

Checkpoint Charlie: The Changing Values of a Cold War Heritage Icon

WROCAH funded Collaborative Doctoral Award between Department of Archaeology, University of York and Stiftung Berliner Mauer (The Berlin Wall Foundation)



Lead Academic and Partner Organisation Supervisors

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Project summary

Working with previously unresearched archives, this collaborative PhD will: 1) **define** the values that people and authorities have attached to Berlin's iconic Checkpoint Charlie over the past 60 years; 2) **investigate** the site's changing role in understanding Cold War Berlin's cultural significance in a fast-changing city; then 3) **create** new guidelines for the future management of similar heritage sites whose values are fluid and contested. This project builds on SCHOFIELD's previous work on Cold War Berlin, his research interest in heritage values and his previous collaborations with KLAUSMEIER and Stiftung Berliner Mauer.

PhD Project description

What is the Project About?

Values are central to debates around heritage significance, informing heritage protection and planning decisions. Yet values are often contested and change over time. Nowhere are these two factors more evident than at the Berlin Wall whether it survives as fragment, void or memory. This timely and collaborative project will use previously unresearched heritage archives combined with interviews to **analyse** changing views of the Wall over the past 60 years and



examine the implications of this fluidity for future management of this and other contested heritage sites, not least in the UK..

Originality and Importance

Sixty years ago, American and Soviet tanks faced-off at Checkpoint Charlie, and the Cold War nearly became reality. The Berlin Wall (of which Checkpoint Charlie forms a significant part) stands as a globally-known and iconic example of contested heritage. Yet a deep analysis of its changing cultural (including local) significance has never been undertaken. As well as being highly original, the project is also timely. Proposed developments at Checkpoint Charlie, including a major new memorial site with a Cold War exhibit managed by Stiftung Berliner Mauer, are throwing the global cultural significance of this event, and of the site at which it occurred, into sharp focus.

Research Questions

1. How have heritage values relating to Checkpoint Charlie and the Berlin Wall changed over the past 60 years, as the Wall transitioned from lived experience into memory?
2. How can a deep understanding of values help shape the site's future management and draw consensus from a divided past?
3. Do authorised views of the site correspond with or contradict those held by citizens; and,
4. To what extent do these locally-held views vary between communities, recognising that a young and multicultural generation now exists within Berlin?

Research Scope and Methods

To address these questions, the project will draw on archives and conduct interviews and opinion surveys resulting in qualitative data. The previously unresearched archives will include: conservation archives within Berlin's Landesdenkmalamt; the Federal Archives of Germany, including the East German Stasi archive; and the Berlin State Archive. Combined, the two sources will help determine changing professional and public attitudes to an iconic heritage location over time.

Legacy

Outcomes of this project will include: 1) academic and web-based publications; 2) good practice guidelines on the assessment of contested heritage sites; and 3) a lasting relationship between the academic and industry partner as its plans for a new museum at Checkpoint Charlie come to fruition over the next decade.

About the Stiftung Berliner Mauer (The Berlin Wall Foundation)

The Stiftung Berliner Mauer (or [Berlin Wall Foundation](#)) was established by Statute in 2008 with the purpose of documenting and providing information about the history of the Berlin

Wall and mass migration from the German Democratic Republic as a contributory factor of the German division and the East–West conflict. It also aims to preserve historic sites and authentic remains and to provide for a dignified commemoration of the Wall's victims.

The Foundation manages several historic sites while curating a significant collection of historic objects, literature, historic photographs and archival material. It also owns an impressive collection of interviews with contemporary witnesses that describe the often tragic history of the people who suffered from the Wall. The Stiftung Berliner Mauer therefore has the dual aims of: 1) collecting the memories of people who were affected by the history of the Wall and making them accessible to the public; and 2) understanding the values attached by people to the Wall and its associated sites and artefacts. The first of these aims has been well covered since the Foundation was created in 2008. The second aim is equally important but has so far received less attention. By studying the values people have attached to one of the Wall's iconic monuments and how these values have changed, the studentship will help develop this understanding.

Every year, 4 million people from around the world visit Checkpoint Charlie, searching for it and for the Berlin Wall. But hardly any physical historical traces remain. The GDR border crossing and the border installations have almost completely disappeared from the landscape. Only the control cabin of the Western Allies and the sector sign can still be seen, and both are reconstructions. Nevertheless, attendance remains high.

Since 2016, Stiftung Berliner Mauer has been preparing a new memorial site and museum at the former Checkpoint Charlie on behalf of the State of Berlin. The aim is to create an attractive, modern and inclusive memorial site at Checkpoint Charlie. The conceptual considerations for the site, including the exhibition, and its implementation will benefit greatly from this research.

Engagement, outreach, dissemination and impact initiatives

The student will support Stiftung Berliner Mauer in terms of its public engagement and impact role, by:

- generating new data that will form an essential baseline from which future decisions (e.g. in the area of audience analysis/development) will be taken;
- publishing results of the research on the website (and social media channels) of Stiftung Berliner Mauer alongside academic publications;
- providing information that will influence the concept for the memorial site and its exhibitions and be incorporated into them;
- presenting and discussing the research in various workshops, for example with members of the 'Zentrum Kalter Krieg' association, a coalition of scholars who are advocating for a Cold War Museum at Checkpoint Charlie, at the Cultural Heritage Centre - Brandenburg University of Technology in Cottbus, and at conferences and symposia on cultures of remembrance, heritage and dealing with historic sites;
- presenting the results at a public event organized by Stiftung Berliner Mauer.

Financial support

Studentships for doctoral research are 40 months in duration for full-time study. Awards are subject to satisfactory academic progress. Awards must be taken up in October 2022; no deferrals are possible. Awards will comprise fees at Research Council rates and a maintenance grant (£15,609 in 2021/22). The grant pays the fees at the Home/UK rate; international students are, however, eligible to apply for this Studentship and the difference between the Home/UK and International fee will be met by the University of York for a successful international applicant. Awards may be taken up on a part-time basis if a student is eligible to undertake part-time study; international applicants may be required to study full-time by the terms of their visa.

Qualifications

Applicants must have a good first degree and a good Masters degree (ideally with Distinction) in subjects related to heritage studies. Such subjects might include (but are not confined to): Archaeology, Geography, History, Public History, History of Art, Sociology. A strong candidate is also likely to have some relevant work experience in the heritage sector. The successful candidate must be highly proficient and ideally fluent in German.

Requirements of the Studentship

WRoCAH students are required to undertake a bespoke training package and to complete a Researcher Employability Project of at least a month, a Knowledge Exchange Project, and to engage with Internationalisation.

All WRoCAH students must submit their thesis for examination with the funded period. This is a requirement of the Arts & Humanities Research Council, which provides the funding for WRoCAH, and is a condition of accepting a Studentship.

Before applying for any WRoCAH Studentship, please first ensure that you have read the WRoCAH webpages about the WRoCAH training programme and requirements, as well as other funding opportunities

<http://wrocah.ac.uk/>

How to apply

By 5pm Wednesday 9 March 2022, applicants are required to submit to WRoCAH an Expression of Interest, which should include:

1. A CV with details of academic qualifications
2. A covering letter comprising a two-page statement to convey your motivation and enthusiasm for the project, and to demonstrate your suitability for your intended PhD studies with the University and Project Partner.

The covering letter should specifically highlight the following:

- Your interest in the project and details on why you have chosen that University and Project Partner.
 - How you will apply your current skills, knowledge and experience to undertake a PhD and the approach you would take to develop the project.
 - How the project fits into your career plans and ambitions.
- **16 March 2022: decision on short-listing**
The short-list of candidates to be invited for an interview will be announced on Wednesday 16 March 2022. *Short-listed candidates must complete a PhD programme application before interview.* If you are short-listed for an interview you will be sent details of how to apply for a place at the University of York. At that point you will need to submit the names and contact details of two referees, copies of transcripts of your academic qualifications and (if applicable) an IELTS certificate.
 - **w/c 11 April 2022: interviews**

Interviews will involve the academic supervisor, Project Partner supervisor and a member of the WRoCAH Studentships Committee. They will be conducted online.

For more information about this project contact

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