



Interviewing contemporary witnesses

“The Fall of the Wall – my first time on the other side”

The following ideas were used as a template for the online workshop “Interviewing contemporary witnesses” done on 25th February 2021 and hosted by Kulturring. The Berlin team prepared a set of general questions to get started. Part of the online workshop was that European shifting walls partners interviewed Berliners who experienced the fall of the wall from either East or West side. shifting walls partners and Berliner formed small groups, collected more specific questions and then spent time to hear from the contemporary witnesses what they had to say. Finally, there was time to relate the Berlin stories to experiences in other European countries in an open discussion.

The goal of the workshop:

- How can history be told through contemporary witnesses?
- How can you ask “good” questions? (how can we get good historical content)
- How can we create empathy within young people for historical content?
- How can the outcomes of interviews be placed in a wider perspective of history representation and learning

1. General questions go get started

First block: General questions

1. When and where were you born?
2. Where were you when the wall fell in autumn 1989?
3. What was your first thought / your first feeling when you heard about it?
4. For which personal experience was the fall of the wall worthwhile?
5. Which experience after the fall of the Berlin Wall would you have liked to do without?

Second block: Connection with your neighbourhood

6. Since when have you lived in Berlin? Since when have you been in the district of Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg?
7. What were the first changes in the district?
8. How did you get to know the people "from the other side"?
9. What has changed the most for you in the district in the last years? (Neighbours, stores, clubs, pubs, architecture, special places, moods, ..)
10. What are your favourite places in the borough?

2. Further questions collected in the workshop teams

Team 1

- When and where you did you hear about the fall of the wall?
- What did you do in that night?
- What did you do the next day after?
- About what were you mostly curious?
- What was your first impression when you passed the wall? (What was your first impression on the other side?)

Team 2

- What was the first thing you bought?
- Were you afraid (for yourself or your family > feelings)?
- What were your feelings (more happy or rather stressed)?
- What surprised you most?
- What was different from what you imagined?
- How was for you?
- Who was the first person you talked to on the other side?
- What was in your bag?
- Did you ever think of going to the other side and never come back?
- What do you regret?

Team 3

- What do you see around you? (Describe the scene - streets, buildings, people, events, ..)
- Was it the way you had imagined it? Any better, any worse?
- How did this moment of suddenly seeing compare to your imaginations you had for a long time?
- Any anecdotes that you remember? Personal anecdote, one that you do not normally read in history books?

