# '1968' in Context: Protest Movements in the 1960s

UTA HINZ

Gerard J. DeGroot, *The Sixties Unplugged. A Kaleidoscopic History of a Disorderly Decade* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 2008), 508 pp., $29.95 (hb), ISBN 9780674027862.

Norbert Frei, *1968: Jugendrevolte und globaler Protest* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 2008), 286 pp., €15.00 (pb), ISBN 9783423246538.

Martin Klimke and Joachim Scharloth, eds., *1968 in Europe. A History of Protest and Activism, 1956–77* (New York: Palgrave, 2008), 344 pp., $85.00 (hb), ISBN 9780230606197.

Michael Seidman, *The Imaginary Revolution: Parisian Students and Workers in 1968* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2004), 310 pp., $22.45 (pb), ISBN-10 1571816755.

The year 2008 marked the fortieth anniversary of the great revolts of 1968. As always, the occasion gave rise to impassioned debates. In Germany they were stimulated by the historian and 1968 veteran Götz Aly, who compared the 'sixty-eight' to the 'thirty-three' generations (the Nazi student body of the early 1930s), and postulated 'parallels in German history', continuities and 'similarities in the approach to mobilisation, political utopianism and the anti-bourgeois impulse'.[1] Following the thirtieth anniversary in 1998, which triggered a flood of scholarly publications,[2] we have had ten further years of research into the recent history of the 1960s, up to the

Heinrich-Heine-Universität, Max-Weber-Gesamtausgabe, Geb. 23.03.01 Raum 42, Universitätsstraße 1, 40225 Düsseldorf, Germany; uta.hinz@phil-fak.uni-duesseldorf.de

[1] Götz Aly, *Unser Kampf 1968 – ein irritierter Blick zurück*, 2nd edn (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2008), esp. 169–84 (quotations 185, 170–1). On the German debate, already launched in 2007, see, for example, Felix Dirsch, '"1968": Von der erlebten Zeitzeugenschaft zum Gegenstand der Historiographie? Eine Literaturauswahl in der Rückschau auf das Jubiläumsjahr 2008', *Zeitschrift für Politik*, 56, 1 (2009), 89–97 (esp. 88–9).

[2] From a comparative perspective, see: Ingrid Gilcher-Holtey, ed., *1968 – Vom Ereignis zum Gegenstand der Geschichtswissenschaft* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998); Arthur Marwick, *The Sixties. Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy and the United States, 1958–1974* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Carole Fink, Philipp Gassert and Detlef Junker, eds., *1968: The World Transformed* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

*Contemporary European History*, **20**, 2 (2011), pp. 233–242 © Cambridge University Press 2011
doi:10.1017/S0960777311000087

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777311000087 Published online by Cambridge University Press

fortieth anniversary in 2008. In 1998, the central question was still to remove the 1960s protest movements from the realm of myth and to establish the 'year of protest' (i.e. 1968) itself as a subject for historical research.[3] Since 1998, the aims of international research have been to develop a global comparative analysis of the movements and to contextualise them historically. Particular attention has been devoted to locating political protest movements in the overall process of socio-cultural transformation through the 'long 1960s'.[4]

This attempt at historicisation engendered a veritable flood of publications and conferences which has increased substantially since 2007.[5] The scope of the research has broadened from the traditional 'protest countries' of France, West Germany and the United States, even extending to states in the former Eastern bloc. The chronological perspective has also widened substantially, from the 1950s to well into the 1970s. Most importantly, the analysis of political protest movements has been closely related to questions of, and methods deriving from, cultural history. The relationship between protest and 'counter-culture' is being examined and contextualised amidst the profound socio-cultural transformations of post-war societies. Most recently, with increasing academic interest in personal histories, research has focused on memory and the politics of commemoration. The 'myth of 1968' has become a subject of historical research in its own right.[6]

Michael Seidman takes us outside the cultural framework outlined above with his *The Imaginary Revolution. Parisian Students and Workers in 1968*, a study of events in France in May 1968. Seidman assumes (p. 2) that society was undergoing a profound cultural revolution and asks how far the latter can be related to the May 1968 events. He concludes that a tendency towards cultural emancipation and participatory democracy also occurred in other states without the benefit of student–worker alliances (p. 8). Seidman examines continuities and discontinuities, negotiations and interactions, with the accent on events and political developments. His main focus is on forms of action, the interaction between students and workers (or their organised representatives), and governmental organisations; the main question is how far the student rebellion was connected with the great strike wave of 1968? In particular, Seidman gauges the government's loss of authority, and the extent to which governmental authorities were capable of reform and crisis management. It follows that he has little to say about the culture of protest, but goes into great detail about the

[3] Gilcher-Holtey, *1968: Vom Ereignis zum Gegenstand der Geschichtswissenschaft*.

[4] Thus, for example, Axel Schildt and Detlef Siegfried, 'Youth, Consumption, and Politics in the Age of Radical Change', in Axel Schildt and Detlef Siegfried, eds., *Between Marx and Coca-Cola. Youth Cultures in Changing European Societies, 1960–1980* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2006), 1–35; Angelika Ebbinghaus and Marcel van der Linden, '1968 – ein Blick auf die Protestbewegungen 40 Jahre danach', in Angelika Ebbinghaus, Marcel van der Linden and Max Henninger, eds., *1968 – ein Blick auf die Protestbewegungen 40 Jahre danach aus globaler Perspektive*, ITH-Tagungsberichte 43 (Leipzig: AVA, 2009), 7–20, esp. 7–8.

[5] See Philipp Gassert and Martin Klimke, '1968: From Revolt to Research', in Philipp Gassert and Martin Klimke, eds., *Memories and Legacies of a Global Revolt* (Washington, DC: GHI Bulletin Supplement, 2009), 5–22 (esp. 8).

[6] Gassert and Klimke, '1968: From Revolt to Research', 9, 17.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777311000087 Published online by Cambridge University Press

course of events before and during the great May wave of protest, drawing heavily on the recently opened police archives (p. 11). His introduction presents and synthesises his main arguments, stressing the evident potential for violence in the demonstrators on the Paris barricades in May 1968 (ibid.). He relates the workers' strikes to the tradition of French labour unrest (ibid.). Examining the governmental actors and their crisis management, he finds only a short interval of impotence, arguing that Georges Pompidou had achieved a degree of political stabilisation before Charles de Gaulle's declaration at the end of May, which is commonly seen as the turning point. Seidman argues that this stability was due in great part to the successful mobilisation of the hitherto unconsidered petty bourgeoisie (p. 12). He stresses throughout that the rebellious students' assaults on materialist values were not accepted by society at large (see, for example, p. 188).

Seidman attempts to set the protest in a historical context beginning well before 1968. After outlining demographic trends, the social structure of the French student body, and the political orientation of student groups, he discusses French education policy and the bitter sense of grievance it provoked in French universities. He devotes some attention to pre-1968 student protests, particularly those at Antony between 1963 and 1965 (pp. 37–42), tracing the roots of anti-authoritarian rebellion back well before 1968 (p. 37); the same applies to the government's approach to dealing with the demonstration, which remained the same in subsequent state–student conflicts. Seidman finds a structure of indecisiveness: repressive police action coupled with a certain willingness to make concessions on the part of governmental and political actors.

In his detailed account of events in 1968, Seidman stresses that the dispute in Paris escalated, and solidarity increased, in response to police brutality and indiscriminate arrests (pp. 94–6). Before that, however, he describes in detail how the crisis was aggravated by deliberate provocation on the part of radical student groups. His account of the May protests in Paris lays considerable stress on their violence and destructiveness: the 1968 barricades, he argues, were not merely improvised and defensive, as they had been in 1871. The violence – however restricted it may appear in historical perspective – was not perceived by either police or students as 'symbolic' (pp. 113–14). Seidman reiterates that the majority of the people arrested during those fevered May nights were not students; as the month wore on, ever more arrests were of young men from the *banlieues* (pp. 116, 183–4). Seidman sees the protests as riots, and at one point describes the protesters explicitly as well-organised hooligans (p. 185).

Seidman seeks to demolish the myth of a student–worker alliance. In addition to the oft-remarked fact that the unions exploited the government's temporary weakness in order to pursue the *material* interests of the workers, his detailed and meticulous account of the workers' strikes (pp. 161–214) demonstrates that wild-cat strikes were very much the exception, and that the strikes died away as soon as material concessions had been obtained: 'Wage earners were less interested in the destruction of property and more in its acquisition. Their desire to consume ultimately became a powerful force for social cohesion' (p. 161). Seidman concludes that the importance of demands

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777311000087 Published online by Cambridge University Press

for more democracy has been grossly overestimated not only by the movement's sympathisers but also by researchers. The notion of *autogestion* did not resonate very much with the majority of striking workers (p. 176).

To this extent, Seidman's revisionist account of May 1968, and his description of subsequent events in June ('The Spectacle of Order'), must be read as a riposte to those who would identify these developments as a (new) social movement:[7] rather than a coherent movement, he finds economic interests together with traditional political strategies which eventually triumphed. As an engine of reform in France, May 1968 has, in Seidman's view, been distinctly overestimated.

Gerard DeGroot's *The Sixties Unplugged. A Kaleidoscopic History of a Disorderly Decade* likewise begins with a plea for the clearance of ever-proliferating thickets of myth. His overview of the 1960s is international in scope, but the emphasis is clearly on American society. The approach is again revisionist, but stretches over the entire decade, combining political and cultural history. DeGroot argues that the entire decade has hitherto been mythologised, defined not so much through its historical context as through ideas that have congealed into ideologies (p. 1). The aim of his substantial monograph, he says, is radically to extend a hitherto incomplete and unbalanced picture (p. 2). DeGroot does not, however, discuss the myth-makers or the current state of research.

Rather, he invites us to undertake 'an impressionistic wandering through the landscape of a disorderly decade' (p. 3), embracing trends, events and personalities that are not usually visited in the course of a 1960s itinerary. Global political events, international cultural trends and protest movements are presented in no thematic, and only approximately chronological, order. Rather we are offered a kaleidoscope in which a new picture of reality emerges with every change of perspective. DeGroot leaves it to readers to draw their own conclusions – a posture which, together with his deliberate decision to dispense with a 'concrete thesis' or systematic line of argument (p. 3), is a striking feature of the book, but problematic in terms of methodology. Nonetheless, the 450 pages of this colourful and many-faceted portrait of the sixties are not devoid of pointed evaluations and arguments.

The kaleidoscopic journey begins at the end of the Second World War, reflecting a tendency towards the long-term integration of cultural change and forms of protest. DeGroot chooses Torgau, which gave its name to a historic military alliance, as the starting point for sketches of the political background of the cold war and anti-communism (pp. 6–10). He justifies this harking back to the Second World War on the grounds that it helped create the generation gap: young people had to distinguish themselves from the 'heroically sacrificial generation' of their parents (pp. 16–17). DeGroot's socio-cultural description of the baby-boomer generation, underpinned by demographic facts, plainly points to subsequent characterisations of the youthful 'counter-culture'. He shows us a generation which – the white middle-class part of it at least – grew up in a consumer-orientated society, cocooned in well-being,

[7] See especially, Ingrid Gilcher Holtey, 'May 1968 in France. The Rise and Fall of a New Social Movement', in Fink et al., *1968: The World Transformed*, 253–76.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777311000087 Published online by Cambridge University Press

against a recreated background of family relationships and gender roles (pp. 12–14). DeGroot extends this overall social context not just to the counter-cultural divide that had been apparent since the 1950s, but also to a new egocentricity which he stresses critically in widely differing cultural and political contexts. In accordance with this introductory argument, his wide-ranging evocation of youth cultures and youth lifestyles (subcultures, music, etc) aims to demythologise and complete the picture. His descriptions of the hippie culture show white middle-class youth moving towards a counter-culture of anti-capitalism and self-fulfilment, fun-seeking and egocentric; with a few exceptions, such as the 'Diggers', these youngsters had only a vague idea of engaging in any political or social programme (pp. 248–50, 301). DeGroot takes the 'yippies' as an example of media-centred demonstrations of a fusion between counter-culture and protest politics, which he categorises as crude event actionism that ultimately proved damaging to political protest (p. 266). He also considers that the historical picture needs to be extended to exhibit more than the activities of a rebellious, left-wing youth culture, using the ultra-conservative 'Young Americans for Freedom' group to indicate the ongoing existence (and political influence), throughout the libertarian sixties, of an opposite pole to the allegedly left-wing youth mainstream (pp. 244–7). This contrastive approach reappears under the heading 'Icons and Heroes', where DeGroot compares the glorified icons of political and cultural rebellion ('Che' and Mao, Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin and Jim Morrison) with largely forgotten personalities and their political, social and ecological programmes. Examples include Rachel Carson, and her fight against the industrial mass production of dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT) (pp. 111–13), and Cesar Chavez, with his struggle to obtain improved working conditions and political rights for Hispanic workers (pp. 274–80).

Similarly, the author classifies protest movements implicitly according to their political programmes (and degree of contact with reality) and to the forms of protest with which they attempted to implement such programmes. There is an exhaustive account of the development of the American citizens' rights movement and the other groups that split off from it. Naturally, the theme of student protest is central, and in this connection DeGroot is critical of revolutionary impulses among the leading student activists, taking 'free speech' to mark the precocious attainment of a 'golden moment of revolt' (p. 189): a protest kindled by the civil rights movement (CRM) which called for justice and freedom and rejected consumerism and conformism, but without seeking to overthrow the system itself. For DeGroot, more ambitious ideas (such as those of Tom Hayden), and attempts to create a mass movement opposed to the system, were nothing but pie in the sky (pp. 95–6). They did far less to mobilise the student body than did the determined and pragmatic struggles of the CRM. In this context the author is equally dismissive of both intellectual and actionist provocation and protest (pp. 342–5), on the grounds that they were mostly rejected by the population at large. Nor does DeGroot think that the growing anti-war feeling in the United States had much to do with student activists. He argues that although students were represented on the National Mobilization Committee to End the War (in Vietnam), they were not dominant (pp. 378–9), while at big demonstrations they

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777311000087 Published online by Cambridge University Press

were swamped by those who had no wide-ranging political aims but simply wanted an end to the war (pp. 380–1).

The scattered sections devoted to rebellion and protest in Europe apply the same basic classification: programmatically 'serious' protests versus the unrealistic, revolutionary and sometimes violent ego trips of young males. He sketches the West German student movement against the background of Germany's Nazi past (pp. 331–40). While finding a degree of ideological utopianism among the protagonists, however, he argues that the protesters did have understandable political motives: 'Because the young valued freedom and democracy, truth and justice, they found the presence of former Nazis in positions of power . . . especially galling' (pp. 332–3). On the other hand, his portrayal of May 1968 in Paris (which is remarkably similar to Seidman's) depicts an 'absurdist revolt' (p. 345) that has, until recently, been romanticised: the fighters on the barricades produced 'nothing but a very big mess' (p. 346). Unlike Seidman, however, DeGroot sees them as harmless children playing at revolution, seeking individual fulfilment and with little constructive to say about politics (pp. 349–54). Rather than the engine of a freer, more democratic society, he regards the Paris rebellion as the expression of a liberalisation that was hampered, rather than fostered, by the events of 1968.

All in all, DeGroot's account ranges very widely through political and cultural history, with an abundance of vivid description and acute comment. He ends by once again drawing attention to retrospective reinterpretation of the sixties as either a glorious history of the political left, or as a quasi-religious rediscovery of the decade, complete with gods, prophets and relics and rooted in a need for individual meaning and self-legitimation (pp. 448–9). Such interpretations ignore or suppress aspects of the decade that do not fit the political or cultural myth (pp. 449–50). However, his call for a historical reassessment is short on concrete suggestions for a desirable research strategy.

Norbert Frei's *1968: Jugendrevolte und globaler Protest* attempts a transnational and comparative categorisation of political protest. His principal objective is to achieve a synthesis of the existing research on protest movements in different countries. As we shall see, this clearly points to his own research background in West Germany's post-1945 *Vergangenheitspolitik*. Frei begins by considering movements in selected countries separately, insisting that his analysis will take due account of each particular national context. He supplements the traditional comparison between protest movements in the United States, France and West Germany with sidelong glances at other countries in Western and Eastern Europe, plus the protest movement in Japan. The focus, however, is on the 'formative' movements in the United States and, most particularly, the German Federal Republic. Frei strives to distinguish as clearly as possible between the defined aims of organised core groups and the more diffuse motives of their hangers-on (p. 37). For him, the counter-cultural atmosphere of the decade is inseparably enmeshed with political protest; however, his main focus is on the political consciousness of a particular generation.

The direction of the argument underlying Frei's historical categorisation of the 1968 revolts is clear from the opening chapter, 'In the Beginning was America'

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777311000087 Published online by Cambridge University Press

(pp. 31–75), in which he debates the specific structural problems of post-war American society. He stresses the evident awareness among the younger generation of contradictions between the political and social self-image of American society and the reality. The ideology of freedom and equality of opportunity was opposed to the generally unsolved problems of discrimination and, in the South, 'de-facto apartheid' (p. 32). At this point Frei establishes a first common element among the diverse protest movements of 1968: the existence of an 'unacknowledged social lie' (p. 32). He argues that the young generation in the United States was prompted to mobilise in the CRM by their perception, in the early 1960s, of a profound discrepancy between constitutional ideals and social practice (pp. 42–3) – along with a wish to really do something to further moral values and political aims (p. 37). Frei argues that the formula 'participatory democracy' should not be dismissed as the outcome of theoretical debate amongst a small group of master minds; rather it was the aspiration of large numbers of American youth. They, too, wanted to break free from a 'frozen' society (p. 48). The Vietnam war acted as a catalyst to the extension and differentiation of potential protests (pp. 50–1) by intensifying awareness of lies and moral ambiguity. Pictures in the media highlighted the ever-widening gap between the ideal of political freedom and the reality of American political practice.

Frei takes care to distinguish between political protest and the development of the youth counter-culture and non-conformist lifestyles, with due attention to their elements of hedonism and escapism. Like DeGroot, he draws attention to processes of mediatisation and commercialisation (pp. 57–63), but he is far more inclined than DeGroot to sympathise with the emotional outlook of the protest generation. He refuses to draw a line between the political and the non-political, between non-conformism, generalised refusal, and political protest. He sees even the hippie movement – however foggy its ideas – as a straightforward critique of the war (p. 59).

His detailed discussion of protest in the Federal Republic of Germany (pp. 77–151) begins with the anti-nuclear armaments protests that started in the late 1950s. This broad chronology, like his assessment of the relationship between political protest, rebellious youth culture and liberalisation in West Germany, is based on current research in 1960s history, which has been greatly extended in the last few years. He puts the transformation of culture and lifestyles in the context of long-term processes of socio-cultural transformation, already clearly perceptible before the political 'revolts' (p. 131). His view of the West German protests concentrates on the historical and political context, as is evident from his discussion of the anti-Vietnam war movements, which he unhesitatingly assigns to the transnational sphere: the protesters were clearly conscious of being part of a growing worldwide protest community (p. 109). However, Frei links the specific emotional burden of the protests, and their violence, directly to the Nazi antecedents of West German post-war society: a link which, in his opinion, has been too energetically played down by German historians and constitutes a decisive difference between the German experience and revolts in other Western democracies (p. 78). He stresses that the generation gap in the Federal Republic of Germany was exceptionally wide – the rebels were the 'children of repression' (p. 81) – citing in evidence the frequency in the protest culture of

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777311000087 Published online by Cambridge University Press

updated allusions to or evocations of past events (pp. 117, 144). He places subsequent terrorist manifestations in the same context, noting parallels in Italy and Japan, where the clashes also rested on 'a burden of past politics' and reached an intensity not to be found elsewhere (pp. 163, 186–7).

Frei sees little comparison between revolts in the West and protests in the Eastern bloc, which belonged to an entirely different sphere (p. 199). The Western protests, however, shared a common core despite all the differences he describes. This core was not confined to social structure – to a specific demographic situation in which emphatically youthful societies struggled to organise their demands – but was rather a global phenomenon: 1968 cannot, he argues, be understood without knowledge of its mental and intellectual context (p. 214–15). He lays particular stress on the 'different scales of values espoused by the pre-war and post-war young'. The latter had taken their fathers' demands – no more war, no more Fascism – quite literally (p. 159). Their intellectual leaders and their followers, wherever in the world they might be, were mobilised by a profound feeling of outrage and a conviction that they must take action for emancipation, participation and a better world (p. 216). Frei argues that the intensely *global* consciousness of this generation was the truly novel element in the protest movements of the 1960s (p. 210).

Transnational links among 1968 protest movements are central to the volume of essays edited by Martin Klimke and Joachim Scharloth, *1968 in Europe. A History of Protest and Activism, 1956–1977*. For them, the chronological scope of the 'age of protest' (p. vii) covers two decades, and they link the structure of events comprehensively to the cultural context. The central theme of the volume is the search for a European dimension to the protests and the thematic extension of their aftermath: not only the political impact, but also the politics of memory and the culture of commemoration. In other words, the book takes a decidedly transnational approach and follows the most recent trend of scholarship, as described above.

In their introduction, Klimke and Scharloth argue that too little attention has been paid to the specifically European dimension of the continent's protest movements and subcultures during the cold war (p. 2). They take Europe as a transnational microcosm of world politics, and also as a collection of sharply differentiated national societies and national experiences (in both West and East). It is these differences that provide an opportunity to analyse border-transcending cultures of political dissent (p. 2). Hence the book includes not only comparisons among a range of national protest movements but also a reconstruction of common or linking elements. The starting point is the activists' own awareness of transnationality, which, the editors argue, became a crucial motor of the whole movement (p. 2). The editors identify four particularly important aspects, beginning with the historical roots and cognitive orientation of the protest. In fact, they find a whole set of interlinked orientations among activists in the West: rejection of the cold war and its attendant anti-communism, and profound frustration with the apathy, materialism and competitive capitalism of society (p. 3). The second aspect relates to cross-border personal and institutional networks, which Klimke and Scharloth see as an essential factor in the European dimension of the protests. The main result of this networking was, thirdly, the rapid spread and exchange of forms

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777311000087 Published online by Cambridge University Press

of protest. Klimke and Scharloth stress the importance of forms of action borrowed from American protest movements, but adapted to the European experience (p. 5). Finally, another transnational aspect is the post-1960s globalisation of the alternative lifestyles and emotional dispositions of popular culture (pp. 6–7).

The book offers not only fifteen case studies of 1968 protests, in both Western and Eastern Europe, but also (in part 1) a study of their 'transnational roots'. The thematic breadth of the essays is striking, encompassing both political and cultural history: they range from the British New Left via the international peace movements to the music and emotions of the 1960s. Not all the studies stress the 'transnational'. Michael Frey, writing on the post-1945 peace movement (pp. 33–44), concludes that despite certain institutional interconnections, the movement as a whole was not strikingly international, although he sees some indications of transnationality in the reception of the new forms of direct action practised by radical American pacifists. In fact, he lays more stress on the transatlantic dimension than on intra-European connections, for example, between the British Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and the West German *Ostermarschbewegung*. By contrast, Niek Pas detects a European network behind the Dutch Provos, showing that their actions were not only widely reported in the European media, but were also imitated by Provo-inspired groups in, for example, West Germany (pp. 13–20). Detlef Siegfried convincingly demonstrates the spread of a rebellious 'global youth culture' in Europe and the existence of an international musical protest scene (pp. 57–70). Other links are discovered by Jakob Tanner, who, writing on the difficult subject of 'emotions', finds some of the dynamics of the 1968 movement in the interplay of new cognitive categories with a particularly emotional 'background noise' (p. 74). He maintains that 1968 cannot be fully understood without further investigation of emotional sensibilities, pointing, for example, to the awareness of global simultaneity and the feeling of total urgency that affected all activists everywhere. He also stresses the central role of the modern mass media (p. 77). He also finds an accentuation of transnational perspectives: the 'attitude of refusal', so fundamental to 1968, is also the quintessence of the Western European counter-culture and the New Left (p. 75).

The last contributor, Philipp Gassert, finds a political common factor along both the transatlantic and the Western European axis: the redefinition of politics itself by the New Left in response to economic and social change (pp. 311–12). Based on comparable social perceptions and intensive intellectual exchange, the New Left laid the foundations for a radically enlarged concept of democracy. The implicit demand for complete self-determination and participation found its way into the key texts of protest movements throughout Western Europe and in the United States (p. 313).

The single-country studies in part 2 are closely oriented on these defined transnational parameters. In almost every case there is a cross-border awareness, sometimes conveyed by the media but sometimes embodied in intensive reciprocal exchanges. Even when personal relationships or networks are described as being little affected by movements in neighbouring European states, there was an exchange of ideas and concepts through the mass media, or the movements' own means of communication (Holger Nehring, 'Great Britain', p. 131). International student

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777311000087 Published online by Cambridge University Press

conferences frequently served as loci of communication in Western Europe. Personal relationships are highlighted in the essays on France, Italy and West Germany; these movements, whose European networks were exceptionally strong, also had close transatlantic connections (Martin Klimke, 'West Germany', p. 106; Ingrid Gilcher-Holtey, 'France', pp. 119–20). Nicole Peter takes Switzerland as an example of the interesting topic of regional cross-border communication (p. 235). However, apart from the famously intense Western involvement in events in Prague, the political movements in Eastern Europe are distinctly different from those in the West. There was certainly some awareness of events across the Iron Curtain, and also some personal contacts (Jan Bauer, 'Czechoslovakia', p. 172; Timothy S. Brown, 'East Germany', p. 194); but it is repeatedly pointed out that both the political context and the orientation of the protests were very different (Stefan Garsztecki, 'Poland', p. 184). Yugoslavia, owing to its unique political context, was a special case (Boris Kanzleiter, pp. 219–28). Yugoslav students were extremely well informed about events and theories in the West, and they identified with student revolts in both West *and* East. One extraordinary example is the blockade of the West German embassy in Yugoslavia by Belgrade students in the night of 10/11 May 1968, as a token of solidarity with the West German students' struggle against the West German emergency laws (p. 224). The brief country sketches necessarily pass briefly over many points, and variously point to the still unsatisfactory state of research. The question of how far networks and relationships extended beyond mediatised exchange remains, to a considerable extent, unanswered: the country-by-country schema is somewhat of a hindrance here. Some more wide-ranging thematic essays, for example, on the international student conferences, would have been desirable.

The idea of including memory and the politics of commemoration is only patchily implemented in *1968 in Europe*. The country sketches contain few references to it. If there is an attempt to identify shared memories, it is (for Western Europe) in the narrative of cultural liberalisation, the shattering of authoritarian social structures (Klimke, 'West Germany', pp. 106–7; Jan Kurz and Marica Tolomelli, 'Italy', pp. 92–3). How this narrative was handed down to and received by succeeding generations remains an open question. Counter-movements and demarcations are also patchily treated. The real complexity of engagement with the 'heritage of 1968', even within a single group, is highlighted in Kristina Schulze's essay on the women's movement: there was some discussion within that movement as to whether it had developed from or against the 'spirit of 1968' (p. 290).

Despite these unanswered questions, this last book is a particularly good indication of the all-embracing perspective and varying methodology of current research into the protest and protest culture of the 1960s, and of attempts to determine their place in political, social and, especially, cultural history. What emerges most strikingly from a reading of all four of these works is how frequently the *myth* of 1968 and the challenge of grasping its political and social significance are still being taken as the thematic starting point for current research. All in all, the present sketch of the reception and commemoration of the protest movements points to these aspects as an outstandingly interesting and fruitful direction for research over the forthcoming decade.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777311000087 Published online by Cambridge University Press