day, asking the next day "How do you feel?", all of those things. For example, we did it together with four Syrians, this re-enactment and three of them didn't have any military background. It was just like from the media we assumed they are used to war but some had fled and never had any military education. It was completely new to them, the setting, it didn't remind them of some things, but then one guy had worked and fought for the free Syrian army. For him it meant so much more the scene, and you could totally see it in the footage that he reacted to this and so I particularly focused on him afterwards to check in if he's okay, and I also didn't push him during the shoot at all. I tried to be more soft with him.

Poh Lin Lee: Yeah, it's interesting, as you're talking, Florian, at the beginning you mentioned that in the film you and your team made a decision about a particular pace that you would provoke, but then you would take time to deconstruct. So you said the film takes that structure, but you're also now talking about the process, in some ways took a similar structure. That there was an intention to provoke, but then space was made to come back - you said something about we go together but we also come back together. So did you at the time realize that the process of making the film started to reflect the pace of the film? Or have I got that wrong?

Florian Kunert: It was really something I found out after the first shooting days, we started shooting in 2015 and then we kind of cancelled because it got out of hand, it was too little prepared. But to reflect on those four shooting days, I kind of figured out, that one day when it really worked out well, what happened, why did it work out well? And this is where I realized, it is this going together, this meditating on a topic together during the day and being very playful around it and then suddenly arriving at some horror from the past that was lived by one or the other protagonist. And then being shocked by it and having so much time and the same playfulness that

got us there to get out of it again. Then I started to think, this must be the method also for the continuous shooting. After that I was more conscious planning to shoot with that in mind.

But the challenge, which is also the kind of tool that the film uses, is that the Syrians have a completely different social conditioning. Culturally but also age wise because they are between 20 and 30 and the older Progress workers are all between 65 and 85 and German. That was a challenge. It was a rougher skin we had to deal with to access memories of the older German protagonists, to go beyond the kind of the narration that says "I'm the sharer of wisdom and you're listening". That was the big question, how to let them engage on a more or less eye level. Which is a task I set out to do. It's very difficult task because of the power status, in that context of being refugees and the age and all of that. But I think in the edit we constructed it in a way where we enforced those moments that existed where they the Syrians were taking power and then put a focus on this in the edit.

Poh Lin Lee: What is the intention of trying to level out power in the edit? Like is it an ethic of taking care of people's representation or did it just not serve the film? Like what was the intention there?

Florian Kunert: If you wouldn't have this balance of power between the protagonists, it would have just been old German men telling the Syrian younger refugees about their past. And this is a very boring film. Because that's what I was interested in is this very different conditioned view on this GDR past, which reveals the intensity of it or the sometimes absurdity of it. To have this fresh view from the Syrian guys on this past shedding a light on that what we struggled to find here in Germany, among Germans in reflecting about our past. This is what I found interesting, that they come with a completely different cultural and social conditioning and now being faced and confronted with this legacy of the German past, living in this area, being put there and not being able to move. So it was not me putting it into their face even though I asked them to come to those places (like the GDR museum). Of course I was the initiator but they're faced with it anyway on a daily basis. For example when they go to the doctor - everyday they tell me stories where I see this conditioning, which led to this behaviour which is today much more racist than in other parts of Germany. So I also didn't feel that I was kind of intentionally abusing by forcing that upon them. I invited them to understand it and to get deeper into it. And that's why we went on that journey.

Poh Lin Lee: And what do you think, the perspective of these fresh Syrian experiences and eyes, like what might they offer back to the German community? Like what is it about this fresh perspective on the GDR that the Syrians offer that could really contribute to German community?

Florian Kunert: It's really hard to answer this question, how directly it contributes. For me it just makes certain things visible.

Poh Lin Lee: So it's taking something that's already in motion?

Florian Kunert: ...and building on that. When we talk about the legacy of GDR, there is a strong narrative about the atrocities committed in the GDR, which was, people imprisoned, interrogations by the STASI, which was looking at your everyday life and at every step you took. There is that side and understanding that is, of course really important, but it is really far away from how most of the people in the valley of the people who don't know conceive their past. Because many haven't been consciously victims, like they have not processed consciously in what way they have been victims of the system in the GDR, which was a military regime that put a lot of things and obstacles into their daily life in a very subtle way, how every military dictatorship does. And to work with those people who are not reflective about it was frustrating, not being able to talk about it. So there needs to be another approach, if you want to talk with those people about their own past. It needed some tool or this contextualization for them to be able to see their own past in this way. And this is what the Syrian guys helped to achieve.

Poh Lin Lee: Given that it's the first time that you do an interview about the film, I'm wondering is there something that's most present that wants to be spoken about or are you feeling a bit like where do I start?

Florian Kunert: A question that was asked throughout the whole project was "who are you talking about?" Are you talking about the GDR? Are you talking about the valley of the people who don't know, which is a very small part of the GDR? Do you talk about your own hometown? Do you talk about your own family? Do you talk about yourself and your post memory conditioning of the GDR? This is varying always. Sometimes the family part

is taking over and my own involvement in the whole story, and then the whole GDR system in a way. It is like all part of it on all levels. I really can't say I am tackling a collective or a private memory or a national memory. It's influenced by all of this and even trans-generational. This is what becomes more and more clear now, that it reaches much further back than the GDR. It goes to what involvement had the valley of the people who don't know during the Second World War, which is also a very specific one with local traumas. How much of a role does the local trauma of this production site that closed down in Neustadt play in my view on the GDR? So it is definitely shaped by all of those things and it's really hard to find a stand because people always want to know: What memory? Is this my story? How much is this part of my story? Do I agree with it or not? But this is something you can't agree with or not. I'm struggling to find the language for. I think the film does in some way because you can't pinpoint what kind of memory it is. It's just in a very different sphere. A visual sphere, which accesses memory in different ways than words. So this is something I was always struggling with and there were always various sharp questions around this - who you're talking about.

Poh Lin Lee: From what I understand, when you made "Oh Brother Octopus", you went to a community to make the film. What was the difference between being a filmmaker, going to a community as opposed to being a filmmaker, making a film that you're both within the community and outside the community?

Florian Kunert: That was a very different experience for me because this is the first time I make a film in a community that I'm part of myself, or have been part of myself.

Poh Lin Lee: How is it different? When I say that, what stands out as being the real difference for you as a filmmaker from doing a film about a community and then doing a film where you are both in and out of the community?

Florian Kunert: I had to be much more protective about myself. Means I had to have certain measures in place so I don't fall back into old behaviour patterns. The film was very much also a therapeutic process. So was "Oh Brother Octopus", but the theme was not as personal as now because it's very entrenched with memory and family. It was like a catharsis for me as well, but in "Progress in the valley of the people who don't know", this therapeutic process is much more obvious. I chose a house or a building that has a meaning in my memory. It was the place where the production of harvest machinery happened during the GDR and after that it housed asylum seekers, which as a child I saw as a violent foreigners. This invited me to make use of this house as a tool in a therapeutic process. Which is not a decision I can justify from scripting perspective.

Poh Lin Lee: So you weren't using scripts logic?

Florian Kunert: There was no script logic at the beginning.

Poh Lin Lee: What were you using instead?

Florian Kunert: Really only instinctual reflexes in association with my memory. Means, this house was a mystery. It was shrouded in clouds in my childhood when I think back of it and I wanted to just know more about it. Then I found out and picked up all that stuff and then decided, we tell the story there. I put all this new meaning, being 20 or 15 years older, this much more reflected meaning into this building and then filmed the demolition process of it and at the end it's gone. And then it was so therapeutic and I can only advise to anybody to go through this. This could be a process that could have been prescribed from the therapist. To put meaning into this building and then destroy it. I mean that was so very ritualistic, the poor film team had to go through this. But when the building was destroyed, I could feel that a really heavy, big load was gone and it felt so good.

Poh Lin Lee: You mentioned that it was quite ritualistic for you, do you have any idea what effect it had on anyone else that was witnessing in part of the process, whether that's crew members or participants in the film or even family? Like did anyone else kind of have any experience that was ritualistic or did that very much feel like your own journey?

Florian Kunert: It's definitely very much my own journey. I cannot expect anybody to follow on that journey with me and have similar...

Poh Lin Lee: Well not even similar but something for themselves?

Florian Kunert: There was one friend I collaborated with that didn't have a trained kind of film background, but he was there researching, he was there sound recording on the shoot, and it was very good to have him by my side because he has lived through the same conditioning like I did. We went through the same school together, and for him it was definitely also reshaping his image of his past and which made him question his relationship with his parents and where it comes from. That's one side, but also like I mentioned before for the Syrian guys, everyday there was a different therapeutic effect to it. For example, one day when we were riding on a horse with one of the Syrian guys with Basil, he was just so transformed after it. He described it as the happiest day in his life since being in Germany. He was just the happiest guy after this. It had nothing to do with the film or my intention for the film with this scene, it was a very personal journey he went on, inside the framework of the film. And I think people did in their own ways. Everybody has his own little journey because otherwise, why would you participate? Although some people would just keep going on before the film like after the film in their ways...

Poh Lin Lee: Do you think it will mean anything to the German community or the German audience that you, like you personally went through a process in the making of this film, being part of and outside of the community? Do you think that that has a meaning or an impact for a German audience or German community?

Florian Kunert: I do think it is very helpful that I am from that community, making this very provocative film about the GDR.

Poh Lin Lee: Why?

Florian Kunert: Because I am part of the victim's side, so to speak. I am a victim of the GDR system, a post generational victim. And from that standpoint it's a very different standpoint to start exercises like this together with participants. I don't think that this film would have been possible without that thing to push against, in your own biography. Without this thing that is challenging you constantly. It shaped the process of the film so much, the way we were shooting, the way we were planning the film. It was insane because I was so irrational in my planning of the film and in my decision making around the film.

Poh Lin Lee: Did your crew trust you or did you find that times they really questioned?

Florian Kunert: Well this was a big question. I definitely have to be very thankful for my crew that they did trust me, most of the times. There were times where it was edging, for example, when we were shooting. The factory got demolished in January, February, which is the coldest month in Neustadt. And I always want to shoot at night. So we would spend a week shooting at night in the ruin, in minus 10 degrees Celsius, which already would have needed so much care to make this a reality and because I was so obsessed with my own process in this film, I sometimes was not taking enough consideration for the team. And there was this moment at 4 o'clock in the morning. Everybody didn't have enough sleep and I think the sound guy just went to sleep in the car. And the camerawoman was screaming hysterically at me and then I realized, okay, maybe this is a tipping point. It needs a lot of humor and consolidation and fun, to bring this back and not let this end on this bad note. A crew running away from the director because he's too obsessed with his own process. It happens so often that shoots are interrupted or even cancelled because of the obsession of directors. I mean, especially when you have a process that is so intimate with your own personal process you need three assistants. And this was missing, especially in a shoot where I didn't have a directing assistant, which was not a good thing. I should have had one.

Poh Lin Lee: I'll just summarize that you spoke about how the whole film was based on your own process and experiment and it was a type of research if you want to say, where people kind of played a different role in that, but you were still the centre researcher, if that makes sense. And then you talked about what you did to kind of sustain and keep people connected to the project was attention to relationships. Relationships where there was some kind of mutual giving and taking of sharing in some way. And that you tried to be as honest and open as you could be while still maintaining this experimental kind of posture, which is for everyone to know that at times they won't know what's going on. Otherwise, how do we disrupt the regular common stories that people tell about their lives? Because as we get older, we start to form a very kind of solidified series of memories and connections between them and in that we lose all the other archived memories that exists but because they don't get told, they start to kind of dissolve and we question their existence. So it sounds like when you talk that in your experiment, it's research but it's also about how do you research material if people just say the

same story. Bringing in the perspective of the Syrian people, finding ways to disrupt, like you said, for someone to rock up at an abandoned building and put on a uniform, like you immediately can't replicate the same types of conversations. So I'm hearing it was very experimental, but also in that you recognize that there's risk. There's ethical risk. And whilst you did try to take up this, you know, this ethic of care in terms of prioritizing relationships. You're saying that not having assistants meant that you were both in a process and trying to facilitate a process, which is a pretty big job. That's kind of what I've got from this last bit that we've been talking about. Does that make sense? Or do you want to make any changes or does it have you think about something else?

Florian Kunert: This was really spot on, in your summary. I feel very connected to that. Especially the first thing which I've never seen in this way, what you said, that I'm the only researcher from the beginning to the end and that the film itself was a type of research from the beginning till the end. I find it interesting to see it in this way, which is true because it has an experimental character from the development to the editing. It was always this quest, where I was the kind of principal researcher if you want to say. And all these people coming in and joining for parts of the way in this research. Leaves the question what was there to research or what is the research matter?

Poh Lin Lee: Yes. Which might link to this idea of the broader social meaning of the GDR, which is something that we could talk about.  
You said that it really caught your attention to use the word researcher because you talked a lot about therapeutic process, but as I'm a therapist, I see a therapeutic process as a form of research. It's a form of inquiry. And I was curious about the title of your film progress in the valley of the people who don't know and how you said that, that was kind of about opening up a question. Does that connect for you? Was that the quest, the question of the quest or was it something else?

Florian Kunert: Progress with a question mark. How to make progress in the valley of the people who don't know. Because what I found that the very first book that drew me into this thing was a book that was written the year after the revolution in 1989 of someone that lived in the neighbour town of mine and experienced the whole GDR, the 40 years of the GDR there. And it was like analysing from a psychological or therapeutic point of view, the way the regime of the GDR influenced every citizen on what levels, family level, in the medical level, in the school level and all the different levels of community and society. Very detailed, oh my God, it was just such an eye opener for me.

Poh Lin Lee: Did it in some way acknowledge some of your own experience or did it bring more questions?

Florian Kunert: It was like something that I knew already. Everything I knew but I could have never put it that way - it was all there. The emotions about this were there, but suddenly I could channel them into a direction. It's not about blame, but just to know where it comes from. All the things that he was writing about, I could feel I experienced even though I didn't. Because I was born 1989 and I lived only one and a half years in the GDR.

Poh Lin Lee: Is that what made it even more confusing? That you hadn't the lived experience?

Florian Kunert: Yes, this is definitely contributed to the predicament of my generation. You are so close to the lived experience, but yet you don't have living memory. So where to put these things that got passed onto you in your education, in your upbringing, in your social context. And this was what led me to the question of what happened in 89, in my hometown, in the area where I grew up, in the valley of the people who don't know. Which was very different to what happened in Leipzig, in Berlin, in other towns in the GDR. And this is where it becomes difficult to talk about it because of course within my town there was also destinies and experiences, that were very different to this. So my family experience always plays a role when I talk about this. I can only have this very personal perspective if you want because it is just the sum of people I got in contact with.

Poh Lin Lee: Does it feel like that sometimes you are taking on a collective voice?

Florian Kunert: This is always the point, where people point the finger and say, I don't want to listen to this because I'm not part of this collective or it's easy to certainly say I'm not part of that collective, and that he doesn't talk about me or he says like, "This is not me," and he puts the blame on me. This is where it's really hard to talk about this. I went back and back and back and said, I only talk about my experience, my personal view, my personal

experience and maybe other people can find similarities or share some certain aspects. But if you say this is the legacy of GDR... obviously the word is there, "legacy of GDR" is there when you talk about the film. But when you word it it becomes so differently suddenly. Suddenly it doesn't make sense to talk about the legacy of GDR because every individual had a different legacy of the GDR, different memory, different life experience, but there is a collective experience that people underwent in this area of the GDR, I would say.

Poh Lin Lee: And I guess, it begs the question, what is the concern or the fear to acknowledge that there is a collective shared experience? Why is it so important to differentiate and say, no, no, no, that's not how I experienced it.

Florian Kunert: Because the collective memory of the GDR, the voice of the public in Germany is a very negative one. It points out the military aspect of the GDR that it was a dictatorship that imprisoned people and the Stasi that was wiring all the apartments, listening to people and this aspect. Which is true, but it's not the dominant narrative of most of the people who lived in the GDR and especially people in the valley of the people who don't know because they were further removed from Western counter stories of the GDR, having very happy memories thinking back to the GDR. And now they want to reject this collective identity of the GDR because it's not conform with their's, and it actually is hurtful probably to them.

Poh Lin Lee: But to reject it means also to dismiss any harm?

Florian Kunert: Done to themselves, what would it mean to them? To acknowledge, maybe there was an underbelly that I just was not aware of while I lived in the GDR. Maybe there was something going on and maybe things I did meant also something else which they were not aware of or not aware of until now. And this is the revolution 89 that didn't happen. Which is a inner revolution of acknowledging, something that I thought was a certain way is maybe another way. And the country did this because suddenly this country is another country, and everything has changed but the very people themselves didn't have to do this to be part of the new country. So this is what I was very interested in to address. What are those things that led to people having happy memories about that from today's perspective carry a very different meaning at the same time. And when you hear the participants talking about military camps and the way it was a cool class outing, the coolest thing to do. The defensive tone everybody takes on talking about those things is the way the film works you know. In this defensiveness, in the tone, in the way they describe their memories, you can see that there is a misunderstanding or that there is a process missing.

Poh Lin Lee: Ot that there's something at stake. There is something very valuable that they are concerned is at risk. If there's good memories dispelled or proven otherwise. Do you know what I mean when I say that?

Florian Kunert: For them there is a lot at risk.

Poh Lin Lee: That's what I mean, yes.

Florian Kunert: It makes sense that they are defensive. I can so understand their defensiveness, you know, but it seems like the public German voice, the media did not understand the defensiveness. This is where I said, can't you see? And maybe I can see because I'm from there and I was born in this time and have a foot in both worlds. So this is where I as the transmitter of this or like maybe the legitimation of me as the principal researcher comes about, because I can understand both worlds at the same time.

Poh Lin Lee: Is there an image that comes to your mind as you describe that? Maybe that's why I'm the key researcher?

Florian Kunert: One image for example, when I watched the archived material of the GDR I had highly emotional responses. I was crying watching the wall coming down even though I don't have personal memory to this, I wasn't there. I mean I was there as a baby, actually.

Poh Lin Lee: That challenges the notion of it though, isn't it? Why is it more legitimate if you have lived the experience as opposed to it is within your culture?

Florian Kunert: This is one image that made me very aware of my own involvement and being able to feel in ways, my mother feels or the generation of my parents feels and that in some ways I'm part of this even though I'm the

next generation. But at the same time the kind of turn my life took, in terms of moving away from that area or more so getting as far away as possible from that area and now having troubles to go back because I find it suffocating shows that I have built a very different reality for myself outside of this conditioning. And these are the two things that live inside of me that I'm negotiating during the filming process.

Poh Lin Lee: Is that the thing that you're pushing against in this inquiry?

Florian Kunert: Yes. This thing that I was pushing against is this conditioning that I carry and that is a reality for me as well.

Poh Lin Lee: Well, it sounds like a physical legacy.

Florian Kunert: Yes, it is.

Poh Lin Lee: That you carry...

Florian Kunert: It is something that feels like I lived through even though I don't have a single memory to put it to, but that's why reading the history, reading those books, looking at the archive was so beneficial because there are the memories, there are the images. There are the images that are missing for me.

Poh Lin Lee: It's like you have the sensation without the image, is it like that?

Florian Kunert: Exactly. I had the same sensation, the same anger, the same frustration or fear, but there was no images to put them towards to.

Poh Lin Lee: Or memory or experience to pin them to.

Florian Kunert: That's why I was obsessively watching GDR archive because there were the images that I was needing to find an answer to those sensations.

Poh Lin Lee: I'm aware that we're going to have to start finishing up which is really disappointing because this is such an interesting conversation. But Flo as you are talking, I almost had this sense that another thing that legitimises your position as the key researcher is that it challenges the notion that you have to have physically lived through something, to have a legitimacy to hold particular experience and memory.

Florian Kunert: But even after you did this, the problem with the GDR is that it is not legitimized, its abuse. Because the public response is always "What do you want? It was a normal life we lived..." It's played down the whole time because it's not an obvious trauma like a physical abuse. It was so much more subtle the trauma. This is what makes it double confusing because then you think you go in this direction and then people just don't know what you're talking about. They're like, "what do you mean? This is just sounds normal to me. We did the same in West Germany...", but it is so hard to grab the GDR and the way it passed on trauma, because it did it in very subtle and very cunning ways.

Poh Lin Lee: And so in some ways it sounds like it needed a really different type of methodology to research it.

Florian Kunert: I think so. I think definitely that led to the experiment it has become.

Poh Lin Lee: Let alone Syrians and people who were part of Progress. It makes sense now as we talk. Otherwise it would have very easily cottoned on to what you were trying to research and slithered away somehow.

Florian Kunert: Yeah it definitely needed some impacts to shake up existing structures...