

Localising liberty: Freedom in the British world, 1660–1760

Exploring the local history of constitutional principles between Britain's civil wars

Projektbericht

Freedom has been the cardinal principle of Britain's political and imperial ideology since the Middle Ages. Despite the failure of England/Britain to live up to this principle – most notoriously in the case of transatlantic slavery – it was the cornerstone of a rich trans-imperial culture.

But how was freedom perceived and enacted on the ground, by individuals in their particular localities? Were their activities and discussions all as uniform as this imperial culture of liberty, or did they differ widely from place to place? What local factors lay behind these similarities and/or differences?

This project explores these questions in four urban cultures in Britain's Atlantic empire during the period that spanned two British civil wars: that in Britain and another in America that soon became a war of independence. Looking at freedom within Bristol, Cork, Glasgow and New York City reveals that across a range of different registers of freedom – economic, political, individual, and

religious – the canonical texts, authors, and principles of British liberty were constantly invoked and mobilised in local controversies. But it also reveals that the meanings of these wider references were often markedly different, depending on local contexts: the varied economic and political structures, confessional mix, and cultural heritages of each city strongly influenced how liberty was interpreted and acted upon. Religious toleration (particularly of Catholics); forced naval recruitment; trading and economic restrictions; censorship of print, stage, and speech; and (popular) political participation are amongst the topics addressed in this project, which offers a fresh perspective on the political and ideological struggles of the century prior to the final breach with America.

Project report

Over the course of my Junior Fellowship at the Alfried Krupp Wissenschaftskolleg, I engaged in a wide range of activities. My time was primarily devoted to researching various aspects of my project, but I also prepared for and attended conferences, drafted and edited several publications, worked as a peer-reviewer, participated in a number of events at the Kolleg, provided guidance



Dr. Andrew Wells war von Oktober 2018 bis September 2019 Alfried Krupp Junior Fellow. Er ist Geschichtswissenschaftler.

Andrew Wells completed his doctorate at the University of Oxford and has held teaching and research positions at the Universities of Edinburgh and Göttingen. He has published chapters in several books and peer-reviewed journals, including *History of European Ideas*, *History Compass*, and the *Journal of British Studies*. He is the co-ed-

itor with Sarah Cockram of *Interspecies Interactions: Animals and Humans Between the Middle Ages and Modernity* (Routledge, 2018) and his first book, *Generating Difference: Race and the Reproductive Body in the British Empire, 1660–1840* is currently under review with Johns Hopkins University Press.

Kurzvita

» Freedom's Parish: Liberty in the urban British Atlantic, 1660–1760

This project examines the range of ideas associated with 'liberty' and 'freedom' in four cities across the British Atlantic world (Bristol, Cork, Glasgow, and New York) in the century before the American revolution. It aims to recapture the meanings encapsulated by the terms 'liberty' and 'freedom' both within and shared/disputed between these cities, which all had important commercial, intellectual, and political ties. It focuses on four key aspects of liberty – economic, individual, political, and religious – to highlight the importance of localities in shaping wider

discourses of freedom. Local cultures, concerns, memories, politics, people, and spaces all played an important role in developing urban cultures of liberty, which could exert profound influence on other territories within and beyond the British empire, often with breathtaking speed. Using a range of sources and methodologies, from exploring material culture to interrogating linguistic corpora, 'Localising Liberty' demonstrates the deep and reciprocal impact of (spatial) contexts and ideas.

Fellow-Projekt

and assistance to other fellows and students of the Universität Greifswald, and applied for academic jobs and further research funding. The following paragraphs describe these varied activities in greater detail.

Research on 'Localising liberty'

I spent the vast majority of my time working on my Habilitation project, and I have made substantial progress developing this study in a number of different directions. I began to work on the topic of freedom and memory in the British Atlantic world soon after commencing my fellowship. My work on this theme stems partly from a summer school I organised at the Georg-August-Universität Göttingen in 2017, which I am consolidating by editing a special issue of the journal *History & Memory* that contains contributions from the summer school's participants. It is also linked to a conference paper I gave in Kraków in October 2018, on the role of freedom in the memory of the English Civil Wars. In this paper and in my work on the topic conducted at Greifswald, I examined the most important history of the wars to be published before the twentieth century, the Earl of Clarendon's *History of the Rebellion* (1702-4), and explored the political and cultural context of its publication. Appearing during the 'rage of party' in Queen Anne's reign (1702-14), the *History* deployed a number of different – and occasionally contradictory – approaches to liberty. To disentangle his thinking on freedom, I examine Clarendon's *History* alongside a polemic he later wrote against one of the seventeenth century's leading thinkers on freedom, Thomas Hobbes, which highlights those aspects of liberty/freedom that were most fundamental for Clarendon. My own contribution to the special issue under my editorship and a significant portion of my Habilitationsschrift (particularly the chapters in which I outline

broader discourses of liberty and freedom before moving to examine urban centres in depth) are both based substantially on this work.

A second crucial topic on which I worked while in Greifswald was on freedom and space. My work on this theme was broad, relating to all of the cities I am investigating, and one part of this research culminated in a conference paper I gave at the "International Congress on the Enlightenment" held in Edinburgh in July 2019. This paper connected the broader set of discourses concerning liberty and freedom (particularly the changing ideas of John Locke) with local circumstances, highlighting the paradoxes of freedom in British imperial urban centres that closely guarded the rights of the citizens yet were heavily involved in transatlantic slavery.

My research extended beyond Locke's meditations on land, property, and freedom to include his discussions of religious toleration, including the latest research on his views about tolerating catholicism, which is of profound importance for my treatment of Cork.

I read widely in the primary and secondary literature on this topic while at the Kolleg, and have examined the experiences of both catholics and quakers in Britain, Ireland, and America from the mid-seventeenth century, and their experiences of persecution in the cities under investigation.

While at the Kolleg I also worked on the issue of sexual freedom, a topic that is related to the issue of religious persecution/

toleration in particular urban spaces. My work here concentrated on two specific cases: the emergence and spread of "Societies for the Reformation of Manners" in Bristol, Edinburgh, London, and elsewhere; and the prosecution of the Scottish clergyman Rev. Daniel Maclachlan for blasphemous libel in 1735-36. Maclachlan had published a book, *An Essay Upon Improving and Adding to the Strength of Great Britain and Ireland by Fornication* (London and Dublin, 1735), in which he argued on the basis of scripture and natural law that extra- and pre-marital sexual intercourse could be justified, not least because of the positive social benefits (principally, a larger population) that it would bring. His case highlights significant differences in Scottish and English legal, religious, and moral culture at a time when sexual attitudes were arguably becoming more liberal. The "Societies for the Reformation of Manners", on the other hand, demonstrate the shared moral fabric of urban centres in Britain just prior to the union of 1707. They were an outgrowth of the 'godly revolution' of 1688/89 and encapsulated a common set of goals while manifesting particular local differences (such as the socio-economic background of their membership or the tactics used to bring offenders to justice). The research I undertook on the case of Daniel Maclachlan was written up as a paper delivered to the "6th Colloquium on Crime and Criminal Justice in the Modern Era", held in Heppenheim in September 2019.

A final key theme of my Habilitation research at the Kolleg dealt with medical freedom, in particular concerning inoculation/vaccination and quarantine. I had already undertaken some work on the history of inoculation as part of my first book and for a paper delivered at the University of Tübingen just prior to commencing my Junior Fellowship

in Greifswald. I extended this work to examine debates on the legitimacy of compulsory inoculation in Britain, which occurred as quarantine measures were introduced in a systematic fashion for the first time.

These issues, which relate strongly to eighteenth-century transformations in concepts of public health (and which have been more thoroughly explored in German-speaking Europe), highlight the range of issues surrounding individual liberty and the safety of the community that came to be expressed in newer forms in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, even though public health measures were of greater antiquity.

My research has underlined the conclusion that medical freedom in Britain became a more contested issue over the course of my period, not least because it was closely bound to issues of class and social status. I also presented this work in a paper presented to the Kolloquium „Zirkulation und Kontrolle: Dynamiken des 18. Jahrhunderts" held at the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel in September 2019.

Conferences

Over the course of my fellowship, I attended several conferences, colloquia, and gatherings beyond those already mentioned. In one of these (*Britisch-Deutsche Wissenschaftsgeschichte(n)*, TU Chemnitz, 9.5.2019), I presented research that I also undertook at Greifswald, which was not immediately related to my Habilitation. In this paper, I examined the part played in racial thought by a previously unnoticed interlocutor, the Manches-



Details of all academic gatherings in which I participated during the period of my fellowship are as follows:

25–27.10.2018. International conference: *Aftermath: The Fall and the Rise After the Event* (Jagiellonian University, Kraków, Poland). Delivered Paper: "Reassessing Freedom in the Aftermath of Revolution: Liberty and Clarendon's *History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England* (1702–4)."

26.1.2019. Meeting of Arbeitskreis Cultural Studies des deutschen Anglistenverbands (Universität Leipzig).

9.5.2019. Day conference: *Britisch-deutsche Wissenschaftsgeschichte(n)* (Technische Universität Chemnitz). Delivered Paper: "Mediating Racial Theory Between Britain and Germany, 1790–1800: The Case of Edward Holme (1770–1847)."

30.5–2.6.2019. International conference: *Postcolonial Oceans: Joint Annual Conference of the Gesellschaft für Anglophone Postkoloniale Studien and International Association for Colonial and Postcolonial Linguistics* (Universität Bremen).

22.6.2019. Meeting of Arbeitskreis Cultural Studies des deutschen Anglistenverbands (Humboldt Universität zu Berlin).

14–19.7.2019. Quadrennial international congress: *Enlightenment Identities: 15th ISECS International Congress on the Enlightenment* (University of Edinburgh, UK). Delivered Paper: "Freedom, Space, and Identity: Liberty and Locality in the Early British Enlightenment." September 2019

5–6.9.2019. International conference: *Zirkulation und Kontrolle. Dynamiken des 18. Jahrhunderts: Jahrestagung der Deutschen Gesellschaft zur Erforschung*

ter physician Edward Holme (1770–1847). Holme translated portions of a German work, Samuel Thomas Sömmerring's *Über die körperliche Verschiedenheit des Negers vom Europäer* (1785), for the benefit of his older colleague, Charles White (1728–1813), who incorporated this translation as an appendix in his own *Account of the Regular Gradation in Man* (1799). Holme, who had strong abolitionist and anti-racist credentials, nevertheless facilitated the communication of racist ideas to a racist colleague, a move that contributed to justifying the perpetuation of slavery in the antebellum United States. I argued that Holme's activities were motivated by a (misplaced) sense of collegiality and politeness, and used his case to highlight the importance of such go-betweens in the emergence of modern racial thought.

des 18. Jahrhunderts (Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel). Delivered Paper: "Quarantäne, Impfung und medizinische Freiheit in Großbritannien, 1700–1840."

19–21.9.2019. Conference: *Konkurrenzen: 13. Arbeitstagung der Arbeitsgemeinschaft „Frühe Neuzeit“ im Verband der Historiker und Historikerinnen Deutschlands* (Universität Rostock).

23–25.9.2019. Colloquium: *Kriminalität, Justiz und Eliten: 6. Kolloquium zu Kriminalität und Strafjustiz in der Neuzeit* (Akademie für politische und soziale Bildung der Diözese Mainz, Heppenheim). Delivered Paper: "A Man of Conviction: Rev. Daniel MacLachlan's Printed Defence of Fornication and his Prosecution for Blasphemous Libel, 1735–36."

Publications

The chief publication that will appear in due course in connection with my fellowship is my Habilitationsschrift, which I aim to submit to Cambridge University Press in 2021 for publication under the title, *Freedom's Parish: Liberty in the Urban British Atlantic, 1660–1760* following the completion of my Habilitationsverfahren

In addition, I completed, submitted, and revised four publications over the course of my fellowship in Greifswald:

- Andrew Wells, 'Impfung, Quarantäne und medizinische Freiheit in Großbritannien, 1700–1840', in Marian Füssel (Hg.), *Zirkulation und Kontrolle: Dynamiken des 18. Jahrhunderts* (forthcoming).
- Andrew Wells, 'Humans', in Sarah Toulalan (ed.), *Early Modern Bodies* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2021 [in preparation]).
- Andrew Wells (ed.), *Global Early Modern Memory*, special issue of *History & Memory* (in preparation). 2 pieces: 'Introduction: Space, Place, and Remembrance in

the Early Modern World', and 'Memory and the Making of Freedom in the Urban British Atlantic, 1660–1760' [in preparation].

- Andrew Wells, 'The Limits of Toleration: Defending Fornication in Eighteenth-Century Britain', *History Workshop Journal* [to be submitted May 2020].

Other Activities at Greifswald

One of the most enjoyable aspects of my time at Greifswald was the opportunity to get to know and work with other fellows, academics, and students at the Kolleg and university. Beyond my individual fellow lecture, delivered on 14 November 2018, I took advantage of the full programme of events offered at the Kolleg and university to learn, meet and discuss with colleagues and scholars from a range of disciplines. I have formed close ties with, among others, Prof. Dr. Michael North and participated in the activities of the Interdisziplinäres Forschungszentrum Ostseeraum. Concerning my relations with other fellows, I worked with Dr. Matthias Bähr to prepare a successful application for a Sektion at this year's Historikertag in Munich. As a native English speaker, I was able to provide linguistic support for other fellows, such as Prof. Diop and Prof. Lorenz. For example, Prof. Lorenz and I translated one another's papers for conferences held in English and German. Intellectual exchange with these and other fellows (particularly Profs. Esser, Geißel, Plamper, and Zabel) has enhanced my scholarship substantially (Abb. 2), and I am especially grateful to have had the opportunity to discuss with such a gifted group of colleagues. I was able to offer assistance to members of the "Junges Kolleg" in the form of a consultation on the British university system for those seeking further study or a stay abroad in the UK. The social activities we undertook at the Kolleg were



Abb 2.: Fellows beim gemeinsamen Gedankenaustausch: Dr. Andrew Wells, Professorin Dr. Andrea Esser und Professor Dr. Matthias N. Lorenz (v.l.n.r.)

particularly pleasurable, such as the "Satire Night" I helped to inaugurate in response to a talk on TV news and current affairs given by Prof. Dr. Claus Kleber: the other fellows and I got together over some wine and nibbles to watch British and German TV satire, following up the talk in a relaxed atmosphere of cultural exchange.

Peer-Reviewing and Applications

A final aspect of my time in Greifswald involved working to enhance my academic

profile and to apply for further third-party funding and academic jobs. To this end, I worked as a peer-reviewer for the journal *Modern Intellectual History* and applied for a total of 12 jobs and 9 fellowships/scholarships during my fellowship year.

Andrew Wells, 'Imperial Political Economy and its Discontents in Colonial New York City, 1664-1763', *Amerikastudien*, 64/3 (2019).

Andrew Wells, 'Global Cities, Glocal Fauna: Animals and the Urban British Atlantic, 1660-1760', *Urban History* (Special Issue: Cities and Globalization in a Pre-Modern World) [forthcoming 2020].

Andrew Wells, 'Politeness and Prejudice: The Production, Reception, and Mediation of the Racial Thought of Charles White (1728-1813) and Samuel Thomas Sömmerring (1755-1830)', in Cecile Sandten and Marian Nebelin (Hgs.), *Britisch-deutsche Wissenschaftsgeschichte(n)* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, [forthcoming 2020]).

Andrew Wells, 'Conspicuous Classification: The Taxonomy and Exhibition of Animals in Early Modern Europe', in Brett Mizelle, Mieke Roscher and Aline Steinbrecher (eds.), *Handbook of Human-Animal Studies* (Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, [forthcoming 2021]).

Am Kolleg
entstandene
Veröffentlichungen