PALGRAVE STUDIES IN THE HISTORY OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

A European Youth Revolt

European Perspectives on Youth Protest and Social Movements in the 1980s

Edited by
Knud Andresen
Bart van der Steen

Palgrave Studies in the History of Social Movements

Around the world, social movements have become legitimate, yet contested, actors in local, national and global politics and civil society, yet we still know relatively little about their longer histories and the trajectories of their development. This new series seeks to promote innovative historical research on the history of social movements in the modern period since around 1750. We bring together conceptually-informed studies that analyse labour movements, new social movements and other forms of protest from early modernity to the present. We conceive of "social movements" in the broadest possible sense, encompassing social formations that lie between formal organisations and mere protest events. We also offer a home for studies that systematically explore the political, social, economic and cultural conditions in which social movements can emerge. We are especially interested in transnational and global perspectives on the history of social movements, and in studies that engage critically and creatively with political, social and sociological theories in order to make historically grounded arguments about social movements. This new series seeks to offer innovative historical work on social movements, while also helping to historicise the concept of "social movement." It hopes to revitalise the conversation between historians and historical sociologists in analysing what Charles Tilly has called the "dynamics of contention."

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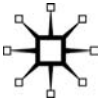

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Series Editors' Preface

Around the world, social movements have become legitimate, though contested, actors in local, national and global politics and in civil society, yet we still know relatively little about their longer histories and the trajectories of their development. Our series, *Palgrave Studies in the History of Social Movements*, is a response to what can be described as a recent boom in the research into social movements. We can observe a development from the crisis of labour history in the 1980s to the growth in research on social movements in the 2000s. The rise of historical inquiry into the development of civil society and the roles of strong civil societies as well as non-governmental organizations in stabilizing democratically constituted polities has strengthened the interest in social movements as a constituent element of those societies.

In different parts of the world, social movements continue to have a strong influence on contemporary politics. In Latin America, trade unions, labour parties and various left-of-centre civil society organizations have succeeded in supporting left-of-centre governments. In Europe, peace movements, ecological movements and alliances intent on campaigning against poverty and racial discrimination and discrimination on the basis of gender and sexual orientation have for decades been able to set important political agendas. Elsewhere, including Africa, India and Southeast Asia, social movements have played significant roles in various forms of community building and community politics. The contemporary political relevance of social movements has undoubtedly contributed to growing historical interest in the topic.

Contemporary historians are not only beginning to historicize these relatively recent political developments; they are also trying to relate them to a longer history of social movements, including traditional labour organizations, such as working-class parties and trade unions. In the longue durée, we recognize that social movements are by no means a recent phenomenon and are not even an exclusively modern phenomenon, although we realize that the onset of modernity emanating from Europe and North America across the wider world from the eighteenth century onwards marks an important departure point for the development of civil societies and social movements.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the dominance of national-history writing over all other forms of history writing led to a thorough nationalization of the historical sciences. Hence, social movements have been examined traditionally within the framework of the nation state. Only during the last two decades have historians begun to question the validity of such methodological nationalism and to explore the development of social movements in comparative, connective and transnational perspectives – taking into account processes of transfer, reception and adaptation. Whilst our series does not preclude work that is still being carried out within national frameworks (for, clearly, there is a place for such studies, given the historical importance of the nation state in history), we hope its books encourage comparative and transnational histories on social movements.

At the same time as historians have begun to research the history of those movements, a range of social theorists – from Jürgen Habermas to Pierre Bourdieu, and from Slavoj Žižek to Alain Badiou as well as from Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe to Miguel Abensour, to name but a few – have attempted to provide philosophical-cum-theoretical frameworks in which to place and contextualize the development of social movements. History has arguably been the most empirical of all the social and human sciences, but it will be necessary for historians to explore further to what extent these social theories can be helpful in guiding and framing the empirical work of the historian in making sense of the historical development of social movements. Hence, the current series is envisioned to make a contribution to the ongoing dialogue between social theory and the history of social movements.

This series is intended to promote innovative historical research on the history of social movements in the modern period since around 1750. We bring together conceptually informed studies that analyse labour movements, new social movements and other forms of protest from early modernity to the present. With this series, we seek to revive, within the context of historiographical developments since the 1970s, a conversation between historians on the one hand and sociologists, anthropologists and political scientists on the other.

Unlike most of the concepts and theories developed by social scientists, we do not see social movements as directly linked, a priori, to processes of social and cultural change and, therefore, do not adhere to a view that distinguishes between old (labour) and new (middle-class) social movements. Instead, we want to establish the concept 'social movement' as a heuristic device that allows historians of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to investigate social and political protests in novel settings. Our aim is

to historicize notions of social and political activism in order to highlight different notions of political and social protest – on both left and right.

Hence, we conceive of 'social movements' in the broadest possible sense, encompassing social formations that lie between formal organizations and merely protest events. But, in our understanding of social movements, we also include the processes of social and cultural change more generally, an approach that evokes nineteenth-century understandings of the term, social movement. We also offer a home for studies that systematically explore the political, social, economic and cultural conditions in which social movements emerge. We are especially interested in transnational and global perspectives on the history of social movements, and in studies that engage critically and creatively with political, social and sociological theories in order to make historically grounded arguments about these movements. In short, this series offers innovative historical work on social movements, while also helping to historicize the concept of 'social movement'. The series is also intended to revitalize the conversation between historians and historical sociologists in analysing what Charles Tilly has called the 'dynamics of contention'.

A European Youth Revolt, edited by Andresen and Van der Steen, questions whether the diverse urban protest movements of the 1980s can be summed up under the label of 'youth revolt'. Highlighting the internationalism of the networks of social movements in the 1980s, this volume seeks to identify a number of characteristics that united a set of highly diverse movements often seen, also by contemporary observers, as belonging together and forming one movement. Thus, these social movements were often characterized by an emphasis on subjectivity ('the personal is the political') and a desire to act within local contexts. Dismissive of formal politics and political parties, these movements sought to create autonomous political spaces of their own. Certain movements within a movement, especially the house-occupation movement, obtained prominent places and sometimes became the public face of that movement, which was, however, always broader than squatting. Overall, the volume underlines the European-wide repercussions of these protest movements, which even found echoes behind the Iron Curtain.

The diverse contributions in this volume are united by their highlighting how ideas and practices transcended national boundaries and how transnational protest networks emerged in the 1980s. Uniting the fields of culture and politics, this volume puts a spotlight on protest politics that was often strongly intertwined with youth politics and frequently had the hallmarks of a new youth movement. Europe, youth,

revolt and the 1980s, the four pillars of this book, uphold an edifice of scholarly investigation that is tantalizingly fresh and demonstrates the vitality of transdisciplinary research between social science and contemporary history. This volume is a house with many rooms, a number of which are designed quite differently. In a similar vein, its many inhabitants often differ drastically, and the overview presented here is at times quite kaleidoscopic. Nevertheless, the editors have been successful in assembling a volume that has an inner unity and showcases 1980s social and political protests as having common roots, strategies and self-understandings.

A European Youth Revolt begs comparison with that other major event of political protest, 1968, which has, of course also been framed in terms of a youth revolt. Unlike their father generation, the 'children of the 80s' – to quote the title of a Joan Baez song – were far more sceptical of political theory and, instead, emphasized the importance of political emotions. This no doubt included strategies of justifying militancy and violence, but overall direct action was seen as more important than theorizing about revolution. The political context of the 1960s could not have been more different from the political context of the 1980s. Whilst the former was characterized by boundless optimism for the manageability of the future, the latter was hinged uneasily between neoliberal pragmatism and the idea of a bleak future (the 'no future' generation). Nevertheless, in the realms of the urban imagination, the desire to appropriate urban spaces, the struggle against racism and the fight against nuclear weapons and atomic energy – as well as in movements seeking to problematize the category of 'disability' – we observe a strong desire among social protesters to work towards what they conceived of as a better world. Thus the impetus for societal change that had motivated the 68ers was still present in the diverse social protest movements of the 1980s.

Many of the contributors to this volume are particularly adept at linking aspects of culture with political protest. Thus, for example, Matthew Worley's chapter on punk is a prime example of the fruitfulness of examining the cultural forms of social protest more closely. Punk was politically ambiguous, although its mainstream was firmly on the left and aligned to various left-wing protest movements. It gave cultural meaning to the self-understanding and the self-images of protest in the 1980s, and it gave voice to a particular generation seeking to establish protest as a life form against the perceived accommodation of the mainstream to the here and now. Punk was therefore a cultural form that

contained (often-bleak) horizons of a different future that could serve as identification points for the protest cultures of the 1980s.

Finally, this volume is, above all, a timely reminder of the power of transnationalism and comparison in studies on social movements. International contacts played a vital role in making the protest movements of the 1980s identifiable across national borders and fostering a feeling of common transnational aims and practices. Scholars interested in making sense of the protest cultures of the 1980s need, therefore, to embark on comparative and transnational studies to reveal the many criss-crossing lines of communication that formed an invisible web across the European continent. Borders, even the Iron Curtain, were not able to stop that web from growing throughout the 1980s. This volume also indicates that a transnational approach might well be useful when looking at the other side – that is, the reaction of the authorities and those in power towards these social movements. Strategies of repression alternated with strategies of integration, but in both cases, the reactions of local and national governments were as transnational as the strategies of their opponents, i.e. the social movements. Hence, the book underlines the need for more transnational and comparative studies on the protest cultures of the 1980s.

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Knud Andresen and Bart van der Steen
Hamburg/Leiden, May 2015

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Introduction: The Last Insurrection? Youth, Revolts and Social Movements in the 1980s

Knud Andresen and Bart van der Steen

Youth Revolts in Europe, 1980–81

On 12 December 1980, police officers in the West Berlin borough of Kreuzberg prevented squatters from occupying an empty house on Fränkeluferstrasse. The police intervention escalated an already tense situation and sparked spontaneous demonstrations and riots that lasted more than two days. The cover photo of this book shows a scene from that first night: two police officers had left their van, guns drawn, to keep a group of demonstrators in check, but other protesters subsequently moved in and knocked over the police van. The West Berlin squatters soon named the episode the 'Battle of Fränkelufer', and the riots became the starting point of the West Berlin squatters' movement. Before the 'battle' the city counted 18 squatted buildings; by June 1981 that number had risen to 165.[1]

The public, politicians and journalists were above all shocked by the militancy of the protesters, who were obviously willing and able to defend their spaces with force.[2] Referring to the events of 1968, newspapers soon spoke of a 'second youth revolt', in which theatrically articulated but unattainable demands went hand in hand with specific goals, and 'movements of withdrawal' merged with overtly political scenes.[3] Thus, protesters in Zurich demanded that 'Greenland' be 'freed of the icepack', while at the same time struggling for an autonomous youth centre. In this youth centre, alternative youths, punks and drug users met, and clashed, with radical activists. And as a conglomerate of scenes, groups and individuals merged, the authorities struggled to comprehend the dimensions and aims of the new youth movement and devise strategies to control it.

The character of the new youth movement, moreover, was explicitly international. The presence of Amsterdam squatters in Berlin on 12 December seemed to confirm that the militancy of local activists was, at least in part, influenced by international developments.[4] In February and March 1980, Amsterdam had witnessed impressive squatter riots, and in May that same year, the Zurich movement had taken off.[5] Activist slogans such as 'Bremen – Zürich – Amsterdam, jetzt ist auch Hannover dran' (Bremen – Zurich – Amsterdam, now it's Hanover's turn) seemed to confirm the international aspect of this movement, but also ironically referred to the 1960s, when radicals had chanted: 'Paris – Rome – Berlin, we will fight, we will win'.[6] Notably, the new slogan not only signified changes in perspective, from revolutionary ideals and 'winning', to revolting and resistance as a goal in itself. It also articulated a change in geographic focus.

Indeed, it has often been claimed that the 'second youth revolt' was localized in the welfare states of Northwest Europe, more specifically West Germany, the Netherlands and Denmark. Switzerland and Austria could be included in this list as well.[7] The characteristics of this youth revolt were a focus on occupations and militant defence of squatted places, dismissal of political parties and political organizations, a renewed focus on the subjective aspect of politics (amongst others articulated through humour) and a focus on locality (the borough, the city).[8] At the same time, however, there is ample evidence suggesting an exchange of ideas, repertoires and mentalities throughout Europe. Punk, for example, was remarkably successful in transferring oppositional ideas and mentalities of non-cooperation beyond the Iron Curtain. Thus, punk rock became a lively youth subculture in Poland and Slovenia. French anti-racist activists in their turn adapted the Solidarność logo and thus appropriated it for their own movement. Amsterdam squatters travelled to Barcelona in 1980 to inform sympathizers about how to organize a squatters' movement. One Barcelona activist remembers: 'The squatter event marked a break in time. Their approach to personal life, the alternative occupation of flats[;] ... it was like water in the desert'.[9]

Is it possible to discern a shared attitude among protesting youths to the degree that one could even speak of a 'European Youth Revolt'? And, if so, how could this be characterized? How did ideas, mentalities and repertoires spread? These questions are central in this volume. To answer them, it is necessary to redirect our view to countries and cities that have previously received only little attention, and ask for the specific characteristics of revolt in these places. This volume therefore not only collects case studies from Germany and the Netherlands, but also from

Eastern Europe and Western European countries that are not commonly associated with the youth revolts of the early 1980s.

Initially, research on youth and youth revolts in the early 1980s was heavily influenced by sociological and political science approaches. On the one hand, social scientists aimed to understand the motives and dynamics of youth movements and their interactions with the state, while several governments initiated research projects that aimed instead to assess the extent to which these movements threatened public order and democratic structures.[10] More recently, the research focus has shifted to consumption patterns, emotions and mentalities.[11] In their recent volume, Hanno Balz and Jan-Henrik Friedrichs focused on protest cultures in Europe, as well as local contexts and developments.[12] To an extent, this present volume builds on that, but it focuses more on the politics of revolt, the interaction between politics and culture and how similar patterns and developments can be observed in different places throughout Europe. Taking youth and revolt as central analytical categories, it is based on local case studies, while at the same time asking for international contexts and interactions.

Revolting Europe

Four categories are central in this approach: Europe as a geographic unit; youth as a social and cultural concept; the notion of revolt; and the 1980s as a delimited era in European history. Starting with the geographical unit of focus and comparison, it is clear that Northwest Europe played a prominent role in the youth revolt of 1980–81, as is described above. But other countries in Western Europe also had to deal with unrest in these years. This was the case, for example, in postcolonial United Kingdom and France. There, it was mainly 'migrant' youths – the sons and daughters of workers from the former colonies, who had arrived in the 1950s and 1960s – who revolted against police brutality, discrimination and bleak social prospects. As such, these protests followed a different course. With fewer contacts and points of entry into institutionalized political bodies, these protests waned sooner – leaving behind a far more contested legacy than the squatters' movements, which were soon incorporated into the collective memory of the 1980s. These countries could be seen as the second region, where youth unrest shocked society.[13]

In Southern European countries, such as Spain, Greece and Italy, social movements were still recovering, either from the transition from dictatorship towards parliamentary democracy, or from the heavy handed repression of radical movements of the 1970s.[14] As traditional political

cleavages remained resilient, many radical youths organized in comparatively strong communist and socialist youth organizations or engaged in fierce conflicts with them.[15] Hard-hit by the economic crisis, and with fewer welfare measures to fall back on, youth saw little opportunity to revolt in the same way as in Northwest Europe.

In Eastern Europe, communist dictatorships left oppositional youth with even fewer possibilities of movement. In response, many of them were drawn to subcultures, such as punk, which proved to be less controllable by the authorities, thus leaving youths with a possibility to cautiously carve out some level of cultural autonomy.[16] With authorities oscillating between tolerance and repression, the youths had to do this by their own means. This was all the more so, because they had few commercial outlets, whilst in Western Europe punk and other subcultures were facilitated by growing interest from the music industry. In this volume, Grzegorz Piotrowski refers to this scene as the 'third circulation', stating: 'The term referred to publishing circulations under communist regimes, with the first circulation being the official one and the second being organized by the dissident sector'. But as the dissident sector still had some inroads into the music industry and could occasionally perform and record, the third circulation was nearly completely excluded and thus had to produce its records and publications through a 'do-it-yourself' means of production. Although in Eastern Europe there were fewer indications of youth unrest, and much less of a youth revolt, there were significant cultural and political similarities and transfers worth exploring. Ironically enough, it were the subcultural scenes that would later become pillars of the larger oppositional movement in Eastern Europe of the late 1980s.

This bird's-eye overview of the early 1980s draws a kaleidoscopic and fragmented image of youth revolts in Europe. Many of these revolts seemingly had local, regional and national origins. But even in places that were 'untouched' by the revolts of 1980–81, the events did leave their mark. In Sweden, for example, a radical youth movement emerged only in the mid-1980s, but all the same drew its inspiration both from stories about 1980–81 in other places and from contemporary movements that had its origins there: for example the West Berlin squatter scene, as Jan Jämte and Adrienne Sörbom point out in this volume.

Youth: the people our parents have always warned us about

Were the protests, movements and revolts that are central to this volume mainly the work of 'youth'? And if so, how can this be established?

There exist no valid statistics as to the social composition or age of those involved in the protests discussed here. In the German Federal Republic, many students were involved, but still the protests cannot be categorized as student revolts since the universities themselves were neither the places, nor main topics, of protests. Furthermore, the movements also involved many high-school youths (a portion of whom dropped out of college) as well as (often unemployed) working-class youths. Even so, the associations between these groups remain contested, as there exist no reliable figures on their numbers or relationships. Furthermore, these protests and revolts never involved 'all' youths, but did involve the majority of the politically active parts of the young generation in the early 1980s.

Even so, there remain three reasons why the term youth does offer productive ways of analysing protests, revolts and social movements in the 1980s. First of all, radical movements and authorities explicitly referred to youth when they articulated their societal hopes, fears and demands.[17] Historically, 'youth' has always been an object of concern and of promise: Does 'youth' hold the promise for the future, or will it be responsible for society's downfall? Radical activists consciously tapped into these fears as they dubbed themselves 'the people our parents have always warned us about'.[18] Others used such fears strategically – for example in their demands for self-managed spaces. Calling them youth centres garnered support and opened up political opportunities: in Copenhagen, a central place of the radical movement was the Ungdomshuset (Youth House).[19] The state of youth was, furthermore, often evoked in the legitimization of radical actions. The economic crisis, unemployment and the fear of nuclear war were consciously stylized as phenomena that hit youth the hardest.

Secondly, contacts with older generations of activists often remained marginal. Because the new activists refrained from forming organizations, and showed only little interest in Marxist theory and labour struggles, they signified a generational break with the radical left of the 1970s. Typically, West Germany's Green Party, which in several ways was a project of the New Social Movements of the 1970s, only established a youth organization in 1994, 25 years after its foundation. Up to that point, the Green Party had seen itself as the parliamentary spokesperson of the radical movements of the 1970s and, thus, of radical youth itself.[20]

At the same time, however, many protesters refused to be designated as 'youths', fearing that this term would depoliticize their causes and struggles. In countries such as Italy, the movement defined itself explicitly

as radical left, emphasizing intergenerational contacts and dialogues, and thus continuities with the movements of the 1970s. And although radical youths often claimed to be hit harder by societal tensions and crises, it was exactly these general issues that had very different effects in different parts of Europe. Although youth unemployment played an important role in the narratives and visions of northern youths, it was in the Southern European countries that youth unemployment was the highest, while the youth revolt seemingly did not take place there.[21] Thus, in this volume, Enrique Tudela and Claudio Cataneo cite an activist who remarked: 'For us it was impossible and unthinkable to get scholarships, or live on unemployment benefits. We joked, saying that the state was paying Northern European youths for doing the revolution, while we were more of a working-class culture'.

Finally, even if we cannot measure the age and social background of those who protested and revolted, those involved were all affected by the fact that youth became a far broader category in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. As educational careers became longer and entry into the workforce was moved forward, economic independence and the starting of a family were postponed. This development, often linked to the term post-adolescence, opened up possibilities for experimenting with alternative lifestyles and ways of living together, in which alternative or radical youths were at the forefront.[22] And while, especially in this respect, differences between European countries were immense, they grew more alike throughout the decade.

When we hold that youth still remains a valuable analytical category, we can build forth on the argument of Sebastian Haunss, who links the term to both 'a strong and a weak generational perspective': 'strong' when dealing with the differences and conflicts between generations, and 'weak' when youth is characterized as a phase of greater sensibility and openness to protest politics. These characterizations leave the question open as to why youth protests do not break out continuously, and in answering this question other factors come into play, such as political opportunities, transfer of action repertoires, political and economic developments. Youth revolts should therefore not be envisioned as generational conflicts, but as specific historical situations, which should, amongst other, be analysed through the lens of youth.

Revolt: drop out or rebel

The concept of revolt features prominently in this volume, while other scholars have instead chosen to use more neutral terms such as youth

protest, movement or unrest. The term revolt, however, featured prominently in contemporary debates on youth protests and riots in 1980–81, especially in West Germany.[23] The term not only signalled the seemingly limited scope of youth's protests, as they voiced no revolutionary programs, but also the seemingly limited gains that they made. Thus, the Zurich Autonomous Youth Centre, acquired after months of fierce struggle, was only held on to for several months, while the 'nuclear freeze campaign', aimed at stopping the nuclear arms race, was ultimately defeated. In the eyes of many, the political perspectives for the activists had been bleak from the start. This view was shared by both protesters and observers alike. Thus, a central slogan of the German protesters was 'We've got no chance, but we'll take it anyway', while several observers stated that the revolting youths faced the non-choice of 'resignation or violence', 'drop-out or rebel'.[24]

But the term revolt also placed the youth movement in a larger frame of postwar radical youth movements.[25] The participants in the 'first youth movement' of 1968 had dubbed themselves, and were seen from the outside as, revolutionary. As the movement withered into an array of groups, parties and movements in the early 1970s, they were dominated by neo-Marxist theories, anti-imperialist internationalism and neo-Leninist attempts at building workers' parties.[26] Integrating into, and subsequently revolutionizing, the working class became a central goal of the latter groups, but by the mid-1970s, these currents had reached an impasse and lost most of their shine and attraction.[27] Within the radical and alternative youth scenes of the mid-1970s, the revolutionary student movement became a target for mockery and ridicule. The inner-movement conflicts were ultimately parodied in Monty Python's *Life of Brian*, released in 1979, in which the People's Front of Judea saw it as its primary goal to 'unmask' and defeat the Judean People's Front and other liberation movements. The focus of radical and alternative youths consequently shifted to a search for authenticity, small-scale, comprehensible spaces and scenes, experimental lifestyles and esotericism.[28] Subjectivity and a politics of emotion gained a central place in the movements.

Political and alternative youth thus moved away from workerist and anti-imperialist politics, became ever more sceptical of revolutionary organizations (especially parties) and of overly abstract theories. The focus on subjectivity not only went hand in hand with cynical parodies of the student leaders of 1968, but also with biting critiques of those who had moderated their political views, had grown to prominence and thus 'sold out'. This attitude was reflected in the lyrics of the Hamburg punk band, Slime, in their song *Linke Spiesser*: 'Always critical and political/

Marx and Lenin on the bedside table/But you've got something against clashes/And you happily make room for the police…. And when we become aggressive/You are all suddenly conservative'.[29]

The turn away from overly revolutionary and ideological narratives heralded a shift towards more pragmatism. This development seemingly effected all youth movements in Europe. To some extent, the shift was the result of movement learning processes. Many radical youths dismissed the focus on theory attributed to the protesters of 1968, especially when elaborate and abstract theorizing went hand in hand with ever more moderate politics. Opening up to alternative youth scenes and new social movements, radical youths came to focus on specific goals and issues. In their struggle against the construction of nuclear power plants, airport runways or urban redevelopment schemes, ideology mattered ever less, whilst the protest forms became ever more specific and practical.

Interestingly enough, a similar attitude was discerned by Padraic Kenney, when he researched rebelling youth in 1980s Poland. Using his contacts to get in touch with oppositional youths, his friends recommended several, who were called 'konkretny'. He later remembered: 'These were the kind of people I wanted to meet'.

> Konkretny meant someone who knew how to organize a demonstration, or to use the media, and who could implement ideas effectively. The opposite […] would be someone who enjoyed analyzing the communist system or the opposition and believed in the power of a devastating critique. [B]y the mid-1980s the time of the 'truth-tellers' had passed, giving way to what I call the konkretny generation.[30]

The term 'konkretny', however, not only refers to the importance of direct action and anti-statism, but also to the subversive element of 'anti-politics': humour and upsetting the rationale of state actors.[31] All these factors became central to the activities of rebellious youths throughout Europe in the 1980s. In this, militancy and (the threat of) violence always played a role, for example in a case in which militant protesters in Zurich saw their way blocked by riot police on a sunny day in 1980. Before engaging in confrontations with the police, a number of activists managed to convince their fellow activists to first have a group discussion on how to move forward. While the riot police were sweating in their riot gear, the debate dragged on for an hour or so, after which the protesters decided that it would be much more fun to go swimming in a nearby lake.[32] The protesters thus subverted the rationale of

state actors, but could only do so because there was a threat of violent confrontation.

The combination of threatening violence and subverting the logic of political conflict turned the protests into something seemingly 'limitless'. Activists were willing to risk their lives in defence of such mundane things as a house, and in doing so went way past what was considered radical in the late 1970s. In this respect, it is interesting to note that the mid-1980s in Western Europe were more violent, with radical movements taking recourse to means such as fire bombs and sabotage attacks.[33] But by then, some sort of habituation had set in. It was rather the riots of 1980 and 1981 that were considered truly shocking and drew attention. In disrupting authority's logic's and routine, violence played a role, but it was not solely or simply about that. Militancy and violence should not so much be conceived as central events, but rather as a cultural common ground. While riots always included only a small part of the movement, militant attitudes were widespread. Pictures, stories and comics of militant confrontations circulated widely within the movement. And militant images were related to attitudes of non-co-operation – widely supported by punk culture – which revolved around work refusal, occupying and claiming spaces and creating alternative and informal economic structures. Together, these became a topos of the movement.

The 1980s: between no future and 'neoliberal youth'

As this volume focuses on the 1980s, the decade is remembered as an era of economic stagnation, political stability and protest. In Western Europe, deindustrialization and economic crisis caused a peak in (especially youth) unemployment, which went hand in hand with protests of a previously unseen scale – for example during protests against the NATO double-track decision, which mobilized up to half a million people in Bonn and The Hague in 1983. With the rise to power of conservative governments in the United Kingdom, Germany and the Netherlands, the economic transition from heavy industry to service economy came along with fierce industrial conflicts and the emergence of neoliberalism. These changes were heavily contested, and the decade was thus rife with social and political conflict and protest. In *Dark Continent*, Mark Mazower described it as the period in which the social contract was in crisis, while in *Postwar* Tony Judt speaks of diminished expectations and a turn towards a 'new realism'.[34] In Eastern Europe, the cracks in the regime became ever more obvious, with an increasing economic crisis,

the rise to power of Gorbachev in the Soviet Union and of Solidarność in Poland. The 1980s became the last decade of the Cold War.

The decade thus became a multifaceted one. In pop culture, the concept of 'no future' was obviously inspired by the intensification of social strife and renewed fear of nuclear war, but at the same time unleashed feverish creativity, amongst other things, through punk and postpunk.[35] Dystopian views thus triggered creativity, rather than despondency. The same goes for the image of European youth. Next to the impression of a youth revolt, the concept of 'neoliberal youth' gained prominence, and was embodied foremost in the new 'yuppies'. Portrayed as the 'winners' of the economic turn, these 'young urban professionals' seemingly uncritically internalized modern career paths and consumption patterns as they moved towards a hedonistic utopia.

This constructed divide between political and uncritical youth was the result of the differentiation and development of youth cultures in the 1980s. While conservative and liberal ideas gained momentum by mid-decade, radical urban movements in various countries became more alike, but also more isolated from wider society, even though they remained a prominent political force. Within subcultures such as punk, similar divisions could be seen, as a political wing grew ever further away from the more hedonist punk scenes.

Who was revolting?

This volume does not give a complete or systematic overview of youth revolts, protests and movements in the 1980s. Rather, the various texts focus on different regions, actors and developments – all central to understanding these revolts and movements. In the remaining part of this introduction, we present a preliminary synthesis of the contributors' findings, focusing on the questions: Who was revolting? What did 'revolt' entail? What came after?

Turning to the first question, it is interesting to see that the concept of youth is discussed in various contributions. In his political science approach, Sebastian Haunss voices concerns about using the concept of youth: first of all because there are no reliable statistics on who was protesting in these years, and secondly because youth may not be the central category through which these protests can be understood. According to Haunss, the youth revolts should be analysed as 'social and thus relational phenomena', and be embedded in larger societal developments. Rather than envisioning these youth revolts as icebreakers of new societal tendencies, he calls on the work of Alberto Melucci and

proposes to look for the 'submerged networks' on which these revolts built and which changed everyday practices and values.

Jan-Henrik Friedrichs, too, is critical of the term youth revolt, and proposes to look at other categories as well. Youth is a contested term for Friedrichs, but he sees a heuristic advantage to it: 'As historians we need to take into account the manifold frictions and conflicts within this "revolt" and we need to take seriously those subjects, who did not necessarily speak through flyers or pamphlets to make themselves heard'. He thus proposes to, instead, take the concept of transgression as a point of departure, focusing on the relations between squatters and illicit drug scenes. The views and policies of squatters towards heroin users in Zurich and West Berlin differed drastically. While the former attempted to include them and supported demands for self-determination, the latter tried to exclude them, seeing them as a political threat.

In this respect it is interesting to note that these dynamics were also present in the Italian and Spanish youth scenes. Both Pierpaolo Mudu and Gianni Piazza, who write about Italy, and Enrique Tudela and Claudio Cataneo, who write about Spain, explicitly see heroin as a weapon used against the radical youth movement. Here, too, activists at first tried to eradicate drugs from their scenes, in Italy even going so far as to physically attack drug dealers. Eventually however, attempts were made at informing, including and politicizing drug users. Thus Tudela and Cataneo write: 'It took activists several years to become aware of the dangers of heroin and find ways to combat it. Activists started to spread information about the dangers of drug abuse by organizing campaigns, talks and spreading posters and graffiti messages'.

In the contributions to this volume on Spain, Italy and Sweden, the youth movements are explicitly seen as left-libertarian movements. Although youth does play a role, the focus is foremost on their political rationales. In studies focusing on squatting in Germany and the Netherlands, on the other hand, the squatters are often envisioned as youths, but the political calibre is considered hard to measure. Rather, the squatters are seen as a conglomerate of various subcultural and political scenes.[36] It can, therefore, be interesting to focus on the places where these youths met. (This would not mean that youth becomes insignificant, but rather that it is related to other factors and analytical concepts, as Friedrichs had proposed.) In exploring this perspective, however, the focus should not only be on large urban centres. In his contribution, David Templin shows through many examples how the ideals of revolt spread to small towns and rural areas in West Germany, and how the urban revolts thus resonated with the ideas of youths in smaller places.

In our view, these findings do not so much supplement our knowledge, but offer a new perspective. They illustrate how demands for self-managed spaces and autonomy were translated to other regions and contexts, how visions and attitudes were transferred, and subsequently changed in the process.

But youth also played an important role in social movements that focused on issues that affected all, such as nuclear weapons, racism and disability. Here, too, youth should be taken as one of several analytical categories through which these movements are to be understood. Dario Fazzi for example shows not only how transatlantic ties influenced the anti-nuclear movement, but also how youths played a role in radicalizing the movement's repertoire: 'Anti-nuclear activists' militancy, their anti-conformism, and their tendency to break the rules that often resulted in the unauthorized occupation of public spaces and construction sites were considered legitimate reactions against unjust and unsafe national and international policies'. In this context, militancy did not so much refer to violence, but to civil disobedience.

The same goes for the activism of disabled people in the 1980s. Monika Baár asks for the links between their actions and the youth revolt unfolding in these years in West Germany. In doing so, she not only uncovers transnational networks, but also comments on the concept of revolt: 'According to mainstream definition, a revolt is an explosive, spontaneous spectacle with a dimension of violence and militant action with the aim of changing social structures. The activities of disabled people hardly ever relied on violence'. At the same time, they did disrupt and subvert political routines, for example when they disrupted the opening of the International Year of Disabled People in Germany, in January 1981, thus forcing federal President Karl Carstens to give his keynote from an alternative location. Baár goes on to see more similarities: 'The wish of disabled activists to exercise self-determination and to change existing social structures was just as paramount as in the case of the youth movement'.

But with broad movements focusing on one topic, the political calibre was sometimes hard to probe. This is, for example, clear in Didier Chabanet's analysis of SOS Racisme. After France had witnessed heavy riots in September 1981, community leaders responded with a peaceful March for Equality and Against Racism in 1983. Out of this grew the Beur movement, which focused on the empowerment of 'migrant' youths, and also inspired new cultural expressions in film, music and literature. From 1985 onwards, however, the Beur movement was marginalized by large free music festivals organized by SOS Racisme, funded by Mitterand's

Socialist Party. Although these festivals attracted large crowds, they failed to stimulate the self-organization of migrant youths as the Beur movement had done previously. When SOS Racisme lost funding, the music festivals stopped, and no others were able to take over. The decade ended with renewed unrest in the suburbs of French metropolises.

Punk and (anti)politics

Just as with the squatters' and other movements, the political calibre of punk, too, is often hard to measure. This is clear in the contribution from Matthew Worley on British punk. In fact, it is often even unclear what punk was, and Worley states: 'Defining "punk" – be it in a cultural or a political sense – is contentious and problematical. Depending on your preference or prejudice, punk could be read as a musical form, a fashion, an aesthetic, an attitude, a protest, a media-construed label, an anti-social gesture, a cultural moment or a lifestyle'. As a result, its political character remained contested: 'Politically, punk was claimed and denounced on the left and right before generating its own explicitly anarchist subculture. It also comprised many who rejected all and any political interpretation of its motives and substance'. Even so, attitudes of non-cooperation and the concept of 'antipolitics' featured prominently in the punk scene. Punk provided, so to say, the soundtrack of the revolt. Thus, Worley states: 'If the riots of 1980–81 remain resonant, then it is partly as a result of punk's ability to distil their essence in cultural form'.

As such, punk was received and adapted to local contexts all over Europe, even becoming a major point of reference for radical youths in Eastern Europe. This features prominently in the contributions of Oskar Mulej and Grzegorz Piotrowski. Oskar Mulej analyses punk scenes in Yugoslavia and focuses on the 'punk spring' of 1981, especially in Ljubljana. With a border open to Western Europe, the Yugoslav communist party was more relaxed on Western cultural influences than were other communist states, and the first punk groups defined themselves as a-political. Although they became more visible during 1981, meeting in public spaces and marking them with ironic graffiti, they refrained from political actions, demonstrations or squatting. But as the communist rulers expressed their 'ideological monopoly [...] above all through symbolic politics', punk's ironic citation of communist slogans and pranks caused irritations, and eventually provoked a wave of repression. Mulej acknowledges that punk contributed to weakening the position of the communist dictatorship, but notices a contradiction. The

punk scene namely focussed above all on 'alternative cultural practices, striving for individual self-expression and "spontaneous subcultural socializing"'. According to Mulej, punk 'may thusly be treated as an important subculture with great political significance, although its own "aims" and "motivations" were not political'.

Grzegorz Piotrowski witnesses a similar pattern in Poland, focusing on punk, the Jarocin festival and the rise of dissident youth movements. During the 1980s, the Jarocin festival attracted thousands of alternative youths and thus became a space of distribution of ideas and subcultural practices, rather than revolt. Dissident youths attended as well, but according to Piotrowski, 'the youth revolt at Jarocin was not explicitly political: it was more against the social system and their lack of prospects'. Even so, this attitude helped to delegitimize the communist system, and parts of the alternative scene soon merged with more overtly dissident youth groups and movements.

Synchronization and international networks

Three contributions in this volume focus on countries that, for various reasons, did not experience a youth revolt around 1980–81. Jan Jämte and Adrienne Sörbom focus on Sweden and, comparing the situation to Northwest Europe and especially Denmark ask: 'Why did it not happen here'. Focusing on societal factors, they emphasize not only the corporatist state model, social democratic hegemony and consensus-based political structures, but also the fact that the government initially aimed at 'investing its way out of the crisis'. With crisis symptoms thus weakened, even activists 'felt that they did not have the same reasons to employ confrontational and militant strategies as activists in other parts of Europe did'. When the economy started to stagnate in the mid-1980s and politics made a conservative turn, however, a radical movement did emerge and soon grew similar to the autonomist movements in Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands.

In their contribution on Italy, Pierpaolo Mudu and Gianni Piazza emphasize the extent of repression after 1977 as a main reason why Italy did not face large youth mobilizations in 1980–81. At the same time, they suggest that the Autonomia movement of 1977 may well have been a pioneer for the youth movements that emerged later in Northern Europe, as the themes, ways of organizing and action repertoires were very similar. Even so, they do not envision the late 1970s as an end point. Rather, they argue that this 'ebb' in radical activism – referred to as *riflusso* in Italy – 'should be reconsidered as a transitional phase from

the radical movements of the 1970s to new movements that sprang up later, such as the anti-nuclear and the anti-militarist movements, radical environmentalism and "post-autonomous" mobilizations'. Here too, these movements soon grew similar to the squatter/autonomist movements in other countries.

Claudio Cattaneo and Enrique Tudela witness a similar development in their analysis of the Spanish youth movement. Here, too, the movement had to process heavy setbacks experienced in the late 1970s, after the end of Franco's dictatorship in 1975 had at first given way to massive mobilizations at workshops and neighbourhoods. After this first phase, the situation stabilized, however, and the transition from dictatorship to a parliamentary system took solid shape. As a result, radical movements waned, and instead of revolutionary perspectives, radical youths in the late 1970s had to deal with widespread disenchantment (in Spanish: desencanto). Even so, they also see the years 1980–81 mainly as a 'transition phase' for the movement, which regained momentum in the mid-1980s. By that time, the radical movement had grown more similar to the squatter/autonomist movement in Northwest Europe – a development that is witnessed in all three contributions.

In the mid-1980s, a part of the youth movement 'synchronized' internationally. Local scenes and movements grew more alike and international contacts intensified. This process went hand in hand with a new protest wave, which was provoked by the Chernobyl accident.[37] This synchronization was furthered through activist travel and travel networks, organizational connections and the media. Linus Owens analyses the travels of the Amsterdam squatters in the early 1980s, and shows how they became popular guests all over Western Europe. In most cases, the Amsterdam squatters were invited to speak about their experiences and tactics, and show movies. In other cases, they would provide more practical help, as Owens stated: 'While mass media rapidly distributes news and information far and wide, it rarely carries the politics and practices of radical movements effectively. A movement based so strongly in tacit knowledge – of how to squat a building to how to defend it – required other ways of sharing information, namely physical travel between activist cities'.

In the contributions on Sweden, Spain and Italy, the effects of these travels feature prominently. Thus, Jan Jämte and Adrienne Sörbom state: 'Swedish anarchists established closer personal contacts to activists in similar movements in other parts of Europe, for instance in Denmark and Germany, travelling across borders to aid in each other's causes. The

international contacts led to the diffusion of political ideas and repertoires of action'. At the same time, transfer was not always a smooth or self-evident process. Enrique Tudela and Claudio Cataneo quote an activist who stated: 'We soon realized that activists in the rest of Europe knew much more than we did. [...] They did things we could not do, but we were also doing things that they could not do'. The concept of no future could lead to similar reactions, for example when Piotrowski quotes a Polish punk saying: 'In Britain, they sing "no future" [...] But I'd like to be on welfare payments there! If you want to know what "no future" means, come to Poland!'

The establishment too, was very aware of international influences. Thus, Vienna's authorities in 1980 were so convinced of the idea that riots were alien to their city that they initially saw the riots of 1 March as instigated by four youths from West Germany. Quickly coming back from this, the city then decided to significantly alter its urban and cultural policies, to avoid 'Zurich situations' in their capital, as Robert Foltin shows in his contribution. In a sense, the authorities' interpretation of, and response to, youth revolts in other countries 'prevented' escalation in Vienna in the early 1980s, even though here, too, an autonomist squatter movement emerged.

However, this development of movements increasingly growing alike, also went hand in hand with increasing isolation. This was especially true for the squatter and autonomist movements, which evolved into a truly European subculture movement, but also lost many aspects that were characteristic of the youth revolt of the early 1980s. As the squatters and autonomists movements became more politically outspoken, their social and political composition narrowed. Their action repertoires grew more fixed and, to a large extent, lost their subversive characters. And as the movements' meeting places grew ever more similar internationally, their local ties grew weaker.

Making sense of the revolt

The establishment in different countries responded differently to the youth revolts in their respective countries. But in Western Europe, the reactions were not so much driven by a moral panic. Rather, research commissions – installed by various governments to assess the characteristics and threat level of the renewed youth protests – aimed at understanding the youth revolts and interpreting them as stimuli for policy change. This was very clear in the Swiss case that Jan Hansen analyses in this volume. Focusing on the Swiss Youth Commission and its

programmatic 'Theses on the Youth Revolt', he shows that the commission concentrated not so much on the actions of the protesting youths, but on perceived structural faults in society. Jan Hansen therefore modifies the traditional dichotomy between youth and politics and analyses how, rather, the establishment was divided on the issue. The analysis and narrative of the West German parliamentary commission of inquiry and of the British Scarman commission were very similar, and the latter went so far as to propose policies to alleviate social tensions – proposals that went mostly unnoticed.

Jake Smith, on the other hand, focuses on how the media analysed and portrayed the youth revolt. Focusing on West Germany, he witnesses a far less-understanding attitude. Rather, the newspapers, and especially the tabloids, viewed the revolting youths as anti-modern, violent and irrational actors who aimed at forcefully undermining the social order. In particular, the conservative right 'tended to point to the nefarious character of the youth revolts, to underlying "structures of violence" and "lawless zones", which endangered the very foundations of the democratic state'. At the same time, Smith notices that the differing interpretations by different authorities shared a similar structure: 'Whether it was a psychologist pointing to shifts in the adolescent experience, a novelist writing about terrorist networks, or a police officer lamenting the fact that the milieu is "not easily manageable", experts, officials and the media understood the youth movement as a concrete instantiation of a larger network, which was both irrational and awe-inspiring'.

When analysing the debates on the riots in Britain, Almuth Ebke, too, focuses on newspapers. But her argument focuses not so much on how journalists and experts visualized youths in revolt, but what it said about British society and where it was headed. Thus, the public debate soon zoomed in on issues relating to identity and belonging, on economic and political perspectives and feelings of social disintegration and decline. And she concludes: 'The 1981 riots thus constitute a landmark for the history of these processes of societal self-definition: existing discussions about belonging were effectively popularized in a framework of perceived economic capabilities, contested imperial legacies and the changing structure of society'.

Both in Northwest Europe and France, governments responded to revolts with attempts at integration. Tragically, these attempts were least successful when the riots involved 'migrant' youths, and these subsequently became a recurring phenomenon in both the United Kingdom and France.

Conclusion

The years 1980–81 witnessed impressive revolts of youths in several European countries. The youth movement made headway, not so much because of its militancy, but because it combined militancy with an ability to subvert political routines. As such, large parts of the establishment felt challenged, even threatened. In the years that followed, the revolting youths withered in different currents and scenes, such as punk and the squatters'/autonomist movement. Of course, youth had never been a monolithic entity, but from the mid-1980s processes of differentiation grew ever stronger. As a result, youth cultures such as punk became less political, while political movements such as the autonomist movement revolved ever less around youth. As these groups and scenes became more well defined, they became more exclusive and more embedded in international networks, while at the same time becoming less closely related to specific local contexts.

In the early 1980s, political contention, violence and subversion had been explicitly linked to youth. Throughout the decade, this vision became less pronounced. Not only did youth lose its ability to disrupt and subvert political routines in the same way, but the different movements and scenes were less associated with youth. The squatters became one political subculture amongst many, and were no longer seen as the embodiment of radical youth. New (youth) cultures, such as hip-hop and techno, drew a more age-diffuse audience, while other currents like punk and rock grew older. At the same time all of them lost much of their potential for political subversion.

When in the 1990s, the alter-globalization movement grew to prominence, it mobilized many youths, but it was no longer defined as a youth movement. In that sense, the years 1980–81 may have been Europe's last youth revolt: not so much because youths revolted, and much less because they revolted as a whole, but because it was the last time that explosive instances of protest and revolt were seen, both by actors and observers, as a youth phenomenon.

Notes

1. For the squatters' movement in Berlin, see F. Anders (2010) 'Wohnraum, Freiraum, Widerstand. Die Formierung der Autonomen in den Konflikten um Hausbesetzungen Anfang der achtziger Jahre', in D. Siegfried and S. Reichardt (eds) *Das Alternative Milieu. Antibürgerlicher Lebensstil und linke Politik in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und Europa, 1968–1983 (Berlin: Wallstein),* pp. 473–98; Geronimo (2002) *Feuer und Flamme. Zur Geschichte der Autonomen*

(Berlin: ID-Archiv); A.G. Grauwacke (2003) *Autonome in Bewegung. Aus den ersten 23 Jahren* (Berlin: Association A).

2. This was reflected in both journalist accounts and government reports. See for example H.J.A. Hofland (1981) *De stadsoorlog. Amsterdam '80* (Alphen aan den Rijn: Sijthof); Wetenschappelijke Raad voor Regeringsbeleid [WRR] (1980) *Democratie en geweld. Probleemanalyse naar aanleiding van de gebeurtenissen in Amsterdam op 30 april 1980* (Den Haag: Staatsuitgeverij); L.G. Scarman (1986) *The Scarman Report: The Brixton Disorders 10–12 April 1981*, reprinted edn. (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books).
3. 'Nichts zu verlieren außer der Angst' *Die Zeit*, no. 8, 13 February 1981; 'Da packt dich irgendwann ne Wut', *Der Spiegel,* no. 52, 22 December 1980, 22–31.
4. L. Adriaenssen (1996) *Een dwarse buurt. Het herscheppingsverhaal van de Staatsliedenbuurt en Frederik Hendrikbuurt, 1971–1996* (Amsterdam: Wijkcentrum Staatslieden-Hugo de Grootburt), p. 71; E. Duivenvoorden (2000) *Een Voet Tussen de Deur: Geschiedenis van de Kraakbeweging 1964–1999* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij de Arbeiderspers).
5. For Amsterdam: Duivenvoorden, *Een Voet Tussen de Deur*; Adilkno (1994) *Cracking the Movement. Squatting Beyond the Media* (Brooklyn: Autonomedia); L. Owens (2009) *Cracking under Pressure. Narrating the Decline of the Amsterdam Squatters' Movement* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press). J. Uitermark (2004) 'Framing urban injustices. The case of the Amsterdam squatter movement' *Space and Polity,* vol. 8, no. 2, 227–44. For contemporary observations on Zürich, see G. Amendt (1980) 'Leichte Krawallerie' *Konkret*, no. 8 (August), 17–21; R. Hänny (1981) *Zürich Anfang September* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp). For historical accounts: H. Nigg (2001) *Wir wollen alles, und zwar subito! Die achtziger Jugendunruhen in der Schweiz und ihr Folgen* (Zurich: Limmat); H.P. Kriesi (1984) *Die Zürcher Bewegung. Bilder, Interaktionen, Zusammenhänge* (Frankfurt a.M.: Campus).
6. 'Grün und Gloria' *Der Spiegel*, no. 47, 17 November 1980, 21–24; T. Ali (2005) *Street Fighting Years: An Autobiography of the Sixties* (London and New York: Verso).
7. Kriesi et al. took this as point of departure in their research of social movements in the 1970s and 1980s in Western Europe: H.P Kriesi et al. (1995) *New Social Movements in Western Europe. A Comparative Analysis* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press). For the development of welfare regimes in the West, see G. Esping-Andersen (1990) *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (Cambridge: Polity Press).
8. This latter aspect is amongst others emphasized in the volume: S. Aust and S. Rosenbladt (1981) *Hausbesetzer. Wofür sie kämpfen, wie sie leben und wie sie leben wollen* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe). For the former aspect, see J. Smith and J. Haeberlen (2014) 'Struggling for Feelings. The Politics of Emotions in the Radical New Left in West-Germany, c. 1968–1984' *Contemporary European History*, vol. 23, no. 4, 615–37.
9. L. Owens et al. (2013) 'At home in the movement: constructing an oppositional identity through activist travel across European squats', in C. Flesher Fominaya and L. Cox (eds) *Understanding European Movements. New Social Movements, Global Justice Struggles, Anti-austerity Protest* (London and New York: Routledge), pp. 172–86, p. 176.

10. For the first, see among others: Kriesi, *Die Zürcher Bewegung*; ibid., *New Social Movements*; R. Koopmans (1995) *Democracy from Below: New social movements and the political system in West Germany* (Boulder: Westview Press). For the latter, for example: WRR, *Democratie en geweld*.
11. Smith and Haeberlen, 'Struggling for Feelings'; Sedlmaier (2015) *Consumption and Violence. Radical Protest in Cold-War West Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press).
12. H. Balz and J.H. Friedrichs (eds) (2012) *'All we ever wanted…' Eine Kulturgeschichte europäischer Protestbewegungen der 1980er Jahre* (Berlin: Dietz).
13. L. Mucchielli (2010) 'Urbane Aufstände im heutigen Frankreich' *Sozial. Geschichte Online*, no. 2, 64–115; H. Willems (1997) *Jugendunruhen und Protestbewegungen: Eine Studie zur Dynamik innergesellschaftlicher Konflikte in vier europäischen Ländern* (Opladen: Leske & Budrich).
14. For Italy, see G. Katsiaficas (1997) *The Subversion of Politics: European Autonomous Social Movements and the Decolonization of Everyday Life* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press); D. della Porta (1995) *Social Movements, Political Violence and the State. A Comparative Analysis of Italy and Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); S. Tarrow (1989) *Democracy and Disorder. Protest and Politics in Italy, 1965–1975* (Oxford: Clarendon Press).
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17. For this, see for example J. Bacia and K.J. Scherer (1981) *Passt bloss auf! Was will die neue Jugendbewegung?* (Berlin: Olle and Wolter).
18. Koopmans, *Democracy from Below*.
19. P. Birke and C. Holmsted Larsen (eds) (2007) *Besetze deine Stadt! BZ din By! Häuserkämpfe und Stadtentwicklung in Kopenhagen* (Berlin: Assoziation A).
20. For a political science approach: A. Markovits and P. Gorski (1993) *The German Left: Red, Green and Beyond* (New York: Oxford University Press).
21. For a contemporarily survey: H.C. Harten (1983) *Jugendarbeitslosigkeit in der EG* (Frankfurt am Main and New York: Campus).
22. H. Kaelble (2007) *Sozialgeschichte Europas 1945 bis zur Gegenwart* (München: Beck), pp. 35–56; Michael Mitterauer (1993) *A History of Youth. Family, Sexuality, and Social Relations in Past Times* (Oxford: Blackwell).
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27. (1977) *Wir warn die stärkste der Partein.…Erfahrungsberichte aus der Welt der K-Gruppen* (Berlin: Rotbuch).
28. Reichardt and Siegfried, *Das Alternative Milieu*.
29. The song appeared on their album *Alle gegen Alle* (1983). In German, the lyrics are: 'Immer kritisch und politisch/Marx und Lenin auf dem Nachttisch/ Doch ihr habt was gegen Rabatz/Und macht den Bullen gerne Platz […] Und werden wir mal aggressiv/Seid ihr auf einmal konservativ'. See also: B. van der Steen et al. (2014) 'Introduction: Squatting and Autonomous Action in Europe, 1980–2012', in ibid. (eds) *The City is Ours: Squatting and Autonomous Movements in Europe, 1980–2014* (Oakland: PM Press), pp. 1–19.
30. P. Kenney (2002) *A Carnival of Revolution: Central Europe 1989* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), p. 13.
31. Katsiaficas, *Subversion of Politics*.
32. Kriesi, *Die Zürcher Bewegung*, p. 66.
33. Koopmans, quoted in D. della Porta, *Social Movements, Political Violence and the State*, p. 53.
34. M. Mazower (2000) *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (New York: Vintage), pp. 327–59; T. Judt (2005) *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (New York: Penguin), pp. 453–635.
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36. Anders, 'Wohnraum, Freiraum, Widerstand', pp. 479ff.
37. Kriesi, *New Social Movements*.

Part I
Concepts and Debates

1

Unrest or Social Movement? Some Conceptual Clarifications

Sebastian Haunss

When in 1980 and 1981 protesters in Zurich, Amsterdam, Berlin and many other cities clashed with the police and disturbed these cities' urban routines, contemporary commentators were surprised by the intensity of the conflicts, by the number of participants and by the level of violence they often involved. Politicians, journalists and social scientists alike have been quick to label the wave of protest that emerged in several European countries, and most forcefully in the Netherlands, Switzerland and Germany, as a 'youth movement',[1] 'youth protest',[2] 'youth unrest',[3] 'youth rebellion'[4] or 'youth revolt'.[5] Usually these terms were not defined, and often authors used them interchangeably, yet always with the prefix 'youth'. Others have precisely questioned this prefix, arguing that the issues addressed in the protest were not necessarily youth-specific, and that a significant number of the participants were too old to be labelled as youth.[6]

In this chapter I would like to take these terms, which are still used to describe the series of mostly urban protests in 1980 and 1981, as a starting point to reflect upon the implications and assumptions that accompany these concepts. The aim is to situate these concepts within the broader literature about protest and social movements and to discuss the implications of these labels. In doing so, I do not claim that the phenomena of the time should not be identified as youth movements, youth protests or whichever labels were chosen. Instead of trying to find the 'correct' label – a task that is bound to fail, because the labels always reflect analytical concepts and do not directly represent the empirical reality – I would rather like to add a layer of self-reflection to the study of these phenomena by discussing the epistemological presumptions that are ingrained in the labels used to describe them.

The dominant notion – that the two most notable aspects of the urban protests in 1980–81 were the youthfulness of their protagonists and the violence of their interaction with the authorities – implicitly suggests two perspectives in order to understand these protests: a generational perspective and a focus on repertoires of action.

At first glance the reference to youth states merely that the rebellious protagonists – or at least most of them – are below a certain age. Yet the term not only provides a description but also offers an explanation for the social phenomenon. Those authors who explicitly label the contentious episode as youth protest, youth movement or youth revolt are thereby claiming that the unifying element among the protagonists is their age or, more precisely, the fact that they belong to the same age cohort. An explanation for their actions should thus either reference the specific historical experiences this age cohort shares exclusively with those of the same age (and not with older generations), or the reference to youth may point to a conflict between two generations, most likely between the generations of the activists and their parents.

On the other hand, the focus on violence – a focus that is so dominant in contemporary studies – suggests that somehow an analysis of the forms and repertoires of action might help to understand the protests and their dynamics. This phenomenological perspective highlights the similarities between instances of contention with regard to their forms of action. It characterizes the social phenomenon by its outer form, more specifically by the fact that the forms of action breach the confines of generally accepted and institutionalized forms of participation. This phenomenological perspective links the various events, mobilizations and other forms of social interaction through their shared means and/or repertoires of action.

In addition to these two perspectives the terms unrest, protest, movement, rebellion and revolt also suggest, to different degrees, a certain embeddedness of the concrete contentious events within broader, more or less aggregated, episodes of collective action or processes of social change.

In this chapter I situate the generational and phenomenological perspectives in the larger body of social-movement research and discuss their usefulness for understanding the protests in 1980–81. I argue that the episodes of protest should be interpreted as being related to each other and embedded in structures and dynamics of social conflict that stretch, in time and scope, beyond the single episodes themselves.

Youth – the generational perspective

The reference to youth can imply both a strong and a weak generational perspective. A strong version of a generational perspective would explain the protests of 1980–81 with the historically specific experiences of one generation or a manifest conflict between the specific young generation and their parents, or with a combination of both. Such a strong version of a generational perspective was present in the contemporary psychological interpretation that the protests in 1980–81 were result of an incomplete break by the young protesters from their parents.[7] This view can be found in other research about social movements and conflict as well, but usually with a critical reflection on the appropriateness of the term 'generation' to define protesters.[8] The problem of this strong generational model is that it proposes a general rift between two generations at one point in time. But while protesters may come from one generation it is never a whole generation that protests. Those engaged in contentious interactions are always only a minority of the age cohort as a whole. A strong generational model is therefore not well suited to explain protest because it would always have to explain the lack of protest in the majority of persons belonging to one generation.

Other studies using the generational concept do not usually refer to an age cohort but to a notion of activist generations, characterized by shared experiences and not primarily by shared age. In her book about the development of the radical women's movement in the United States, for example, Nancy Whittier uses the term 'feminist generations' to refer to groups of activists, who have participated in the women's movement at the same time.[9] A generation of activists, as such, does not share the same age but the same period of engagement. They are political, not age, cohorts. The concept of generations is then not used to explain the emergence of a movement but to analyse its development over time.

More common is another, much weaker, generational concept that builds on the general idea that a person's age might have a strong influence on his or her propensity to participate in protests and/or social movements. This reflects the idea that youth (however this is defined) would be a biographical phase in which people are more likely to participate in protests. This interpretation is quite common in several studies about the protests in 1980–81. In his study of the protests in Zurich, Hanspeter Kriesi argues that youth should be understood as a transitional phase of emancipation from the confines of the family and before full integration into the labour market with its own strict set of rules.[10] This transitional phase offers the potential for a relatively high level of personal freedom

but is also characterized by the instability of status passages.[11] Several authors also argue that younger people are more sensitive than older people to the problems of their societies.[12] One might therefore assume that younger people above a certain age should show greater biographical proclivity to protest because they have less work and family obligations and, therefore fewer reasons, which might hinder their engagement.

The problem with this assumption is that, in a similar way to the strong generational concept, the notion that the particularities of this transitional phase between childhood and adulthood would explain the protest of 1980–81 has to address the issue of *differential* participation in protests by persons from the same age group. Only a minority of each age group takes to the streets, while the conditions of greater biographical proclivity should be relevant for all young people. Moreover such a perspective would also have to explain why the youth-specific factors affecting persons of a certain age have created fertile conditions for protest only at a specific point in time. Did the conditions of socialization for young people change significantly between 1975 and 1980?

The problem with both the strong and the weak generational perspectives is that they attempt to explain activities of a specific minority of young people at one point in time, with general claims about general conditions of socialization for all – or at least the majority of – people of a certain age group. A generational claim ('We are speaking in the name of a whole generation!') may be a legitimate political empowerment strategy, but as an analytical category it can never work. Generational or age-related conditions of socialization can only ever be one factor among others that comprise a more complex explanation.

Moreover, the notion of youth protests in the early 1980s may be superficially plausible but rests on weak empirical evidence. Unfortunately, information about the demographics of protesters in general, and about protesters at that time specifically, is rather limited and usually rests on police records of persons detained during particularly violent events.[13] While general surveys often show the propensity to protest as declining with age, this assumption has not been generally confirmed in those cases in which research has produced reliable information about the age of participants in protests or social movements. Existing studies do not give a clear indication of youth (or old age) as either a propagating or an inhibiting factor for participation in social movements.

For example, in his study about the participants in the 'freedom summer' mobilization of the US civil rights movement in 1964, Doug McAdam has shown that there was no linear relationship between age and participation in this form of high-risk activism. Participation rose

among 'freedom summer' activists between the age of 18 and 21, then dropped and then rose again with age.[14] Studies that have looked at the age of participants in protests in Germany consistently show the age group of 40–64 to be overrepresented compared to their proportion of the overall population, whereas those under 25 are generally underrepresented, and those between 25 and 39 are overrepresented only in peace protests.[15] A comparative study of the worldwide anti Iraq war protest on 15 February 2003 shows the youngest age cohort of 15–25 year olds as overrepresented in some countries (Italy, Germany, Sweden) and underrepresented in others (United States, Spain).[16]

Overall, therefore, research on social movements has so far not produced evidence supporting either the strong or the weak generational perspective. This does not mean that such a perspective may not be quite fruitful in some instances. But it should remind us that the generational hypothesis is demanding if its claim goes beyond the simple observation that many young people have participated in a given protest. For example, such a demanding claim would be that a specific social condition, one which enabled certain forms of protest in the early 1980s, would have influenced only people from a distinct age cohort.

But even if the notion of generational or age cohorts may not be that helpful for the analysis of protest dynamics in the early 1980s, the generational perspective can point to the importance of biographies to understand movement participation by accounting for individual and sometimes collectively shared pre-histories of movement engagement.[17] In fact, the studies of the protests in 1980–81 often provide biographical narratives from movement activists about their motivations and their interpretations of the protests.

Violence – the phenomenological perspective

I use the term phenomenological perspective to describe a perspective that focuses on a social phenomenon's outer form. From this perspective, social movements are defined by their forms and repertoires of action. For the protests in 1980–81 the one repertoire on which most commentators (and many researchers) focused was the violent nature of interaction with the police. To be fair: many researchers and journalists did not reduce the protests to this singular aspect of violence and explicitly presented insights into the activists' everyday practices and their motivations beyond any limited focus on the violent confrontations.[18] But the violence nevertheless often provided a somewhat reductive starting point for the analysis.

In general a phenomenological perspective addresses important aspects of social movements, because it pays attention to a protest's outer forms and thus takes the deliberately chosen form of the activists' self-presentation seriously. In a widely cited definition, Charles Tilly argues that social movements should be understood as a political complex, combining three elements: '(1) Campaigns of collective claims on target authorities; (2) A array of claim-making performances including special-purpose associations, public meetings, media statements and demonstrations; (3) public representations of the cause's worthiness, unity, numbers and commitment'.[19] So, for him, the specific forms and repertoires of action are important elements that differentiate social movements from earlier forms of collective action – forms which were not yet social movements and therefore followed different logics and objectives. In Tilly's historical perspective the characteristic repertoire of a social movement co-evolves with the development of democratic societies that have a parliamentary decision-making process at their core.

Dieter Rucht also includes a reference to the use of protest – although he is much less specific than Tilly and only uses the generic term in his definition of a social movement as a 'lasting action system of mobilized networks of groups and organizations, based on collective identity, and aimed at creating, preventing or reversing social change by means of public protest'.[20] In a very similar way Donatella della Porta and Mario Diani define social movements as: '(1) Informal networks, based on (2) shared beliefs and solidarity, which mobilize about (3) conflictual issues, through (4) the frequent use of various forms of protest'.[21] In their definition, another element of outer form is present: the characterization of social movements as informal networks – although this refers not so much to the phenomenological level that is immediately visible to the outside observer, but to a structural property of the social relations that form a social movement.

A certain focus on morphological similarities is also present in Sidney Tarrow's concept of protest cycles, in which phases of the protest trajectory are characterized by more or less disruptive forms of protest,[22] or Ruud Koopmans' analysis of protest waves.[23] Due to the synchronicity of events across several countries and the interplay between multiple social movements in the early 1980s (women, peace, environment, nuclear energy and so forth), this concept seems to be especially relevant for an analysis of the embeddedness of the urban youth protests.

Obviously none of the cited definitions claim that social movements should be characterized only by their forms of action. They all include a reference to the forms and repertoires of action as being merely one

element among others. None of the authors mentioned so far would differentiate social movements, purely by their outer form, from other forms of collective action. Tarrow even explicitly denounces the reduction by both social scientists and political commentators of social movements to their use of violent forms of protest, claiming that 'rather than seeing social movements as expressions of extremism, violence and deprivation, they are better defined as collective challenges, based on common purposes and social solidarities, in sustained interaction with elites, opponents and authorities'.[24] But form is nevertheless one indispensable element.

Insisting on including specific forms of action in a definition of social movements is not a tautology, although it might somehow sound logical that a reference to protest should show up in any definition of social movements. Nevertheless, for the majority of definitions found in academic literature this is, in fact, not the case. Forms of action are not mentioned in either Herbert Blumer's classical definition of social movements as 'collective enterprises to establish a new order of life',[25] or in John McCarthy's and Mayer Zald's influential article in which they presented the outlines of the resource mobilization approach and defined a social movement as 'a set of opinions and beliefs in a population which represents preferences for changing some elements of the social structure and/or reward distribution of a society'.[26] The reason is that in these conceptualizations, which differ substantially in their epistemological assumptions, social movements are primarily interpreted as expressions of social conflict, regardless of the mobilized form these conflicts take.

In contrast, a phenomenological perspective pays attention to the ways in which participants in social movements present themselves in public. Such a perspective assumes the outer form of protests to be deliberate and therefore a significant expression by protest participants themselves. It looks at protest practices as performances in which cultural symbols are reproduced and reinterpreted.[27] From a cultural perspective, the focus is not limited to the single instances of violent confrontation on the streets, but it analyses such violence in relation to other cultural practices of a movement.

Embedding the protests – unrest versus social movement

Among the terms unrest, protest, movement, rebellion and revolt, unrest is the least specific and most diffuse. Unrest refers to the disturbance of an otherwise stable order, yet this disturbance has no identifiable collective protagonist – apart maybe from a diffuse social category of youth.

In contrast, protest always implies a strongly antagonistic perspective and a deliberate orientation towards reaching the protest's goals, but it is unspecific with regard to its duration. I would argue that the term social movement should imply a certain continuity over time, but the above-cited definitions do not always contain this element.

Rebellion and revolt, on the other hand, are the terms most closely associated with social transformation.[28] Using these terms suggests that the protagonists involved have fundamentally challenged existing social power structures and were not content with reform and piecemeal policy change. These terms therefore imply a focus on processes of social change. The same can also be true for the term social movement. Depending on the historical period and also depending on the field, actor-driven processes of (fundamental) social change have variously been labelled as revolutions, revolts, uprisings, social movements or social conflicts. The choice of terms depends to a certain degree on the level and scope of change or on the temporal trajectory, with revolution, revolt and uprising describing episodes of accelerated social change, while the terms social movement and social conflict stand for slower change.

In their *Dynamics of Contention*, McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly have actually suggested that these terms describe social phenomena that have so much in common that they are not neatly separable, and an integration of the research on revolutions, revolts, industrial conflicts and social movements under the unified concept of contentious politics would be needed.[29] Fourteen years later, however, one has to concede that their proposal was so far not very successful in uniting different disciplinary strands of research.

Regardless of whether the various terms should be unified into one super-concept, the terms movement, rebellion and revolt situate the individual episode of protest in a larger framework of societal and political change and thus suggest a political or social-process perspective that is at the heart of most social-movement research. This perspective comes in many varieties that can be roughly divided into: a strong version, with a focus on processes of social change, and a weak version, with a focus on interaction and the policymaking process. What unites them is that they all understand social movements to be forms of contentious interaction embedded in social and political structures – structures they try to influence and change.

In the strongest version, social movements are seen as direct expressions of historical social conflicts. This was the perspective adopted the French post-Marxist sociologist Alain Touraine when he defined social movements as 'a special type of social conflict' about the control of

'cultural patterns (knowledge, investment, ethics) in a given societal type'.[30] Touraine wanted to find the one new social movement that would become the heir of the workers' movement. For him, social movement was therefore not so much an empirical but a theoretical concept. And after realizing that none of the empirical protest mobilizations of his time would fulfil the thusly assigned historical role, his interest in social movements faded.

The strong version of the idea that social movements are inherently intertwined with processes of social change is also prominent in the works of the Italian social-movement researcher Alberto Melucci, who defines a social movement as a specific form of collective action. For him a social movement is 'the mobilization of a collective actor (1) defined by specific solidarity, (2) engaged in a conflict with an adversary for the appropriation and control of resources valued by both of them, (3) and whose action entails a breach of the limits of compatibility of the system within which the action itself takes place'.[31] As one specific form of collective action, a social movement is therefore more or less similar to other forms of collective action that differ along one or more of the three dimensions – conflict versus consensus, solidarity versus aggregation, breaching versus maintaining the system limits.

Like Touraine, Melucci uses the term social movement as an analytical concept, but unlike Touraine he does not see social movements as mere expressions of societal cleavage. On the contrary, he was very interested in the empirical variety of protest mobilizations, and in the not-so-visible everyday practices of social-movement activists. Melucci argues that contemporary social movements are not just a string of visible protests but are in fact submerged networks,[32] submerged in everyday life, and alternating between short phases of visibility and longer stretches of latency. His study of social movements in the early 1980s in Italy refocused attention from the highly visible protest events to the less visible, but (arguably for the continuity of the movements) more important emerging social structures in which activists attempted to immediately realize their ideas for alternative social norms and structures.

In the strong version, social movements and social change are closely connected, so that social movements either cause social change or are expressions of it. In the weak version, the idea of social change is reduced to policy change, and the focus lies therefore on the interaction between social movements and other protagonists within the policymaking process. The core claim of this strand of the political-process perspective is that a social movement's chances to influence the policymaking process depend upon favourable political opportunity structures.[33] At

their core, these political opportunity structures consist of institutional procedures and settings, (national) political cultures and the constellation of potential allies and opponents. It is generally assumed that more accessible and open formal political institutions, unstable alignments and divided elites provide better opportunities for social movements to have their claims realized.[34] While the political-process perspective has often been criticized for being too unspecific about which factors should and which factors should not be included in the political structure, its important conceptual contribution clearly lies in its focus on the embeddedness of social movements. The political-process perspective always reminds us that activities of protesters and social movements should be analysed in relation to the environment in which they are embedded.

Analysing the protests in 1980–81 from a political or social-process perspective means embedding the events in Zurich, Amsterdam, Berlin and elsewhere in the respective local trajectories of contestation and relating them to the basic social and political conditions of their time. This perspective was present in Hanspeter Kriesi's study on what he calls 'The Zurich Movement (Die Zürcher Bewegung)', in which he analyses the continuity and conflict between the 1980 protests in Zurich and the remnants of the protest wave of the 1968 students' movement in an alternative urban counter-culture.[35] It also guided Helmut Willems's comparative study of a variety of conflicts and protest episodes in several European countries around 1980–81, and which he interpreted as structures and (alternative) norms producing episodes of conflict.[36]

Conclusion

What can be gained from this meta-discussion of terms and concepts for the analysis of the contentious episodes in 1980–81? As mentioned above, terminology is not innocent. The terms used to label a protest come with attached concepts and are therefore embedded within specific theoretical perspectives. The history of social-movement research is also a history of struggles about the proper term for the social phenomenon the research is about. I do not think that agreement on one term should be the goal, but a reflection of the implications of terminology will certainly help in the analysis.

The different perspectives highlight different aspects of the empirical phenomena. A phenomenological perspective with a focus on morphological similarities may help to better understand the universe of protest in the early 1980s by identifying diffusion and transfer processes of protest repertoires and cultural expressions. How, for example, did

protest repertoires in the squatters' movement travel from city to city and across national borders? How was it possible, that a squatted house in Amsterdam, Berlin, Copenhagen or Zurich looked essentially the same? How was it possible that an activist from Amsterdam felt immediately 'at home' in a squat in Hamburg and vice versa? In more general terms, the phenomenological perspective may help to answer the question: Which social processes can be identified that enabled the diffusion of repertoires and led to the emergence of similar sociocultural scenes?

Taking the generational perspective seriously would mean to not just describe the demographics of the protesters, but to use those demographics as an explanatory element. Compared to other protests of the time – for example, about nuclear energy and world peace – it certainly makes sense to characterize the urban protests of the early 1980s as youth protests. But the question then is: What differentiates them from the other protests? What were the specific conditions of greater youth participation in the urban protests? How can the notion that they are somehow a generational phenomenon help to explain their emergence and trajectory?

Neither the generational perspective nor the phenomenological perspective addresses one important aspect of the protests of the early 1980s: Those protests developed their disruptive and provocative potential not only on the political, but to an important – and maybe even larger – degree also on the cultural level. The notion of submerged networks captures this interplay between cultural innovation and political activity. The violent clashes with the police that surprised and shocked liberal and conservative commentators alike were only the visible tip of the proverbial iceberg. Below the level of public visibility or, more precisely, less noted by the general public, dense social networks and local infrastructures had developed that facilitated alternative lifestyles and everyday practices. The so-called youth revolt in 1980–81 is intricately connected to the emergence of social-movement scenes, defined as networks of people who share a common identity and a common set of subcultural or countercultural beliefs, values, norms and convictions, and simultaneously as networks of physical spaces where members of that group are known to congregate.[37] Such a perspective highlights the fact that the protests around 1980 drew on resources provided by earlier social movements and, at the same time, created new resources that have enabled later mobilizations.

Finally, the term unrest, which has often been used to describe the protests of the early 1980s, encapsulates an image of stability and disturbance, where the more or less stable social normality is periodically interrupted by instances of disorder, like ripples on the flat surface of a lake

caused by a stone thrown into it. Instead of ripples, there may even be a storm that violently agitates the waters, but after a period of agitation the lake surface will invariably return to its calm state of rest. This is not a very good image for the events in the years 1980 and 1981. Instead, they should be analysed as social and thus relational phenomena. The people who participated have been embedded in complex social networks, and the events themselves are related to each other, to earlier and later contentious mobilizations, to the national and transnational political sphere and to changing social structures in societies that were undergoing fundamental changes at the end of the industrial age. The episodes of protest should always be interpreted as being embedded in social-conflict structures and dynamics, which stretch in time and scope beyond any single episode. Whether these episodes are labelled social movements, revolts, protests or something else depends on the analytical categories that provide the lens through which to analyse the empirical phenomena.

Notes

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Part II

Squatters and Autonomist Movements

2

Vienna in March 1981: A 'Puzzling Demonstration' and Its Consequences

Robert Foltin

On Sunday afternoon, 1 March 1981, some hundred demonstrators gathered at Stephansplatz in the First District of Vienna, the centre of the city. They marched along the most expensive shopping street, the Kärntnerstraße and approached the 'Ring', which circles the inner district. The crowd consisted of hippies, a few dozen punks, other freaks and political eggheads, mostly anarchists or non-dogmatic left-wingers (Spontis). There was only one visible banner, stating: 'High sein, frei sein, Terror muss dabei sein' (To be high, to be free, there has to be terror). This motto fell on fertile ground with the media, who quoted it repeatedly. The demonstration circled the First District and entered it again. A few windows were smashed, most of them in the Rotenturmstraße, another important shopping street. Finally, the police kettled the whole demonstration, and about hundred protesters were arrested.[1]

Why tell about this one specific demonstration in 1981? There had been bigger manifestations in the recent past, such as the occupation of the 'Arena' in the summer of 1976. The city had also witnessed demonstrations voicing 'real' demands, for example during the squatting of houses belonging to the city. There had been more militant demonstrations, for example after the execution of five anarchists by the Franco regime in Spain in 1975. During this demonstration, the office of Iberia airlines was invaded and smashed by hundreds of demonstrators.[2] Finally, there were heavier riots in Vienna involving autonomous activists during the 1980s, especially after 1987 at the annual opera ball. Still, there was something remarkable about that 1981 demonstration in March: it was the first time in years that the city witnessed urban unrest. The activists involved comprized a new generation. They were

politicized by the movements in the second half of the 1970s, such as the occupation of the Arena and the movement against nuclear power, or had only become active in the last few years or months. Along with other factors, the unrest had a profound impact on Vienna and the city's policies.

After 1 March, the community hastened to revise its youth and cultural policies. New social and cultural centres were opened or legalized, concert halls were founded and a number of houses and apartments were given to artistic and political groups and collectives. Even so, the reasons for the policy shift and the (self-) presentation of the protesters differed remarkably. While the city described them as young people and artists, formulating their policies accordingly, many activists defined themselves as political, thus refusing the label 'youths'. This created a field of tension, where the community and protesters would at times find common ground, yet would just as often descend into conflict.

Together with other groups and movements such as citizens' initiatives protesting against urban restructuring – often targeting old working-class districts – the movement originating from the March demonstration would also have an accelerating impact on urban development policies in Vienna. In short, urban restructuring changed from a technocratic top-down process to a more considerate and consensual policy – a development that also took place in other major European cities.[3]

Furthermore, 1 March was important for the future development of the 'autonomous' movement. The demonstration was an important event in the formation of the Viennese Autonomen. Some of the demonstrators had already been active in the anarchist, and later autonomous, scene. Others were politicized by it. In the course of the decade, a flourishing autonomous movement came into being. The change in the community's cultural and urban development, as well as the link between the demonstration and the nascent autonomous scene are the main themes of this chapter.

'High sein, frei sein, Terror muss dabei sein'

Both the media and the public were astonished and fascinated by the demonstration of 1 March. Above all, the 'violence', so untypical for the peaceful town of Vienna, drew attention. There had been some smaller 'riots' in recent years: for example the quarrels about the Burggarten, but still this seemed to be the first time that youths had acted so aggressively. Beforehand, the police would occasionally arrest or chase protesters

without encountering any active resistance. Commentators such as the *Arbeiterzeitung*, the newspaper of the social democratic party, thusly spoke of a 'strange' demonstration, by 'speechless' protesters, since they had refrained from voicing any specific requests or demands. Due to the fact that the police and the media could at first not imagine such riotous activities stemming from Viennese or Austrian youths, they pin-pointed four demonstrators originating from West Germany and branded them as the ringleaders. They were arrested and charged accordingly. Soon after, however, it became clear that at least one of the four was a tourist. The four were released and the Minister of the Interior made an official apology to the said tourist.[4]

The governing social democrats discussed the 'youth revolts' taking place in other European cities and related them to the situation in Vienna. In the end they proposed to support youth centres and youth organizations, as well as 'alternative' projects. They would secure the position of the Arena, create a Rockhaus (rock house), as well as a self-managed youth, culture and communications centre in the Gassergasse and the WuK – Werkstätten und Kulturhaus (house for workshops and culture). The grounds and spaces were to be provided by the city.'[5]

Indeed, superficially, the demonstration looked like some form of 'copy-cat riot'. After urban unrest in Zurich, where activists had demanded an autonomous youth centre, and in West Berlin, where a militant squatter scene had evolved in December 1980, Vienna activists seemed to be following suit. The *Arbeiterzeitung* thus wrote: 'Randalierer proben Zürich in Wien' (Rioters try out Zurich methods in Vienna). Indeed, the demonstration in Vienna was organized by a group of Spontis, who planned to squat a house in the first district. Its goal was to support the squatting, while at the same time diverting the attention of the authorities. The police, however, had been aware of the activists' plans and had sealed the house, thereby undermining the activists' plans.

Other aspects seemed reminiscent of movements in other cities as well. The demonstration had, for example, not been announced officially. Instead, the activists had mobilized informally via word-of-mouth, leaflets and graffiti. Their demands were also similar and ranged from the very basic, such as an end to the criminalization of drugs and playing music on the streets, to the somewhat grander, such as ending the suppression of homosexuality, or calling for free housing. Although it was not stated in so many words, the movement's main demand seemed to be: 'We want the world and we want it now'.

The fact that the protesters had not voiced any 'realistic' demands posed a further problem for the media, the public and the municipality.

How could these actions be interpreted? Even years later the historian Siegfried Mattl called the demonstration 'rätselhaft' (puzzling).[6] Efforts were made to engage in a dialogue with the 'movement' by the secretary-general of the social democratic party (the Sozialistische Partei Österreichs – SPÖ), Karl Blecha, a few days after 1 March, and with the interior minister, Erwin Lanc, that June.[7] But as the movement had no organizational centre and lacked a distinct political focus, it was seemingly impossible for the administration and politicians to draw the movement into some form of negotiation.

A new youth scene emerges

The Sponti demonstration however did not appear out of thin air. Rather, it followed up on earlier movements and developments. As early as the summer of 1976, artists, activists and young people had occupied the large Auslandsschlachthof (export slaughterhouse) site and dubbed it the 'Arena'. Two years later, in 1978, activists had founded a small non-commercial social centre, the Amerlinghaus, which was not self-managed but managed by an administration installed by representatives of the district and the city.

The three months of feverish activity in the 'Arena', were similar to the events centred around 1968 in other countries. This 'first Arena' was an enormous area, comprising a dozen buildings used for cultural, social and political events. In size and design it was comparable to Christiania in Copenhagen, if only a little smaller. It still remains the largest and most important squat in the history of Vienna.[8] The occupants included activists from traditional left-wing organizations and anarchists, and there were a great number of cultural and social initiatives. Tens of thousands participated in events and activities, at least as visitors. Others identified with the Arena as an emancipatory project. By the end of the summer of 1976, however, pressure from the administration of Vienna, combined with internal conflicts, caused the participants to leave the area voluntarily. One group of squatters continued to live and to work in the smaller Inlandsschlachthof (domestic slaughterhouse) and were tolerated, but existed in a legal grey area.

In the second half of the 1970s, a new generation of cultural and political activists joined the growing alternative scene, originating from the subsequent movements of 1968. On a cultural level, punk influenced a certain section of young people. In Vienna, the first bands began to perform punk music in the late 1970s, and records were published on a do-it-yourself basis with low distribution. The

new music also inspired a new life style. Continuous quarrels with the authorities ensued, as lots of punks wore studded belts considered as illegal weaponry by the police. After the authorities cancelled a punk party in the spring of 1979, a tense situation arose, and the police spent most of the night chasing some dozen punks and sympathizers through the city. These punks were present at most of the more radical demonstrations from 1 March onwards. However, the real breakthrough of punk as a cultural movement came later, with the establishment of band practice rooms and a stage in the GAGA building in May 1981.

In the spring of 1979, punks, alternative youths and activists got involved in a dispute over public space.[9] At that time, the Burggarten, a park in the centre of Vienna, was a meeting place for so-called hippies. The tabloid *Kronenzeitung* wrote about youths involved in 'sex and drugs and killing ducks'. However, because it was forbidden to walk on the lawn, people were expelled regularly. Subsequently, it became a weekly ritual to thus provoke the authorities and play a cat and mouse game with the police.[10]

People involved in what was now known as the Burggarten movement started to gather on a regular basis at the Amerlinghaus and soon after demanded a self-managed social and cultural centre. They organized a great number of demonstrations in support of their demands. This included a march into the town hall during an open-house day. The Amerlinghaus was also reoccupied reoccupied as part of this campaign. At the same time, activists tried to storm the 'alternative' city festival of the oppositional conservative Österreichische Volkspartei (Austrian Peoples' Party – ÖVP).

When the ÖVP hired the Viennese Phorushalle in autumn 1979 to organize an Ideenmarkt (Market of Ideas), advertised as an alternative event for young people, the movement interpreted it as a provocation. On the last day of the event, activists occupied the Phorushalle to emphasize their demand for an alternative centre. After the squatters left the site the next day, a chaotic situation ensued, while the police chased some hundred demonstrators through the city.[11] Although the activists did not succeed in acquiring a self-managed centre, all parks were subsequently opened to the public, followed a little later by the Burggarten as well.

The assemblies in the Amerlinghaus continued in the following months and years. In addition, a Häuserrat (housing council) was founded in the subsequent years, functioning as a coordinating group for collectives looking for places to live and work in an alternative way.

The city changes

During the elections of 1971, Bruno Kreisky's SPÖ gained an absolute majority and was able to govern Austria without having to form coalitions. This would remain so until 1983.[12] The government took many steps to modernize Austrian society through, among other things, a partial legalization of homosexuality and abortion.[13] At the same time, for the first time since the 1950s, the government faced a steep rise in unemployment. Although the number of unemployed people rose less than in other European countries, it was enough to alarm politicians, who feared a radicalization of unemployed youths.[14]

During local elections in Vienna, too, the SPÖ consistently won a majority of the vote.[15] Since the 1950s, they had concentrated their efforts on developing a 'modern' city, with large construction projects such as a new central hospital, the Allgemeines Krankenhaus, (general hospital – AKH), and infrastructural projects such as the underground train network and the Donauinsel (Danube Island) to prevent flooding. Their central concept of urban development was to tear down old houses built in the nineteenth century and erect modern ones in their place. Both within and outside the SPÖ, there was initially little opposition to this policy.[16]

However, by the late 1970s the level of criticism increased and the SPÖ came under pressure, both from new alternative and ecological movements, as well as from the more-traditional main opposition party, the ÖVP. In this period, the SPÖ lost a referendum on the construction of Austria's first atomic energy plant.[17] A similar confrontation prevented the redevelopment of a large recreational area, the Steinhofgründe, which was subsequently preserved.[18] The ÖVP used these confrontations to represent itself as a liberal, urban and ecological alternative to the SPÖ, and as such organized the previously mentioned city festival in spring 1978 and the following years.

The March 1981 demonstration came, therefore, at a time when Vienna's urban policies were being questioned, while youth unemployment, punk music and alternative scenes were on the rise. This combination caused both the ruling SPÖ, as well as the opposition, to draw the same conclusion: The city needed to change.

In this context, the demonstration on 1 March formed the last push for the city government to start rethinking their policies. Two short-lived squattings, on 1 and 23 May 1981, showed again that the new youth movement was more than a flash in the pan. As senseless and puzzling as the demonstration on 1 March might have looked, it now

forced the city of Vienna to act swiftly. The incident – but above all the possibility that the conflict would escalate further, as it had done in other European cities – became one of the main drives of the city administration. It feared that the unrest in other European cities could spread to Austria.[19]

Soon after, the municipality invited representatives of other European cities to help develop strategies to combat radical movements, as well as to make policy changes to modernize the city. One result included plans to offer spaces to artists and activists to prevent further squatting attempts.[20] Buildings belonging to Vienna were given to collectives and groups through short-time leases under specific conditions. The leases were called Prekariumsverträgen (precarious contracts).[21] The collectives or groups only had to pay for running costs such as water, rubbish collection and energy (gas and electricity). However, the contracts could be repealed any time, which happened on a number of occasions. At the same time, the city would not allow squatting. Collectives could run as self-managed initiatives but had to be connected to an official association. Nevertheless, some alternative and autonomous structures with their origins in such projects still exist today.

An example is the Rosa-Lila-Villa (pink-purple villa) in the sixth district, the first house in Vienna for lesbians and gays. A group of homosexuals leased the very prominent and visible house with a precarious contract in the summer of 1982. In autumn, they revealed that they planned to open an information centre for gays and lesbians. The social democratic community of Vienna funded it as a 'social project'. Conservatives, led by the ÖVP, which ruled the sixth district, opposed it fiercely and in doing so, momentarily negated their attempts to exhibit a liberal stance. But after the quarrels and riots surrounding squats in the Aegidigasse and Spalowskygasse in the same district, the Rosa-Lila-Villa seemed to be a relatively moderate project. In the end, the initiative gained normal leases and became a visible milestone in lesbian and gay emancipation.[22]

Even so, leasable objects were found only in districts with an active 'Gebietsbetreuung', an institution of the city for providing information and advice on social issues of housing, the living environment, infrastructure and urban renewal. In those districts some kind of sustainable redevelopment was achieved.[23] As a result, many projects were realized in the sixth district.

The creation or realization of many cultural projects was therefore supported by the city administration. The Arena in the Inlandsschlachthof was legalized and remains an important place for rock concerts. A group of

prominent Austrian musicians demanded a Rock House, which was eventually realized at the beginning of 1983. Another big project was the transformation of the defunct Technologisches Gewerbemuseum (Technical Trade Museum – TGM) into the WuK, an important alternative venue. The WuK soon became more professional and detached itself from the activist movement and more radical communities such as the punks and anarchists. When a number of them tried to acquire spaces in the WuK after the termination of the Gassergasse temporary lease in 1983, they were thrown out. The same happened three years later with people who had been evicted from the squat in the Ägidigasse and Spalowsygasse.

Many of these new collectives and alternative centres had a significant influence on the cultural climate of the 1980s. The new social movements and their projects, combined with new commercial venues and spaces, were what made Vienna such an attractive and diverse city in the 1980s. Underground art and fashion flourished, as did the city's nightlife.[24] Some say the cultural life of Vienna took off in the 1980s.[25]

The Kultur- und Kommunikationszentrum Gassergasse (Centre for Culture and Communication, the GAGA) followed a trajectory different to the WuK. A few days after 1 March, the keys to the former Wiener öffentliche Küchenbetriebsgesellschaft (Viennese Public Kitchen Operating Company – WÖK) were handed over to the respective activists, who had first laid eyes on the property months earlier. The GAGA became an important centre for the anarchist and punk scene. It was also used by a variety of different groups, mostly political. The building housed an anarchist printing collective, the 1 March Movement, named after the events in March, as well as INHALE (Initiative Hanf Legal – Initiative for the Legalization of Hemp). On top of that, it offered space for an alternative school, an alternative children's shop, a workshop for cars, as well as one for bicycles, a carpentry shop, released-prisoner care and the Häuserrat (housing council).[26]

Difficulties arose within the neighbourhood because of noise disturbances, problems with youths hanging outside the building after parties, alleged orgies and illegal drug usage. The police raided the centre from time to time – mostly because of noise disturbances – and in January 1983, they found a kilo of marijuana in a washing machine in the GAGA complex. Subsequently, the organization INHALE was banned and the city administration froze the subsidies for the necessary running costs (water and maintenance of the building). As a protest, activists organized an open-air concert on 26 June. However, clashes with the neighbours escalated. Supported by right-wing extremists, the residents started to throw stones at the GAGA participants. In the end, the police stormed the GAGA and

arrested all the people inside who had defended themselves against neighbours and right-wing activists. Part of this activism at the GAGA played a major role in the formation of the Viennese autonomous groups.

The making of the Viennese Autonomen

In Italy the radical, militant and libertarian Autonomia movement reached its peak in 1977. It consisted of alternative groups such as the Indiani Metropolitani (urban Indians), underground artists and intellectuals, as well as the more political Autonomia Operaio movement (workers' autonomy). As the movement demanded a city for all and propagated direct action, confrontations with the police ensued in large cities such as Rome and Bologna.[27] Although the movement was eventually repressed, many of their texts were translated into German and discussed in Vienna. People travelled to Italy and became acquainted with the autonomous scene. After their defeat in 1977, Viennese activists redirected their focus to West Berlin as the squatter capital of the 1980s. Inspired by their Italian and German counterparts, they dubbed themselves 'Autonomen'.

Some activists moved to the Aegidigasse after the eviction of the GAGA, adjacent to the longstanding Spalowskygasse centre. The first inhabitants of the Aegidigasse acquired precarious contracts, but in the following years, all empty flats in the house were occupied and squatted. In 1986, the final regular precarious contracts were stopped and the Aegidigasse became a 'real' squat. It grew to become the major social centre for the autonomous scene in the mid-1980s. In the summer of 1988, the police tried to gain access to a vacated apartment in the Spalowskygasse. However, for some hours a militant defence hindered the police from entering the building. Those defending the house escaped to the neighbouring Aegidigasse. The following day, a larger police force entered and searched the Aegidigasse. The entrance was demolished by an excavator and all inside were arrested. Both the Aegidigasse and the Spalowskygasse were torn down immediately. The defence of these squatted houses, however, was only part of autonomous activism in the second half of the 1980s. The regular clashes with the police during annual demonstrations against the opera ball (attended by many rich and prominent people), became just as famous as they were infamous.[28]

The demonstration on 1 March changed the 'youth movement' from a relatively peaceful phenomenon into a far more political and militant one. And it was a part of this group that eventually grew to become the Autonomen. In his book, the activist and historian Geronimo ironically called the squatter movement in West Berlin and Germany, as well as

the movements against atomic energy and large infrastructural projects, 'the making of the autonomist groups in the 1980s'.[29] The demonstration on 1 March could be interpreted as the decisive step to the 'making' of the Viennese Autonomen.

The events of March 1981 also influenced urban development policies. The redevelopment of some districts took shape in a different way, with more emphasis on communication with inhabitants, and on a more sustainable form of gentrification, in which renovation was preferred to the tearing down of buildings. For the first time in decades, Vienna became a centre for cultural renewal. This development was not limited to the rise of a lively punk scene, but included many musical styles. For example, a characteristically Viennese form of New Wave achieved wide popularity.[30] The most prominent artist in this scene was Falco, who began to make music in the underground performance band Drahdiwaberl.

Although the character of gentrification changed in the few districts experiencing autonomous activity, houses and apartments situated there became less affordable. The people who supported squatting and autonomous action had to look for housing in other places located further away from the centre. Since then the numerous squatter actions of the last decade tended to occur there.[31]

The youth unrest in Vienna in the 1980s, and the subsequent emergence of an autonomous movement, showed similarities to the developments in other European cities. Although it was relatively small on an international scale, it was nevertheless defining on a local level. The shift within the city towards a new form of urbanism also saw some parallels with international trends. Exceptional was the cultural shift from a provincial to a more cosmopolitan attitude, for which the occupation of the Arena had laid the foundation. The demonstration of 1 March and the following events only meant an acceleration of the changes.

Notes

1. *Arenazeitung* (1981), vol. 6, no. 3/4; R. Foltin (2004) *Und wir bewegen uns doch. Soziale Bewegungen in Österreich* (Vienna: Edition Grundrisse), p. 130; R. Foltin (2014) 'Squatting and Autonomous Action in Vienna 1976–2012', in B. van der Steen, A. Katzeff and L. van Hoogenhuijze (eds) *The City Is Ours: Squatting and Autonomous Movements in Europe from the 1970s to the Present* (Oakland: PM Press), pp. 255–77, p. 258; A. Suttner (2011) '*Beton brennt' Hausbesetzer und Selbstverwaltung im Berlin, Wien und Zürich der 80er* (Münster: Lit-Verlag), p. 243.

2. Foltin, *Und wir bewegen uns doch*, p. 95.
3. A. Holm (2010) *Wir bleiben Alle! Gentrifizierung – Städtische Konflikte um Aufwertung und Verdrängung* (Münster: Unrast-Verlag), p. 13.
4. The police and the media wrote about '*Terrorprofis aus der BRD*' (Professional terrorists from the Federal Republic of Germany). The Viennese rock and performance group Drahdiwaberl made a musical performance out of it: *Drahdiwaberl – Terrorprofis aus der BRD*: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gtn2hw6GObk, date accessed 15 April 2015.
5. 'SPÖ-Landesorganisation Wien, Wiener Konferenz am 5. März 1981' (Wiener Jugendkommission), p. 4, quoted in Suttner, '*Beton brennt*', p. 245.
6. S. Mattl (2007) 'Kultur und Kulturpolitik in der Ära Kreisky', in W. Maderthaner, S. Mattl, L. Musner and O. Penz (eds) *Die Ära Kreisky und ihre Folgen. Fordismus und Postfordismus in Österreich* (Vienna: Löcker), pp. 121–92, p. 185.
7. Suttner, '*Beton brennt*', p. 245.
8. Foltin, *Und wir bewegen uns doch*, p. 116, Foltin, 'Squatting and Autonomous Action in Vienna 1976–2012', p. 256.
9. See also L. Wieger (2010) Soziale Bewegung im öffentlichen Raum. Strategien und Praktiken emanzipatorischer Raumaneignung und gesellschaftlicher Raumproduktion (Vienna: MA Thesis).
10. Foltin, *Und wir bewegen uns doch*, p. 129, Foltin, 'Squatting and Autonomous Action in Vienna 1976–2012', p. 258.
11. Ibid., p. 129.
12. In 1970 the SPÖ became the strongest party in Austria for the first time (SPÖ 81 mandates, ÖVP 79, FPÖ 5) and formed a minority government. It was tolerated by the FPÖ (Freedom Party), in exchange for altering the voting system in favour of smaller parties. After the elections of 1971, the SPÖ got the absolute majority (SPÖ 93, ÖVP 80, FPÖ 10). Until 1983 the social democrats governed alone, between 1983 and 1986 in a coalition with the then-liberal FPÖ.
13. Compare Maderthaner et al., *Die Ära Kreisky und ihre Folgen* and many articles in R. Sieder, H. Steinert and E. Tálos (eds) (1995) *Österreich 1945–1995. Gesellschaft, Politik, Kultur* (Vienna: Verlag für Gesellschaftskritik), for example H. Eder, *Die Politik der Ära Kreisky*, p. 186, M. Fischer-Kowalsky, *Sozialer Wandel in den 1970er Jahren*, p. 200.
14. Members of the *Österreichisches Institut für Jugendkunde* (Austrian Institute for Youth Studies) visited Zurich and mentioned the unrest in their report. See Suttner, '*Beton brennt*', p. 243. See also *SPÖ-Landesorganisation Wien, Wiener Konferenz am 5. März 1981* (Wiener Jugendkommission), p. 2, quoted in Suttner, '*Beton brennt*', p. 243.
15. Between 1945 and 1987 from 50 per cent to 60 per cent, highest in 1973, 60.1 per cent. Since 1993 less than 50 per cent.
16. See also W. Förster and H. Wimmer (eds) (1987) *Stadterneuerung in Wien – Tendenzen, Initiativen, Perspektiven* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag).
17. Foltin, *Und wir bewegen uns doch*, p. 110.
18. S. Mattl (1998) 'Die lauen Jahre – Wien 1978 – 1985', in M.W. Drexler et al. (eds) *Idealzone Wien: Die schnellen Jahre* (Vienna: Falter), p. 86.
19. SPÖ-Landesorganisation Wien, Wiener Konferenz am 5. März 1981 (Wiener Jugendkommission), p. 2, quoted in Suttner, '*Beton brennt*', p. 244.

20. Suttner, '*Beton brennt*', p. 246.
21. The *Allgemeine bürgerliche Gesetzbuch* (ABGB, general civil code) from Austria takes this form of contract from Roman law. Something can be given for use but can be revoked by the lender at any time.
22. Foltin, *Und wir bewegen uns doch*, p. 137.
23. See H. Berger (1984) *Gebietserneuerung 1974–1984. Das Wiener Modell* (Vienna).
24. Drexler et al., *Idealzone Wien*; A. Bauer, M. Fürth and S. Kratochwil (eds) (2001) *Schwarzes Café:…das andere Wien 1981–2001. Wir haben keine Chance aber wir nutzen sie* (Vienna: Triton).
25. Drexler et al., *Idealzone Wien*, p. 118.
26. Suttner, '*Beton brennt*', p. 273 describes the development of the GAGA in great detail.
27. See S. Lotringer and C. Marazzi (2007) *Autonomia. Post-political Politics* (Los Angeles: Semiotext).
28. Foltin, *Und wir bewegen uns doch*, p. 174, Foltin, 'Squatting and Autonomous Action in Vienna 1976–2012', p. 262.
29. Geronimo (1995) *Feuer und Flamme. Zur Geschichte der Autonomen*, 4th revised version (Berlin and Amsterdam: Edition ID-Archiv). In English, *Fire and Flames. A History of the German Autonomist Movement* (Oakland: PM Press), p. 92.
30. Drexler et al., *Idealzone Wien*; Mattl, *Kultur und Kulturpolitik in der Ära Kreisky*.
31. See also R. Foltin (2011) *Und wir bewegen uns noch. Zur jüngeren Geschichte sozialer Bewegungen in Österreich* (Vienna: Mandelbaum Verlag).

3

Amsterdam Squatters on the Road: A Case Study in Territorial and Relational Urban Politics

Linus Owens

On 3 March 1980, in the heart of Amsterdam, an unstoppable force collided with an immovable object. Days earlier, after squatting a building on Vondelstraat, in a spontaneous burst of militant resistance, squatters drove back the police trying to evict them. Their hastily constructed barricades protected them over the weekend, but as the confrontation dragged on, authorities found a novel solution to break the impasse: tanks. Tensions over the housing crisis had been building for years; now the conflict between activists and authorities had finally come to a head. The tanks were meant to end the standoff and return things to normal. Yet as they accomplished the first goal, the second moved out of reach. Things would never be the same again.

Tanks on a collision course with flaming barricades in the streets of Amsterdam produced a dramatic spectacle highlighting struggles over real estate speculation, housing shortages and the rights and desires of young people. The story played widely in the media, first locally, then worldwide.[1] Yet as the tanks smashed through the barricades, clearing the way for eviction, the squatters inside were successfully negotiating their right to stay. This victory energized activists to further pursue their right to the city. While the housing struggle is the central story of the movement, the full picture is more complex. Victory at Vondelstraat reinforced squatters' claims to the local, but it also catapulted them beyond the local. Invitations for visits arrived from activists across Western Europe, eager to learn the secrets of Amsterdam. Exploiting their sudden international notoriety, they travelled to proselytize squatting and urban resistance, opening new spaces of mobility, identity and

politics. The movement combined the right to the city with a politics of mobility, showing how urban social movements operate in both territorial and relational spaces.[2]

The Amsterdam squatters' movement is central to understanding youth unrest and activism in Europe in the early 1980s. Its importance comes from its size, with nearly 10,000 participants, and its significant local political power.[3] This chapter argues that their mobile practices are fundamental to their influence. Protest and revolt erupted across Europe in 1980. Yet this was more than a series of local and national movements held together by a container called Europe. They shared more than a geographic space; they shared a social movement space, one which relied on active networks and information flows, sharing identity, knowledge and tactics through the physical movement of activists across local and national borders. How activism and resistance moves from the local to the transnational is under-theorized and poorly articulated. The Amsterdam case shows how local protest both feeds, and is fed by, trans-local activism and travel. The right to the city relies on a politics of mobility. The unstoppable force does not always oppose the immovable object. Simultaneously territorial and relational, urban movements can encompass both.

Stuck in Amsterdam

Amsterdam currently enjoys a reputation as an exciting destination for young people, full of creative spark and opportunity. In the late 1970s, however, Amsterdam was a city in crisis.

> The garbage along the streets, the dog-doo on the sidewalks, the torn-up roads, the purse-snatching and car radio theft, the tens of thousands of unemployed, the parking problem, the heroin needles in the doorways, the sluggish bureaucracy, the grouchy Amsterdammers, the run-down houses, the epidemic graffiti, the blind violence of the hooligans and other 'persistent drawbacks' lost the city its folkloric aspects and made living in the capital unbearable.[4]

Those who could escape left, leaving behind a shrinking city: smaller population, constrained finances and fewer opportunities.

Those remaining faced massive housing shortages produced by rampant real estate speculation and sluggish urban renewal projects. Despite widespread vacancy, young people seeking housing struggled

to find suitable accommodations through official channels. Waiting lists were long – often stretching over five years – locations were poor, frequently on the city margins, and options were limited, with no room for living circumstances beyond the nuclear family. Finding a place to live, and to live differently, in Amsterdam was a significant challenge facing many young people.

Squatting promised a solution, at once radical and practical. A 1914 Supreme Court decision made it legal to establish residency in an unused building by spending the night in the property with a table, a chair and a bed, effectively legalizing squatting in any building left vacant for at least a year. Although used by activists off and on from the 1920s,[5] squatting only became a serious political tactic in Amsterdam in the 1960s, when the radical group, the Provos, proposed their White House Plan. To fight real estate speculation and vacancy, doors of empty buildings were painted white to signal their availability for occupation. Despite some successes, like many of Provo's plans, it was more a fun prank than viable politics.[6] Nevertheless, political squatting grew sporadically throughout the early 1970s, with an early peak coming in the mid-1970s. Plans for a new metro line called for the demolition of a considerable housing block in the Nieuwmarkt neighbourhood. The city bought the properties, moving the residents out. The concentration of vacant buildings created optimal conditions for extensive squatting and, eventually, thousands of squatters moved in.[7] They were able to stay for over a year, benefiting from the considerable lag between vacating the properties and demolishing them. This gift of time and space allowed squatters to develop a strong community, a shared culture and commitment to the space itself. When eviction notices finally came in early 1975, squatters would not leave willingly, fighting back with large-scale resistance and street battles.[8] In the end, the squatters lost; they were evicted, the buildings came down and the metro was built.

As the 1970s drew to a close, evictions continued plaguing the movement. Although legal, squatting did not guarantee stability. Long-term occupations such as Nieuwmarkt were rare. Frequent evictions did not slow the pace of squatting; a nearly endless supply of vacant buildings provided many alternatives. Relocations took their toll however, disrupting efforts to form stable homes and build a sense of community. Seeking to break the cycle of squat-eviction-relocation, squatters tried to increase the costs of evictions. Initially, they relied on non-violent civil disobedience. Protesters would stand, arms linked, outside the building,

symbolically blocking the police, before relenting to the routine eviction process. An eviction in the Kinker district in 1978 however, presented a radical rupture to this choreographed resistance.

> Squatters from throughout the entire city were standing in front of the building [...] then the busses of riot police came in. Well, I had never seen such a thing, and I saw them coming towards me, and they ran towards the people and immediately began to beat them up. I was stunned. But I believe everyone was really stunned, because the entire group standing there had also personally never experienced that before, and they stood there yelling 'no violence, no violence' and the Riot Police kept hitting and beating them.[9]

Despite this unprecedented attack, squatters maintained their non-violent stance throughout, unable to revise their own eviction script in that moment. Squatters soon adapted their tactics to this changed landscape. As squatter Leen remembered: 'At the following protests, we had to do something. We could no longer allow our side to remain non-violent while being beat up by the police'.[10] The Groote Keyser, an enormous squatted group of buildings in the canal district, but with few permanent residents, did not seem the obvious location for squatters to make their stand.[11] Threatened with eviction in October 1979, the residents left willingly. What it lacked in committed residents, however, the Keyser made up for in size, strategic location and the symbolic power of its position in the real estate speculation markets. 'It was time for a speculator's property that could be used to make the step between passive resistance and active defence. The Keyser was big and empty, and everyone fit inside it'.[12] Residents were promptly replaced by a group of militant squatters from across the city and beyond. They set to work fortifying the building against eviction, barricading doors and windows, and collecting weapons for fighting the police. Security for the building was tight. As the eviction neared, security grew tighter, effectively cutting the building off from the city.[13] The Groote Keyser would be the line in the sand; squatters planned to meet the violence of the police with violence of their own.

Hoping to avoid further escalation, city authorities negotiated a deal to allow the squatters to stay in the Groote Keyser. They avoided a confrontation, but the fuse had already been lit, and it did not take long for it to go off. When a building on Vondelstraat was evicted in February 1980, squatters vowed to retake it. To distract the police, they organized a march in another part of the city, allowing a smaller group to re-squat the building. When the march led back to Vondelstraat, the participants

provided reinforcements. Relying on the element of surprise and an outpouring of unexpectedly militant tactics, they successfully pushed back the police lines through a barrage of paving stones.[14]

Safely inside the barricades, squatters made three demands: they must be able to stay in the building, the riot police must disperse and a recently arrested squatter must be released. Once these demands were met, they would dismantle the barricades and reopen the roads. The city council refused and the situation settled into a tense standoff. Meanwhile, squatters and supporters celebrated their success, filling their newly created free space with spontaneous outbreaks of community and joy. As the weekend wound down, authorities moved to forcefully resolve the situation. Flyers dropped from helicopters warned protesters to expect harder tactics, and early Monday morning tanks arrived to break open the barricades once and for all. They successfully reopened the streets but they did little to address the larger issues. The public strongly supported the squatters.[15] After all this, the authorities agreed to the squatters' demands, and they remained in the building. The barricades were now gone, but they were no longer needed.

Vondelstraat ushered in a new period of active resistance. Successfully defeating the police and the city council gave squatters a greater sense of political possibility. This battle marked a turning point, pushing the movement from a housing struggle to a larger urban revolt. As squatter Willem put it, 'It was at Vondelstraat that I became a real squatter'.[16] More than simply occupying buildings, squatting required the active defence of urban space and the demand for a more inclusive and responsive political system. They were not just demanding housing; they were demanding the city.

Squatting and the right to the city

The right to the city is an increasingly important principle for urban social movements.[17] Initially coined by Lefebvre,[18] this right encompasses the demand for housing, cultural autonomy and participatory democracy,[19] values all at play within the Amsterdam movement. As Uitermark, Nicholls and Loopmans argue, today, the right to the city 'often serves as a discursive vehicle to reinvigorate squatting movements which, after their expansion in the 1980s and the subsequent contraction and isolation of the 1990s, seek to broaden their agenda'.[20] Even though they used different terminology, the right to the city framework was already a guiding factor in the early politics of squatting in Amsterdam.

Accessible housing is central to this right.[21] Amsterdam squatters were at the forefront of the fight for housing for all. Squatting provides 'a practical defence of the right to decent and affordable housing'.[22] Squatting protects those who might otherwise be excluded from urban spaces. Moreover, squatting explicitly challenges these forces of exclusion, 'the neoliberal forces of the late capitalistic stages: financial speculators, real estate developers, and the policymakers that favour them and exclude the worst-off from access to affordable housing'.[23] As the Groote Keyser defence shows, Amsterdam squatters situated their struggle within the broader context of municipal housing policy and market-driven real estate development.

A popular slogan within the movement proclaimed squatting was more than putting a roof over one's head.[24] The same is true of the right to the city: housing is part of a larger whole. As Martinez and Cattaneo argue, 'if squatting constitutes an essential claim to satisfy housing needs as a right to housing, at the same time it is also a claim to satisfy social needs'.[25] Nieuwmarkt provides one example of how squatting offered the space and freedom to experiment with collective living, building communities supported by new lifestyles and relationships.

Democratic political participation is another key component of the right to the city. Existing primarily outside of standard parliamentary politics, squatting nevertheless provided an entry point into Amsterdam politics, first through the movement and then through direct engagement with municipal authorities. Pattaroni describes the importance of political inclusion for squatters in his analysis of Geneva: 'Faced with a city that seemed to be increasingly governed by the laws of the market, it was crucial to defend the idea that a city could be conceived, designed and used by those who lived there rather than by those who owned it financially'.[26] Housing policy, weak economic conditions and unemployment, as well as an unresponsive municipal government combined to marginalize young people from the city – both physically and politically. At Vondelstraat, squatters demanded fuller participation for excluded groups. Squats and the broader movement served as a primary focus of urban political praxis, where activists built cultures of participatory democracy.[27]

Amsterdam squatters clearly embodied the right to the city paradigm. But it would be a mistake to categorize them exclusively through this framework. This is partly because the idea itself may be too broad. Researchers frequently overuse and overextend useful concepts, in this case applying the label of 'the right to the city' to all urban movements.[28] But the concept also distracts from other important political

spaces. Uitermark, Nicholls and Loopmans make the strongest case against stretching the concept. They argue that a focus on the right to the city locks the analysis at the level of the city, making it difficult to follow how cities connect into movements operating beyond specific urban spaces, a situation they find remarkable, since 'the right to the city movement is itself a global movement that not only unites activists and academics within cities but also (and especially) activists and academics rooted within and moving between urban nodes'.[29] To supplement this territorial framing of urban movements, they propose taking more relational perspectives.

The Amsterdam movement is not simply organized around local city politics; it also draws on relations to various other cities. The right to the city is only one part of this story. The other part includes what might be called a politics of mobility, the desire, freedom and ability to move. Squatters remained focused on the city, but this focus expanded beyond the confines of their specific city, Amsterdam. Following their movements exposes the 'relational conduits where movements connect and develop'.[30] Within the context of European youth movements, Amsterdam acts as one of many urban 'nodes in relational networks of meaning and collective identity which may stretch far beyond its territorial boundaries'.[31]

Following the events around Vondelstraat, squatters in Amsterdam pursued two separate but intersecting paths. Firstly, they used their newfound local strength to successfully push for better housing and extend their right to the city. Secondly, they used their newfound international acclaim to push their influence beyond Amsterdam's borders. Vondelstraat, and the media spectacle surrounding it, established Amsterdam simultaneously as both a singular and a more general expression of the problems afflicting cities across Europe. Bridging the unique with the universal, Amsterdam squatters hit the road to spread their tactical and strategic visions, building new networks of trust and collective identity in the process.

Beyond Amsterdam

The politics of Amsterdam spilled into other cities, first through media images circulating throughout Europe and the world. While mass media rapidly distributes news and information far and wide, it rarely carries the politics and practices of radical movements effectively. This is partially because mainstream news often portrays such movements negatively, especially those using violent tactics.[32] Activist media,

while more accurately representing the movement, still works better for sharing information than teaching practice. A movement based so strongly in tacit knowledge – from how to squat a building to how to defend it – required other ways of sharing information, namely physical travel between activist cities.

In the months following Vondelstraat, Amsterdam squatters criss-crossed Europe, visiting cities such as London, Paris, Rome, Barcelona, Madrid, Zürich, and multiple destinations in Germany, including West Berlin, Hamburg and Cologne, along with numerous smaller cities. Invited by local activists to give presentations, they discussed tactics, successes and overall experiences, not only with squatting, but also the construction of a movement and urban politics. They brought films of evictions and protests, reading material covering both theory and practice, and spoke to crowded rooms of eager activists. Their primary message was: Amsterdam expertise could be exported into new urban environments to serve local resistance.

Most visits focused mainly on sharing information and translating it into the local context. At times, this could be as straightforward as introducing squatting into a new environment. In 1980, Madrid lacked any significant squatting scene. When Amsterdammers visited, they came in order to make the general case for squatting.[33] Other destinations with an ongoing history of squatting, such as London or Rome, asked for more specialized knowledge on successful tactics. This model of information exchange culminated in international squatting conferences, bringing together squatters from across Europe, first in Paris in 1980 and the following year in Münster, Germany. Travel allowed activists to develop new networks, to share knowledge and experiences, and to transfer local knowledge from one place to another, creating a foundation for developing trust and shared identity across multiple urban nodes.

Germany was the most popular destination for these trips, facilitated by physical proximity as well as already-existing activist networks linking the two countries, which provided a foundation of shared trust and identity. This allowed travelling squatters to share more militant practices, which depended on tacit knowledge that transfers best through direct contact. In a 1980 travel report, a group of Amsterdam squatters, recently returned from a tour of German cities, described the importance of existing ties for travel. These ties facilitated both 'official' and less formal forms of activist travel.

In the previous year many Amsterdam squatters had travelled to Germany to see how squatting plays out there. Also, on their own initiative, people 'toured' German squat-cities to explain squatter activities

in Amsterdam, bringing with them films and video. There was a great interest for such information in Germany.[34]

Nichols argues that more information and contact encourages more travel.[35] In this case, visitors from Amsterdam piqued people's desire to see the place first hand. Many German activists made the pilgrimage to the city, eager to experience the dramatic public side of squatting, as well as the social life and community inside its private spaces, which was only accessible through travel.[36] These informal visits moved through existing networks – often friends visiting friends – as well as expanding those networks, introducing new people into the mix. Together, these trips created an active circuit of movement and interaction, binding the different activists closer together.

Cologne squatters were first to invite their Amsterdam comrades for a visit. At a series of meetings, Amsterdammers described specific recent actions, along with their general tactical shift towards active resistance, which they touted as a model for squatters elsewhere.[37] These meetings also provided space for locals to share information on their own projects. Attendees in Cologne came to learn about squatting in Amsterdam, but they also discovered new local projects. 'Many people coming to the talk were also first exposed to the new squat, Stollwerck, which they hope will be the start of larger involvement in the movement there'.[38] Later, a different group of squatters arrived in Hamburg. A poster promoted the event thusly:

> In Amsterdam 50,000 people seek housing. Just as many people in Hamburg have been seeking housing for years. Must Hamburgers also soon start squatting? The Dutch squatter has already existed for 10 years. We want to learn from them how they fight the housing crisis. Therefore we have invited squatters from Amsterdam to a discussion.

In this way, trips to Germany were similar to trips to other destinations; Amsterdam squatters shared information about their movement and met new people.

Authorities at the destinations on the Amsterdammers' itinerary suspected that these meetings were more than just sessions for sharing information or friendship-building exercises. They saw something nefarious: Amsterdam's social unrest spilling into their own cities. In Hamburg, the local paper warned, 'The rioters are coming!'[39] Describing their trip to Cologne, a group of squatters reported: 'The way the press criminalizes squatters was highlighted by the visit of 4 squatters to town

and the headlines, "Help! The Squatters are Coming!" and "Chaos in Cologne" – as if the Amsterdam squatters had come to participate in the violent defence of the big squat in town'.[40] Travelling squatters symbolized the threats of a politics of mobility – mobile activists meant sharing tactics, spreading identities and growing movements, introducing unrest into new localities. Such headlines could be dismissed as the sensationalism of the conservative press, and, in most cases, all that happened when Amsterdam squatters visited was an information session. But the strong shared trust and identity among Amsterdam squatters and squatters from German cities did allow additional practices to flow through the networks. Yes, the rioters were coming, and sometimes they brought the riots with them.

Ties between Amsterdam and West Berlin were particularly robust, with a long history of interaction. When Amsterdam squatters came to West Berlin, they did more than share stories, they also shared the streets. One particular visit in December 1980 highlights the nature of this relationship. When squatters violently resisted an eviction in the Kreuzberg district, authorities questioned the role Amsterdammers played in the event. 'German police reports pointed not only to the presence of Amsterdam squatters, but also that fighting methods employed appeared transplanted directly from the Netherlands'.[41] Newspaper coverage noted, 'Amsterdammers' presence on the violent front line is no surprise to German police, because Amsterdam squatters were already active in West Berlin'.[42] The frequency of their presence provided a strongly shared identity and level of trust between activists, increasing their likelihood not just to participate in the action but even to take the lead. Different tactics travel differently. Those that depend on tacit knowledge and practice do not travel well through the media or weak social ties, instead relying heavily on activist travel through established networks.

While the Amsterdam-West Berlin axis constituted the most important route, it was far from the only link used to transmit more hands-on learning. In March 1981, Amsterdammers visited Nuremberg, a city with no significant squatting scene. The head of the local youth centre had travelled to Amsterdam in order to learn how to squat. Upon his return, he invited Amsterdammers to teach others about the movement. Their first visit in January 1981 attracted nearly 200 people.[43] The visitors planned to screen films of their protests, but uneasy officials prevented the city-funded youth centre from showing them. Worried this was the first step towards importing Amsterdam's civil unrest into peaceful Nuremberg, the chief of police complained:

> The youth learned precisely how squatters in Amsterdam work, tactics against the police, how to best barricade their house, or how to resist eviction by the police [...] I find that scandalous. There are only a few vacant houses here. What the Dutch squatters are doing now in Germany is very dangerous.[44]

When Amsterdammers returned in March to show the films in a space outside city officials' direct control, police and activists both came prepared. The meeting was shut down and activists responded with a spontaneous protest, marching through the city, leaving behind a wake of broken windows and vandalized cars. Naturally, everything was blamed on the Amsterdam squatters.[45] Increasingly, city authorities wanted to keep Amsterdammers from visiting their towns but they were fighting a losing battle. One outcome of the Amsterdammers' travels was that the mobility of their tactics relied less and less on their own mobility. Activist networks, once formed, were hard to break, and as they grew denser, they allowed information and practices to bypass roadblocks set up by authorities. The shortest connection was not always a straight line.

Travelling squatters produced locally grounded networks of mobile activists with a corresponding new sense of political space, what Chatterton calls 'autonomous geographies'.[46] Amsterdam squatters initially demanded the right to the city, specifically to their own city. Activist travel, however, pushed them beyond Amsterdam, contributing to the development of a trans-urban space of social movement. This space produced difference locally and sameness trans-locally. Amsterdam squatters called for a city that belonged to everyone. Squats served as inclusive spaces for cultivating and defending difference against an otherwise homogenizing urban landscape. A politics of mobility encouraged activists to move through various urban hubs. Information and tactics flowed through these networks, building relationships of trust based on shared experiences and identity. Thus, at the network level, squatters produced not difference but sameness.[47] This relational space, in which information flowed, linked radical urban movements across Europe, making them closer and more similar to each other, while at the same time creating a stronger, more oppositional identity of difference towards local political players.

Conclusion

Creating a broader space of social movement, located in cities, but also across cities, fuelled the growth of squatting and other urban revolts in

Europe in the early 1980s. Amsterdam was the centre of the squatting world in 1980, boasting the largest and most militant squatter movement in Europe. They were also the most mobile. The Vondelstraat confrontation solidified their position as a powerful force, demanding an expanded right to the city for the young residents of Amsterdam. Additionally, their success in Amsterdam opened doors for cultivating new connections and deepening existing relationships with urban activists spread across Europe. Examining the right to the city and a politics of mobility together reveals underappreciated aspects of urban movements, which are at once territorial and relational. Nicholls argues: 'Successful movements tend to depend on both territorially intensive and geographically extensive relations for pooling and deploying resources'.[48] Urban movements succeed thanks to a dialectic of stability and mobility: sometimes demands for mobility are the most effective form of resistance, while at other times stability works better. Truly effective movements can be at once an unstoppable force and an immovable object.

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4

Beyond the Metropolises: Youth Centre Initiatives in the 'Youth Revolt' of 1980–81 in West Germany

David Templin

In December 1980, a new phenomenon of youth unrest was discussed in the West German media: 'West Berlin – Zürich – Amsterdam – Freiburg – Bremen – Hannover – Hamburg: Jugendkrawalle' (youth unrest) was the headline of news magazine *Der Spiegel*, which reported on barricades, broken windows, street fights and 'rebellious youth'.[1] The following year, the German Federal Office of Criminal Investigation (BKA) counted 595 incidents of squatting in empty houses in 153 cities all over the republic.[2] Protests against a 'new housing shortage' merged with new forms of youth radicalism and a rejection of traditional norms and values. But was the shape of these protests really new, or can we speak of this 'youth unrest' as the climax or peak of already-prevalent practises and actions? How do we relate the events of 1980–81 to the movements and youth culture of the 1970s, for example, regarding the degree of politicization?

As a wave of squatting started in cities such as West Berlin and Freiburg in 1980 and soon spread to other cities, the political struggle for urban spaces by young people in West Germany already had a history. The Jugendzentrumsbewegung (youth centre movement), which evolved after 1970–71 especially in small and medium-sized cities, can be seen in some ways as a predecessor of the youth protests of 1980–81 with regard to the practise of squatting and the attempt to create autonomous spaces for young people and their alternative lifestyles. Local action groups formed largely by grammar-school pupils, but also by apprentices, young workers and a minority of students – predominantly males – demanded self-governing youth centres from the local authorities in

West Germany. The creation of spaces, free from parental control and pedagogic or communal authority, was the common aim of the movement – expressed in the call for Selbstverwaltung (self-government).[3]

In 1974 more than one thousand of these groups existed all over West Germany.[4] A minority of them, especially in larger cities, began to squat houses to establish youth centres on their own. In some cities these struggles were combined with struggles against urban restructuring, for example when old buildings in urban renewal areas were squatted. Between 1971 and 1974 more than 50 houses had been squatted in order to establish independent youth centres.[5] Yet the majority of these action groups used more moderate ways such as petitioning, talking to local representatives and rallying to reach their goals. Despite widespread scepticism and distrust on the side of the authorities, over the course of the 1970s several hundred self-governing youth centres were founded in West Germany.

The youth centre movement continued to be active during the second half of the 1970s and the early 1980s. From 1975 onwards more and more local initiatives and youth centres in suburban and small-town areas started to form associations and committees to coordinate their activities on regional, supra-regional and national levels. Despite talk of a 'crisis of the movement' around 1975 and several closings (enforced by local authorities or due to internal problems), contemporary estimations from 1977 assumed that there still existed more than 1,200 local initiatives or self-governing youth centres.[6] For 1981, I could identify 423 youth centre groups, but the real number was probably much higher.[7] A survey from 1981–82 registered about 200 self-governing youth centres in the state of Hesse alone.[8]

In this chapter, I firstly analyse continuities between this movement and the urban unrest in German cities in 1980–81. Secondly, I examine the role of urban space for this movement, especially the relationship between urban centres and 'the periphery': suburban and small-town-areas. The third aim is to identify not only similarities but also differences between the movement of the 1970s and the 'youth revolt' of 1980–81, as well as contemporary developments of youth culture that do not fit into the narrative of revolt.[9]

Continuities between the youth centre movement and the youth revolt

The struggle for self-organized spaces played a crucial role in the youth revolt of 1980–81, especially in the form of squatted houses, which

served primarily as living spaces but often also had rooms to meet in, such as a cafe or bar. Already-established self-governing youth centres also provided spaces – for the new movements, as well as for new forms of youth culture. Some of these buildings and places, which had been created over the course of a local youth centre movement in the early 1970s, became affected by a new kind of radicalism and emerged as spaces for an autonomous left-wing movement.

Two illustrative examples from Hanover and Nuremberg confirm such a development. When a riot against the oath-taking ceremony of the West German army erupted in November 1980 in the city of Hanover, a regional capital in northern Germany, the police held the independent youth centre UJZ Kornstraße (founded in 1972) responsible. Shop windows had been smashed and stores plundered. On the same day the police surrounded and searched the youth centre. The local newspaper spread the accusation that the riots had been planned by the activists of the Kornstraße with 'military precision'.[10] A similar episode occurred in Nuremberg, the second biggest city in Bavaria, in March 1981. During a spontaneous demonstration following a film screening about Dutch squatters several shop windows were broken. The demonstration ended at the self-governing cultural and youth centre KOMM (founded in 1973), which was surrounded by the police: 172 people were arrested, and 141 of them remained in custody for longer than a day, some for weeks. The actions of the police provoked an intense public debate on a national level.[11]

Yet it was not only in existing youth centres that ideas and practises of the new 'youth revolt' were picked up. Despite the success of several hundred youth centre initiatives during the 1970s, a lot of groups – especially in small-town areas but also in peripheral districts of larger cities – still had no rooms to utilize or in which to meet. Some of these groups were influenced by the impulses of the metropolitan squatting movement. For 1980 and 1981 I could identify more than 46 buildings throughout West Germany that were squatted by youth centre initiatives – 60 per cent of them in small and medium-sized towns.[12] About three quarters of these occupations aimed at creating a new youth centre, while the other quarter sought to defend already-established centres, which were to be closed. If one looks closer at the youth initiatives responsible for these occupations, one can find groups that had been active for years (some of them for five or ten years), while others were newly formed in 1979 or 1980.[13]

Old buildings, former factories and schools were chosen by the squatters: some of the young activists combined the struggle for a youth centre

with the fight against real estate speculation. For example, in Ginnheim, a district in the north of Frankfurt, young squatters proclaimed:

> The occupation was a way for us to show the public and the authorities the misery in which young people find themselves in Ginnheim. We accuse Mr. Preisler and Mr. Herskovits of promoting the decay of old yet still beautiful and intact houses in order to tear them down and build tremendous tower blocks in their place.[14]

Occupations of already-existing youth centres aimed at preventing closures: for example in Kressbronn, a small municipality with 7,000 inhabitants on Lake Constance in the south of Germany. The self-governing local youth club had existed since 1973. In 1980 the municipality terminated their agreement, and the authorities won the resulting eviction lawsuit. In October 1981, the activists reacted by squatting their building in order to prevent its closure. After four days the police evicted the young people.[15]

Most of the occupations ended with an eviction by the police – sometimes after a few hours, while others lasted several weeks or months. Noticeably, in contrast to the metropolitan 'riot pictures' of 1980–81, many groups of youth centre squatters stressed the peaceful nature of their action. Some of them announced their resistance to eviction 'in a passive and non-violent way'.[16] In none of the accounts of evictions of squatted youth centres could I find larger incidents of violence occurring. In many cases, the young people simply stayed inside until the police carried them out of the building. This was the case at the eviction of a squatted building in Radolfzell, a city with 23,000 inhabitants on the shores of Lake Constance, in July 1980. Only a few squatters resisted, some throwing excrement and planks at the police, while most of the people simply sat down and waited.[17] In small towns where the scene of the radical activists was much smaller and the anonymity of nonconformist actions considerably lower than in big cities, violent clashes between protesters and policemen remained rare events.

The use of established independent youth centres as spaces for this new unrest, as well as the squatting carried out by old and new initiative groups, show the connections between the youth centre movement and the youth revolt. The ties and intersections between these two phenomena also become obvious when we look at the supra-regional level. For example, in 1980–81 the circular of the Koordinationsbüro für die Initiativgruppen der Jugendzentrumsbewegung e.V. (Coordination Office for Initiative Groups of the Youth Centre Movement), a nationwide

operating committee that formed in 1973 and had close ties to the German Communist Party (DKP), frequently reported on squattings that were intended to establish youth centres, but also living space.[18] And at a meeting of youth centres in the federal state of Lower Saxony in June 1981, young people from small-town groups came together with squatters from West Berlin. In the documentation of the meeting it was noted that most of these squatters 'had formerly participated in youth centre initiatives, too'.[19]

Youth revolt – beyond the metropolitan centres

The youth revolt of 1980–81 in West Germany was not just a phenomenon in large cities such as West Berlin, Hanover or Bremen, for it also occurred in 'provincial' areas, in suburban and small-town regions. Youth initiatives there adopted new forms and discourses of culture, protest and lifestyle from the metropolises and implemented them in their own areas. *Der Spiegel* stated in an attention-grabbing piece in March 1981: 'The riots between squatters and public security forces have relocated to the province: There, the demands of the drop out youth for autonomy and their own youth houses are rejected.'[20]

Having its roots in towns with less than 100,000 inhabitants characterized the youth centre movement of the 1970s.[21] It promoted the pervasion of rural and suburban areas with new styles of youth culture, as well as new political ideas of self-determination and grassroots democracy. Self-governing youth centres in the smallest municipalities served as spaces for these new cultural and political forms, acted out by the younger generation: With long hair, blues, folk and rock music, open-air festivals, disruptions of city councils and demonstrations, the young people often provoked the conservative inhabitants of small towns. While in the early 1970s initiatives in small-town and suburban areas tried to follow the models developed in the main arenas of revolt, in the second half of the decade initiatives and youth centres in more 'provincial' areas began to create their own networks and articulated a new provincial self-confidence. In his book *Provinzleben* (Provincial Life), published in 1977, Albert Herrenknecht, youth centre activist from the small town of Wertheim in Baden-Württemberg, argued for the appropriation of the term 'province' by the left as a 'term of struggle [...] against the technocratic centralism of the cities'.[22] In his view, self-governing youth centres and other forms of alternative infrastructure could create bases for left-wing and nonconformist activists to stay and further the cause in the province. With the youth centre movement, but

also with protests against nuclear power plants and attempts to create living and working communes in rural areas, the left wing and the alternative milieu arrived in the countryside.

The youth revolt of 1980–81 should be viewed against the backdrop of these changes in the relationship between large cities and the periphery. Again, the wave of squatting in the metropolitan centres provided initiatives in smaller towns with an instrument they could apply for their own purposes. When local police evicted the young activists from Kressbronn (mentioned above) they asked in a statement whether the authorities were trying to 'create a situation such as in Berlin'.[23] Kressbronn was not West Berlin, but the young activists identified with the movement and events in the metropolis and sought to adopt a practise by an urban social movement, in this case squatting, in their own small-town context. But the question in the statement also functioned like a warning directed to the authorities and the local public: Nobody in Kressbronn should want to have such a chaotic set of circumstances as in Berlin.

Based on already-established alternative political networks, the impulses from the 'strongholds' of the movement fell on fertile ground. If you look at the number of squattings of youth centres, the percentage of those taking place in smaller cities rose after 1975.[24] Young people from smaller cities moved to large cities like Berlin and established personal connections between urban centres and the urban periphery or countryside.

In addition to the links between West German metropolises and the 'provincial' areas, transnational connections can also be identified. This is especially true for the reception of youth unrest in Switzerland and the Netherlands. In youth centres in Hanover, Nuremberg or even small cities such as Weinheim (in the state of Baden-Württemberg) films of the protests in Zurich or Amsterdam were shown.[25] In Neckargemünd, a town with 10,000 inhabitants in the south of Germany, activists painted walls with graffiti slogans such as 'Zürich – Berlin – Neckargemünd?' as they fought with authorities for more financial support for their self-governing youth centre.[26] And at the same time activists from Zurich looked at the history of the West German youth centre movement as a learning example for their own struggle. Five Swiss activists travelled through West Germany and gathered information in several self-governing youth centres. In 1981 they published a book about their tour, *Freiraum Autonomes Jugendzentrum* (Free Space Autonomous Youth Centre), in which they evaluated their experiences at different centres. By criticizing the German youth centres for their institutional and

contractual compromises, the activists from Switzerland outlined their own understanding of full 'autonomy'.[27]

Visions and concepts of autonomous spaces

The squatting for self-governing youth centres in the early 1980s resembled in many ways those that had happened ten years earlier. But these activities were only one part of the larger youth revolt of 1980–81 – an offshoot, in which appear continuities to protests in suburban and small-town areas. By comparing the revolt with the youth centre movement of the 1970s, it is also possible to point out differences and new developments. Even contemporary observers compared the generation of '1980' with that of '1968'. *Der Spiegel* emphasized the habitual differences:

> Different to the times of the APO [extra-parliamentary opposition of 1966–69], young dropouts prefer to take to the streets for their own purposes. While the revolt of 68 proclaimed preferably universal theories in the abstract jargon of social scientists, young people of the 80s [...] speak in the language of emotional egocentrism.[28]

At the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s alternative youth culture and its expressions had changed. Instead of the earlier dominance of theoretical discourses (especially Marxist and neo-Marxist), an optimistic view of a new socialist society to come and the strong influence of political organizations, activists of these new youth cultures were more anti-institutional, 'emotionally' oriented and shared a pessimistic view of society.[29] With new styles and subcultures such as punk, parts of the younger generation distanced themselves from the former hippie culture – even if it was still present.

While the struggle for creating autonomous, self-organized urban spaces linked the youth centre movement and youth revolt, the visions and conceptions of autonomous spaces also changed notably between 1971 and 1981. In the youth centre movement of the 1970s the notions of Jugend (youth) and Freizeit (leisure time) had been very important for the discourse of the movement. Furthermore, the early youth centre initiatives projected a lot of hope into the notion of Selbstverwaltung (self-government). This conception of self-government was based on the idea that all visitors to a youth house should participate in the process of decision-making. The youth centre movement had close connections to left-wing educationalists, and theories of 'emancipatory' or 'anti-capitalist youth work' were picked up.[30] By practising self-organization

in their leisure time, young activists also hoped to prepare the ground for resistance in the workplace. Young activists from the small municipality Schweich (in the state of Rhineland-Palatinate) described their vision of a self-governing youth centre in a leaflet from 1974 as follows: 'A youth centre, which we organise and govern by ourselves. There we want to find recreation from dull work at the company and at school but also think collectively about our daily engagement with the family, school, workplace and our leisure time [...].'[31] Other groups wanted young people in youth houses to 'develop a critical consciousness and recognise social and political relationships'.[32] But even when the activists intended to bridge the gap between leisure and work, in order to create a society of self-organization beyond capitalism, this distinction remained crucial in their thinking.

The concepts for autonomous spaces in the youth revolt of 1980–81 resembled, but also differed from, those of the early 1970s: The notions of 'leisure time' and 'youth' became less important for the activists, and the links to left-wing varieties of pedagogy and institutionalized youth work more and more disappeared. Instead of creating spaces with the narrow function of providing rooms for young people in their leisure time, occupied buildings were now perceived as places for a unity of living, working (or non-working), being politically active and just spending time. Hopes for creating a new socialist society had already been shattered by the effects of the economic crisis of 1973–75. This became obvious after 1977 when most communist and socialist organizations fell into a state of crisis and lost a lot of their members.[33] Instead of waiting for the revolution, a new 'autonomous' life, in a radical sense, was something to be practised in the here and now. An activist of the autonomous centre Kukuk in the district Kreuzberg in West Berlin stressed this idea in an interview:

> Practically, this means for me, when I squat a house, I want to create a space for myself, in which I can practise a form of life, which is not so fixed as in society as a whole. [...] The point for me is that I am coming closer to myself, together with other people, and I am able to develop and also pinpoint my true needs and abilities. [...] Our new forms of life and the fact that we are breaking away from their work process are for themselves a danger to the system.[34]

Such a holistic approach stemmed from discourses and social practises of the alternative milieu in the second half of the 1970s, but also had its roots in the squatting carried out in the early 1970s by Spontis (a

contemporary current of the extra-parliamentary radical left) and their fusion of militancy and subjectivist politics.[35] For many activists the notion of youth no longer served as a positive point of reference, while the ideas and concepts of self-government and self-organization remained relevant. Conceptually, these ideas were embodied in the frequently used term autonomes Zentrum (autonomous centre) or Kultur- und Kommunikationszentrum (centre of culture and communication) instead of selbstverwaltetes Jugendzentrum (self-governing youth centre).[36] A radical gesture of refusal, combined with more affective and sensitive ways of articulation had replaced the more intellectual discourses of '1968' and that period's subsequent movements such as the youth centre movement.

Depoliticization and generational shift at the turn of the 1980s

Relating the youth revolt of 1980–81 to the youth centre movement of the 1970s and early 1980s enables us to better estimate the degree of political engagement and activism of young people in the early 1980s. While new impulses revitalized the youth centre movement in some towns, youth houses in many others had been affected by a growing depoliticization among the youth.

The documents of self-organized youth centres of the late 1970s and early 1980s are full of complaints about tendencies towards a generational shift, depoliticization and the loss of the importance of key ideas. For example, activists complained of a lost sense of self-government in the established youth centres. In 1981 an activist in the small city of Bramsche in Lower Saxony romanticized the 'old days' and contrasted them with the current situation in the local youth house:

> Those were the days when we were 'young and active'. [...] But political work seems to be over now.[37]

Other activists or contemporary observers noted that – while the old generation of activists had to fight for self-government and the sheer existence of an open youth house – these things had become a matter of course for the teenagers and new users of the centres born in the 1960s.[38]

Since the very beginning, a gap between activists and consumers – the latter described by activists as 'passive' – had been a problem for nearly every self-governing youth centre. The idea of self-government as the integration of every single user in a democratic process

of decision-making seemed to turn out to be nothing more than a utopian illusion. Furthermore, personal changes to the core group of activists became a recurring phenomenon. After they finished school, many young activists left the town and/or turned their backs on the local youth house. At the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s the generation that had taken part in the heyday of the movement – most of them born in the 1950s – left the centres, and in many cases the transfer of responsibility and a generational shift in the core groups of the centres failed.

In addition to this generational shift, the discourse of the activists regarding the social composition of the initiative groups and the centres had changed. In the beginning of the movement a distinction between grammar-school pupils and students on the one side and apprentices and young workers on the other played a crucial role for the self-image of the movement. Influenced by Marxist and neo-Marxist discourses, activists tried to get in contact with young workers, and some initiatives named their buildings an Arbeiterjugendzentrum (working-class youth centre).[39] In the following years, publications by youth centre groups were full of reflections about the relationship between these two groups of young people and the failure to politicize the working-class youth. With the crisis of Marxism at the end of the 1970s, the focus on 'proletarian' youth also slowly disappeared from the internal debates and stated aims of the initiatives and youth centres.

In 1985 the educationalist Leo Teuter published empirical research about self-governing youth centres in the state of Hesse and came to the conclusion that the youth centre movement had successfully created hundreds of self-governing spaces – but in the early 1980s most of these spaces no longer served as places of political activity.[40] Taking this aspect into consideration it should be asked whether, or to what extent, the militant movement of 1980–81 was an expression of broadly shared perspectives and feelings among the young. The range of the 'revolt' of 1980–81 should therefore not be overestimated in comparison to the politicization of young people in the 1970s (especially of those with a better education).

Conclusion

The youth revolt of 1980–81 in West Germany has manifold origins – for example, in the alternative milieu or the left-wing radicalism of the Spontis. One of these origins is the youth centre movement, which evolved ten years earlier, primarily in small towns and suburban areas.

The method of squatting a house, the importance of free space for cultural and political activities, the impact of ideas and practises such as self-organization, self-government and grassroots democracy – in many ways, elements of the youth centre movement resurfaced in 1980–81. While in large cities such as West Berlin the appropriation of living space was very important for the squatters' movement, in smaller cities rebellious youth felt much more the need for creating spaces for communication and common activities.

Between the early 1970s and the early 1980s the notions and concepts of autonomous spaces also changed noticeably: The idea of creating space for young people in their leisure time was slowly replaced by a more holistic approach, which integrated living, working, cultural life and politics. If we look at young people, youth cultures and youth centres in the early 1980s, we should also take into account signs of decreasing politicization in comparison to the late 1960s and 1970s, growing complaints about apathy and a strong orientation towards consumption.

Notes

1. 'Da packt dich irgendwann 'ne Wut', *Der Spiegel*, no. 52, 22 December 1980, pp. 1, 22–32, p. 1, 25.
2. S. Reichardt (2014) *Authentizität und Gemeinschaft. Linksalternatives Leben in den siebziger und frühen achtziger Jahren* (Berlin: Suhrkamp), p. 502. For a summary of this *Häuserkampf* (housing struggles) see ibid., pp. 498–571; A. Suttner (2011) *'Beton brennt.' Hausbesetzer und Selbstverwaltung im Berlin, Wien und Zürich der 80er* (Vienna and Berlin: LIT); W. Lindner (1996) *Jugendprotest seit den fünfziger Jahren. Dissens und kultureller Eigensinn* (Opladen: Leske & Budrich), pp. 324–433; with a focus on the whole decade: H. Balz and J.-H. Friedrichs (2012) *'All we ever wanted…' Eine Kulturgeschichte europäischer Protestbewegungen der 1980er Jahre* (Berlin: Karl Dietz).
3. This chapter is based on my dissertation project, which examines the youth centre movement in West Germany from 1970 to the early 1980s: D. Templin (2015) *Freizeit ohne Kontrollen. Die Jugendzentrumsbewegung in der Bundesrepublik der 1970er Jahre* (Göttingen: Wallstein). For a short overview of the movement (with a focus on the early 1970s) see D. Siegfried (2006) *Time Is on My Side. Konsum und Politik in der westdeutschen Jugendkultur der 60er Jahre* (Göttingen: Wallstein), pp. 655–61.
4. K.P. Emrich (1974) 'Selbstverwaltete Jugendzentren – Eine Alternative' *Neue Praxis. Kritische Zeitschrift für Sozialarbeit und Sozialpädagogik*, vol. 4, 323–29, 323.
5. This number is based on the data base *Jugendzentrumsbewegung 1970–1982* created by the author.
6. A. Herrenknecht (1977) 'Die Jugendzentren verstärken ihre Zusammenarbeit' *Deutsche Jugend. Zeitschrift für die Jugendarbeit*, vol. 12, 539.

7. Data base *Jugendzentrumsbewegung 1970–1982*.
8. L. Teuter (1984) *Selbstverwaltung und Professionalität. Möglichkeiten und Probleme professioneller Jugendarbeit in selbstverwalteten Jugendfreizeiteinrichtungen* (Frankfurt: Extrabuch/Pädex), p. 130.
9. I use the term 'youth revolt' even if it is a contemporary phrase which needs to be historicized.
10. *Hannoversche Allgemeine Zeitung (HAZ)*, 13 November 1980, p. 17 (all quotations are translated by the author).
11. T. Röbke (1991) *Das Nürnberger Kommunikationszentrum KOMM (1973–1990). Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Basisdemokratie* (Frankfurt a.M./New York: Campus), pp. 9–11; H. Glaser (ed.) (1981) *Die Nürnberger Massenverhaftung. Dokumente und Analysen* (Reinbek: Rowohlt).
12. Data base *Jugendzentrumsbewegung 1970–1982*. Following the German statistics agency a *Großstadt* (large city) has more than 100,000 inhabitants, a *Mittelstadt* (medium-sized city) between 20,000 and 100,000, and a *Kleinstadt* (small city) between 5,000 and 20,000.
13. Data base *Jugendzentrumsbewegung 1970–1982*.
14. Letter from Jugendinitiative Ginnheim, undated (1980), in: Archiv der deutschen Jugendbewegung (Burg Ludwigstein) (AdJb), A202, Nr. 913.
15. Leaflet 'Jugendhaus Gattnau nach 8 Jahren geräumt!' (October/November 1981), in: Archive of Forschungsstelle für Zeitgeschichte in Hamburg (FZH), Collection Tiedeke Heilmann, JZ 4/1981.
16. Letter from Jugendinitiative Ginnheim, undated (1980), in: AdJb, A202, Nr. 913; 'Rundbrief Koordinationsbüro für Initiativgruppen der Jugendzentrumsbewegung e.V.', no. 11/1980, p. 2, in: Archive of FZH, Collection Tiedeke Heilmann, Box 'Bundesweit'.
17. N. Ehnert and M. Kunz (2014) 'Die Besetzung des Feuerwehrgerätehauses in Radolfzell', in H. Kempe (ed.) *Die 'andere' Provinz. Kulturelle Auf- und Ausbrüche im Bodenseeraum seit den 1960er Jahren* (Konstanz and Munich: UVK), pp. 183–209.
18. 'Rundbrief Koordinationsbüro für Initiativgruppen der Jugendzentrumsbewegung e.V.', no. 9–10/1980, p. 4, no. 11/1980, no. 12/1980, no. 1/1981, and no. 3/1981, in: Archive of FZH, Collection Tiedeke Heilmann, Box 'Bundesweit'.
19. 'Dokumentation Treffen der Jugendzentren aus Niedersachsen, 26–28 Juni 1981 im Bahnhof Göhrde', pp. 10–12, p. 11, in: Archive of FZH, Collection Tiedeke Heilmann, JZ 4/1981.
20. 'Deutschland ist krank' *Der Spiegel,* no. 13, 23 March 1981, pp. 26–32, p. 26. Though the magazine spoke of 'riots' in the province, in the article mainly occupations, demonstrations and political graffiti in small and medium-sized towns were mentioned, despite a reference to 'broken windows' in two medium-sized cities in North Rhine-Westphalia. But the magazine also considered Freiburg, a city with 175,000 inhabitants and regional centre in Baden-Württemberg, where stones were thrown and cars and windows were demolished, as part of the 'province'.
21. D. Templin (2014) 'Freiräume vom Provinzalltag. Jugendzentrumsinitiativen im ländlich-kleinstädtischen Raum in den 1970er Jahren', in Kempe (ed.), *Die 'andere' Provinz*, pp. 299–326.

22. A. Herrenknecht (1977) *Provinzleben. Aufsätze über ein politisches Neuland* (Frankfurt: Jugend & Politik), p. 23.
23. Leaflet 'Jugendhaus Gattnau nach 8 Jahren geräumt!', (October/November 1981), in: Archive of FZH, Collection Tiedeke Heilmann, JZ 4/1981.
24. Data base *Jugendzentrumsbewegung 1970–1982*.
25. Poster 'Zürich Jugendhauskampf' by Motzer/UStA, 3 November 1980, in: Archive of FZH, Collection Dieter Koschek, Box 'Diverses'; *Hannoversche Allgemeine Zeitung (HAZ)*, 13 November 1980, p. 17.
26. 'Mosquito. Regionalzeitung für Initiativ- und Basisgruppen, Jugendzentren in Selbstverwaltung in der Region Haigdelberg', no. 5 (April/May 1981), p. 57, in: Archive of FZH, Collection Tiedeke Heilmann, Box 'Baden-Württemberg'.
27. S. Haldemann (1981) *Freiraum Autonomes Jugendzentrum. Gedanken über ein autonomes Jugendzentrum anhand Erfahrungen selbstverwalteter Jugend- und Kulturzentren in Deutschland* (Horgen: Gegenverlag).
28. 'Da packt dich irgendwann 'ne Wut', *Der Spiegel*, no. 52, 22 December 1980, pp. 22–32, quotation: p. 27.
29. F. Esposito (2014) 'No Future – Symptome eines Zeit-Geists im Wandel', in M. Reitmayer and T. Schlemmer (eds) *Die Anfänge der Gegenwart. Umbrüche in Westeuropa nach dem Boom* (Munich: Oldenbourg), pp. 95–108.
30. The concept of 'emancipatory youth work' is developed in H. Giesecke (1971) *Die Jugendarbeit* (Munich: Juventa). For 'anti-capitalist youth work' see H. Lessing and M. Liebel (1974) *Jugend in der Klassengesellschaft. Marxistische Jugendforschung und antikapitalistische Jugendarbeit* (Munich: Juventa).
31. 'Initiativkreis Jugendzentrum' to editorial staff of *DISKUSS* 8 March 1974, attachment: 'Leaflet Initiativkreis Jugendzentrum Schweich' (1974), in: Historical Archive of Südwestrundfunk (SWR), FS Familie, 29/21214.
32. 'Information Jugendzentrum (Bad Säckingen)', no. 1, 12 April 1972, in: Historical Archive of SWR, FS Familie, 29/21213.
33. M. März (2012) *Linker Protest nach dem Deutschen Herbst. Eine Geschichte des linken Spektrums im Schatten des 'starken Staates', 1977–1979* (Bielefeld: Transcript).
34. M. Wieczorek (1981) 'Bullenparanoia und das Gefühl vom Paradies. Michael Wieczorek sprach mit Vertretern des "Kukuk"', in S. Aust and S. Rosenbladt (eds) *Hausbesetzer. Wofür sie kämpfen, wie sie leben und wie sie leben wollen* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe), pp. 97–126, pp. 108ff.
35. S. Reichardt (2014) *Authentizität und Gemeinschaft*; W. Kraushaar (2004) 'Die Frankfurter Sponti-Szene. Eine Subkultur als politische Versuchsanordnung', *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte,* vol. 44, 105–21.
36. For uses of the term '*autonomes Zentrum*' see Uli M. to Tiedeke Heilmann 14 December 1981, in: Archive of FZH, Collection Tiedeke Heilmann, JZ 4/1981; 'Baracke II. Zeitung der Aktion Jugendzentrum Backnang', no. 3 (1982), pp. 25f., in Archive of FZH, Collection Tiedeke Heilmann, Box 'Baden-Württemberg'; 'Mosquito. Regionalzeitung für Initiativ- und Basisgruppen, Jugendzentren in Selbstverwaltung in der Region Haigdelberg', no. 6 (June/July/August 1981), p. 68, in: Deutsche Nationalbibliothek/German National Library, DZb 81/942.
37. 'Zeitdruck. Dampfblatt der Jugendlichen', no. 6 (September/October 1981), p. 10, in: Archive of FZH, Collection Tiedeke Heilmann, JZ 3/1981.

38. A. Herrenknecht and R. Moritz (1978) 'Jugendzentrumskoordination 1971–1977', *Informationsdienst Sozialarbeit,* vol. 20, 79–92, 87; L. Teuter (1984) *Selbstverwaltung und Professionalität*, p. 178.
39. ArbeiterJugendzentrum Bielefeld (AJZ) (1973) *Dokumentation der Brackweder Hausbesetzung und der Bewegung um das Arbeiterjugendzentrum* (Bielefeld: Self-published).
40. L. Teuter (1984), *Selbstverwaltung und Professionalität*, pp. 191, 197, 215.

5

Revolt or Transgression? Squatted Houses and Meeting Places of the Heroin Scene in Zurich and Berlin as Spaces of Transgressive Youth

Jan-Henrik Friedrichs

Was there a European youth revolt in 1981? Media images of protesting, sometimes even rioting, youths in various European cities seem to confirm this assumption. But the 'youth revolt' featured teenagers as well as thirty-somethings. In this sense, it was, rather, a sociological and media category and an attempt to understand certain social crises in relation to the critical stage of youth. The term 'youth revolt' may well therefore disguise important differences in regard to the (perceived) class or educational background, the race or gender of activists.

Even more problematic than the term 'youth', I would argue, is the idea of a 'revolt'. This is based on a narrow concept of the 'political' that limits both the scope of our research and our ability to understand the nature of events unfolding in the early 1980s. Instead of talking about a 'youth revolt', I suggest employing the more encompassing term, 'transgression'. As I look more closely at spaces of the squatter and heroin scenes in Zurich and Berlin, a focus on transgression allows a comparison of different groups of youths, who were experiencing the restraints of a normalizing regime of Fordist society. It also allows for the comparison of different attempts to 'drop out' of the prevailing social order, and to relate them to one another (and to the respective governmental reactions). Most importantly, a focus on spaces of transgressive youth helps to illuminate the interconnectedness of the two scenes. As illicit drugs, including heroin, played a significant role in political-protest movements,

such a focus avoids the discursive separation of, and normative hierarchy between, 'genuinely political' activists and seemingly negligible drug consumers.

The heroin and squatter scenes: related phenomena?

At first glance, drug consumption does not seem to have played a significant role in the 'youth revolt' of 1981. This is rather surprising when considering that in the underground scene of the 1960s, the consumption of illicit drugs (mainly cannabis, LSD and mescaline) and the wish for social change had gone hand in hand.[1] Yet scholars generally agree that by the early 1970s the underground had split into a political scene, a soft-drug scene and a hard-drug scene.[2]

A closer look reveals, though, that the political and hard-drug scenes were still linked on several levels, despite their general separation. The first aspect that connected the two scenes was indeed that of youth involvement – at least in the German-speaking parts of Western Europe – but not in a biological sense. Sociologists and the media portrayed squatting and heroin consumption as youth phenomena,[3] while activists' demands for autonomous youth centres seemed to signify a political struggle on a generational scale.[4]

Yet official statistics paint a different picture. In 1976 German police reports categorized only 10 per cent of heroin users as members of the 'youth' – that is between the ages of 14 and 18. At the same time, the number of 'young adults' (21–25 years) accounted for the largest, and growing, group of heroin users.[5] Even these statistics might still exaggerate the proportion of youths numbered among drug addicts or drug consumers. Later studies showed that minors were disproportionately charged with offences under the narcotics laws, while the actual number of teenage and adolescent drug consumers was significantly lower than statistics based on police controls suggested.[6] Heroin consumption in the early 1980s was, to a large extent, a practice more common among young adults rather than youths or children.[7]

The same is true of the squatter scene. While a majority of squatters seem to have been in their early twenties, teenagers and people in their thirties also participated in the movement.[8] Squatters themselves usually emphasized the political over the generational aspects of their actions. Instead of a 'youth movement', self-labelling as 'squatters', 'anarchists' or Autonome prevailed. For them, youth was a term that could symbolize determination, but the scene as a whole was much more diverse.[9] In later publications, activists even rejected such a classification as an attempt

by social scientists to obscure the squatters' genuinely socio-political character – a notion that historians should not dismiss lightly.[10]

Who and what qualified as youth was therefore in constant flux. Contemporary debates on a prolonged phase of adolescence, but also on the age of consent and of criminal responsibility, hint at the fluidity of the category 'youth' as a social construct. Youth and contrary behaviour came to therefore constitute the same thing: those who were engaged in the squatter movement or the heroin scene were, by definition, youths – not in a biological but in a cultural sense. Further weight was added to this concept by a cult of youthfulness that was prevalent in both scenes: as an appreciation of youthful determination, courage and incorruptibility on the side of the squatters and as an ideal of 'live fast, die young' on the side of many heroin users.[11] Dwindling chances for upward mobility, in view of constantly rising rates of unemployment among youths, fuelled both resignation and social protest among young people as youths.

Both groups – squatters and heroin users – were also driven by a fundamental dissatisfaction with their urban environment, which appeared as the manifestation of an encompassing, normalizing regime.[12] These sentiments were expressed primarily through metaphors of social and architectural coldness.[13] Members of both groups were searching for a sense of 'warmth', either through collective living or through drug use.[14]

Likewise, life in both scenes was centred around the search for extraordinary corporeal and emotional experiences in order to oppose the perceived monotony of modern city life. These teenage 'kicks' took forms that had, in a way, been typical for youth movements since the 1960s and could also be found in (individual) drug consumption, as well as in (collective) militant actions.[15]

Many squatters and heroin users also shared some core values. In particular, the rejection of wage labour was a widely held attitude. Both scenes were also connected through an ideal of masculinity that was based on toughness, aggressiveness and the willingness to undertake personal risks.[16] Finally, members of both scenes appreciated a certain coolness, an ideal that was structuring the lives of many youths, regardless of gender or subcultural identification.[17] Above all, both scenes were connected by their wish to 'drop out' of society. In regard to drugs, the idea to 'turn on, tune in, drop out' harked back to the 1960s and provided an understanding of 'dropping out' primarily in a spiritual or psychological sense. But by 1980 'dropping out' could also be understood as the appropriation of new socio-geographic spaces. The most obvious example of this is the idea of squatted houses as free spaces, yet the rise of visible scenes of heroin users also included a spatial facet,

as did trips to popular meeting places of the international drug underground, such as West Berlin, Amsterdam, India or Afghanistan.[18] A closer look at these spaces also shows the connectedness of the two scenes on a personal level: either because political activists and heroin users shared the same physical and social spaces, because they befriended each other, or because they were activists and drug consumers in one person.

Case study I: The Autonomous Youth Centre (AJZ), Zurich

A good example for this study is the Autonomous Youth Centre, or AJZ, in Zurich. After years of struggle for such a non-commercial cultural venue, the spring and summer of 1980 saw increasing protests over the matter. The Bewegig (the movement) understood itself in generational terms as a youth movement, directing protest at the norms of adulthood that they saw mirrored in city and society. Heroin users participated on equal terms in this attempt to procure a space that would allow an escape from the perceived monotony of the surrounding 'ice-pack society'. In a flyer from 1980 it read, under the headline 'grass, not gas' (contrasting the use of marijuana by the youth movement with the use of tear gas by the Zurich police):

> We are taking dope in order to get to know each other better, to dig out and expand our sensibility, tenderness, fantasy that has been embedded in concrete by the system (shit, acid), or because we are dropping out completely from the ice pack, to sense euphoric feelings of happiness, warmth and tranquillity (heroin).[19]

Framing juvenile drug use as a form of dropping out of a hostile environment furthered the concept of a 'basic connection between the drug problem and the unrest in Zurich', since both were 'signs of a fundamentally sick society', as sympathetic social scientists were quick to explain.[20] The feeling that society had nothing to offer sensitive, nonconforming youths connected political activists and drug users, while separating them from the adult world. This view was seemingly confirmed by the installation of a repressive regime of control in urban space by local authorities. While policies to monitor and disperse groups of delinquent youths were targeted mainly at the heroin scene, they actually affected all transgressive youth, either because of their looks or their preferred meeting places.[21]

Once the AJZ opened its doors in June 1980, it was also frequented by heroin-addicted youths who quickly became a visible segment of its

clientele. Many of them understood themselves as part of the youth movement and had participated in the struggle for the AJZ. The idea of a unified youth movement that also included heroin users was therefore not simply based on ideological deliberations but also on concrete experiences.

Nevertheless, the plenary meeting of all AJZ users implemented a policy of 'no H in the AJZ'.[22] While heroin users were still welcome in the AJZ, they were required to trade and consume heroin outside its walls. To many activists' surprise and disappointment, though, most heroin users ignored this policy. With police chasing the drug scene with an intensity that, from today's point of view, seems almost surreal,[23] the AJZ was the only relatively safe haven for these youths. Pleas to accept the principle of a drug-free youth centre fell on deaf ears. During the summer of 1981, the situation got out of hand: politically and culturally interested youths stayed away, while ever more rooms were occupied by the drug scene.[24] The AJZ was about to lose its character as an open space for, potentially, all youths, precisely because youths – in this case heroin addicts – were claiming access to a space that they felt was rightfully theirs as well. Two so-called 'drug groups' were trying to find a solution that would keep the AJZ an open space without reproducing governmental strategies of exclusion. Activists of the 'drug group AJZ' explained:

> Work and struggle in the drug group can only be understood as a part of the entire political struggle in the autonomy scene. But also vice versa: The struggle for autonomy must not leave the drug problem aside. The Zurich movement must not be split into its neat and its not so pleasant parts.[25]

The self-conception as a 'youth movement' let these activists hesitate to exclude youth whom they perceived as fellow victims of the norms and demands of adult society.

For a long time, the Left had interpreted drug use as a consequence of the destructive forces of modern capitalism. This view, however, provided the Left with no alternative drug policies 'on the ground'. The implementation of government policies of repression in public urban space was therefore met with little resistance. It was the conflict about the use of spaces, such as the AJZ, that eventually triggered a fundamental change in alternative drug policies. Activists in the drug groups shifted their focus away from ideological deliberations towards the conditions within the AJZ.[26] This allowed for new local and pragmatic policies that could counteract hegemonic strategies of repression and spatial control.

Accepting the fact that a drug free AJZ was as much an illusion as was a drug-free society, and that abstinence was simply not an option for many heroin users, drug activists installed a large separate room, the 'Tschönkie-Room', or 'junkie room', in the attic of the AJZ. The use of heroin was to be allowed within this room, yet prohibited in the rest of the youth centre.[27] The junkie room posed a pragmatic solution to the problem of drug consumption; it was an act of solidarity and perhaps also born out of fear that the whole project might be defeated once the movement dissolved into distinct groups. Yet it also aimed at strengthening aspects of self-organization among addicts, improving the hygienic conditions of consumption, and serving as a means to maintain contact with the drug groups' clientele and possible new members.[28] First and foremost, it was an attempt to maintain the character of the AJZ as an open space for all misfits, unadapted or transgressive youth.

This policy was not undisputed among AJZ activist. In order to raise awareness for the problem of juvenile drug addiction, but also in an attempt to gain support among other activists, the drug groups organized a so-called 'drug week' in January 1982, featuring film screenings, plays and debates on the topic.[29] About a thousand people made their way into the AJZ, and the local press provided ample information on the campaign, on heroin use in Zurich and on the concept of the junkie room.[30] It was one of the very few times that young heroin addicts had the opportunity to describe their situations and to explain their points of view. As a result, a local radio report emphasized the addicts' right to self-determination and concluded that 'the fixers shall be able to decide, decide about their therapy for instance. [...] There was also a consensus that the public has to take seriously not just the phenomenon of drug addiction but, finally, also the drug addicts themselves'.[31] The local *Tages-Anzeiger*, albeit hesitantly, considered that accepting addicts and addiction might be a prerequisite for therapeutic successes.[32] Alas, neither junkie room nor drug week were able to turn the tide. The sheer number of heroin users made it impossible to restrict the drug trade and consumption to the small junkie room, nor did the city of Zurich show any signs of a change of policy. In March 1982, the remaining activists decided to shut down the youth centre for good.

And yet, besides its positive temporary effects for drug users, the junkie room was an attempt to practically oppose a repressive drug policy that aimed at spatial dispersion and exclusion. The fact that young heroin addicts were becoming visible and audible in the discourses on heroin use and on urban spaces for revolting or transgressive youths, was by itself truly exceptional. Never before had it been possible for young

heroin users to publicly demand their right to self-determination – and to make the media listen sympathetically.[33] The space of the AJZ and its junkie room were thusly starting points for larger political interventions into the discourse on drug politics but also, in a much wider sense, on questions of youthful self-determination and their social and urban conditions.[34]

Case study II: The Berlin squatter scene

In a sense, the situation in the Berlin squatter movement was at once both very similar to Zurich and entirely different. Also on the rise since the spring of 1980, the heterogeneous squatter scene comprised Autonome and feminists, students and runaways, punks, Stadtindianer (urban Indians), alcoholics, potheads and heroin addicts. More often than not, these categories overlapped and were in constant flux.[35]

In contrast to the Zurich Bewegig, the Berlin squatter scene did not conceive of itself as a youth movement. Rather, its identity was based on a spatial understanding of politics. They were not 'youths' – they were 'squatters'. At the core of their political agenda was the creation of spaces that were perceived as entirely different from their surroundings, so-called 'free spaces' that we might understand through Michel Foucault as 'other spaces' or heterotopias.[36] This stronger identification with and through space also had consequences for the squatters' attitudes regarding drug use and drug users.

In 1982, the alternative *Tageszeitung* reported that '[a]mong squatters and the movement as a whole, drugs – from beer to heroin' were playing 'a significant role'.[37] In fact, the consumption of illegal drugs was one aspect that established the squatted houses as 'other' spaces – and that attracted a wide range of transgressive youths, regardless of their ideological convictions.[38]

The Berlin squatter movement had reached its zenith in the summer of 1981. During the winter of 1981–82, suppressed conflicts within the scene came to the fore – a process that one participant later described as the 'Psycho-Winter'.[39] And while the consumption of drugs was probably as widespread among the squatters in Berlin as it was amongst Zurich's youth activists, in the winter of 1981–82 some squatters noticed a rise in the consumption of alcohol and other drugs and a visible presence of heroin users in public spaces.[40]

Activists were unable to answer the question of why so many of their comrades were apparently numbing themselves with alcohol, cannabis or even heroin.[41] The increased consumption was sometimes related to

the decline of the squatter movement and the harsh winter conditions, as reported in the radical left journal *radikal* in January 1982:

> Stricken with hunger and their own helplessness, many children of the revolt are fleeing to Mama and her cooking pot. [...] No wonder then that the last Mark is turned into alcohol. New on the menu is heroin. But there, at the latest, it's radically over with any self-determination.[42]

While drug consumption within the squatter scene was thus acknowledged, a dividing line was drawn between alcohol (and implicitly cannabis) on the one side and heroin on the other, between 'soft' drugs that still allowed an active participation in the scene and 'hard' drugs that were synonymous with the loss of self-determination and hence the basis for political activism. This shifted the focus from problematic practices of consumption to seemingly clear dividing lines between substances.

This view was facilitated, as it mirrored squatters' conceptions of urban spaces. While the squatted houses appeared as heterotopian 'free spaces', heroin and heroin use were situated in the realm of capitalist mainstream society. This idea of heroin as a distinct 'Other' and an outside threat was seemingly confirmed on the larger spatial scale of the local district. Especially the district of Kreuzberg was imagined as a rebellious neighbourhood that stood in contrast to the rest of the city and its social and political order. As such, the visible presence of heroin users in public spaces became proof, in the eyes of the squatters, that the government was thusly aiming to destroy this rebellious neighbourhood.

On panel discussions and flyers, squatters complained – and not without a certain irony – about the lack of police presence, which they interpreted as passive encouragement for 'junkies' to gather in Kreuzberg (see image on p. 91).[43] As *taz Berlin* put it, approvingly, 'If they succeed in bringing the H scene here into the neighbourhood, it will be destroyed'.[44] It remained unclear who 'they' were and how exactly the neighbourhood would be destroyed. But it propagated the perception of heroin as something that was alien to the squatter scene and its spaces.

This put heroin users in a precarious position: If heroin was used to depoliticize people and to destroy the whole squatter movement, then the individual heroin user was at least lost for the purposes of political struggle. Even worse, drug users could also embody the threat of destruction and appear as a tool in the hands of 'the state'. As a consequence, the 'free spaces' of the squatter scene had to be defended, not only against

the police, but also against heroin – embodied by the heroin users. Just as mainstream policy and media had situated them outside of society, the squatters now excluded them discursively – and spatially.

That is not to say that this policy was undisputed among squatters.[45] Yet calls for solidarity with those who did not have as much 'power' were scarce. Even interventions by activists from the AJZ drug groups via *radikal* could not change the minds of Berlin activists. In their view, the exclusion of heroin users was a moral problem rather than a question of political strategies because addicts were not the subject of political protests. A 'smash-H-group' answered in *radikal* that, 'To us it is no suppression of problems when we say that we don't know what to do with stoned junkies. We are proceeding from the assumption that one can build up something once junkies have stopped shooting up'.[46] This was of course in compliance with hegemonic views, and it led neither to an alternative drug policy nor to a fruitful discussion about squatters' own drug use.

Conclusion

The comparison between Zurich and Berlin shows that the separation between a political movement and a distinct heroin scene was only one possible result of activists' discursive and spatial strategies. In Zurich, self-definition as a youth movement led to various attempts to keep heroin-consuming youths socially and spatially included. Especially in connection with the 'drug week' of January 1982, activists were able to shift the discourse on drugs from one of public order to one on self-determination and harm reduction.

In Berlin, on the other hand, the squatters' own problematic drug use was externalized and projected onto 'junkies' as a deviant other. The stronger identification with spaces – spaces that were imagined to be free of the surrounding 'coldness' and problems – facilitated a view on heroin and its consumers as being alien to the squatter scene, something that could and should be spatially excluded in order to save what was understood as an urban social movement.

A focus on transgressive behaviour instead of the narrower concept of a revolt is therefore necessary to avoid reproducing contemporary narratives of 'actual' activists and unproductive and disturbing 'Others'. Transgression is thus not proposed here as a new master narrative for protest in the early 1980s. Yet if we take 'youth' as an ambivalent, but nonetheless important, factor in the evaluation of the events of 1981, the concept of a revolt is far too laden with presuppositions and is therefore unable to comprehend the broad spectrum of social and cultural

practices and agents within this movement. The focus on transgression draws our attention towards the mutual construction of youth, urban space, norms and deviance.[47]

The concept covers first and foremost the transgression of norms and values of mainstream society, including its work ethics and consumption practices. But it also applies to the transgression of spatial boundaries. Meeting places of the heroin scene were often established at inner-city spaces, which were thereby transformed into spaces of deviant consumption; in many instances this could also be perceived as an invasion of proletarian youths from satellite towns into the spaces of the middle-class.

This spatial dimension also applies to the transgression of national boundaries. Commodities, ideas, and also people crossed these borders and established a transnational, European, or even global culture, which was organized around nodes rather than territories. It is noteworthy that cities like Berlin, Amsterdam and Zurich were also important reference points for the political youth movement in general and the squatter scene in particular. Especially in the Christiania Free State in Copenhagen, the Mecca of European alternative youth culture, the distinction between the political, soft and hard-drug scenes had always been more than fragile.[48]

In contrast to the idea of a 'youth revolt' that presumes the existence of youth as a more or less coherent historical subject, to speak of 'transgressive youth' may also imply the contested nature of youth itself. Within the spaces of both the squatter and heroin scenes, people became 'youths' simply by participating in a movement and sojourning at its spaces.

Moments of transgression can also be found in regard to bodily borders. While drugs, especially heroin, point to the fragility of these borders, political activists also experienced moments of intoxication during collective militant actions.

Finally, the seemingly clear boundaries between transgressive and 'normal' youth have to come under scrutiny. Posters produced by the squatter movement found their way into children's bedrooms, thus transforming them into outposts of an otherwise far-off urban social movement. And pilgrimages of 'ordinary' youths to symbolic sites of the heroin scene (as, for instance, the Bahnhof Zoo train station in Berlin) or to hotspots of the political underground,[49] advise us to call into question the very subject of a European 'youth revolt' in the early 1980s. As historians, we need to take into account the manifold frictions and conflicts within this 'revolt' and we need to take seriously those subjects who did not necessarily speak through flyers or pamphlets to make themselves heard.

"Kiez gegen Heroin [neighborhood against heroin]," [Berlin, 1981/82], Linkes Plakatarchiv, http://plakat.nadir.org, Abb. 142_12, date accessed 16 September 2015.

Notes

1. In this sense, especially: N. Bromell (2000) *Tomorrow Never Knows. Rock and Psychedelics in the 1960s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), p. 80.
2. K. Weinhauer (2006) 'The End of Certainties: Drug Consumption and Youth Delinquency in West Germany', in A. Schildt and D. Siegfried (eds) *Between Marx and Coca-Cola. Youth Cultures in Changing European Societies, 1960–1980* (New York: Berghahn Books), pp. 376–97; D. Briesen (2005) *Drogenkonsum und Drogenpolitik in Deutschland und den USA. Ein historischer Vergleich* (Frankfurt/Main: Campus), pp. 288–89, pp. 295–305.
3. J. Bacia and K.-J. Scherer (1981) *Passt bloss auf! Was will die neue Jugendbewegung?* (Berlin: Olle & Wolter); M. Haller (ed.) (1981) *Aussteigen oder rebellieren.*

Jugendliche gegen Staat und Gesellschaft (Reinbek: Rowohlt); P.U. Hein (1984) *Protestkultur und Jugend. Ästhetische Opposition in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Münster: Lit-Verlag); M. Bock et al. (eds) (1989) *Zwischen Resignation und Gewalt. Jugendprotest in den achtziger Jahren* (Opladen: Leske & Budrich).

4. See David Templin's essay in this volume.
5. Arthur Kreuzer (1978) *Jugend, Rauschdrogen, Kriminalität* (Wiesbaden: Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft), p. 18.
6. T. Müller and P.J. Grob (1992) *Medizinische und soziale Aspekte der offenen Drogenszene Platzspitz in Zürich 1991. Vergleichende repräsentative Befragung von 758 DrogenkonsumentInnen*, edited by ZIPP-AIDS (Universitätsspital Zürich), p. 14.
7. H. Künzler (1990) *Analyse der offenen Drogenszene am 'Platzspitz' in Zürich. Sozio-ökonomische und medizinische Aspekte* (PhD diss, Universitätsspital Zürich), p. 45.
8. According to the Berlin senate, 64.9 per cent of all squatters were male and 35.1 per cent female; 24.5 per cent were younger than 21; 40.2 per cent were between the ages of 21 and 25; 35.3 per cent were older than that. Pupils and university students accounted for 36 per cent, workers for 26 per cent, while 38 per cent were unemployed or their professions were unknown. H. Willems (1997) *Jugendunruhen und Protestbewegungen. Eine Studie zur Dynamik innergesellschaftlicher Konflikte in vier europäischen Ländern* (Opladen: Leske & Budrich), pp. 267–81, p. 347. The Berlin police announced that 82 per cent of all those who had been arrested in the course of street riots (until 31 December 1981) were between 18 and 30 years of age and thus classified as adolescents (*Heranwachsende*) or adults, while youths only accounted for less than 5 per cent. Landesamt für Verfassungsschutz Berlin *Der 'Häuserkampf' in Berlin (West)'* (after April 1982) APO-Archiv Berlin, R6, Berlin. *Der 'Häuserkampf' in Berlin (West*), p. 34. See also J. Bacia and K.-J. Scherer '... unser Haus – die einzig längerfristige Perspektive für uns! Ein Gespräch mit "friedlichen" Besetzern', in Bacia and Scherer, *Passt bloss auf!*, p. 130.
9. J. Bacia and K.-J. Scherer '... tagsüber rede ich mit den Leuten und nachts haue ich denen die Scheiben zusammen! Ein Gespräch mit einem aktiven Instandbesetzer', in Bacia and Scherer, *Passt bloss auf!*, p. 137.
10. Geronimo (1990) *Feuer und Flamme. Zur Geschichte und Gegenwart der Autonomen. Ein Abriß* (Berlin: Edition ID-Archiv), p. 91. See also K. Hartung (December 1978) 'Über die langandauernde Jugend im linken Getto. Lebensalter und Politik – aus der Sicht eines 38 jährigen' *Kursbuch*, no. 54, 174–88.
11. Weinhauer, 'The End of Certainties', p. 378.
12. H. Grymer (1982) 'Stadt als Ort struktureller Gewalt – Jugendkrawalle als Gegenwehr', in *Arch+*, p. 41, quoted in W. Lindner (1996) *Jugendprotest seit den fünfziger Jahren. Dissens und kultureller Eigensinn* (Opladen: Leske & Budrich), p. 417.
13. On the emergence of the coldness metaphor, see Lindner, *Jugendprotest*, p. 299.
14. S. Reichardt (2005) '"Wärme" als Modus sozialen Verhaltens? Vorüberlegungen zu einer Kulturgeschichte des linksalternativen Milieus vom Ende der 1960er bis Anfang der 1980er Jahre' *vorgänge*, no. 171–72, 165–87; Arbeitsgruppe Drogen (Drogengruppe AJZ) (July 1980) 'Gras statt Gas', in: Sozialarchiv Zürich (in the following: SozArch ZH), Ar 201.89.7 – Mappe 3: 1.
15. J. Schwarzmeier (2001) *Die Autonomen zwischen Subkultur und sozialer Bewegung* (Norderstedt: Books on Demand), pp. 26ff. highlights collective violence and

mass actions as a means for 'Autonome' to experience a form of intoxication, to create authenticity by placing oneself in danger and to provide a possibility for identification with the peer group. This thesis of violence as a core element of identity creation has been criticized by F. Anders (2010) 'Wohnraum, Freiraum, Widerstand. Die Formierung der Autonomen in den Konflikten um Hausbesetzungen Anfang der achtziger Jahre', in S. Reichardt and D. Siegfried (eds) *Das Alternative Milieu. Antibürgerlicher Lebensstil und linke Politik in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und Europa 1968–1983* (Göttingen: Wallstein), pp. 473–98, esp. pp. 494ff.

16. J.-H. Friedrichs 'Freiräume? Geschlechterkonstruktionen und -konflikte in der westdeutschen Hausbesetzungsbewegung der 1980er Jahre', in K. Müller-Wienbergen et al. (eds) *Synthese und Perspektiven der Konstitution von Raum und Geschlecht* (Bielefeld: transcript, forthcoming).
17. Weinhauer, 'Heroinszenen', pp. 260–61.
18. On travelling squatters see the essay by Linus Owen in this volume. Travel descriptions of young heroin users can be found in Heidi S. (1981) '"Eigentlich bin ich nur 'ne lebende Leiche." Aus dem Tagebuch der Fixerin Heidi S.' *Der Spiegel,* no. 37, 7 September 1981, 98–112 for Amsterdam; E. Egartner and S. Holzbauer (1994) *'Ich hab's nur noch mit Gift geschafft…' Frauen und illegale Drogen* (Pfaffenweiler: Centaurus), p. 116 for India; ibid., p. 205ff. for Afghanistan; M. Terzok (Manfred Trezak) (1982) *Entzug in Bangkok* (Berlin: Freitag) for Thailand.
19. Arbeitsgruppe Drogen, 'Gras statt Gas', p. 1.
20. R. Howald et al. (1981) *Die Angst der Mächtigen vor der Autonomie. Aufgezeigt am Beispiel Zürich* (Horgen: Gegenverlag), p. 177.
21. J.-H. Friedrichs (2013) Urban Spaces of Deviance and Rebellion. Youth, Squatted Houses and the Heroin Scene in West Germany and Switzerland in the 1970s and 1980s, Dissertation (Vancouver, BC), pp. 104–12.
22. 'Der Tschoenki-Raum im AJZ. Wie es dazu kam. Wie es jetzt ist. Wie es werden soll/könnte. Vor.- und Nachteile' (end of 1981/beginning of 1982), SozArch ZH, Ar 201.89.4 – Mappe 1: AG Drogen, Drogengruppe ZH, 1980–82, Drogengruppe AJZ & Drogengruppe ZH, theoretische Debatte/Aufarbeitung, bes. Tschönkie-Raum, 1981–84 (in the following: SozArch ZH, Tschönkie-Raum).
23. Friedrichs, Urban Spaces, pp. 113–18.
24. Drogengruppe AJZ & Drogengruppe ZH 'Heutige Situation im AJZ – was sich seit dem vorliegenden Bericht (d.h. sei[t] August) verändert hat' (1981 or 1982), SozArch ZH, Tschönkie-Raum, pp. 1ff.
25. B.R. (Drogengruppe AJZ) 'Standort Drogengruppe/bis und mit 12.11.81 (was bisher beschlossen und akzeptiert wurde)', 18 November 1981, SozArch ZH, Tschönkie-Raum.
26. Ibid.
27. Besides the source material cited in the following, see also G. Amendt (March 1982) 'Ein Schuß im Zentrum' *Konkret*, no. 3, 90–96.
28. 'Der Tschoenki-Raum im AJZ. Wie es dazu kam'; little bird (Drogengruppe AJZ?), 'zum jahreskongress der internationalen sektionen des geheimbundes "goldener schuss auf den imperialismus"' (1982?), ibid., p. 4.
29. On the conceptualization and evaluation by the drug group, see 'Der Tschoenki-Raum im AJZ. Wie es dazu kam'; B.R. 'Standort Drogengruppe'; little bird 'zum jahreskongress', p. 2.

30. '"Drogenwoche" im AJZ' *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 28 January 1982; 'Vor vollem Haus die Drogenprobleme diskutiert' *Tages-Anzeiger*, 30 January 1982; 'Drogen: Betroffene schaffen im AJZ Öffentlichkeit' *Tages-Anzeiger*, 28 January 1982; 'Drogenwoche zeigte: Fixerraum für AJZ wichtig' *Tages-Anzeiger*, 4 February 1982.
31. Regionaljournal Zürich 'Drogenwoche im AJZ' DRS, 31 January 1982, directed by Isabel Baumgartner, http://zureich.cytracon2.info/de/ton/regionaljournal-drs.html, date accessed 06 February 2013.
32. 'Vor vollem Haus die Drogenprobleme diskutiert' *Tages-Anzeiger*, 30 January 1982.
33. Usually heroin addicts' life-stories would be framed in a narrative of passive victims in need of help and/or driven by 'the desire to be normalised'. V.B. Bergschmidt (2004) 'Pleasure, Power and Dangerous Substances: Applying Foucault to the Study of "Heroin Dependence" in Germany' *Anthropology & Medicine*, vol. 11, no. 1, 59–73, 67–69.
34. Little research has been conducted on the long-term effects of the junkie room experiment. See Johannes Herwig-Lempp et al. (1993) 'Entkriminalisierte Zonen: Frei-Räume für Drogenkonsumenten', in K. Böllert and H.-U. Otto (eds) *Umgang mit Drogen. Sozialpädagogische Handlungs- und Interventionsstrategien* (Bielefeld: Karin Böllert KT Verlag), pp. 76–96.
35. See B. Härlin (1981) 'Von Haus zu Haus – Berliner Bewegungsstudien' *Kursbuch*, no. 65, 1–28, esp. 27.
36. M. Foucault (1986) 'Of Other Spaces' *Diacritics*, vol. 16, no. 1, 22–27; P. Johnson (2006) 'Unravelling Foucault's "different spaces"' *History of the Human Sciences*, vol. 19, no. 4, 75–90.
37. 'Wider die innere Vermummung. Diskussion am Sonnabend: Drogen und Bewegung' *taz Berlin*, 4 February 1982.
38. On the importance of drugs in the creation of spaces by and for adolescents, see M. Kappeler et al. (1999) *Jugendliche und Drogen. Ergebnisse einer Längsschnittuntersuchung in Ost-Berlin nach der Maueröffnung* (Opladen: Leske & Budrich), pp. 57ff., p. 113.
39. A.G. Grauwacke (2008) *Autonome in Bewegung. Aus den ersten 23 Jahren* (Berlin: Assoziation A), p. 65.
40. 'Wider die innere vermummung' 6 February 1982, Papiertiger Archiv der Sozialen Bewegungen, Soziale Kämpfe. Drogen. 1981–83, 9, p. 2; Einige Bewegte (January 1982) 'Stillstand ist das Ende von Bewegung' *radikal*, no. 100, 14.
41. 'Wider die innere vermummung'; 'Wider die innere Vermummung. Diskussion am Sonnabend: Drogen und Bewegung' *taz Berlin*, 4 February 1982; 'Berliner Blues oder Alpträume in der Mauerstadt' *radikal*, vol. 6, no. 100 (January 1982), 8.
42. Einige Bewegte, 'Stillstand ist das Ende von Bewegung'.
43. Ben 'Kiez gegen Heroin' *taz Berlin*, 21 December 1981.
44. Ibid.
45. On the different positions, see ibid.
46. smash-H-Gruppe (March 1982) 'no title' *radikal*, vol. 7, no. 102, 12.
47. See P. Stallybrass and A. White (1986) *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press); E.A. Grosz (1995) 'Bodies-Cities', in E.A. Grosz (ed.) *Space, Time, and Perversion. Essays on the Politics of Bodies* (New York: Routledge), pp. 103–10.

Part III
Transforming Radical Movements

6

Why Did It Not Happen Here? The Gradual Radicalization of the Anarchist Movement in Sweden 1980–90

Jan Jämte and Adrienne Sörbom

This chapter examines the development and role of the anarchist movement in Sweden during the 1980s. In relation to many other parts of Northern Europe – which had seen an upsurge in radical left-libertarian activism, squatting and urban unrest at the turn of the 1980s – such social movements and confrontations remained a marginal phenomenon in Sweden, at least until the end of the decade. However, by the late 1980s a new generation of younger activists, often with roots in the anarchist milieu, formed the basis for a radical squatter and autonomist movement, which proved very similar to the movements that had developed throughout Europe almost a decade earlier.

In relation to the European revolts in the early 1980s, this chapter thus takes as its point of departure the question, 'Why did it not happen here?', and continues by exploring the gradual growth, transformation and radicalization of the Swedish anarchist movement. Combining a political opportunity approach, the framing perspective and the concept of repertoires of action, we elaborate five tentative explanations as to why the forms of activism developed and deployed by radical left-libertarian activists in Europe did not reach Sweden until the end of the decade. The chapter is based on an in-depth analysis of movement-related documentation, such as magazines, leaflets, websites and books, as well as semi-structured interviews with activists.[1]

Concepts and theoretical framework

In this chapter the terms 'radical left-libertarianism' and 'anarchism' are frequently used, often in close relation. The term radical left-libertarianism is used as an umbrella concept, gathering different strands of anti-authoritarian forms of socialism, stressing both anti-capitalist and anti-statist views, as well as the need to build a society based on voluntary forms of cooperation. Presently, such movements also often articulate strong criticism of what are seen as other forms of oppression, such as sexism, racism and homophobia, thus making the movements potential allies to a wider section of movement cultures. The anarchist ideology and movement are firmly rooted within this broad ideational category, together with other branches of left-libertarianism such as council communism, anarcho-syndicalism or autonomism.

For a long time what constitutes an actual anarchist position has been debated. This debate occurs mainly because anarchism has assumed hybrid forms throughout history and does not show the same coherence, structure or positioning around canonical texts or thinkers as many other ideologies do.[2] In this chapter, we do not aim to give a precise definition of anarchism, but use the term in a broader sense to describe activists expressing or sympathizing with what could rather be referred to as an 'anarchist political stance'.[3] By this, we mean activists who are inspired by and supportive of anarchist principles (for example anti-capitalism, anti-statism, anti-authoritarianism, voluntary forms of cooperation and so forth) and practices (for example direct action, self-government), even though they may not necessarily refer to themselves as anarchists or limit themselves to engagement within explicitly anarchist groups and organizations. Departing from this viewpoint, the history of the anarchist movement is often intertwined with other strands of radical left-libertarianism. When necessary for our analysis, these strands will also be taken into account.

The analytical framework of this chapter is based on the concepts of political opportunity structures, framing and repertoires of action. The political opportunity approach stresses that movements are shaped by their political context, which can both promote or stifle collective action. Institutionalized politics and social movements live in a close relationship; working together and against each other in a constant give and take of resources, ideas and activities.[4] The concept of framing refers to the process of meaning construction, whereby activists perceive, identify and formulate problems, localize the causes and parties responsible, come up with possible solutions and strategies for action, and sketch out

alternative goals and visions in order to spread these ideas and mobilize adherents and constituents within the surrounding society.[5] Finally, the concept of repertoires of action is used to describe particular forms of collective action, developed and deployed by social movements or, in Charles Tilly's words, the 'whole set of means [a group] has for making claims of different types on different individuals'.[6] The concept highlights that a movement repertoire is developed within a specific societal and historical context and, therefore, is highly affected by time and place and the actions of previous movement protagonists.[7] In order to mobilize consensus, the action deployed must resonate within the society in which it is being implemented, which favours already-established and accepted forms of protest over actions that are considered untested or too radical.[8]

The anarchist movement in Sweden after 1960

The rise of new social movements in the 1960s and 1970s made a strong impact on Swedish society. However, while in neighbouring Denmark the new movements contained 'a confrontational, semi-anarchist element of a more continental character',[9] the Swedish student movement and New Left were more inspired by Maoist, Leninist and Trotskyist ideas. Consequently, anarchist ideas and practices were often marginalized, even though they were still evident in smaller local anarchist groups, as well as within networks and organizations such as the Provo movement, the Situationists, the Young Socialists or among the activists in, for instance, Alternativ stad (Alternative City) or Alternativt samhälle (Alternative Society).[10]

After the wave of New-Left activism subsided in the 1970s, it gave way to what has often been referred to as the 'alternative movement'.[11] Within this broad political and cultural movement context – gathering thousands of activists from the environmental, feminist and peace movements – libertarian and anarchist ideas were given a more prominent role than within the New Left. The alternative movement took a strong stance against what was seen as the ideological doctrines, membership control and centralized party structures of the communist left. Even though organized anarchist groups still remained few, the ideas of decentralization, federalism, autonomy, local self-governance, mutual aid and a general anti-hierarchical stance flourished in the alternative movement.[12] The focus on challenging mainstream society by realizing alternatives here and now also became a practical meeting point between the anarchist politics of 'direct action' and the alternative movement's cultural experiments with, for example, 'folk' culture

(folk music and so forth), new sexual identities, family constellations or alternative diets (vegetarianism, veganism, 'health food').

There were attempts at squatting in Sweden during the 1970s and early 1980s, but they were much less frequent than in, for example, Denmark and Germany. These attempts were carried out by activists holding various ideological beliefs, some of whom were anarchists. Most notable was the occupation of the Student Union in Stockholm in 1968, but there were also other squatter actions during the 1970s, for instance in the cities of Stockholm, Lund and Gothenburg. In the early 1980s, groups of younger activists also started to mobilize to occupy spaces and create social centres for youths and the unemployed. Occupations were organized in the cities of Västerås, Umeå, Göteborg and Jönköping, among other places, but they rarely survived longer than a month.[13] In relation to, for example, Denmark, Germany or Holland, there are no reports of these early occupations escalating into violent clashes with the police. Instead the occupiers often highlighted the importance of passive resistance and the high costs associated with engaging in confrontations with the police.

To summarize, the political revolts of the early 1980s, as well as the workings of the anarchist activists, took modest forms in Sweden. While radical left-libertarian movements throughout Europe engaged in direct action, squatting and riots, much of the activism of their Swedish counterparts was non-confrontational and built on principles of non-violence. Instead, the radicalization of this milieu happened during the second half of the 1980s and early 1990s, which we discuss at the end of this chapter. In the next section, we elaborate five tentative explanations as to why the confrontational forms of activism, which developed in other parts of Europe in the early 1980s, did not reach Sweden until the end of the decade.

Five tentative explanations

The five explanations that we propose move from a macro level, focusing on the economic structures and political opportunities, via a meso level, discussing the relationships between different movement organizations, to the micro level, describing the collective action frames of the activists themselves. The explanations are tentative and not exhaustive, and none should be seen as prior to any of the others. We also see them as mutually reinforcing, in tandem shaping the context, in which anarchists and other radical activists took part and developed their strategies and frames.

The Swedish economy during the 1980s

The 1970s saw increasing economic instability for large parts of the Western world. Following the breakdown of the Bretton Woods financial system in 1971, the two oil crises of 1973 and 1979, and the gradual structural transformation of the industrial sector in the West, the international economy tumbled into recession.[14] These developments also affected Sweden, meaning a decrease in economic growth and the beginning of a more far-reaching transformation of the industrial sector and the economic system into a more service-based economy. However, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, large parts of the public had yet to experience the full effect of these structural changes. For a considerable period of time, the government tried to stimulate the economy by devaluating the currency and investing its way out of the crisis – thus maintaining a relatively high level of production and employment – in the hope that the crisis would eventually pass.[15] The investments held back some of the negative effects of the crisis experienced in many other European countries: high unemployment rates, cuts in social security and a shortage of affordable housing – issues at the heart of many youth revolts throughout Europe.[16] In the 1970s and 1980s, unemployment rates in Sweden deviated from the general European pattern, staying at around 2–3 per cent compared to an average of 9 per cent in several other EU countries.[17] In addition to this, the building of approximately a million new apartments during the 1960s and 1970s meant a widespread availability of affordable housing, also for young people.

Although there is no deterministic relationship between economic crisis, societal strains and the mobilization of grievances,[18] we tentatively hold that the overall economic and social situation in Sweden during the early 1980s decreased the likelihood of urban unrest, youth revolts and a radicalization of the libertarian left. This view is also held by some of the activists interviewed during our research, who state that they felt that they did not have the same reasons to employ confrontational and militant strategies as activists in other parts of Europe, given that Sweden was not as hard-hit by the economic crisis as many other countries.

Corporatism and closed opportunity structures

A second reason for the absence of an insurrectionary radical left-libertarian movement during the early 1980s may have been the political opportunity structures in Sweden at the time. Since the 1930s, the political landscape in Sweden had been dominated by social democratic ideals.[19] Between 1936 and 2006, the Swedish Social Democratic Party

(SAP) ruled continuously, except during the years 1976–82 and 1991–94. This firmly established Sweden as a social democratic welfare state.[20] In this context, corporatism was a strong tendency. For instance, there were strong and active ties between the ruling party and traditional popular/folk movements, the trade unions and other organizations connected to the labour movement.[21]

In practice, this often meant that it was easier for an organization close to the SAP to be heard by the government. For them, the political opportunity structures were open and benign, but at the same time it was more difficult to gain influence for movement organizations outside the warmth of the social democratic community. For anarchist groups, this presented a situation that was rather closed. They were critical of the corporatist structures but were still surrounded by a general 'movement-culture' and an infrastructure based on corporatist ideals that tied movement organizations and the state closely together.

One example of this is the widespread phenomenon of adult educational associations (so-called Studieförbund), which are civil society organizations funded by the state. Within the adult educational associations, people come together in publically funded 'study circles', organizing political or cultural education and activities ranging from reading books to holding lectures or political debates, playing music or performing theatre. Even though radical left-libertarian groups openly criticized the dominance of the social democrats and the corporatist structures – accusing them of co-optation and de-radicalization – it is probable that the strong organizational infrastructure built by the SAP and the social democratic labour movement within civil society also affected the radicals and their political opportunities, making it harder to gain influence, as well as to break out of established and dominant repertoires of action.

Consensus-based repertoires of action

As previously stated, for large parts of the twentieth century Swedish civil society was built on corporatist ideals. We maintain that these ideals also influenced the repertoires of action developed by social movements in the postwar era. In general, civil society organizations promoted consensus-based repertoires of action. Until the late 1960s, demonstrations other than on the 1 May were rare, and in relation to many other Western European countries there are few incidents of political violence in Swedish political history, especially in the period between 1945 and 1965.[22] The strands of socialism that dominated the Swedish extra-parliamentary left during the 1960s and 1970s, such as

the Maoist and Leninist groupings, focused on creating broad popular fronts using mainly non-violent repertoires of action. In order to radicalize the working class, Maoist and Leninist groups often used tactics such as 'entryism', and hence sought to enter into, work with and create alliances with social democratic organizations and institutions, thus making it hard to deploy and gain support for radical tactics.[23] The relatively few incidents that involved violence – the clashes between 'mods' and police in 1965, some of the anti-imperialist marches of the FNL-movement during the late 1960s, anti-apartheid demonstrations in the city of Båstad in 1968 or, most notably, the planned kidnapping of a Swedish minister in 1977[24] – were all met with heavy criticism and stigmatization from activists in general as well as from more radical currents within the movement. An interviewed activist from the 1970s recalls:

> It was difficult to do more militant stuff during the 1970s [...]. We may have wished for more militancy in one way or the other, for example when we squatted Mullvaden [in 1977–78]. There were those, who thought that it would be better to defend these houses physically, but those who thought differently were in some kind of majority and were kind of anxious about this type of action.

In the late 1970s and 1980s the alternative movement carried on the tradition of using mainly non-violent strategies. For them, non-violence was seen as an essential part of the movement's ideology and was treated as both a means and an end.[25] Even the groups within the alternative movement that used more confrontational strategies, such as civil disobedience and direct action, kept to principles of non-violence. These groups often also became an alternative for radicals, such as the anarchists. For instance, the anarcho-syndicalist trade union founded an anti-militarist committee in 1979, which conducted one-week training camps in non-violent civil disobedience, preparing for strikes, boycotts, obstruction and non-violent direct action.[26] As a whole, the broad consensus over the use of non-violent strategies and the emphasis on democratic dialogue, cooperation and formal organizing impeded radical political activism, especially different forms of militancy.

The institutionalized legacy of the socialist and communist movements of the 1960s and 1970s

The new social movements of the 1960s and 1970s introduced new political issues, conflicts and protagonists, raising the level of contention in many Western countries. In general, the movements in Sweden were

inspired by the protests of the New Left, but in relation to their European counterparts the Swedish mobilizations took a less libertarian turn.[27] Both in practice and theory, the lion's share of the protest movements in Sweden were primarily inspired by Maoism, Leninism and Trotskyism.

As noted, these groups wanted to create broad popular movements through disciplined and mainly non-confrontational tactics. They had a more formalized, party-centred approach and often saw anarchist and other left-libertarians as utopian or even counter-revolutionary. Even though the influence and dominance of the socialist and communist movements waned during the 1970s, many activists remained within the organizational structures of the left, thus making it harder for anarchist ideas and practices to spread. One interviewed activist – active since the late 1960s and onwards – described the influence of 'the dogmatic left', as such:

> There was some kind of hegemony from the dogmatic left, which dictated how things should be done. So, it was [...] for us to accept the rules that the 'powers' had decided; it was like 'now you can demonstrate', [...] [and they defined] how things should be done. It was like that all the time, like someone else was telling us how to behave, and we were supposed to conform in order to appear trustworthy. To a large extent, it was the FNL-movement that set the standard for the whole left, and also in the music movement. They were setting the conditions for how things should be, and the anarchist movement was not that strong.

When the older generation of activists gradually left the organizations, a new window of opportunity opened, which contributed to a breakthrough for a new, younger generation of activists, bringing in more left-libertarian ideals, as well as new repertoires of action.

The frameworks of the anarchist activists

Ultimately, the Swedish situation can be partly explained by the collective action frames of the anarchist activists themselves, which in many ways were affected by the political and social contexts described above. In the late 1970s and early 1980s the activists focused on classical anarchist issues such as antagonism towards the state, government, police and the capitalist economy. For instance, in the anarchist journal, *Brand* (the most persistent articulator of anarchist ideas in Sweden since its founding in 1898), the struggle against wage labour was a recurring theme, viewing work as a way of repressing the 'free mind'.

But even though *Brand* was often rather confrontational in style, the anarchists' goals, strategies and alternative visions rarely called for the use of more militant strategies. Instead, they preferred attempts to create practical alternatives. The strategies developed and deployed often involved withdrawing from society in order to create local alternatives, social experiments or other ways to 'opt out'. For instance, during the early 1980s, *Brand* published a regular feature, titled *A-socialen* (a-social), criticizing left-wing demands for full employment and, instead, pleading for direct 'human liberation' from 'the capitalist state and system' through 'social strikes'. The feature promoted work refusal, absenteeism and obstruction.

Thus, the anarchists centred on finding ways out of entrapment or repression, focusing on creating alternatives and 'living right', rather than confronting the system through more insurrectional forms of activism.

The development of the anarchist movement in the late 1980s

As noted, some of the characteristics of the anarchist milieu changed during the second half of the 1980s and the early 1990s. The shift meant a new generation of younger activists entered the Swedish movement, which gradually came to resemble some of its more radical European counterparts: for instance, in Denmark, Germany and Holland. This shift was illustrated by one activist as follows:

> Well, there was quite a lot of control, for example in the (alternative) music movement. But then a number of political activists came, belonging to a different generation, that wasn't bound by these recollections of that part of the left. And they started carrying out actions in another manner, more militant [...], a combination of militancy and fantasy. Pretty fun stuff, moving things out to the streets again.

This transformation was partly driven by the growth and gradual politicization of parts of the punk scene, which revitalized various anarchist groupings. The new generation of anarchist activists was also clearly inspired by the European youth revolts of the early 1980s, especially the various types of squatter movements that had emerged in several European countries and cities. Interviews indicate that Swedish anarchists established closer personal contacts with activists in similar movements in other parts of Europe – for instance in Denmark and

Germany – travelling across borders to aid in each other's causes. The international contacts led to the diffusion of political ideas and repertoires of action. Taken together, this meant an introduction of new focuses, more radical protest tactics and the introduction of new theoretical perspectives. By 1986–87 these types of repertoires of actions had taken root, contributing to a wave of occupations and militant actions in several of the larger cities of Sweden. The shift is clearly illustrated, both in the activists' own historical accounts as well as in reports by the secret police. In 1987, the latter stated:

> In the past period, the contours of a new and militant anarchist movement have emerged. Young people, who have previously been active in squatting, etc., have taken action against the United States and companies with a connection to South Africa. So far, there has been an attack on the American Embassy, riot-like demonstrations against Nancy Reagan's visit, vandalism of McDonald's restaurants and sabotages of Shell's petrol stations. In connection to this summer's riots in Kungsträdgården (a park in central Stockholm), there was a clear incitement/guidance by certain individuals, and it is clear that these have also stood behind several of the earlier events. The movement is, due to its anarchist character, loosely joined, but there is clearly an organized core, which among other things has been in contact with the Danish BZ-movement.[28]

Summing up the early history of the movement, one activist writes:

> [I]n the three major cities of Sweden there is an autonomous squatting movement emerging in '86–'87 and over 400 sabotages against Shell are carried out across the country. The movement in Stockholm is also carrying out militant attacks on the American Embassy and the like. The paper *Brand* restarted again in 1986 and partly becomes a forum for this movement. *Brand* had stopped its publishing in the aftermath of the repression in connection with the Kröcher affair in 1977,[29] something that crushed the burgeoning anarchist movement in Stockholm.[30]

Throughout the second half of the 1980s, activists gathered in squatted houses, engaged in the struggle against apartheid and fought the emerging racist skinhead movement. The squatted houses also functioned as social and cultural networks, which formed the basis of a growing subculture. The scene that thus emerged, parts of which later transformed into the

autonomous movement, came to function as a node for various radical groupings. Although the core of this movement contained anarchist activists, it also gathered radical and anarcha-feminists, social ecologists, animal rights activists and anarcho-syndicalists, as well as other strands of radical left-libertarian activists.[31] As a whole, the movement gradually became much more similar to their European counterparts.

In the 1990s, several attempts were made to give the developing movement a more organized form. Some of the most prominent examples of this were Antifascistisk action (AFA) (Anti-Fascist Action), which surfaced in 1991 and was established as a network in 1993, Folkmakt (People power), and the Syndikalistiska Ungdomsförbundet (Swedish Anarcho-syndicalist Youth Federation). These networks and organizations, together with several other more loosely assembled groupings, formed the basis for a growing militant scene that functioned as a radical flank to the anti-racist, feminist, leftist and anti-apartheid movement throughout the 1990s. The different struggles – especially against what was seen as forms of oppression based on racism, sexism, homophobia and class – were often connected to the idea of 'triple oppression', a theoretical inspiration mainly derived from German autonomists.[32] Thus, the collective action frames combined a materialist analysis of class oppression, racism and sexism – viewing these as the outermost expression of structural problems deeply rooted at the heart of society – with the use of militant, direct actions against their adversaries. The activists came to take part in many contentious mobilizations during the 1990s, trying to heighten societal conflicts and to visualize what they considered a larger 'reactionary mobilization' in society.[33] In particular, the movement engaged in the counter-mobilizations against emerging militant neo-Nazi activism in Sweden during the 1990s. According to interviewed activists, at its peak in the 1990s the movement could mobilize between 4,000 and 5,000 activists (spread across the country), but the actual numbers are difficult to estimate.

Conclusion

The upsurge in radical left-libertarian activism that took place in many parts of Northern Europe in the early 1980s did not take root in Sweden at the same time. Only in the late 1980s, did a new generation of anarchists develop similar collective action frames and repertoires of action that had been established by, for instance, the Danish and German squatter and autonomist movement. But what kept them from doing so in 1980 and 1981? What was it about Sweden in the early 1980s

that made the anarchist milieu less prone to engage in the same type of activism as their European counterparts?

In this chapter we have suggested five interrelated factors that may explain this situation. First of all, the economic crisis that had struck many parts of Europe in the late 1970s, causing high unemployment and shortages of affordable housing, had not fully developed in Sweden by the early 1980s. Moreover, the strong position of social democracy and corporatist structures in Sweden, with a focus on cooperation and consensus-based repertoires of action, did not make for fertile soil for radical activism. Instead, the anarchists and young prospective radicals were surrounded by a movement infrastructure that tied the state and movement organizations closely together, thus impeding radicalization. Furthermore, the alternative movement of the 1980s emphasized the importance of non-violence while also promoting a stronger focus on lifestyle, a 'cultural approach' to direct action and the creation of alternative cultures. Finally, the anarchist movement was also held back by the remnants of the 1960s and 1970s communist and socialist movements, which were still active in many organizations during the early 1980s.

All in all, the circumstances did not prove to be fertile ground for the same type of radical activism as in other parts of Europe. Although anarchist activists stressed classical anarchist issues, they rarely advocated the use of more confrontational strategies. In theory, they were not against militancy as a method for changing or disrupting the system, but in practice they did not attempt to go head-to-head with their adversaries. Instead, the activists preferred trying to invent ways of creating alternatives and 'opting out', relating to the collective action frames within parts of the alternative movement that had a prominent role in Sweden in the 1970s and 1980s.

By the end of the 1980s, and especially during the early 1990s, the anarchist movement radicalized, thus resembling the movements in Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands. Although in this text it is not possible to explore what brought about these changes, it is clear that some of the previously mentioned social and political relations underwent radical transformations. In the early 1990s, Sweden entered a deep financial crisis, leading to, among other things, severe cuts in welfare and a steep rise in unemployment. The hegemonic position of social democracy and the 'Swedish model' was challenged, leading to a de-corporatization of civil society. Around the same time, the older generation of left-wing activists gradually 'retired', the alternative movement was weakened and the frameworks of a new generation of anarchist activists was infused by ideas and practices from similar, but

more radical movements in other parts of Europe. These changes were paralleled with the growth of a violent neo-Nazi subculture that clashed with parts of the extra-parliamentary left, as well as increasingly repressive policing against squatters, with the eviction of the Folkungagatan squat in Stockholm (1990) marking a symbolical turning point. Taken together, these changes contributed to a radicalization of parts of the Swedish activist milieu, creating movements similar to those that almost a decade earlier had developed throughout Europe.

Notes

1. The empirical material consists of ten interviews conducted between 2008 and 2012 with activists who have been a part of the anarchist environment sometime between the late 1960s and mid-1990s. The interviews were part of three different research projects: (1) 'From Apathy to Activism' (The Swedish Research Council, 421–2007–8782); (2) 'Anarchists in the East and West' (The Foundation for Baltic and East European Studies, 1561/42/2911); and, (3) 'The Many Faces of Anti-Racism' (Ph.D. dissertation, Jämte, 2013). The age of the activists at the time of the interviews ranged from around 40 to 55. Apart from interviews, we have analysed the major magazine from the anarchist environment (*Brand*) in the 1970s and 1980s. We have also read and analysed the journal from the Trotskyite youth organization (*Motstånd*) from the early 1980s. Finally, we have also drawn on our previous research on the anarchist and anti-fascist movement in Sweden as sources of data. All quotes, both from interviews and written material, have been translated from Swedish to English by the authors.
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19. See G. Esping-Andersen (1990) *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (Cambridge: Polity Press).
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24. In the late 1970s activists described as anarchists were charged and sentenced for taking part in sabotage actions and participating in the planned kidnapping of a Swedish minister. The minister was see by the activists as responsible for the deportation of RAF members who had taken part in a militant occupation of the West German embassy in 1975. In Sweden, this was known as the Norbert Kröcher affair. See Janne Flyghed (1998): 'Politiskt våld i Europa. Medel och motmodel', in H. von Hofer (ed.) *Brottsligheten i Europa* (Lund: Studentlitteratur), pp. 104–30; SOU (2002: 91).
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7

Not Only Riflusso: The Repression and Transformation of Radical Movements in Italy between 1978 and 1985

Pierpaolo Mudu and Gianni Piazza

While in 1980 and 1981, European cities such as Amsterdam, West Berlin, Zurich and London were shaken by urban conflicts and riots, the Italian radical left faced a period of increased repression. The 'meeting of movements' in Bologna in September 1977 – during which thousands of activists gathered in the city, occupied public spaces and confronted the police – represented the end of a long season of struggles, discussions and actions by radical political organizations. The 'hot autumn' of the 1970s ended, and the 'winter' of the 1980s began.

The end of a decade of radical mobilization, 1968 to 1978, proved to be a traumatic experience for those involved. By the end of the 1970s, the presence of the radical left in public spaces, squares and streets – as well as semi-public places such as bookshops, cinemas and bars – decreased until it had almost disappeared entirely, thus leaving a new generation of activists, students, proletarian youths and unemployed, mostly young people between 16 and 25 years, with almost no spaces or links to previous experiences.

The period after 1978 has been dubbed the 'ebb' of the movement (riflusso), and was characterized by the withdrawal of activists from their public movements into the private sphere. The mainstream press actively reported on and celebrated the movement's decline and mourning.[1] Below the radar, however, political mobilization did not cease completely. Within the remaining movements, the legacy of previous struggles was discussed intensely, as well as new ways to

move forward.[2] Debates over controversial issues continued, just as the struggle for new 'liberated' spaces did not subside.

Analysing the one or two years after the demise of 1977 does not offer much insight into this Italian anomaly. Rather, these years should be reconsidered as a transitional phase from the radical movements of the 1970s to new movements that sprang up later, such as the anti-nuclear and the anti-militarist movements, radical environmentalism and 'post-autonomous' mobilizations, such as the Social Centres movement and grassroots trade union movements such as the *COBAS* (Comitati di Base – Grass-root committees).

This chapter proceeds from two theses. Firstly: the defeat of the autonomous movements at the end of the 1970s did not mean their disappearance but their transformation, as activists re-evaluated past experiments and failures. Secondly: intergenerational dialogues among activists did not cease, even though the context changed dramatically. Not only did the movement face heavy state repression, but it was also challenged by a new societal model, which was characterized by secularization, individualization and a pluralization of life styles. A stronger emphasis on leisure time, on 'subcultures' and their commercialization (for example the world of fashion) greatly influenced young people and youth scenes. Nevertheless, activists from the radical left managed to politicize certain metropolitan youth trends, above all punk, even though it seemed more pragmatic, 'realistic' and far less ideological than the previous radical movements. The ever stronger links with punk represented an important shift, focusing more on creativity, artistic expression and leisure time than on 'work' and labour struggles.

This chapter comprises four sections and a conclusion. The first two sections deal with the dynamics of repression and radicalization of the extra-parliamentary left at the end of the 1970s. The third section maps the new social movements that emerged thereafter, at the beginning of the 1980s. The fourth section discusses the ways in which the riots and struggles in other European cities were debated within Italian movements and how they furthered the genesis of the Social Centres movement in the mid-1980s.

The end of Italy's 'hot autumn'

A fundamental question in relation to the riflusso era is: to what extent was the decline of the radical left at the end of the 1970s the result of government repression? During the 1960s, a strong and sizable protest

movement emerged, which consisted of both workers and radical youths. The extreme right and the state responded with the so-called 'Strategy of Tension', the aim of which was to generate an atmosphere of political instability, insecurity and fear, so as to promote a shift to authoritarian governance.

This strategy was planned and prepared as a justification for repression and the restriction of democracy. Most of all, it was 'directed at containing communism in Italy' and 'it was an essential part of this strategy, that the threat of political subversion should be seen as coming from the left, not from the right'.[3] The campaign was initiated by a right-wing bomb attack at Piazza Fontana in Milan in 1969 and followed in the early 1970s by bomb attacks in trains and in public squares (such as Piazza della Loggia in Brescia in 1974), and the threat of a coup d'état. At the height of this campaign, demonstrations were forbidden in Rome (between 21 April and 31 May 1977), a permanent 'state of siege' took hold in Bologna, and the police repeatedly used firearms against protesters. In addition to police repression, there were cases of right-wing terrorist violence condoned by the secret services, of cooperation between the government and fascist squads, and the introduction of heroin in certain cities with the aim of undermining the strength of social movements.[4] In fact, as Anna Cento Bull has asserted, when investigations into bomb attacks 'started to target the extreme right, several state forces mobilized in order to obstruct their progress and to prevent information from reaching the magistrates, thus severely hampering the judicial process'.[5]

Furthermore, heroin began to circulate in Italian cities in 1975, with its prevalence proportional to the destruction of social movements.[6] Radical-left groups tried to fight heroin diffusion, but were defeated. Drug dealers, often linked to neo-fascist groups, were even killed by leftist groups in Rome and Milan in 1978. In response, the drug dealers fought back. In Milan, the two young activists Fausto Tinelli and Lorenzo (Iaio) Iannucci from the squatted Social Centre, Leoncavallo, who were investigating drug dealers' activities, were shot and killed in March 1978, causing outrage amongst activists.[7] The number of drug addicts in Italy increased from about 20,000 in 1976 to 50,000 by the end of 1977, rising to 100,000 in 1978 and 200–250,000 at the end of 1982. The circulation of heroin, the increasing presence of fascists and police attacks, all progressed in combination.

Confronted with such forms of repression, many extra-parliamentary groups were in turn drawn to armed practices. This tendency was reinforced by a fear of a reactionary coup d'état such as had happened in

Greece (1967) and Chile (1973). The formation of armed protest groups also took place in other Western countries, where the first groups had emerged in 1968–71. But the Italian situation is hardly comparable with other countries, as the proliferation of armed groups in Italy had no equal in Europe. In total, 24 major armed groups and 78 minor armed groups were active between 1971 and 1986.[8]

The number of people involved in organized armed struggle was very high as well. Between 1969 and 1989, total of 4,087 individuals (3,142 men and 945 women) were investigated for being part of an armed organization and of subversive activity or insurrection against the state.[9] Those under investigation were often youths (1,314 between the ages of 21–25 and 1,149 between the ages of 26–30), mostly workers and students, and 75 per cent of all cases were male.[10]

The choice of some to take up arms affected many collectives and, according to many radical militants such as Primo Moroni, this caused a slow disintegration of the radical left. In their view, after the 'militarization' of political conflicts and the subsequent decline of the movement, the remaining activists were left with only a small number of alternatives, all negative: looking for a position within institutional organizations, withdrawal into the private sphere, the armed struggle or heroin and suicide.[11]

The radical left was torn by intense internal struggles over the hegemony within the movement. At the end of the 1970s, movement meetings

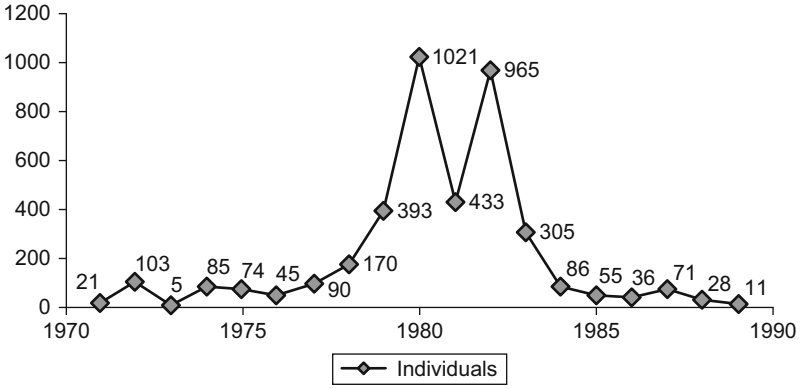

Figure 7.1 1971–89, new investigations (*inquisiti dalla magistratura*) of all leftist armed organizations

Source: Based on Curcio (1994: 488).

were often tense due to domineering attitudes of the autonomists. At the same time, 'new left' groups such as *Lotta Continua* (Continuous Struggle) and *Avanguardia Operaia* (Workers' Vanguard) went through a crisis and dissolved. It is open to debate whether it was the crisis of the revolutionary new-left groups that ignited the new radical actions of 1977 or vice versa.[12] Most of all, the radical left was divided over its stance towards armed groups. Although many radical movements and collectives suffered the repression provoked by the actions of armed groups, most activists were not keen on resolutely condemning the armed groups' actions, thus coining the expression 'comrades who make mistakes'. Although they believed the armed fighters were wrong, they still felt that they stood on the same side of the barricade. A great deal of energy went into committees against repression and for solidarity with the high number of people who were arrested or had to serve time in prison.

The empire strikes back

From the mid-1970s onwards, the government started to isolate and repress the radical left. In 1976, a government of 'national solidarity' was formed with the backing of the Communist Party (PCI), which had previously been excluded from government coalitions. The main outcome of this 'historical compromise' (compromesso storico) was an austerity program. The year that followed marked the peak of mobilization by the Italian radical left, which was heavily influenced by autonomism, Marxism, insurrectionary anarchism and feminism. Not long afterwards, the kidnapping and subsequent murder of the president of the Christian Democrats, Aldo Moro, by the Red Brigades heralded a period of intense state repression against radical-left activists.[13] In the years that followed, more than 40,000 people were charged by prosecutors, 15,000 were put in jail before being formally charged before a court, while 4,000 of the arrested were ultimately imprisoned with very severe sentences.[14] Furthermore, hundreds of activists left the country, causing Balestrini and Moroni to conclude that 'an entire generation was put in exile'.[15]

One of the most spectacular cases of repression took place on 7 April 1979, when hundreds from the Autonomy Movement – among them well-known activists and academics such as Toni Negri and Luciano Ferrari Bravo – were arrested and accused of being part of a subversive 'Organization' comprising the Red Brigades and other armed groups on a clandestine level, and Autonomia Operaia (Workers' Autonomy) on a public level.[16] Negri was charged with a number of trumped-up charges,

including leadership of the organization (and then of the Red Brigades), and of masterminding the 1978 kidnapping and murder of Aldo Moro. Years later, it was proven that the allegations as to his leadership of the Red Brigades and the existence of the 'Organization' were unfounded.[17]

Another grave example of the extent of this repression was the so-called 'legge Reale', named after the minister of justice who proposed the law.[18] According to radical-left activists and intellectuals, this law legalized and justified police violence, homicide, torture and detention for the 'protection of public order'.[19] Critics have denounced this law, which is still in force, as a 'license to kill', and it has been directly linked to approximately 20 deaths a year from 1974 to 1989.[20] In fact, Art. 3 of the law extends the use of preventive detention, even in the absence of a crime, allowing police custody for 96 hours without validation by judicial authorities. Art. 8, furthermore, allows body searches at any given place, without the permission of a judge, which goes against the Italian constitution. Art. 14, finally, extended the options under the Penal Code for the legitimate use of weapons by the police, not only in the face of violence or resistance.

Gild Zwerman, Patricia G. Steinhoff and Donatella della Porta thus summarized the situation at the end of the 1970s, by stating:

> [R]epression was evidenced by (1) new or emergency laws and procedures for policing mass protests; (2) implementation of these laws and procedures to divide and dissuade participation in protest by criminalizing militant segments of the movement; (3) covert intelligence techniques such as harassment, disinformation, infiltration, and surveillance in order to 'neutralize' militant groups and mobilization leaders; and (4) unusually severe conditions for imprisoned militants. Although it is clear that as the mass movement receded, its clandestine organizations became increasingly isolated and involuted, taking on the characteristics of cultic groups or religious sects, they were never fully severed from the political movements and networks, in which they developed.[21]

In addition to repression by the government, other developments challenged Italy's radical left. By the end of the 1970s, broader society's tolerance for political dissidence diminished drastically. Political parties, institutions and newspapers firmly spoke out against radical political gestures, and the political mainstream developed a narrative of blaming the extra-parliamentary left and radical-left groups for the excesses of the 1970s, describing the 'evil' 1977 movement as a tragic epilogue or degeneration of the 'good' 1968 movement.

The end of the 1970s also prefigured the Italian transition from an industrial to a service-based economy. This went hand in hand with a number of grand industrial conflicts, which were lost by labour and as a result gravely weakened its position against capital. State repression and economic restructuring were opposed by a mass movement of workers and youths, as well by as a small but very active number of armed groups, whose resistance, however, remained mostly ineffective.

According to Phil Edwards, the period from 1978 to 1981 can thus be considered as the 'aftermath' of the second cycle of contention in Italy in the 1970s, as armed groups first profited from the suppression of mass movements and then, deprived of a dependable milieu of movement sympathizers, 'were thrown back on their own support structures, whose carrying capacity was necessarily limited'.[22]

In summary, we can say that it is true that countering harsh repression sapped most of the energy of the people involved in radical politics at the end of the 1970s but, at the same time, the radical left was challenged by fundamental economic and social changes. These combined developments accelerated the dissolution of numerous radical groups, and of their way of approaching politics, which was based on often-chaotic and endless discussions. Furthermore, for many movements, it advanced the move away from the armed struggle. As a result, radicals developed new ways of interpreting the political situation and of conducting political activism, as is discussed below.

The 1980s in Italy

In the early 1980s, social movements in Italy were still recovering from the blows they received in the previous years. At times, they were still able to mobilize large numbers of people, but certain developments also highlighted that the context for social action had changed drastically. Three major events were of great importance for social movements in Italy at the beginning of the 1980s. The decade started with the massacre at the Bologna railway station (Strage di Bologna), which marked the end of the 'Strategy of Tension', as the establishment no longer perceived a victory by the left possible.[23] That same year, FIAT workers in Turin struck and were defeated. In 1981 the decision to place Cruise and Pershing II nuclear-armed missiles at the NATO base of Comiso (Sicily), provoked protests by hundreds of thousands of people. In many ways, these three events introduced the most important issues of political conflict for the years to come.

In October 1979, the FIAT automobile company in Turin fired 61 workers, unjustly accusing them of terrorism and assault. Half a year later, in summer 1980, FIAT announced the temporary layoffs of 24,000 employees and the dismissal of 14,469 workers at their Mirafiori factories in Turin.[24] The 'factory councils' (consiglio di fabbrica) immediately called for a strike in response and all Mirafiori factory gates in Turin were blocked by picket lines.[25] On 14 October, after more than a month of strikes, FIAT clerical workers and supervisors opposing the strike organized a mass meeting at the Teatro Nuovo in Turin, after which several thousand people silently walked the streets. The media exaggerated the number of protesters and dubbed it the '40,000 people march', after which the trade unions opted for negotiations and accepted most of the demands of the FIAT management. The dispute was resolved on 17 October, with the 'traditional' working class receiving a stunning blow, directly after the more radical social movements had been repressed.[26]

The FIAT conflict and the workers' defeat interrupted the trend of increasing wages for manual workers and the reduction of the salary differences between themselves and clerical workers. Furthermore, it posed an important moment in the shift towards a service-based economy. The percentage of people employed in the service sector increased from 44 per cent in 1975 to 57 per cent in 1987.[27] Redundancies, outsourcing and short-term contracts scattered the working class, thus destroying its previous strength. Connected to this was the decline of the PCI.[28]

Not long afterwards, on 7 August 1981, the government decided to install a NATO base at the former airport of Comiso in Sicily and place more than one hundred nuclear missiles there. It sparked mass protest on a local and national level. Various newly formed peace and anti-imperialist committees organized demonstrations in major Italian cities. Mobilization against the NATO double-track decision soon expanded on a European scale and even beyond. During the summer of 1981, mass protests were organized internationally with several millions of participants, and even across different countries: for example when people marched from Copenhagen to Paris.[29] Many European activists travelled to Sicily to demonstrate against the Comiso base.

On 4 April 1982 more than one hundred thousand people joined a march against the stationing of missiles at Comiso, and a year later, activists even from outside Sicily, set up an anti-nuclear camp on the land around the airport. Peaking in 1983, anti-nuclear activists blockaded the military airport *en masse*, practised various forms of civil disobedience and direct action. For another three years, protest continued, until in 1987 the Italian government was forced to abandon its nuclear

policy following the outcome of a referendum initiated by environmentalists and anti-nuclear groups.[30]

The peace movement mobilized hundreds of thousands and attracted many militants of the previous decade. But it also mobilized a new generation of young activists, who would subsequently become part of the environmentalist, anti-nuclear, student and/or squatters' movement. As a result, the movement changed both with respect to its organizational structure and its forms of action. The new movement functioned as a network of local committees coordinated by umbrella groups, and it preferred non-violent direct actions and civil disobedience.[31]

The movement also signalled a different geography of conflict. In the past Rome, Turin, Genoa, Padua, Naples and Bologna all had their own specific but connected urban patterns and political conflicts. Now, the different urban scenes opened up to a more fragmented series of practices. In the second half of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, for example, Bologna experienced a long season of urban conflicts and also of creativity, while in other cities such movements were still caught up in processes of decline.[32]

International squatting and the emergence of the Social Centres movement

The youth revolts in many parts of Europe in 1980–81 seemed in many respects a delayed reprisal of the Italian mobilizations of 1977. Even so, they had a refreshing influence on Italian social movements. The riots in Brixton in 1981 and the emergence of radical punk bands such as The Clash created new cultural points of reference. Even so, the effects were not immediately visible. Rather, they slowly penetrated the new generation of activists. Travel by musicians and activists played an important role in this diffusion process. In December 1985, for example, videos made by kraakers from Amsterdam, as well as Hausbesetzer from Berlin and Zurich, were presented in the Social Centre Scaldasole in Milan.[33] This kind of initiative introduced fresh political ideas and tactics to a new generation of Italian activists.[34]

The links to Germany were particularly strong. The developments there were also monitored with special care, because of the activities of the Red Army Faction (Rote Armee Fraktion, RAF) and the counteractions by the state, which were seen as similar to the situation in Italy.[35] But the movement was even more inspired by the strength of the new squatters' movement. Thus, the readers of *Autonomia*, the main magazine of the autonomist movement, were informed that comrades in Berlin had

two radio stations, Radio Utopia and Radio Black Rat.[36] They could also read about the difference between the Dutch squatters and the Italian autonomists, about the number of squatters living in Berlin, and the difficulties of squatting in Southern Germany.[37] Large mobilizations in West Berlin, such as the TUWAT festival and the militant demonstration against the visit of US Secretary of State Alexander Haig, were all covered in the Italian radical press (see example below).[38] At the same time, the Italian autonomous movement of the 1970s fascinated members of the German movement, and 'a book about the Metropolitan Indians was published in Germany, while some of them travelled the country seeking to spark similar formations'.[39]

Demonstration in Berlin – 1980

Various Italian cities reacted differently to the conservative restoration at the beginning of the 1980s. Traditional movement centres such as Milan lost their leading economic and cultural roles as a result of economic restructuring, while in the south of Italy, the Mafia became ever stronger as a predominant societal force. Within the movements, the new political situation, as well as the 'inexistence of a political class' after 1977–78, stimulated discussions on new ways forward. One of their answers, inspired by the examples from West Germany and other countries, was the creation of a network of squatted Social Centres and 'liberated spaces', which became a strategic goal in the second half of 1980s.[40] Although the 1970s had already witnessed numerous occupations and squatter actions, renewed squatting campaigns in Rome, Milan and other cities marked a threshold and the birth of a second generation of squatters' movements.

The Social Centre network focused more on the European experiences of squatting than on far-away experiences in Asia or Latin America. Just as did other squatters in Europe, the Italian squatters set out to redefine militant politics and subvert rather than overthrow parliamentary politics. Equally, like their European counterparts, they did not dwell too much the previous decade of struggles and instead centred discussions on avoiding past pitfalls, moving out of the political ghetto, and rebuilding new public spaces as centres for developing the movement and encouraging political conflict. Even so, the Italian movement differed from other (Northern) European squatters, in that it had to establish self-managed spaces in the context of a declining welfare system. Although squatter actions in other European countries were discussed among Italian activists and inspired their own activity, the peculiarity of the Italian experience lies in the fact that the movement of

the 1980s merged with older generations of (autonomist) activists and others to form an important political network.[41]

The legacy of the 1977 movement was discussed, analysed and further elaborated within the newly formed squatters' movement. Just as its predecessor had done, the squatters' movement recognized no leaders, masters or 'holy books'. Rather, it denounced formal leadership and hierarchies. Furthermore, it adopted the 'labour refusal' attitude (rifiuto del lavoro) developed by its predecessors during the 1970s. While the early autonomists saw this refusal as a declaration of independence of the working class from capital, 'inasmuch as it not only refuses wage labour but fights against it, and fighting reasserts its own otherness, difference and superiority relative to it',[42] punks also refused traditional attitudes towards work, even when they articulated it in a less-theoretical way.

The Italian movement stayed true to the principles of autonomy and self-organization, thus denouncing political parties and trade union organizations, and emphasizing horizontal organizational structures and consensual ways of decision-making. Yet it differed from earlier movements in its pragmatism and aversion to overly theoretical or existential debate. Another difference was its conscious effort to further a broad, popular counterculture and promote a total refusal of mainstream society. Actions and campaigns thusly focused on creating and manipulating signs, images and cultural practices. Culture was no longer an instrument of struggle but became a space for struggles. The development of squatted Social Centres and the survival of radical struggles were made possible by the existence of many projects from the previous movement, such as radio stations, bookshops and cafes. This also furthered links between different generations of activists, thus relativizing the importance of age and generation within the movement.

Punk played an important role in the Social Centre movement and added greatly to its appeal to proletarian youths. Through their music and lifestyle, they diversified the scene and developed new countercultural codes and practices. The Social Centres' emphasis on self-management overlapped with punk's focus on do-it-yourself (DIY) practices. Furthermore, they introduced a new interest for communication technology that had evolved through subversive cyberpunk practices, while the previous generation had been more suspicious of media and technology.[43] In fact, the growing interest of punks in the development of computers and technology gave birth to the magazine, *Decoder*, in 1986. At the same time, their 'no future' attitude and nihilistic approaches were moderated because of their contacts with other activists within the

Social Centres. Punk magazines testify to the level of politicization of the punk scene.

The Social Centres attracted many young women. Nevertheless, for the Italian women's rights and feminist movement as a whole, the years 1978–80 have been dubbed the 'silent years'.[44] Between 1978 and 1979, many feminist collectives dissolved, although important events are worth mentioning, such as the legalization of abortion in 1978 and the referendum in 1981 that secured the law 194 of 1978. The gender perspective at the beginning of the 1980s was very different compared to previous years. During the 1970s, the feminist movement had focused on women's issues, such as legal and informal subordination to men, exploitation, and exclusion from the labour process. For many, the changes to laws on family rights, divorce and abortion were seen as great successes achieved by the movement. But as a result, central conflicts seemed pacified, and the need to emphasize differences and conflicts between women and men was felt less strongly. The feminist movement did not disappear, but became less political and more institutional. During the 1980s, it turned into an aggregation of cultural centres, magazines, associations – less engaged on a directly political level, and more focused on culture.[45] As the movement evolved, it proliferated into a broad spectrum of collectives and organizations: from professional associations organizing training courses, seminars and debates, to women's cooperatives, lesbian associations and the Committee of the Civil Rights of Prostitutes (founded in 1982 in Pordenone).[46] Political women's groups were active in the environmentalist and pacifist movements, such as in the protest campaigns against the missiles in Comiso (Sicily) and against nuclear power.[47]

Conclusion

The years between 1978 and 1985 can be considered as a transitional period between two phases in the history of Italian social movements. Repression, the rise of heroin and larger social and economic changes combined to bring about the defeat of radical movements at the end of the 1970s. Not surprisingly, many activists interpreted the resulting crisis in catastrophic terms (for example in the expectation of a coup d'état). Moderates subsequently set their hopes on accessing the establishment through institutional unity (compromesso storico), while some radicals opted for the armed struggle. The aftermath of the season of repression radically altered the form and repertoire of new radical movements. Socio-economic issues lost their central importance, while peace, nuclear energy and weapons, and Social Centres became more important, as the

political agenda shifted to post-material issues and single-issue mobilizations. In many ways, the movement of the 1980s became a precursor to the alter-globalization movements of the 1990s.[48]

Therefore, the defeat of the 1977 movement did not herald its demise, but its transformation. And while young people played an important role, the Italian radical movement witnessed intense intergenerational dialogues and learning processes, which were predominantly visible in the anti-nuclear campaigns and the Social Centres movement.

Notes

1. P. Morando (2009) *Dancing Days* (Roma-Bari: Laterza).
2. B. De Sario (2009) '"Lo sai che non si esce vivi dagli anni ottanta?" Esperienze attiviste tra movimento e associazionismo di base nell'Italia post-77' *Interface*, vol. 1, no. 2, 108–33.
3. A. Cento Bull (2007) *Italian Neofascism: The Strategy of Tension and the Politics of Nonreconciliation* (New York: Berghahn Books), p. 19.
4. F. Ferraresi (2012) *Threats to Democracy: The Radical Right in Italy After the War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press); G. Flamini (2002) *La banda della Magliana* (Milan: Kaos edizioni).
5. Cento Bull, *Italian Neofascism*, p. 19.
6. Centro di Iniziativa Luca Rossi (ed.) (1990) *Libro bianco sulla Legge Reale. Ricerca sui casi di uccisione e ferimento 'da legge Reale'* (Locate Triulzi: Editoriale Cento Fiori).
7. A. Ibba (1995) *Leoncavallo* (Genova: Costa & Nolan).
8. R. Curcio (1994) *La mappa perduta* (Roma: Sensibili alle Foglie).
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Federazione Milanese di Democrazia Proletaria (ed.) (1989) *Libro bianco sul Leoncavallo* (Milano: federazione milanese di Democrazia Proletaria).
12. G. De Luna (2009) *Le ragioni di un decennio. 1969–1979. Militanza, violenza, sconfitta, memoria* (Milano: Feltrinelli); M. Grispigni and L. Musci (eds) (2003) *Guida alle fonti per la storia dei movimenti in Italia (1966–1978)* (Roma: Fondazione Lelio e Lisli Basso, Ministero per i Beni e le attività culturali); A. Pantaloni (2011) 'La dissoluzione di Lotta Continua nella Torino della seconda metà degli anni '70' (Università degli Studi di Firenze – Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia: Thesis).
13. R. Lumley (1990) *States of Emergency: Cultures of Revolt in Italy from 1968 to 1978* (London: Verso).
14. The movement's press also faced repression, as a great number of newspapers and magazines were charged for supporting the armed struggle or calling for insurrection. Publications that faced charges included magazines such as *Anarchismo*, *il Bollettino*, *Controinformazione*, *Corrispondenza Internazionale*, *Metropoli*, *Rosso*, *Senza Galere* and *Senza Tregua*.
15. N. Balestrini and P. Moroni (1997) *L'orda d'oro* (Milano: Feltrinelli).
16. G. Piazza (1987) 'Movimenti e sistema politico: il caso di Autonomia Operaia' (Degree thesis, University of Catania).

17. F. Scottoni (1988) 'L'ultima parola sul caso "7 aprile"' *La Repubblica*, 5 October; G. Piazza (1987) 'Movimenti e sistema politico: il caso di Autonomia Operaia' (Degree thesis, University of Catania).
18. Italian Parliament (1975) *Disposizioni a tutela dell'ordine pubblico* (Regulations to protect public order). Law from 22 May 1975, no. 152.
19. Balestrini and Moroni, *L'orda d'oro*.
20. Centro di Iniziativa Luca Rossi, *Libro bianco sulla Legge Reale*.
21. G. Zwerman, P.G. Steinhoff and D. della Porta (2000) 'Disappearing Social Movements: Clandestinity in the Cycle of New Left Protest in the U.S., Japan, Germany and Italy' *Mobilization. An International Journal*, vol. 5, no. 1, 85–104, 102.
22. P. Edwards (2009) *'More Work! Less Pay!' Rebellion and Repression in Italy, 1972–7* (Manchester: Manchester University Press).
23. The Bologna massacre was a terrorist bombing of the Bologna railway station, on 2 August 1980, which killed 85 people and wounded more than 200. The bombing has been attributed to the neo-fascists, in cooperation with Italian secret services. See, Cento Bull, *Italian Neofascism*.
24. Only 4 out of 61 workers were later sentenced for assault in the factory and none for terrorism. The 61 dismissals for 'terrorism' and the 24,000 layoffs for economic reasons were the outcome of the industrial policy of the new CEO Cesare Romiti aimed at defeating trade unions and self-organized workers: see the article on the website of the official newspaper of the entrepreneurs association *il Sole 24 ore*, 'Romiti, un ingombrante "primo ministro"': www.ilsole24ore.com/fc?cmd=art&codid=22.0.762410708&artType=Articolo&DocType=Libero&chId=30, date accessed 13 May 2015.
25. The *consiglio di fabbrica* were formed by the representatives of workers directly elected in a factory by a 'white' voting ballot: they could not be unionists or joined to any association, but most were members of a traditional union.
26. R. Franzosi (1995) *The Puzzle of Strikes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
27. Ibid.
28. S. Bologna (1977) 'The Tribe of Moles: Class Composition and the Party System in Italy', *Working Class Autonomy and the Crisis* by Red Notes and CSE (London 1979), and in SEMIOTEXT(E), vol. 3, no. 3, 1980 (Originally in *Primo Maggio*, no. 8 (Spring 1977), pp. 3–18); A. Negri (2005) *Books for Burning*. (London: Verso).
29. L. Anderlini (1981) 'Camminare contro' *Alfabeta* (November), p. 27.
30. After the end of the Cold War, in 1991, the missiles were removed from the Comiso base, and it was reconverted into a civil airport in 2013, as the pacifists and anti-militarists had demanded 30 years earlier.
31. D. della Porta (1996) *Movimenti collettivi e sistema politico in Italia. 1960–1995* (Roma-Bari: Laterza).
32. O. Rubini and A. Tinti (2003) *Non disperdetevi. 1977–1982 San Francisco New York Bologna. Le città libere del mondo* (Roma: Arcana).
33. For the reception of Amsterdam experiences in the Italian movement, see 'Nascita e sviluppo del movimento dei Krakers' *Autonomia*, April 1983, pp. 56–58; J. Bervoets (1980) 'I krakers esplodono sul problema della casa' *Umanità Nova*, 21 September, no. 28, pp. 3–8; P.P. Goegan (1980) 'Uscire di Casa!' *Umanità Nova*, 9 November, no. 35, pp. 3–8. T. Welschem (1980)

'Senza abitazione niente incoronazione' *Umanità Nova*, 27 April, no. 15, p. 3.For information on Zurich in the Italian activist scene, see P.P. Goegan (1980) 'Rivolta dalla A alla (J)Z. Keine Macht fur niemand (nessun potere per nessuno)' *Umanità Nova*, 19 October, no. 32, pp. 3–8.

34. For example, in 1986, the anarchist magazine *Umanità Nova* published three more long articles on the Dutch situation.
35. 'Stato e autonomia di classe. Speciale Germania. "dallo stato di diritto al diritto dello stato"' *Autonomia*, 30 October 1978, no. 11; G. Manga (1981) 'La Germania come scuola di repressione' *Umanità Nova*, 1 February, no. 4, p. 3.
36. 'West Berlin ... ed è subito cronaca'. *Autonomia*, October 1981, pp. 4–5.
37. 'Un prato, una discussione, molte informazioni' *Autonomia*, October 1981, pp. 6–10.
38. 'Corrispondenza da Berlino' *Autonomia*, November 1981, p. 12. A comprehensive description of the situation in the Berlin district of Kreuzberg was published in 1981; P.P. Goegan (1981) 'Berlino Ovest presa a sassate' *Umanità Nova*, 29 February, no. 8, p. 3.
39. G. Katsiaficas (1997) *The Subversion of Politics: European Autonomous Movements and the Decolonization of Everyday Life* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press).
40. P. Mudu (2004) 'Resisting and Challenging Neo-liberalism: The Development of Italian Social Centers' *Antipode*, vol. 36, no. 5, 917–41.
41. P. Mudu (2012) 'At the Intersection of Anarchists and Autonomists: Autogestioni and Centri Sociali' *ACME*, vol. 11, no. 3, 413–38.
42. Piazza, *Movimenti e sistema politico*, p. 175; Edwards, *'More work! Less pay!'*, p. 68.
43. M. Philopat (1997) *Costretti a sanguinare* (Milano: Shake edizioni).
44. M. Bianchi and M. Mormino (1984) 'Militanti di se stesse. Il movimento delle donne a Milano', in A. Melucci (ed.) *Altri codici* (Bologna: Il Mulino), pp. 127–73.
45. Ibid.
46. Della Porta, *Movimenti collettivi e sistema politico in Italia*, pp. 98–99.
47. G. Piazza (2012) 'Movimenti di donne o donne in movimento?' in R. Palidda (ed.) *Donne, Politica e Istituzioni* (Firenze: Editpress), p. 257.
48. S. Dazieri (1996) *Italia Overground. Mappe e reti della cultura alternativa* (Roma: Castelvecchi); T. Tozzi (1991) *Opposizioni '80* (Milano: Amen).

8

Beyond Desencanto: The Slow Emergence of New Social Youth Movements in Spain During the Early 1980s

Enrique Tudela and Claudio Cattaneo

The protest movements that emerged in Spain in 1980–81 may have been different in several respects to those in other Northern and Western European countries. While many cities in those countries witnessed the rise of an autonomist and squatter movement, noted for their direct action repertoires and countercultural values, the Spanish context was still strongly shaped by the transition from the Franco dictatorship to a parliamentary democracy. In order to understand the movements of 1980–81 in Spain, it is thus necessary to position them within the general political context of the transition era, which began after Franco's death in 1975 and ended with the rise to government of the Socialist Party in 1982. In the Spanish context, the transition era has a stronger explanatory value for the socio-political changes that took place in the early 1980s than the specific years 1980–81. However, in this chapter we argue that the years 1980–81 did play an important role in this process. These were the years in which the hopes of a generation of political activists for revolutionary change awakened, after four decades of dictatorship, and gave way to the disenchantment (desencanto) of the 1980s. What arose out of desencanto was a movement far more similar to the radical movements in the rest of Europe.

1975–79: emerging from a long dictatorship

In the second half of the 1970s, Spain was swept by a wave of numerous, often radical, social movements. But, different to the rest of Europe,

these movements did not develop significant countercultural practices. Rather, they were embedded in working-class neighbourhoods and labour struggles. In other European countries, radical and countercultural political trends had already spread widely among middle-class students in the 1970s; however, the cultural and physical isolation of the Spanish state during the Franco era had prevented such a development. The notion that Spain was still, socially and politically, far apart from Europe would greatly influence Spanish social movements in the following years.

The rise and decline of the autonomous workers' movement

The political and cultural horizons of the radical groups that are analysed here, were above all influenced by recent Spanish history and remitted to the experience of the anarchist and radical labour movement during the revolution and civil war of 1936–39. Forty years later, the memory of this period was still vivid, also among younger generations that had not experienced the revolution themselves.[1] This resulted in an active autonomous current during the labour struggles in the second half of the 1970s and, in particular, the commitment of many autonomous and libertarian activists to taking part in the reconstruction of the National Confederation of Labour (Confederación Nacional del Trabajo, CNT), the legendary syndicalist union, which had been banned during the dictatorship.[2]

A few figures show the steep rise in social conflict that followed Franco's death. Between 1975 and 1976, the number of participants in strikes increased tenfold from roughly 500,000 to more than 5 million, while the total hours not worked rose from about 10 million to almost 150 million.[3] In many ways, this movement was similar to the Autonomia movement in Italy – albeit smaller and less mature, because it did not have the possibility to build on any earlier experiences of widespread countercultural mobilization, such as the Italian 'hot autumn' (Autunno caldo) of 1969.[4]

The creation of a new CNT was perceived by many militants, both young and old, as an opportunity to build a large and powerful organization, which could both counterbalance attempts by fascist groups to retain or regain power after Franco's death, as well as attempts by the communist left to take control of workers' struggles and de-radicalize them. The Spanish Communist Party (PCE) had actively voiced anti-institutional, anti-monarchic and revolutionary ideals during the dictatorship, but after Franco's death it soon embarked on a process of institutionalization – accepting

parliamentary democracy and the existing economic, military and religious powers in exchange for its legalization and representation in parliament. This process was partially in line with the international Euro-communist current (in March 1977, the PCE organized a meeting in Madrid with the leaders of the Italian and French communist parties), which on the one hand sought to positively engage with democratic institutions, but on the other hand was not (yet) interested in issues such as gay and feminist liberation, the anti-nuclear struggle or anti-militarism.[5]

This phase of transition can be understood as a process of adjusting Franco's regime to suit the Western European context. A critical moment in this process was the signing of the Moncloa Agreements in 1977, which sought to stabilize society by forging a compromise between Franco's regime and the forces of the authoritarian left. The treaty sought to consolidate the transition by allowing political freedoms such as a free press and free elections on the one hand, while tackling the economic crisis through neoliberal interventions on the other. The PCE, which had been legalized just a few months before, did not hesitate in signing the agreement. Together with the agreement in 1980 on the Workers' Statute, the Moncloa Agreements managed to reduce social conflict by limiting the power of horizontal workers' assemblies. From that moment onwards, only institutionalized trade unions, with an often-vertical structure and representative power, were allowed to negotiate with factory management. The previously mentioned workers' assemblies had up to then served as a platform for discussion and activism and had been able to drive labour struggles forward – one reason for this being that they were not controlled by the trade unions. The process of stabilization and compromise was finalized by the signing of the new constitution in 1978. As a result, the revolutionary tide subsided, and the hopes and longings of many young people were set back.

Even so, the parliamentary left gained support for this strategy of compromise and de-radicalization, and during the municipal elections of 1979 the Socialist Party (PSOE) and communist PCE became the second- and third-largest parties. The process culminated in the PSOE taking power in 1982. For many voters, institutional legalization and changing the system from within – taking into account the abandonment of radical autonomy and institutionalization – represented a peaceful yet moderate alternative to civil war. The changes that were subsequently enacted had, after all, been deemed impossible during the dictatorship. In particular the neighbourhood associations, most of the feminist movement and, above all, large sections of the workers' movement supported this strategy. The

minority of militants, who remained steadfast in their autonomous and radical positions, faced a sense of desencanto (disenchantment).

In the case of the feminist movement, the Second Spanish Feminist Conference held in Granada in December 1979 became the stage of a rift between institutional feminism and independent feminism. The latter would remain active throughout the 1980s, and use demonstrations and other forms of action to push legislative changes, such as the passing of a divorce law in 1981 and decriminalization of abortion in 1985.

The above-mentioned inclusive political pacts, were paralleled by repression and criminalization for those groups that did not sign these treaties. Thus, in 1976, five workers were killed by the police during a wildcat strike in Vitoria. In 1978, the CNT also suffered from a campaign of criminalization: the Scala Case, in which several of its members were accused of having set fire to a nightclub in Barcelona, which killed several workers. Ironically, the fire broke out at the end of the very first CNT demonstration allowed by the state in 40 years. The demonstration had been directed against the Moncloa Agreements, and some of the workers killed in the fire were themselves members of the CNT. The police arrested more than a hundred militants, while the press strongly attacked the organization and characterized it as criminal. Subsequently, many workers and mainstream society associated the CNT and its politics with violence and distanced themselves from the radical trade union organization. Only years later, it turned out that the fire had been started by a police agent provocateur. Yet, it was too late, as the decline of the CNT had already set in and activists faced fatigue and widespread demoralization. Moreover, there were internal factors that contributed to its weakening. Many felt that there were irreconcilable internal differences.[6] At the CNT's congress in 1979, the organization stated that 'the necessary in-depth discussions, through which anarcho-syndicalism can contribute to solving the problems affecting the working class and the whole of society have not yet developed'.[7]

The failure to rebuild the CNT ended a four-year cycle of labour activism, closing off one pathway through which radical discontent could have been channelled and pushed beyond the limits of liberal democracy. As a result, autonomous groups lost much of their strength and support, leaving, in particular, young activists feeling politically disoriented. The 1970s thus ended with a sense of loss and a need to find new alternatives: the age of disenchantment had begun. A new phase began, marked by dissatisfaction and a turn away from the labour movement, and this would eventually lead to the emergence of new radical movements. These would, nonetheless, take years to consolidate.

Desencanto: political violence and heroin

In the years 1980 and 1981, radical youth movements had to find new ways of self-organization and activism, as the integration of neighbourhood associations, trade unions and political parties had left them marginalized and partly branded as criminal. Moreover, the new decade was one of economic recession and high unemployment, especially among young people.

The recession of the early 1980s in Spain had its roots in the oil-related international crises of 1973 and 1979, but it was also related to internal socio-structural changes. Firstly, the Spanish economy underwent a transition from industrial and agricultural production to a service-sector economy. This transition went hand in hand with the closing of factories, massive layoffs and radical changes in employment opportunities. Secondly, the number of job seekers increased dramatically due to the effects of the baby boom: In 1981, young adults accounted for one third of the total Spanish population (which was then 37 million).[8] Finally, partly as a result of the development of the feminist movement, but also because of economic changes and the improvement in their educational levels, a new generation of women entered the labour market. The cumulative effect of these factors contributed to a peak in youth and female unemployment (between 16 and 24 years of age), reaching 53.7 per cent in 1981. At the same time, enrolment at universities also began to rise.[9]

These social and economic developments – in a context in which deficient welfare measures were combined with strong family ties – only succeeded in undermining the possibilities for radical activism and hampered the growth of a radical and countercultural scene.[10] An activist from that time recollects: 'For us it was impossible and unthinkable to get scholarships, or live on unemployment benefits. We joked, saying that the state was paying Northern European youths for doing the revolution, while we were more of a working-class culture. These were two completely different contexts, and we considered ourselves as the underdeveloped'.[11]

Next to these socio-economic factors, two other causes played key roles in the weakness of protest movements in Spain: police and fascist violence and the steep growth of heroin consumption.

A violent time

Although it is generally acknowledged that the transition to liberal democracy was a peaceful process, the era also produced violent excesses

that were reminiscent of the situation in Italy and Ireland. Between 1975 and 1983, 591 people were killed for political reasons, mainly due to left- and right-wing terrorism, but also because of police and state repression, which cost 188 people their lives.[12] The police were not reorganized or purged after the transition, resulting in enduring support for the values of the Franco regime within the force. In 1980 alone, 30 people died as a result of police violence, among them Yolanda Gonzalez, a student activist who was kidnapped and murdered in Madrid by a far-right group that received loose protection from the police. Cases of illegal detention, torture and even murder by police were not uncommon. Thus, in 1981, a Guardia Civil unit from Almeria killed three young men, whom they confused for ETA activists who a few days earlier had attacked an army general and killed three soldiers. This escalation of violence reawakened old fears and trauma in Spanish society, especially among the older generations, who had lived through the civil war and the dictatorship.

These fears peaked on 23 February 1981, the day of the failed coup d'état, when a group of Guardia Civil stormed Congress, while the army took control of Valencia. This extreme event illustrates the context in which Spanish radicals were active, and how different it was from the rest of Western Europe. Instead of youth revolts, Spanish society in 1980 faced fascist attempts at a coup d'état, and escalating violence between the radical left on the one hand and the extreme right and the authorities on the other. As a consequence, the general public and political elite sought to maintain the status quo and saw the transition as a lesser evil. In the following year, general elections brought the PSOE to power.

In the Basque country, where ETA was very active and had a sizable social base, political violence was even more prevalent. Many from the radical left shared ETA's point of view that there had not been any true democratic changes after Franco's death, and that national reconciliation with Franco supporters was incompatible with a genuine transition. On the other hand, the violence used by ETA was received critically by the libertarian left, especially because of the risk it entailed of implementing military tactics for the popular struggle.[13]

The burden of heroin

In addition to violence and repression came the burden of heroin. In the first half of the 1980s, the rise of heroin consumption made a strong impact on Spanish society. It stimulated self-destructive habits among young people, in many cases leading to their early deaths and gravely affecting families, neighbourhoods and communities. But it also affected

political movements, as heroin consumption increased dramatically among youths who had been previously active in radical movements.

The economic situation was one factor that contributed to the heroin crisis. With youth unemployment reaching nearly 60 per cent and a lack of social welfare, young people readily turned to drug smuggling, which often led to experimental use and then addiction. For many former activists, economic hardship mixed with political disillusionment. At the neighbourhood level, associations were appropriated by the PCE and PSOE, causing institutionalization and professionalization, as well as the demobilization of grassroots activism and increasing isolation from everyday people. The arrival of drugs in a context of demobilization could explain why so many former activists got hooked on them.[14]

For these individuals, this shift was closely related to the desencanto: frustration over lost struggles and failing perspectives, over the timid and slow reforms, and over the demobilization and depoliticization of much of the population. Political and social disenchantment led to a sense of self-destructive nihilism. As one author remarks:

> Young idealists with a great capacity for sacrifice, convinced that revolution was possible, devoted their time to the cause [...] Then came the frustration of seeing how the transition was only a reform of the regime and not a rupture from it. Many people left activism and went home, changing the permanent revolution into a permanent dissatisfaction. Others fell into the dark world of hard drugs, particularly heroin.[15]

This change of attitude broke down barriers towards criminal activities and had destructive effects on many neighbourhoods, which in the late 1970s had often been centres of struggle. Born between the 1950s and the early 1960s, these youths became known as the 'lost generation'.

It took activists several years to become aware of the dangers of heroin and find ways to combat it. Activists started to spread information about the dangers of drug abuse by organizing campaigns and talks and spreading posters and graffiti messages. But by then thousands of young people had already died or had been too seriously debilitated by drug abuse.

Beyond desencanto: cultural interconnections and the rise of a new radical scene

Spaniards born between the mid-1950s and mid-1960s had lived under a dictatorship that had only hesitantly liberalized its cultural politics. Pop culture and alternative culture from abroad slowly trickled in via radio

and television. Young people also started working abroad, or making trips there.

For Spanish activists in 1980–81, the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua and the guerrilla war in El Salvador were particularly important points of reference. Both movements showed a close affinity to Spanish culture, and the imagery of popular insurrection evoked reminiscences of the Spanish Civil War of 1936–39, which had so strongly influenced radical Spanish politics of the second half of the 1970s. In 1980–81, many solidarity committees were created by those activists.

Connections with radical movements from other parts of Europe were initially weak and would only evolve a few years later, when punk counterculture gained popularity among the youth. Especially in Barcelona, the contacts with other young Europeans were more frequent, and after Franco's death in 1975 international travel to and from Barcelona brought about a small cultural and libertarian revolution.

Examples of this cultural openness were the Libertarian Cultural Days held in Barcelona in the summer of 1977. It was a successful event and, with nearly half a million attendees, it influenced an entire generation of young people as well as offered an opportunity for young libertarians and autonomous activists to feel less isolated from the various international movements. The difference to European radical movements remained, however, evident. An activist later recalled meeting foreign activists:

> They had much more economic and technological resources and experience than we had. We soon realized that activists in the rest of Europe knew much more than we did. [...] They did things we could not do, but we were also doing things that they could not do.[16]

European networks were forged by travel, among other things. This included a number of women in need of abortions or young men fleeing the military draft. They would often go to the Netherlands. Other important contacts arose through international protest causes. The protest against nuclear power was a strong impetus for activists in Spain to forge international alliances. These contacts gave way to various forms of material and immaterial solidarity. Bilbao's alternative newspaper *Luna*, for example, was established with support from abroad.

In these years, a countercultural scene slowly took shape, attracting both young workers and students. Much of this scene was inspired by alternative publications such as *Star, Alfalfa* and *Vindicación Feminista*, which

dealt with a disparate range of issues such as anti-psychiatry, feminism, ecology, homosexuality, sustainable urbanism and prison struggles.[17]

To allow for a preliminary comparison between Spanish and Northern European radical movements in the 1980s, the following sections focus on three movements in Spain that are most similar to the movements in Northern Europe: the Libertarian Ateneus movement, the anti-militarist movement and the ecologist and anti-development movement.

The Libertarian Ateneus movement

The Libertarian Ateneus were self-organized countercultural centres that emerged in the late 1970s in many city neighbourhoods, and particularly in Valencia, Madrid and around Catalonia. Founded by organizers inspired by the anarchist cultural centres that had played an important revolutionary role among workers of the first third of the twentieth century, the centres' re-emergence highlighted again the importance of the Spanish revolution as a historical point of reference for young radicals. The Ateneus were social and cultural places, not so much centred on popular education, as in the early twentieth century, but used for meetings, the organization of action, and campaigns and social gatherings for youths and activists.

Libertarian Ateneus were autonomous projects, each with its own dynamic. Due to their social function, seemingly very different collectives managed to fit together. Usually, the groups running an Ateneus would rent a space and obtain a formal and legal status. The Ateneus were also places where young men and women worked together, experiencing forms of cooperation between genders that had already been seen in the neighbourhood movement, but had not existed so much in the labour movement. Libertarian Ateneus managed to survive through the transition era and the desencanto, because they had not only a political but also social and cultural functions. In cities such as Barcelona, there was an Ateneus in almost every neighbourhood. Some of them also collaborated intensively with local neighbourhood associations. In 1981, the Ateneus movement organized its first national meeting.

By the mid-1980s, the strength of the movement started to wane, particularly because many key activists from allied neighbourhood associations gave up their radical positions and instead formed alliances with political parties. Even so, in the mid-1980s several Ateneus, especially in Barcelona, cooperated with and supported the first squatters: young punks striving to carve out spaces for housing, concerts and political activity.[18]

Anti-militarist movements

The beginning of the 1970s saw the first cases of youths refusing the military draft. By the early 1980s, this practice had grown into a movement with a strong anti-militarist identity. Illustrative of this development was the formation in 1979 of the Conscientious Objector Movement (MOC), with a firm anti-militarist program. The MOC organized small activist groups in all the main cities and represented the main coordination platform of the anti-militarist movement. Resistance to military service became one of the spearheads of Spanish anti-militarism in the 1980s, but its followers also joined protests against Spain joining the NATO (1986) and the presence of US military bases on Spanish soil.

Denouncing the role of the Spanish military during the Franco years, as well as continuity in army personnel after the transition were other points of anti-militarist activity. The attempted coup d'état on 23 February 1981 and the military interventions in the Basque country also represented opportunities to mobilize around the issue of anti-militarism.[19] From an anti-patriarchal perspective, the anti-militarist movement also challenged classic male gender roles, represented by military values. This prompted many women to participate in the movement.

Although the 1980s were a decade of setbacks for social movements, this was not the case for the anti-militarist movement. The anti-militarist movement in Spain was obviously driven by the massive demonstrations taking place in Europe against the 'Second Cold War' and the installation of cruise missiles in Europe, so that, at least in this case, the pacifist and anti-militarist movements in Spain were in line with what was happening beyond the Pyrenees.

Anti-development during the transition: the anti-nuclear and neo-rural movement

At the same time, a movement emerged that protested against nuclear energy and also occupied abandoned rural villages. The concept of leaving the city for the countryside was an integral part of the ideas and dreams articulated in radical magazines such as *Alfalfa, Bicicleta, Ajoblanco, El viejo Topo* and *Integral*. These publications featured regular advertisements by young people looking for comrades in order to start a rural community project. Often, the people who undertook these 'neo-rural' adventures were also part of urban anti-militarist or land-conservation movements. These projects thus entailed much more than simply dropping out or a focus on ecology. Due to their neo-rural activities in

combination with urban protest and direct action, we prefer to define them as the anti-development movement.

Anti-nuclear protests brought about a moratorium on nuclear energy in 1984. This moratorium, partly related to scandals such as the accident at Three Mile Island (March 1979), where a nuclear power plant almost exploded, was mainly achieved by the strength of the ecologist movement that by 1982 influenced PSOE's electoral program.

Some remarkable protest events against nuclear power unfolded in the Basque country and Navarra. That was the case at Lemoniz, a nuclear plant under construction since 1972 that was confronted by public action, such as the signing of a petition and demonstrations. The protests became more violent when ETA, the Basque nationalist organization, started supporting the anti-nuclear cause. Between 1977 and 1979, they carried out several bomb attacks, killing three construction workers. Police violence occurred also, for example in June 1979, when a Civil Guard officer shot Gladys del Estal, a 23-year-old woman who participated in the International Action Day against Nuclear Energy in Tudela, in response to the Three Mile Island accident. ETA's anti-nuclear campaign reached a violent peak when they kidnapped and assassinated Lemoniz's chief engineer, J. M. Ryan in January 1981, and assassinated the chief director of the project, A. P. Mugica, in May 1982. It was only in autumn 1982, when the PSOE came into power, that the construction was stopped.[20]

A second example of anti-nuclear protests was the campaign, in the summer of 1979, against the construction of a plant in Valdecaballeros, a town in the economically poor southern region of Extremadura. The opponents protested peacefully, and without involvement of established political parties, thus forming the – up to that point – strongest ecological autonomous movement in Spain.[21]

An important branch of the ecologist movement that emerged in the transition years was the neo-rural movement, which is still active on the Iberian Peninsula. The inspiration for this movement came partly from France, where during the 1970s thousands of youths moved from the capital and other cities to the Pyrenees. This affected Spaniards close to the Pyrenees, and in 1980, 20 Basque activists, who had been active in the anti-militarist and peace movement, organized the first occupation, in the village of Lakabe in Navarra, which had been abandoned since the 1960s. Their aim was to organize a free, self-governing, non-violent society in line with ideals that had been developed elsewhere in Europe after the 1968 movement. Lakabe is still a point of reference among neo-rural communities in Spain.

The occupation in 1977 of the abandoned area of Gallecs – this time just 20 km to the north of Barcelona – can also be characterized as emanating from a mix of ecologist, anti-development and neo-rural interests. Young ecologists from Barcelona joined forces with local inhabitants and farmers to occupy some of the empty farmhouses and created a commission for the protection of Gallecs. Initially very active, organizing relatively large street protests and by the early 1980s with more than a hundred people squatting, the movement soon lost its momentum, partly due to disenchantment with the fact that local municipalities (some governed by 'left-wing' parties) were selling land to developers.[22]

Conclusion

All these movements were affected by Spain's very specific political circumstances, characterized by a geographic isolation and reinforced by a 'political isolation' in the sense that, although experiencing the shift to democracy, the movements were not yet 'synchronized' with movements in other European countries. Although emergent, Spanish radical and counter-cultural youth movements had not yet completely matured, and their ideas and experiences were not yet truly connected or in line with other European cases.

Social dynamics contributed to the slowness with which Spain exited its isolation: as we have seen, the lack of a welfare state posed difficulties in the emancipation of a young countercultural and revolutionary generation, which remained, from an economic perspective, very much dependent on family ties. Although a sizable middle-class was emerging in terms of purchasing power, this was not yet the case in cultural terms. As university enrolment boomed in the 1980s, students only then grew as a force for societal change – but it would take time for them to organize and build alliances with young people and workers.

Other problems for radical movements in Spain originated from the unfavourable political structures. Although the PCE, the most influential left-wing party, embraced democratic institutions and the monarchy during the 1980s, it remained strongly tied to Leninism and to the Soviet Communist Party, far more than to other European communist parties. The conversion to Euro-communist principles was slow to come and, due to this, stimulating cooperation with the social movements described above did not come about, remaining so until 1986, when Izquierda Unida was created.

To sum up, the years 1980–81 cannot be understood outside the perspective of the transition era (1975–82), which was characterized by

the emergence of widespread and intergenerational public movements. When, however, the 1970s grew to a close, and it became clear that revolutionary fervour was waning, the same youths were struck by strong feelings of desencanto. Repression contributed further to the demise of the revolt: during the transition era, an average of one young person was killed by the police each month. Finally, the circulation of heroin contributed to deaden the dreams of many youths for an alternative and utopian world, erasing those young people from the political and activist scene. On top of that came a deficient welfare state, which did not offer financial support such as unemployment benefits or interest-free study loans – as happened in Northern European countries, freeing most youths from the need to earn money.[23]

The Spanish context thus proved to be very different from that of Northern Europe. Even so, libertarian, anti-militarist and anti-development movements emerged, and bonds with youth scenes in the rest of Europe grew steadily throughout the 1980s.[24]

Libertarian Ateneus were remarkable because they were able to survive the years of desencanto and move relatively easy from a focus on neighbourhood and labour struggles to new issues. As a result, they served as a bridge to the incipient squatter movement and, from then on, a bridge was established with the rest of Europe's radical and autonomous movements.

From the perspective of the autonomist movement, dark years would follow from there on, dominated by economic crisis and political demotivation. At the same time, however, these feelings were processed creatively, particularly in the Basque country, through punk and radical rock bands such as Kortatu, La Polla Records and MCD. Only years later, with the wildcat student strikes of 1986–87, the success of the anti-militarist movement at the end of the 1980s and the consolidation of a squatters' movement in the early 1990s, would the panorama truly change.[25]

Notes

1. Towards the end of the 1970s, there was a revival of interest in the Spanish Revolution, resulting in a series of translations of earlier works by foreign authors such as W. Bernecker (1982) *Colectividades y Revolución Social* (Barcelona: Critica); F. Mintz (1977) *La Autogestión y Anarcosindicalismo en la España Revolucionaria* (Madrid: Ediciones de La Piqueta); as well as the publication of personal accounts, such as J. Peirats (1971) *La CNT en la Revolución Española* (Paris: Ruedo Ibérico) and D. Abad de Santillan (1975) *Por qué perdimos la guerra* (Madrid: Deltoro).
2. J. Zambrana (2000) *La alternativa libertaria. Catalunya 1976–1979* (Badalona: Edicions Fet a Mà).

3. 'Comentario sociologico', enero-julio de 1979, Confederación Española de Cajas de Ahorros, *Bicicleta*, February 1980, vol. 26, 8.
4. N. Balestrini and P. Moroni (2006) *La horda de oro. La gran ola revolucionaria y creativa, política y existencial (1968–1977)* (Madrid: Editorial Traficantes de Sueños). Orginal title: (1997) *L'orda d'oro 1968–1977. La Grande Ondata Rivoluzionaria E Creativa, Politica E Esistenziale* (Milan: Feltrinelli).
5. Rather than anti-militarist, the PCE remained staunchly anti-imperialist, and it would take until 1986 before a shift occurred with the creation of Izquierda Unida (Unified Left), a new political party which, at least on paper, also claimed to be a social movement.
6. For deeper research into this debate we recommend: VVAA (1979) *CNT Ser o No Ser. Suplemento a Cuadernos de Ruedo Iberico* (Madrid: Editoriales Iberica de Ediciones y Publicaciones).
7. *Bicicleta*, January 1980, vol. 23–24, 48, translated by the author.
8. M. Beltrán et al. (1984) *Informe sociológico sobre la juventud española 1960/1982* (Madrid: SM ediciones), cited in F. del Val Ripollés (2011) 'Pasotismo, cultura underground y música pop. Culturas juveniles en la transición española' *Revista Estudios de Juventud*, vol. 95; http://www.injuve.es/sites/default/files/tema5_revista95.pdf, date accessed 12 May 2015.
9. Ibid., p. 77.
10. Unemployment in 1976 was at 615,240, while in 1981 it reached 2 million, especially affecting the youth residing in industrial areas. See P.C. Carmona Pascual (2008) 'Autonomía y contracultura. Trabajo, revuelta y vida cotidiana en la Transición', in Espai en Blanc (eds) *Luchas autonomas en los años setenta* (Madrid: Traficantes de sueños), pp. 203–30.
11. Extracts from an oral interview with Iñaki Garcia in El Lokal, Barcelona (30.07.2014).
12. M. Sanchez (2010) *La Transición Sangrienta. Una Historia Violenta del Proceso Democrático en España (1975–1983)* (Barcelona: Ediciones Peninsula).
13. 'Editorial' *Bicicleta*, June 1981, vol. 40, 4, translated by the author.
14. 'La rebelión de aquellos hijos del agobio' *El Pais*, 20 January 1995; http://elpais.com/diario/1995/11/20/madrid/816870262_850215.html, date accessed 12 May 2015.
15. M. Suanes Larena (2010) *Plantant cara al sistema, sembrant les llavors del canvi* (Tarragona: Arola Editors), p. 34.
16. Extracts from an oral interview with Iñaki Garcia in El Lokal, Barcelona (30 July 2014).
17. Other alternative publications included *Ajoblanco*, *Bicicleta*, *El Viejo Topo* and *Sal Común*.
18. C. Cattaneo and E. Tudela (2014) 'El carrer es nostre! The Autonomous Movement in Barcelona, 1980–2012', in B. van der Steen et al. (eds) *The City is Ours* (Oakland: PM Press), p. 99.
19. *Bicicleta*, June 1981, vol. 40, 30.
20. http://www.euskomedia.org/aunamendi/46105 and http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_nuclear_de_Lem%C3%B3niz, date accessed 12 May 2015.
21. J.S. Gonzales *1979: Extremadura no se rinde, Valdecaballeros no es negociable*, http://historiadelpresente.es/sites/default/files/congresos/pdf/38/sanchezgonzalez.pdf, date accessed 12 May 2015.

22. http://www.ecologistesenaccio.cat/temes/espais/gallecs/gallecses.htm, accessed 12 May 2015.
23. Interview with Iñaki Garcia, op. cit.
24. See also VVAA (2008) *Luchas autonomas en los años setenta* (Madrid: Traficantes de Sueños) and 'El carrer es nostre' in VVAA (2014) *The City is Ours* (Oakland: PM Press).
25. We are grateful to Carlos Ángel Ordás for his helpful information about the anti-militarist movement.

Part IV

New Social Movements and Youth Protest

9

The Nuclear Freeze Generation: The Early 1980s Anti-nuclear Movement between 'Carter's Vietnam' and 'Euroshima'

Dario Fazzi

In the early 1980s, a wave of varied discontent emerged in the Western world. Western Europe and the United States witnessed massive demonstrations that took the shape of peaceful marches as well as alarming riots. The protesters alternately aimed to challenge capitalism, support different models of economic development, promote anti-militarism and non-violence or redefine urban and social spaces. Large portions of them, however, heralded safeguarding the environment as their primary goal and identified nuclear energy as their main object of concern. The quest for a cleaner and safer environment, which was the essential feature of a broad array of criticisms of nuclear power, mobilized large sections of society and provided people with new tools of civic expression.

Historians and social scientists have explained the rise of this movement substantially in two ways. On the one hand, structural analyses have focused on the geopolitical changes of the Cold War and have situated the emergence of this movement in the broader context of the deteriorating relations between the two superpowers, or in the progressive decline of US hegemony in Western Europe. On the other hand, by claiming that the conventional explanations have overlooked the many differences affecting this movement, some analysts have adopted instead an internal view and have concentrated on the attributes and motivations of the various demonstrators, so as to highlight either their cultural backgrounds, social impact or political achievements.[1] As a result, these different interpretive paradigms have provided only limited

explanations about the causes that originated this wave of protests and the consequences it had.

This chapter tries to merge interpretive paradigms that have provided only limited explanations about the causes that originated these paradigms in order to shed new light on both the ideas that drove this movement and the most immediate effects the movement had. In the early 1980s, indeed, a few structural changes such as the strengthening of a 'complex (transatlantic) interdependence' vis-à-vis the recrudescence of the Cold War, revamped old fears of nuclear catastrophe.[2] Simultaneously, a cluster of innovative local protests, expressing the growing anxiety of specific communities, caused the movement as a whole to gain momentum and succeed in mobilizing at national level. The combination of these two elements made it possible for many Western anti-nuclear groups to turn the public's attention to environmental issues and thereby change the terms of the public debate on nuclear power.

At the same time, studying the increasing environmental concern affecting both shores of the Atlantic in the early 1980s as the combined result of both systemic pressures and local contingencies is also particularly beneficial to answering the underlying questions of this volume: to what extent were these protests a genuine product of European societies? Did they display a generational impetus to a renewed idealism? Were they animated by a revolutionary drive? And if so, to what extent? The historical analysis will reveal: first, that these environmental concerns were deeply rooted in the late 1970s transatlantic countercultural movement with its mistrust of technology, anti-modernism and anti-capitalism; next, that two major turning points, the Three Mile Island accident and the so-called Euromissiles crisis, crucially contributed to the spreading of environmental protest in the Western hemisphere; and, finally, that an inventive proposal to stop the nuclear arms race became the catchword of a generation, calling for substantial revision of the role – and the limits – of the modern nation state.

Shared environmental uneasiness

The mid-1970s represented, both in the United States and several Western European countries, a period of social ferment. In the United States unemployment hit a peak of 8.5 per cent, the highest level in the postwar era, while inflation soared and topped out at around 12 per cent.[3] Stagflation, growing inequality and scandals at home, mixed with recurrent political crises abroad, fostered the public perception that many

of the promises of modern capitalism, such as welfare and economic growth, entailed considerable risk. Under these circumstances, the conventional wisdom that modernity would inevitably mean progress and development came into question. Several radical organizations and student groups openly challenged this belief in modernity and attacked its quintessential symbols, among which nuclear energy was the most conspicuous. Both civilian and military application of nuclear power came to represent the foolishness of unbounded technological development. For many, protecting the environment against nuclear radioactivity became the precondition for the establishment of a more just and equal society.[4]

When, in 1969, John McConnell launched the idea of celebrating *Earth Day* every year, his plan was to alert people to the necessity of restoring the natural system of balance that human beings had 'partly upset' with their technological achievements. At about the same time, traditional conservationist movements and women's organizations started publishing and distributing material focused on the health hazards of nuclear power, the perilous nature of the nuclear arms race, the questionable safety of civilian reactors and of the disposal of nuclear waste.[5]

As the concern for nuclear contamination of the environment increased, several Public Interest Research Groups, such as Ralph Nader's Critical Mass Energy Project of Public Citizen, started monitoring the safety of US nuclear power plants and the adequacy of federal rules for evacuation in case of radiological accidents. In February 1975, the Coalition for International Cooperation and Peace promoted a nationwide referendum against an increase in federal investment in nuclear power, with more than 60,000 citizens signing the referendum.[6] Organizations like the Union of Concerned Scientists, the Nuclear Information and Resource Service and the Safe Energy Communications Council blazoned the many alternatives to nuclear power. Other ecologist groups – such as the National Audubon Society, the Natural Resources Defense Council, the Environmental Policy Center, the Environmental Defense Fund and Environmental Action – lobbied Congress and mounted nationwide anti-nuclear campaigns.[7] In an effort to give a unified voice to the heterogeneous chorus opposed to reckless nuclear policies, in May 1977 more than a hundred peace, religious, environmental, feminist and public interest groups established an umbrella organization called the Mobilization for Survival (Mobe). The Mobe was an overt attempt to 'link nuclear power with nuclear weapons'. It issued a call 'for a national demonstration' against the risks of nuclear energy and organized a series of public demonstrations at major public

places such as nuclear weapons facilities and government offices.[8] As its leaders explained, the Mobe summoned up the discontent of several local communities working together to achieve some very specific goals: 'zero nuclear weapons, halt nuclear power, stop the arms race, and fund human needs'.[9] By criticizing both civil and military nuclear policy, the Mobe network nurtured the American environmentalist demands and placed them in a broader, transnational context. With its activities, the Mobe was, indeed, inviting 'the people of every nation [...] to require their governments to move beyond the rhetoric of disarmament toward concrete action' and was pushing, at the same time, for major breakthroughs in the international control of nuclear energy.[10]

Similar efforts multiplied across Europe. In spite of a broad pro-nuclear consensus, a few French environmentalist groups organized marches to halt the unscrupulous burial of radioactive waste under the seabed. In February 1977, a group of anti-nuclear demonstrators occupied a proposed nuclear site in Flamanville, while the following summer a violent protest erupted at the Creys-Malville construction site, where a fast breeder reactor was built, leaving one dead among the activists and sparking national attention.[11] In the United Kingdom, groups such as Friends of the Earth, the Conservation Society and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds promoted a public inquiry into the planned building of a nuclear reprocessing plant, which, due to its environmental cost and possible military applications, soon caused a major national controversy.[12] When the Italian government launched its 1975 National Energy Plan, which included 'a substantial increase in its nuclear power plants', nuclear opposition spread over the peninsula as well. The Radical Party and the Italian branch of the Friends of the Earth started a campaign against the building of a site for the disposal of radioactive waste in Nova Siri and collected more than 500,000 signatures for a petition asserting that nuclear power was an outdated technology 'because it is neither safe nor economical, not on ideological or opportunistic ground'.[13] In West Germany, anti-nuclear demonstrators occupied a construction site in Wyhl, which in that country 'became the major symbol of successful non-violent resistance' against nuclear power.[14]

Two events, however, transformed these campaigns into a truly transatlantic phenomenon. The first was an accident at Three Mile Island, a nuclear power plant in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, where the core of a nuclear reactor almost melted down, causing a release of radioactive gases into the atmosphere. The second was the so-called NATO double-track decision, which contemplated the modernization of NATO's

nuclear forces and the deployment of new nuclear-armed, mid-range ballistic missiles in five Western European countries.

Immediately after the Three Mile Island accident, people went to the barricades and urged the US administration to tackle nuclear safety.[15] A few weeks after the partial meltdown, 65,000 activists rallied peacefully in Washington, DC, branding the accident as President Jimmy Carter's responsibility – 'Carter's Vietnam' – and demanding a halt to further investment in atomic power plants.[16] Mobe leaders emphasized the comprehensive environmental cost of the accident by claiming that it had had 'an immediate impact on the lives of citizens surrounding the plant, causing pregnant women and small children to flee the area, causing widespread anxiety and mental anguish among the surrounding population, causing businesses to close, curtailing commercial activity in the area, and halting transportation on certain roads and highways near the scene of the accident'.[17] On the streets, young protesters took their cue from the 1960s and, by 'mixing ecology and nostalgia', condemned the administration's nuclear policy with slogans like 'No more Hiroshimas! – No more Harrisburgs!'[18] As a Mobe leaflet maintained, 'beyond the destruction of Hiroshima we see the destruction of American cities. We walk through the ghettoes of our cities and remember Martin Luther King, Jr.'s prophetic words, "The bombs that fell on Vietnam have exploded in Watts and Detroit"'. The activists asserted that they would no longer accept their 'lives being threatened by poverty, war, the drafting of youth, radiation and radioactive wastes from nuclear power plants'.[19] Well organized events labelled 'Hiroshima Day' were held at the Salem/Hope Creek Nuclear Complex in Delaware; at the Davis-Besse nuclear power plant, 25 miles east of Toledo, on Lake Erie; as well as in Milwaukee and in front of the Rockwell Steel Building in Pittsburgh.[20] Almost 16,000 protesters rallied at a proposed nuclear reactor site on Long Island, and 20,000 did the same at the highly contested Diablo Canyon site on the coast of California. Finally, the Mobe network organized a nationwide campaign against the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's decision to declare the Three Mile Island accident no more than an extraordinary occurrence.[21]

The second watershed, the decision to install new intermediate-range nuclear missiles in Europe's heartland, was a response to Moscow's deployment of a new generation of medium-range missiles in Ukraine.[22] Although US Secretary of State Cyrus Vance argued 'the free people of the alliance [would] show overwhelming support for the decision', protests rapidly erupted.[23] The organizations involved in the demonstrations encompassed religious bodies, such as the Dutch

Inter-Church Peace Council (IKV), and radical movements such as the British European Nuclear Disarmament (END). The French Committee for Nuclear Disarmament (CODENE) sided with the Committee against Cruise Missiles (KKN) in the Netherlands; the Coordinating Committee in Germany (KA) had its counterpart in the Italian Unified Committee for Disarmament and Peace (CUDIP).[24] In spite of the allegations of promoting Soviet propaganda, the anti-nuclear protests soon became an independent social force throughout Western Europe.[25] The environmental dimensions of these protests, indeed, helped them to overcome the traditional ideological divides of the Cold War. For the first time, something akin to a unique European voice was challenging the threatening results of the bipolar confrontation. Among the European anti-nuclear organizations a strong, intangible link emerged, 'created by the knowledge that neighbouring peace movements' were active.[26] Accordingly, this sense of common participation fostered an unprecedented, although still-scattered, mobilization throughout the Old Continent.

A new slogan for a new generation: the 'Freeze' campaign

The Three Mile Island accident and the Euromissile crisis transformed the anti-nuclear movement into an independent social force in the West. However, it was only in between 1981 and 1982 that the anti-nuclear activists on both shores of the Atlantic found a common flag to hoist. The new buzzword came from a young American arms-control activist, Randall Forsberg, who formulated the idea of a 'nuclear Freeze'.

In an influential pamphlet titled *The Price of Defense*, Forsberg articulated the nuclear Freeze concept. Coming directly after NATO's decision in 1979, her argument was that the two superpowers, and modern states in general, could no longer manage any further nuclear developments.[27] Calling 'for a radical reorientation' of US defence policy, she argued that technology was leaping too far ahead of the managers. Accordingly, the nuclear arms race was a problem that had to be stopped – or frozen – immediately. Forsberg offered the Mobe her nuclear Freeze proposal as a viable strategy for political action, and the organization immediately endorsed it. Anti-nuclear activists soon recognized that the Freeze proposal could win strong popular support, as its main idea was 'focused, clear and easily understood'. It seemed a practical alternative to the continuing escalation of nuclear armaments. Freeze was also sufficiently 'broad and comprehensive' so as to encompass the testing, production, and deployment of all nuclear weapons and delivery systems. Strategically, Freeze

was bilateral and applied equally to the US and Soviet nuclear forces. Ultimately, the proposed the Freeze would be verifiable by methods of detection that both the superpowers already possessed.[28]

All of these characteristics made Freeze attractive to European organizations as well. To coordinate the efforts of this new campaign, the IKV was designated as the European networking centre. It started publishing a monthly magazine, *Disarmament Campaigns*, covering the European disarmament movement and its transnational connections.[29] European activists established several consultative committees composed of representatives of the main national organizations, to share information concerning European/United States anti-nuclear groups, contacts and exchanges. The END and the International Peace Communication and Coordination Centre (IPCC) started coordinating speaking tours and joint statements with their American counterparts. In spite of the numerous, still-existing differences between the European and American movements, which were mainly based on different strategic approaches and perspectives on the nuclear arms race, the Freeze campaign eventually strengthened both formal and informal transatlantic bonds.[30]

In the United States, the nuclear Freeze campaign transformed anti-nuclear protests into a genuine mainstream movement.[31] Pressured by its social demands, mostly consisting of better environmental safeguards, the rejection of institutionalized violence and a radical switch from vast defence spending to the strengthening of social welfare, hundreds of politicians endorsed the Freeze campaign and the Congress began a two-year debate over various Freeze resolutions. Almost 300 city councils and towns and more than a dozen state legislatures passed Freeze resolutions while, in several elections throughout the country Freeze referenda were put on the ballot.[32] In 1981, a Gallup poll showed that 72 per cent of Americans favoured a mutual Freeze. On 8 June 1982, the Nuclear Weapons Freeze Committee translated this consensus into 'a total of 2,139,499 signatures of U.S. citizens in support of a bilateral nuclear Freeze' that were sent to both the U.S. and the Soviet missions to the United Nations.[33] A few days later, a number of anti-nuclear movements and groups organized an impressive pro-Freeze and pro-nuclear-disarmament event. Nearly a million Americans converged on Central Park in Manhattan, forming the biggest demonstration in the United States up to that time.

Europe witnessed the same kind of proliferation of anti-nuclear protests, which revealed a common uneasiness with the nuclear arms race and an increasingly popular environmental concern. In 1981–83, almost half a million British citizens marched against nuclear weapons,

participated in poster displays and in letter-writing campaigns, distributed leaflets and banners, or circulated buttons and stickers.[34] The camp that a group of British women established at a Royal Air Force base in Greenham in 1982, which was inspired by the example of the Women's Pentagon Action Unity Statement in the United States, received ample publicity, and around 30,000 women sought to join it. In Norway, women condemned the diversion of public money into military expenditures and invited their government to 'Use the Military Spending for Providing Food'.[35] In November 1981, the Dutch anti-nuclear Hollanditis unexpectedly attracted more than 400,000 demonstrators in Amsterdam, while the IKV collected 3,700,000 signatures in support of a nuclear Freeze. The Italian CUDIP invited delegations from the IKV, the British END, the German Die Grünen and the French Le Cun du Larzac to join its local protest in the small Sicilian village of Comiso, where the American missiles were to be installed, so as to give these delegations an idea of successful bottom-up mobilization. The European partners, in exchange, helped the Italian anti-nuclear activists to launch a petition calling for the closure of the military base and to organize a large national demonstration on 4 April 1982.[36]

In general terms, European public opinion proved to be increasingly supportive of the anti-nuclear protests and sympathized with the development of a European movement challenging the nuclear arms race. The call to prevent 'Euroshima' – a nuclear disaster in Europe's heartland – which was simultaneously an invitation to become 'good democrats' and rise up 'non-violently against the arms race', as German Green leader Petra Kelly put it in 1982, gained wide popular consensus.[37] About 40 per cent of the population in Britain, France, West Germany and the Netherlands and 60 per cent in Italy unconditionally rejected NATO's decision to place new nuclear missiles in Western Europe. Young Western Europeans, in particular, remained largely pessimistic about the outcomes of further disarmament talks and criticized their governments' attempts to defend the Atlantic strategy. A vast majority in Italy and pluralities in Britain and France believed that the United States was not sincerely seeking agreement on arms reduction. Many Europeans thought the two superpowers were using the nuclear negotiations just as a means to strengthen their own positions in the nuclear arms race.[38] Although such widespread public approval did not translate into electoral clout – with conservative, pro-nuclear forces eventually prevailing almost everywhere – the Freeze movement succeeded in fostering public interest in nuclear issues and induced members of the political elite to place nuclear policy under public scrutiny.[39]

Legacies

The anti-nuclear movement of the early 1980s represented an inter-class, mix-gendered, grassroots mobilization, which mainly – and in its most authentic forms – developed in the Western hemisphere. Its main object of criticism and primary concern was nuclear power, applied both to military and civilian purposes and generally regarded as a dire symbol of modernity. Although politically incomplete and perhaps partly unsuccessful, this movement impacted deeply on Western politics, society and culture.

In political terms, the anti-nuclear movement did contribute to the creation of a favourable climate for a halt in the nuclear arms race and paved the way for future nuclear negotiations. Due to the pressures this movement had been able to mount, even such a pro-nuclear hardliner as U.S. President Ronald Reagan, who had previously defined the Freeze proposal as a 'very dangerous fraud', had to admit publicly, in his 1984 State of the Union Address, that 'a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought'.[40] At a societal level, this movement anticipated a common trend in contemporary social protests, which frequently combine local needs and actions with global issues. Culturally, this wave of protest epitomized the triumph of global interdependence and a tendency toward cultural homologation at the same time. More importantly, it laid the foundation for a general rejection of nuclear weapons and for the building of widespread awareness of the environmental cost that the mismanagement of nuclear power might entail.

However, in order to provide a first answer for the underlying questions of this volume, it is possible to say that this campaign was not so much a genuine product of European society: rather, it should be placed in a broader, transatlantic, framework. The protest against nuclear power and in favour of greater environmental safeguards, indeed flourished in a transatlantic context and a transatlantic scheme of alliances affected its development and outcomes. The anti-nuclear protesters also denounced a paradox particularly affecting the Western democracies: although conceived to improve citizens' life conditions and provide security, their nuclear investments had instead fostered social insecurity, environmental concerns and inequality. For this reason, the protesters were voicing their dissent by proposing alternative – and, in their views, genuine – democratic models, based on local participation, active citizenship and in the defence of ideals such as freedom from fear and from want.

Secondly, and in regard to the generational dimension of the protests, young activists played a major role in the development of this anti-nuclear

movement. The nuclear Freeze proposal had the merit to bring young voices together transnationally. But it was the youth's attack on modern states' inability to manage nuclear power and nuclear weapons, regarded as instruments and epitomes of institutionalized violence, that crucially connected the anti-nuclear protests with the demands for a more-equal and less-violent society. Understandably, young people were mostly concerned about their futures, as it was threatened by the risks of environmental catastrophes due to the unsafe production of nuclear energy and the persistence of nuclear arsenals in the international arena.[41] For this reason, the first post-baby-boomer generation, having no more than a remembrance of 1968, capitalized on its first opportunity to occupy public spaces and express its angst, dissatisfaction and demands for a better future.

Finally, the volume asks whether this movement, as a whole, can be considered as a revolt or not. Anti-nuclear activists' militancy, their anti-conformism and their tendency to break the rules – which often resulted in the unauthorized occupation of public spaces and construction sites – were considered legitimate reactions against unjust and unsafe national and international policies. The actual revolutionary drive of these protests, however, lay in the mistrust of modernism in general and nuclear technology in particular. As a by-product of capitalism, nuclear power simultaneously represented one of its most conspicuous failures: it fostered insecurity and inequality without solving the structural crises and contradictions affecting modern capitalist democracies. In this sense, these protests represented an attempt to radically redefine both national interests and international political and economic priorities.

Notes

1. See W. Burr and D.A. Rosenberg (2010) 'Nuclear Competition in an Era of Stalemate, 1963–1975', in M.P. Leffler and O.A. Westad (eds) *The Cambridge History of the Cold War. Vol. 2. Crises and Détente* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 88–111; F.J. Gavin (2010) 'Nuclear proliferation and non-proliferation during the Cold War', in Leffler and Westad, *The Cambridge History of the Cold War. Vol. 2*, pp. 395–416. See also R.D. Schulzinger (2010) 'Détente in the Nixon-Ford years, 1969–1976', in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War. Vol. 2. Crises and Détente* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 374, where the author argues that détente 'succeeded at first, because it reduced popular anxieties about the dangers of war between the United States and the Soviet Union'. Francis Gavin has recently explained to what extent disarmament and non-proliferation have been a shared interest of both the superpowers; see F.J. Gavin (2012) *Nuclear Statecraft: History and Strategy in America's Atomic Age* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press). A good explanation of the crisis of American hegemony and its broader consequences is given

in T. Engelhard (2007) *The End of Victory Culture: Cold War America and the Disillusioning of a Generation* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press). As regards interpretations focusing on the individual actors, see L.S. Wittner (2003) *The Struggle Against the Bomb. Vol. 3. Toward Nuclear Abolition: A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement, 1971–Present* (Stanford: Stanford University Press).

2. See R. Keohane and J. Nye (1991) 'Interdependence in World Politics', in G.T. Crane and A. Amawi (eds) *The Theoretical Evolution of International Political Economy: A Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press), pp. 122–40.
3. *U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey, Unemployment Rate 1947–2003*, online at http://data.bls.gov/timeseries/LNU04000000?years_option=all_years&periods_option=specific_periods&periods=Annual+Data, date accessed 15 April 2015. See also *U.S. Inflation Calculator, Historical Inflation Rates: 1914–2014*, online at http://www.usinflationcalculator.com/inflation/historical-inflation-rates/, date accessed 15 April 2015.
4. J.B. Price (1989) *The Antinuclear Movement* (London: Cengage Gale), p. 138. According to Helena Flam, 'The contestation of the antinuclear movements was directed against a sensitive central policy area which depended on the dominant materialist, technocratic and growth-oriented world-view…. The antinuclear movements questioned this world-view. They exposed it as political myth and challenged the interests that had a stake in it'. See H. Flam (1994) *States and Anti-Nuclear Movements* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press), p. 3.
5. To evaluate the historical significance of groups like the Sierra Club in the United States., see National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Record Group (RG) 79, Records of the National Park Service, Records of Key Officials – N.B. Drury, Box 21, Sierra Club. See also TAM 127, Box 10, Sierra Club. Helena Flam argues that Friends of the Earth was 'the most important of the new environmentalist groups' and the first environmentalist group to make 'public intervention on nuclear energy when it submitted evidence to the House of Commons Select Committee on Science and Technology on the inadequacy of the safety of US-designed light water reactors'. See Flam, *States and Anti-Nuclear Movements*, p. 76. Finally, see I. Weintraub (2000) 'The Celebration of Earth Day: Perspectives on an Environmental Movement', *Electronic Green Journal*, vol. 1, no. 12, online at http://escholarship.org/uc/item/72c5328k, date accessed 15 April 2015. On the role of women, see P.A. Gwartney-Gibbs and D.H. Lach (1991) 'Sex Differences in Attitudes toward Nuclear War', *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 28, no. 2; A. Swerdlow (1993) *Women Strike for Peace: Traditional Motherhood and Radical Politics in the 1960s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).
6. See the letter of the Coalition for International Cooperation and Peace Executive Director, H.H. Lerner, dated 21 May 1977, in New York University Libraries – Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, Mobilization for Survival Records (TAM 127), Box 1, Coalition for International Cooperation and Peace, 1977. See also Price, *The Antinuclear Movement*, p. 116. Finally, see the 'Testimony of Ralph Nader before the House Subcommittee on Environment, Energy and Natural Resources, May 7, 1979' in TAM 127, Box 3, Three Mile Island.

7. See the report *Nuclear Power in an Age of Uncertainty* (Washington, DC: US Congress, Office of Technology Assessment, OTA -E-216, February 1984), p. 215, online at http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/ota/Ota_4/DATA/1984/8421.PDF, date accessed 15 April 2015.
8. See T.R. Rochon and D.S. Meyer (1997) 'Introduction: The Nuclear Freeze in Theory and Action', in T.R. Rochon and D.S. Meyer (eds) *Coalitions and Political Movements: The Lessons of the Nuclear Freeze* (London: Lynne Rienner), p. 4. See also B.A. Miller (2000) *Geography and Social Movements: Comparing Antinuclear Activism in the Boston Area* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press). Finally, see TAM 127, Box 2, 2–11 December 1977 conference evaluation.
9. TAM 127, Box 2, October Department of Energy (DoE) Action, document titled *No More Nuclear – Victims Actions at the Department of Energy*.
10. Wittner, *The Struggle Against the Bomb*. Vol. 3, p. 37.
11. Flam, *States and Anti-Nuclear Movements*, p. 144; J-C. Simoën (1977) *Chronique d'une lute: Le combat antinucléaire à Flamanville et dans La Hague* (Didier Anger: Paris).
12. W.C. Patterson (1978) 'The Windscale Report: A Nuclear Apologia', *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, vol. 34, no. 6, 44, online at http://www.waltpatterson.org/windscalerpt.pdf, date accessed 15 April 2015.
13. Flam, *States and Anti-Nuclear Movements*, p. 210.
14. Ibid., p. 271. See also the report *Mass Occupation of Proposed Wyhl Nuclear Power Plant Site in Germany, 1974–1977*, in http://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/mass-occupation-proposed-wyhl-nuclear-power-plant-site-germany-1974–1977, date accessed 15 April 2015.
15. J.R. McNeill (2010) 'The Biosphere and the Cold War', in M.P. Leffler and O.A. Westad (eds) *The Cambridge History of the Cold War. Vol. 3. Endings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 438. See also E.J. Walsh (1988) *Democracy in the Shadows: Citizen Mobilization in the Wake of the Accident at Three Mile Island* (New York: Greenwood). A contemporary ABC News survey showed that 71 per cent of Americans wanted further reassurances from the US administration. See Price *The Antinuclear Movement*, p. 132.
16. See the news reports of *The New York Times*, 7 May 1979 and *The Washington Post*, 7 May 1979, both in TAM 127, Box 2, May 6 Antinuclear Demonstration in Washington, D.C.
17. See the 'Petition before the National Regulatory Committee, July 24, 1979' in TAM 127, Box 3, Three Mile Island. At that time, the *Mobe* network also sponsored the publication and circulation of 'Atomic Accidents', a 25-year study on radiation that stated that nuclear radiation exposure had created more than 450 victims throughout the country. See TAM 127, Box 2, October Department of Energy (DoE) Action, letter from Leo Goodman to Bob More, 19 October 1979.
18. See several press clippings in TAM 127, Box 2, 6 May, Antinuclear Demonstration Washington D.C., and Bob Moore's letter, 25 June 1979, in TAM 127, Box 2, 6–9 August Actions 1979.
19. See Mobilization for Survival, 'A Call To Remember Hiroshima' in TAM 127, Box 2, 6–9 August Actions 1979.
20. See TAM 127, Box 2, 6–9 August Actions 1979.
21. See letter from Critical Mass leader Sally Wurtz to the Friends of the Mobilization for Survival dated 10 August 1979, in TAM 127, Box 3, Three Mile Island.

22. T. Judt (2005) *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (New York, The Penguin Press), p. 590.
23. T.R. Rochon (1988) *Mobilizing for Peace* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), p. 3.
24. R.v. Dijk (2012) '"A Mass Psychosis": The Netherlands and NATO's Dual-track Decision, 1978–1979' *Cold War History*, vol. 12, no. 3, 381–405. See also J. Sarkar, 'Wyther Pax Atomica? The Euromissiles Crisis and the Peace Movement of the Early 1980s' in http://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/whither-pax-atomica-the-euromissiles-crisis-and-the-peace-movement-the-early-1980s, date accessed 15 April 2015.
25. See H. Nehring and B. Ziemann (2012) 'Do All Paths Lead to Moscow? The NATO Dual-track Decision and the Peace Movement – A Critique' *Cold War History*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1–24.
26. See the contemporary analysis by M. Mowlam (1983) 'Peace Groups and Politics' *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, vol. 39, no. 9, 28–31: although the author defined the concept of the 'European Peace Movement' as 'premature', she recognized several common features of the European anti-nuclear protests so as to portray them as an important and unique socio-political factor.
27. See L.S. Wittner (2010) 'The Nuclear Freeze and Its Impact', *Arms Control Today*, in http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2010_12/LookingBack, date accessed 15 April 2015. Freezing the nuclear weapons systems was not an entirely new idea. It had circulated within arms-control circles since the early 1960s, but when NATO proposed the deployment of missiles in Europe and the Mobilization for Survival adopted it as its official strategy, Freeze emerged as a matter of broad public debate. See D.S. Meyer, 'Institutionalizing Dissent: The United States Structure of Political Opportunity and the End of the Nuclear Freeze Movement' *Sociological Forum*, vol. 8, no. 2, 159.
28. See Nuclear Weapons Freeze Campaign Strategy Papers, in TAM 127, Box 9, Nuclear Freeze.
29. See N. Young (1983) 'The Contemporary European Anti-Nuclear Movement: Experiments in the Mobilization of Public Power' *Peace & Change*, vol. 9, no. 1, 1–16.
30. An opposite view, focused on the differences between the movements arisen on the two shores of the Atlantic, is offered by D. Cortright and R. Pagnucco 'Transnational Activism in Nuclear Weapons Freeze Campaign', in Rochon and Meyer, *Coalitions and Political Movements*, p. 84.
31. T.R. Rochon and D.S. Meyer 'Introduction: The Nuclear Freeze in Theory and Action', in Rochon and Meyer, *Coalitions and Political Movements*, p. 2. See also N. Tannenwald (2005) 'Stigmatizing the Bomb: Origins of the Nuclear Taboo' *International Security*, vol. 29, no. 4, 32. In Tannenwald's view, during the Reagan era 'mounting dissatisfaction with the strategy of deterrence was reflected in renewed calls for a no-first-use policy and in renewed moral debate over nuclear weapons'.
32. See M.J. Hogan (1994) *The Nuclear Freeze Campaign: Rhetoric and Foreign Policy in the Telepolitical Age* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press), pp. 1–2. See also K.D. Rose (2001) *One Nation Underground. The Fallout Shelter in American Culture* (New York: New York University Press), p. 222.
33. R.E. Powaski, (2000) *Return to Armageddon, The United States and the Nuclear Arms Race, 1981–1999* (New York: Oxford University Press), pp. 18–19.

See also D. Cortright and R. Pagnucco, 'Transnational Activism in Nuclear Weapons Freeze Campaign', in Rochon and Meyer, *Coalitions and Political Movements*, p. 83. Finally, see N. Tannenwald (2007) *The Nuclear Taboo. The United States and the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons Since 1945* (New York: Cambridge University Press), p. 285.

34. See 'Missile a Major Issue in Britain Vote', *The New York Times*, 18 May 1983; '600,000 March in Europe Over Arms Build Up', *International Herald Tribune*, 26 October 1981; 'Missiles Are Fine, If They Are British', *The Economist*, 29 October 1983, p. 58; 'CND Prepares Action Against Cruise Companies', *The Times*, 3 May 1983.
35. M. Lumsden (1983) 'Nuclear Weapons and the New Peace Movement', in *World Armaments and Disarmament: SIPRI Yearbook 1983* (London: Taylor & Francis), pp. 101–26.
36. See B. Thompson, (1982) *Comiso, END Special Report* (London: European Nuclear Disarmament and the Merlin Press), online at http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/113723, date accessed 15 April 2015.
37. Quoted in Wittner, *The Struggle Against the Bomb. Vol. 3*, p. 130.
38. The data are taken from a United States Information Agency report titled 'West European Public Opinion on INF', dated 5 January 1983, in NARA, RG 306, U.S. Information Agency, Office of Research and Media Reaction, Box 45, S-1/5/83-A.
39. D.S. Meyer 'Institutionalizing Dissent: The United States Structure of Political Opportunity and the End of the Nuclear Freeze Movement', p. 159; J.P. Knopf, 'The Nuclear Freeze Movement's Effects on Policy', in Rochon and Meyer, *Coalitions and Political Movements*, p. 127. For a critical review of the Reagan administration's nuclear strategy, see R. Jervis (1984) *The Illogic of American Nuclear Strategy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press). See also R. Scheer (1982) *With Enough Shovels: Reagan, Bush and Nuclear War* (New York: Random House).
40. In 1982, U.S. polls showed that public support for a bilateral, verifiable nuclear Freeze was consistently at 70 per cent, see the *Gallup Reporter*, 13 January 1983, quoted in L.M. Overby (1991) 'Assessing Constituency Influence: Congressional Voting on the Nuclear Freeze, 1982–83' *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, vol. 16, no. 2, 300. See R.E. Powaski (2000) *Return to Armageddon. The United States and the Nuclear Arms Race, 1981–1999* (New York: Oxford University Press). See also R. Reagan (1984) 'Address before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union, January 25' online by G. Peters and J.T. Woolley *The American Presidency Project*, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=40205, date accessed 15 April 2015.
41. Protesters' slogans mostly posed the same dramatic question: 'Are we the last generation?' see TAM 127, Box 2, 6–9 August Actions 1979.

10

The European 'Disability Revolts' of 1981: How Were They Related to the Youth Movement?

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Simultaneous with the European 'youth revolts', the years 1980–81 saw an upsurge in the protest activities of disabled citizens throughout Europe. Although these protests remained low-scale and unsystematic in the majority of cases, they did represent novel developments in the history of social movements in several ways. Protests by disabled citizens were not entirely unheard of in earlier decades, yet they were almost exclusively initiated by war veterans or victims of industrial accidents – individuals who believed that they possessed a certain moral currency to raise their voices because they had sacrificed their health, either in the service of the fatherland or in that of their employers. The majority of the protests in the explosive years of 1980–81, on the other hand, were organized by civilians, and this marked a new paradigm in the understanding of disability. Up until the early 1980s, being disabled was perceived primarily as a medical issue focusing on the deficient body. Consequently, in this model, the 'problem' lay with the individual, who was expected to give an extra effort to make sure that they did not 'inconvenience' anyone else. According to the new, alternative model, disability came to be interpreted as a social construct, and the causes of disablement were detected in the social environment. It was therefore primarily the responsibility of society to remove the barriers that restricted the lives of disabled citizens.[1] No longer did disabled civilians accept the 'stigma' of not (necessarily) being able to contribute to the national economy. They even called attention to the fact that this shortcoming was often due to the absent or deficient rehabilitation practices rather than to a lack of ambition or some inability on the individuals' part.

This chapter focuses first and foremost on protest activities of disabled people in West Germany, where they were especially prominent, while simultaneously touching on similar events in other countries. Moreover, this chapter considers the question as to whether, and to what extent, the disability movement, and particularly the disability protests of 1981 in Western Europe, were related to the ongoing youth revolts of the same year. Scholars have pointed to the similar trajectories between the emerging disability movement and the women's movement in the 1970s and 1980s but, to date, no attempts have been made at detecting any similarities or parallels between disability and youth protests. For the purposes of this chapter, the term 'revolt' is used with qualifications and therefore in parentheses. According to the mainstream definition, a revolt is an explosive, spontaneous spectacle with a dimension of violence and militant action, and with the aim of changing social structures. The activities of disabled people hardly ever relied on violence. But, as we shall see, they had other strategies at their disposal, be it the blocking of streets or disruption of events. Nevertheless, the wish of disabled activists to exercise self-determination and to change existing social structures was just as paramount as in the case of the youth movement.

This chapter first explains the significance of the International Year of Disabled Persons for emancipatory objectives and also tracks the prehistory of such activities in Europe and more specifically in West Germany. It then proceeds with the discussion of the most significant protest actions performed by West German activists and lastly goes on to draw similarities and differences with the youth movement and also with the women's movement.

The International Year of Disabled Persons

What motivated disabled citizens to raise their voices in the early 1980s? Paradoxically, it was an event intended to improve the conditions of disabled people, or at least to call the public's attention to their circumstances, which functioned as a major catalyst for the movement. In 1976, the UN passed a resolution to designate the year 1981 the International Year *for* Disabled Persons. The main aim of this initiative was to promote the rights of persons with disabilities and to enable them to take full part in the life and development of their societies. The goal was for disabled people to become integrated into the mainstream of life.[2] All United Nations member states were expected to take part in the initiative and so-called 'national committees' were formed

in nearly every UN country. It might have surprised many health and care professionals that disabled people were not necessarily happy with the charitable nature of this initiative, as was reflected in the designation of the year *for* disabled people. It was because of such pressure that in the final and official version this year became the International Year *of* Disabled Persons. Some disabled activists questioned the very meaningfulness of the year altogether, calling it a rotten idea. 'We only seem to have international years for dogs, trees, children or disabled people – never for bank managers or university professors!'[3] Socially, the goals of the International Year were ambitious. The program emphasized the de-medicalization of disability, self-determination, anti-discrimination and equalization, securing disabled people's right to life, integration into the community and as much control as possible over the services for disabled people. Disabled activists however feared that it would only reinforce notions of dependency and stigmatize them further.

In several countries the International Year produced considerable tension: political events and the media became saturated with programmes on disability-related issues. Nevertheless, in practical terms very little happened, so that disabled people became irritated about what they perceived as nothing more than hypocritical lip service. Another circumstance that exacerbated the situation was that precisely at this time the world was experiencing an escalating economic crisis. The official propaganda surrounding the year at both national and international levels raised expectations significantly. However, not only could these expectations not be met, but ironically, in 1981 many countries made deep cuts to their social welfare budgets, bringing about worsening living conditions for disabled people. The vast gap between promises and reality thus became a major catalyst for the politicization of disabled citizens and inspired many grassroots initiatives. A further reason for protest was that the 'noble ideas' of self-determination and equalization were rarely put into practice. For example, in 1981 the Swedish delegates of Rehabilitation International, an organization of professional caregivers, suggested that disabled people should get an equal say in the organization's decision-making and, therefore, 50 per cent of the delegates should be disabled people. However, the proposal was refused because most professionals simply could not believe that disabled citizens were able to represent their own interests. As a result, a new grassroots initiative, the Disabled Peoples' International (DPI) was formed.[4]

In several countries, 1981 marked the first time disabled people appeared in public spaces in order to demonstrate in a confrontational manner. For example in Austria, the celebratory opening event of the

year, which included high-ranking politicians such as the Austrian president Bruno Kreisky, and social policy experts, was obstructed by disabled activists, who blocked the entrance to the Hofburg with their wheelchairs. The protesters met with disbelief and incomprehension from many observers and bystanders, who had never before related the condition of 'being disabled' with the act of 'protest'. Experts of social policy interpreted the action as a criticism of their work and claimed that 'we are looking after the disabled in an exemplary way'. It was precisely this paternalistic attitude, however, that had provoked the disabled activists in the first place.[5] Protest was particularly loud in Britain, where the incoming Tory government of Margaret Thatcher was determined to reduce public spending and encourage people to stand on their own two feet. This attitude particularly hit vulnerable people, and the new Conservative government had no qualms about declaring that they did not feel obliged in any way to at least maintain the level of earlier spending on disability-related services. The International Year provided the first platform for disabled activists to collectively express their disapproval of the International Year's official ideology. As a result, the first national cross-impairment organization was formed: the British Council of Organizations of Disabled People (BCODP), which shocked officials who struggled with the idea of disabled people being in charge of their own organization. Unsurprisingly, they observed the BCODP's development with suspicion and typically caricatured their activists as a bunch of loony left-wing Marxists.[6]

Antecedents: disability movements in the 1960s and 1970s

While the International Year certainly provided impetus, just as in the case of the youth movement, the activities of disabled people in West Germany did not just emerge into the world from a void. Disabled activists in West Germany were well aware of the emancipatory activities of their counterparts in other countries. A small group even visited the first Independent Living Centre in the world at Berkeley, which was founded in 1972 and pioneered legally defined rights for disabled people, demanding that they take control over their lives: the centre was run by and for people with disabilities. Activities at Berkeley revealed several similarities with movements for equality and civil rights by and for racial minorities, women and homosexuals. The first comparable institution in Germany, which was founded in Bremen in 1986, was clearly modelled on it yet, previously, in 1978 a centre had been opened in Munich, which was supported by conscientious objectors and sought

to help disabled people move out of segregated institutions. In addition to the 'Berkeley experience', a number of professionals, such as those working in the Spastics' Centre in West Berlin had learnt about successful models of inclusion in Italy and Sweden and, in 1980, published a book stating that they considered integration as a perquisite for a 'normal' life.[7]

The first associations in Europe concerned with the conditions of disabled people were formed by parents with the intention to share their problems, assist their children and provide a forum for interest representation. This took place at a time when disabled children and adults were typically accommodated in segregated kindergartens, schools and sheltered workshops. In the late 1960s and 1970s, as the disabled children of the parent-association founders reached puberty, the student movement made a strong impression on West German society, while the women's movement was also emerging. These new developments made a significant impact on the emergence of a new attitude among the disabled youth: not only did they start to distance themselves from the expert-dominated organizations, but they also sought emancipation from their parents' organizations and from their parents' dominance in particular. Autonomy and self-help became the new objectives.

Another new development was the formation of Clubs of Disabled People and their Friends, where disabled and non-disabled people could meet and embark on discussions in a spirit free of prejudice. In 1970s Frankfurt, the non-disabled journalist Paul Klee and the disabled activist Gusti Steiner organized a course on Coping with the Environment at the local Volkshochschule (Adult Learning Centre), which raised awareness of the societal conditions of disabled people. Public transport, for example, was generally inaccessible, and wheelchair users who were able to travel on trains had to travel in unheated baggage wagons without toilets while paying full fare.[8] When the authorities systematically ignored their request to make specific buildings and services accessible, they embarked on a number of public demonstrations, which were influenced by the student movement and the civil rights movement, and typically involved direct, non-violent confrontation. For example, in 1974 they blockaded trams during the rush hour in order to make the public aware that for disabled people the use of trams was entirely out of the question. Apart from supportive voices, reaction from some people included the declaration that 'such people' would have been gassed under Hitler's regime.[9]

Another development was the formation of the so-called Krüppelgruppen (cripple groups), the first of which was founded in 1978 by activists

Horst Frehe and Franz Christoph. These groups conveyed a more radical message. They addressed societal oppression and sought to develop a 'cripple's consciousness', which entailed neither partnership nor negotiation but clear *opposition* to their oppressors. The choice of the provocative word 'cripple' as a self-definition (comparable to the use of the word 'queer' by representatives of the gay/lesbian movement) was intended to indicate that the emerging 'politically correct' definitions, such as 'disability' only diverted attention away from the social barriers that they faced. The group's members' aim was precisely to highlight the distance between disabled and non-disabled people, while also calling attention to the utmost isolation and dependence that resulted from the conditions of segregation.

The first demonstration

The first significant protest was organized in 1980 and revealed an ironic gap between the official declarations on the upcoming International Year and everyday realities. On 25 February 1980, the court in Frankfurt passed a verdict which addressed the various complaints of an elderly woman who had spent three weeks on holiday in Greece in 1976 and found the conditions in her hotel so unsatisfactory that she took the travel agency to court. She demanded compensation for a number of inconveniences, including the following problems: not enough deckchairs on the beach, problems with the cleanliness of the hotel, the fact that the hotel beach was also used by non-hotel guests and the radio and air conditioning did not function properly. On top of that, she was particularly disturbed by a group of what she described as '25 physically and mentally seriously disabled Swedish guests – a huge psychological strain'. The court accepted her complaint and the judge argued that 'a holiday maker cannot be expected to be forced to be exposed – even if indirectly – to sick people. This is not discrimination, and the hotel should have ensured that the other guests are not disturbed'. According to the ruling, the plaintiff was entitled to compensation, which amounted to 50 per cent of her holiday expenses.

When the judgement was publicized, it came under heavy criticism and soon received media attention. The judge further compromised himself during his attempt to defend the decision.

> It is undeniable that the presence of a group of severely disabled people can reduce the enjoyment of a vacation for sensitive people. In any event, this is the case when we deal with deformed, mentally disturbed people who are not in the command of language, who

> sometimes emit inarticulate streams in an irregular rhythm, and occasionally have seizures [...] There is suffering in the world, and this cannot be changed. However, the plaintiff is justified in not wanting to see it during her vacation.[10]

In other words, the judge represented the 'traditional' view, according to which the sight of disabled people affronted the healthy eye and should appropriately be kept out of sight. This view however was no longer tolerated in an era of changing sensitivities and intensified emancipatory activities. A national protest was planned because, as activist Gusti Steiner declared, 'We won't allow ourselves to be equated with defective toilet seats or be made into a vacation problem'.[11]

The resulting demonstration took place on 8 May 1980 in front of the court. The judge, who was completely oblivious to the societal reception of his ideas, patronizingly declared that although he himself objected to the initiative, he would open the back door of the court building and allow five participants to have a discussion with him, as long as the demonstrators were going to behave appropriately.[12] The organizers expected up to a thousand people to attend the demonstration but at least 5,000 participated (some estimates are as high 8,000 participants), both disabled and non-disabled. The demonstration constituted the first gathering of this kind in Germany and, apart from its sheer size, it marked a turning point in other ways, too. The media supported the demonstrators and condemned the court's decision as inhumane and disgraceful. Hundreds of letters were written by citizens and associations, while the Catholic and the Lutheran Churches also protested. The Association of Hotel Managers issued a statement, in which they emphasized that in German hotels everyone was welcome and that they were doing their best to accommodate everyone, including those with special needs. Many people pointed in their letters to the (hidden) continuity with eugenic practices of the 1930s. As one of them put it, 'If disabled people should be hidden from the public eye, cannot the same argument be made for others whose sight is also "disturbing": fat people or bald people? And how far can we go?'[13] Another point, which many people found offensive, was that the judge sought to create a division between different groups of disabled people by stating that he had nothing against the sight of 'physically disabled people' (Rollstuhlkranke), yet the mentally disabled belonged to entirely different category, which was a clear act of stigmatization.

The demonstration was accompanied by 'cacophonic music' produced by the popular Linksradikales Blasorchester (Radical-Left Brass Orchestra), and was attended by Swedish guests, who represented the

Swedish group of disabled holiday makers. Among them was Per-Olov Kallman, the director of the Association for Children and Young People with Physical Disabilities, who had organized the trip to Greece and who came to Frankfurt (together with a small group) to address the crowd on behalf of the Swedish group of holiday makers. Before the demonstration started, a German group had visited Kallman in Stockholm and their experience convinced them of not only the unreliable nature of the evidence provided by the holidaying woman (no other evidence was used by the judge), but also of the great differences in societal attitudes towards disabled people in West Germany and Sweden. The Swedish hosts declared that they found the West German scandal detrimental and that for them it sounded like 'the voice of the past'. In Sweden, the government and state institutions pursued the integration of disabled people and this surely could not have been achieved if they were not allowed to stay in hotels together with non-disabled people.

The thousands of protesters against the Frankfurt judgement not only called attention to the extensive discrimination faced by disabled people, but they also revealed that they were perfectly able to speak for themselves and stand up for their rights. Although the court decision was not reversed, it gave an enormous boost for further mobilization. It was the first time that protests by disabled people had made it into the national news. The majority of the public was appreciative, although there were some voices that condemned the protests as an affair of 'extremists' and Marxists. The protesters reacted to this in a jocular tone by stating that they would not be surprised if they were accused of receiving support from the GDR.[14]

Actions against the International Year of the *Disabler*

Given such antecedents, it is not surprising that a number of disability rights organizations renamed the International Year of Disabled Persons as the International Year of the *Disabler.* They also established an action group *against* the UN Year. What particularly frustrated the activists was that they assumed the official events would be used by the authorities to celebrate themselves, without any intention of implementing any real changes. The official opening of the International Year in Germany was organized on 24 January 1981 and attended by disabled people from all over the country, who embarked on a spectacular demonstration in order to draw attention to their situation. They threw the opening ceremony into disarray by entering the hall in a 'Parade of Cripples and Do-Gooders'. They then occupied the stage and forced Federal President

Karl Carstens to withdraw to a locked room to give his keynote address from this remote location. Numerous activists chained themselves to the stage and demanded that there would be 'no speeches, no segregation, no violations of human rights'. The declaration the group read is generally considered a key document of disability rights in West Germany:

> We are a coalition of initiatives of disabled people from the entire Federal Republic and West Berlin. We declare that the 'International Year of the Disabled', as well as this opening ceremony, are being put on without our input and against our interests. This event is nothing but an expensive integration operetta, which is intended to cover up the deplorable situation of disabled people. We reject the congratulatory speeches of those disabled people who claim that full integration has already been achieved. Today and tomorrow, we are allowed to pee in accessible toilets that have been brought here for this occasion. The day after tomorrow, we'll have to stand in the corner like dogs again. Today and tomorrow, we will be sitting at home again. The policy of special institutions, special equipment, special treatment, etc. has led to nothing but ghettoization, isolation, dependence, and mistreatment. Today, too, on 24 January, the disabled are housed and mistreated in institutions. Today, too, the disabled are subjected to bureaucratic arbitrariness, unemployment, and inhumane conditions. We demand: no speeches, no segregation, no violations of human rights.[15]

The federal president's speech from that secure room had a message completely in line with what the protestors expected: the words 'rights' or 'self-determination' were entirely absent. Instead, he appealed to notions of charity and love of one's fellow man.

The next public demonstration also caused considerable irritation to many people. It took place in the context of the Federal Rehabilitation Fair in Düsseldorf on 18 June 1981, where Carstens, the federal president, was scheduled to deliver yet another speech. Before that could happen however, Franz Christoph, a member of the Bremen Cripple Group, approached him. Christoph reprimanded Carstens for sponsoring an event in which, again, 'people were talking about us but not with us',[16] and subsequently hit him lightly with his crutch. By undertaking this act, Christoph demonstrated that the resistance of disabled people was not taken seriously. Although, for any other person hitting a 'symbol of the Federal State', the consequences would have included a prison sentence, the only consequence of his act was that he was banned from the premises.[17] Christoph protested against this 'discrimination' based

on pity and insisted that he be treated in the same way as any non-disabled citizen would have been in similar circumstances.

Several West German newspapers published a photograph on their front pages, which showed Christoph as he was about to strike Carstens. Not everyone was appreciative of this sensational act. Two outraged women for example reacted in an aggressive tone, and one of them even added that it was 'too bad he can still walk'. Christoph justified his act by stating: 'We have to confuse our benefactors so much that when they see us on the street, they do not know whether they are seeing a problem child or a terrorist cripple'.[18]

New Cripple Groups and the Cripple Tribunal

The demonstrations also gave impetus to the formation of new Cripple Groups in several German cities, many of which chose a strategy of separatist confrontation with the non-disabled world. Moreover, 15 disability rights groups organized a Cripple Tribunal in Dortmund on 12–13 December 1981. These were inspired by the Russell Tribunal, which was initiated by philosopher Bernard Russell and brought into being with the aim of deciding whether accusations of 'war crimes', made against the US government in conjunction with the war in Vietnam were justified. In 1967, in his final address to the tribunal, Russell concluded that 'the moral, legal and political categories by which we are accustomed to judge human conduct are inadequate for these crimes'.[19]

The Cripple Tribunal addressed the instances in which the human rights of disabled people were violated in the Federal Republic. The violation of human rights was understood, not in the formal juridical sense of the word as prescribed by politicians and lawyers, but in relation to the concept of human dignity.[20] The tribunal pointed to the segregation of 'those (disabled) citizens whose participation was not required in the free market economy' and who encouraged radical resistance in order to oppose that segregation. It provided ample evidence for the authorities' whimsical use of power, the deplorable living conditions in certain institutions and also for the unresolved mobility problems. It also called attention to the especially precarious situation of disabled women, pointing out that, contrary to common belief, rape victims were not only sexy young women wearing miniskirts.[21] The book, which published the proceedings of the tribunal two years later, also noted that once the International Year had passed, politicians quickly forgot about their speeches and introduced radical budget cuts. The mayor of Hessen even declared that considering that disabled people make up

a relatively small minority of the population, more substantial investment in improving their situation was 'unreasonable'.[22]

Similarities and differences

When comparing the protests by disabled people (during the years 1980–81) to the actions of rebellious youths during the same period, what similarities and differences can be observed? When contemplating this question, the marginal and vulnerable status of both groups – disabled and young people – may be a useful point of departure. The widespread economic downturn that followed the oil crisis had a detrimental effect on the opportunities of both disabled and young people as they faced a lack of jobs or poorly paid jobs, a lack of decent housing and decreased prospects for social improvement.

The European Community described the status of 'handicapped' citizens in economic terms as a considerable burden and, hence, called for their rehabilitation.

> Non-rehabilitated handicapped persons do not contribute to the production process, they are below average consumers, they do not pay taxes and they account for a considerable share of the social budget. The integration of handicapped persons into active life makes it possible to reduce these disadvantages and provides a considerable contribution to the labour force. [...] Vocational and social integration, by giving handicapped persons fresh motivation and new dynamism, helps to make them more independent and responsible. This is one of the major factors in a social policy to help these people.[23]

However, financial restraints limited the opportunities of rehabilitation, and disabled people had barely any hopes in a job market where even their non-disabled counterparts encountered difficulties.

Naturally, because of disabled people's 'vulnerable status', the political and societal reactions to such unruliness followed trajectories different from those of the youth movement. As the episode of the West German activists demonstrates, they could build on the 'power of the powerless'. When they protested, tied their wheelchairs to buses or obstructed the traffic in other ways, the police had to find a 'softer' way of dealing with them. In this context, similarities are more obvious with the women's movement: women likewise had the special agency of vulnerability when they protested on the streets, especially when carrying small children with them. On the other hand, however, as we have seen, the

direct confrontation was a new phenomenon in the repertoire of disabled activists, clearly inspired by the actions of youth activists.

In addition to vulnerability, the quest for autonomy and self-reliance appear to be the most significant common denominators between the motivations underlying the disability movement and the youth movement. It is also worth noting that there existed an overlap between these two movements: among the disability protesters were many young people, including parents of disabled children. It was at that time that the independent living movement – which offered an alternative to traditional segregated institutions in which disabled people could not enjoy autonomy – promoted a new lifestyle for disabled people. Thus, apart from the demand for autonomy, the emphasis on the formation of a new identity and a counterculture may also be comparable features: while youth protesters established autonomous youth centres, disabled people set up independent living centres. Counterculture youth movements are typically informed by initiatives that express dissidence regarding their parents' values, and dissidence is defined in terms of attitudes, beliefs and behaviour by which individuals deviate from the norms established by their societies. Not only participants in the youth movement, but also those in the disability movement experienced a certain sense of alienation – a sense that led to their unwillingness to identify with certain norms sanctioned by society and that resulted in a confrontational attitude. This attitude was often accompanied by a rebellious spirit regarding parental overprotection, which many disabled people saw as a hinderance in their wish to develop themselves as autonomous beings and assert their agency. This stance was voiced especially clearly by a disabled woman who declared:

> The severely disabled individual [...] must find the strength to rebel. They must rebel against their parents, the know-it-alls, the well-intentioned people [...] Only self-awareness makes it possible to take the first steps towards emancipation.[24]

Notes

1. On the social model of disability see T. Shakespeare (ed.) (1998) *The Disability Reader. Social Science Perspectives* (London: continuum).
2. The text of the resolution can be found at http://www.un-documents.net/a31r123.htm, date accessed 15 April 2015.
3. J. Campbell and M. Oliver (1996) *Disability Politics: Understanding Our Past, Changing our Future* (London: Routledge), p. 188.

4. On the Disabled People's International, see D. Driedger (1989) *The Last Civil Rights Movement. Disabled People's International* (London: Hurst).
5. 'Walter Guggenberger: Begegnungen mit Volker Schönweise', in P. Flieger and S. Prangger (eds) (2013) *Aus der Nähe: Zum wissenschaftlichen und behindertpolitischen Wirken von Volker Schönweise* (Neu Ulm: Verein zur Förderung der sozialpolitischen Arbeit), p. 98.
6. Campbell and Oliver, *Disability Politics*, p. 189.
7. *Am Rande gedrängt: Was Behinderte daran hindert, normal zu Leben* (Pushed to the Margins: What Prevents the Disabled from Living Normal Lives).
8. Poore, *Disability*, p. 274.
9. Ibid.
10. E. Klee (1980) *Behinderte auf Urlaub. Der Frankfurter Reise-Urteil: Eine Dokumentation* (Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag), p. 33. Translation based on Poore, *Disability*, p. 277. In the description of the events below I mainly, but not exclusively, rely on these two books, and the citations are based on the translations in Poore's book.
11. Poore, *Disability*, p. 277.
12. Klee, *Behinderte auf Urlaub?* p. 63.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid., p. 90.
15. A. Mayer 'Behinderteninitiativen in der Bundesrepublik', in G. Steiner (ed.) (1988) *Hand und Fussbuch für Behiderte* (Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag), p. 166, translation based on Poore, *Disability*, p. 280.
16. *Kölner Stadtanzeiger*, 18 June 1981.
17. S. Köbsell (Spring 2006) 'Towards Self-Determination and Equalization: A Short History of the German Disability Rights Movement' *Disability Studies Quarterly*, vol. 26, no. 2, http://dsq-sds.org/issue/view/33, date accessed 15 April 2015.
18. Cristoph (1973) *Krüppelschläge*, p. 71, cited in Poore, *Disability*, p. 281.
19. J. Duffett (ed.) (1968) *Against the Crime of Silence. Proceedings of the Russell International War Crimes Tribunal* (New York: O'hare Books), p. 653.
20. S.V. Daniels and T. Degener et al. (1983) *Krüppel-Tribunal: Menschenrechtsverletzungen im Sozialstaat* (Cologne: Pahl-Rugenstein), p. 10.
21. Ibid., p. 98.
22. Ibid., pp. 7–8.
23. 'Proposal for a decision on action by the European Social Fund to assist the Social and Occupational Integration of the Handicapped', in: Archives of the European Community, COM 1973.
24. Christa Schlett's words from 1974, see Poore, *Disability*, p. 283.

11

Between Political Failure and Cultural Identity: The Emergence of the 'Beur Movement' in France in the 1980s

Didier Chabanet

In the early 1980s, France witnessed the rise of the so-called Beur Movement, which mainly mobilized migrant youths from the metropolitan suburbs (banlieues). The term 'beur' comes from verlan, a form of French slang that inverts the syllables within words. The word *arabeu* (Arabian) is thus changed into beu-ra-a and subsequently shortened to beur. The Beur Movement emerged at a time of rising unemployment and political strife – a period in which the left came to power, while at the same time the extreme-right party, Front National (FN), grew to become a national political force. It was within this overall context that the integration of young immigrants became salient, particularly within the most deprived suburbs.

This became clear through a wave of urban riots in September 1981, which were followed by demonstrations of banlieu residents between 1983 and 1985. As a result, the living conditions of the banlieu population became a central political issue, in spite of the movement's rapid demobilization. From 1985 onwards, the organization SOS Racisme established itself as an important political player in this field. But rather than focusing on the social and political problems of the suburban population – such as unemployment, lack of political voice and structural racism – SOS Racisme set out to fight racism through popular and festive demonstrations aimed at a mass audience, promoting a moral or ethical message rather than a political one. As a result, the Beur movement's legacy remains ambiguous. On the one hand, it was not able to give a voice to young immigrants from the deprived suburbs, where

social problems and political isolation have continued to worsen ever since. Even so, the movement *did* raise public awareness of the problem of racism against North Africans, while at the same time stimulating the development, diversification and recognition of artistic or cultural expressions by Northern African French, which soon became known as 'Beur culture'.

The sudden emergence of the young unemployed in public spaces

The crisis-ridden 1980s in France came after the so-called Thirty Glorious Years (1945–74), which were characterized by strong economic growth, the belief in a better future and the introduction of new types of social, political and institutional control, which effectively pacified much social conflict, especially in urban areas. Economic growth also led to the recruitment of many migrant workers. Those who left for France to work were first of all, however, considered to be manpower and it was not expected that they would settle in France permanently. In this context, it was perhaps not surprising that immigrants were almost completely absent from political discourse until the middle of the 1970s.[1]

The Golden Age ended abruptly (and symbolically, in any case), with the riots of August–September 1981 in the district of Minguettes and its surroundings, on the southern outskirts of Lyon. These riots, which included mainly immigrant youths, shook the country to its core. For several weeks, the news reported on astonishing scenes of violence and looting, without understanding their meaning. Among political commentators of all persuasions, incomprehension prevailed, nurtured by the fact that young people – mainly from immigrant families – were engaging in the destruction of their own environment.

Even so, the left-wing government took numerous social measures to respond to the challenge of rioters.[2] Indeed, an overall openness to the problems in the suburbs marked the start of François Mitterrand's first presidential term. In cities at risk, major preventative 'anti-hot-summer' operations were launched in 1982, and more than 100,000 young people from the most disadvantaged districts were either sent on holiday or kept busy where they were. At the same time, relatively ambitious public policies were launched in the fields of education, local delinquency prevention, urban development and social housing. Moreover, in the cultural sector, the law of 9 October 1981 brought an end to the decree-law of 12 April 1939 (a decree that had subjected foreign associations to strict control by the Ministry of the Interior), thus facilitating the self-organization

of migrants.[3] This proactive approach did not, however, prevent mass unemployment, especially amongst suburban youths. In addition, some campaign promises were not kept, such as the granting of voting rights for immigrants in local elections. On top of that came a high number of racist crimes and killings, with 203 people of North African origin being killed in racist attacks between 1971 and 1989.[4] Finally, the 1980s saw the rise of a number of extreme right groups and parties. Front National, for example, enjoyed its first electoral success in 1983, gaining 17 per cent of the vote during the first round of local elections in the city of Dreux, near Paris.[5]

In response, a handful of young people of immigrant descent from Marseille organized a march for equality and against racism, leaving for Paris on 15 March 1983. Setting out amidst almost generalized indifference, the march soon enjoyed widespread success, growing popularity and great media interest.[6] In numerous cities youths began to mobilize and when the march arrived in Paris on 3 December almost 100,000 people had joined. At this point, the march also included members of the highest public offices, such as government ministers, who participated in the final procession. Furthermore, Mitterrand sanctioned the event by receiving the main organizers of the demonstration. One of the leaders of the march subsequently featured on an evening television news bulletin, announcing the key measure that the president had announced during their meeting: a ten-year residence permit for all foreigners with regular employment and no criminal record. This measure represented the ultimate victory for immigrants insofar as the permit was to provide them with a crucial shelter from long-lasting administrative arbitrariness.

This march marked the birth of the Beur movement, bringing anti-racist militants together with young people from the most deprived districts.[7] The overall aim of the march was the transformation of immigrant youth into a recognized political player that could mobilize easily and more broadly engage with politics. The success of the march was in many ways linked to its highly symbolic form. Being conceived as a way to highlight the migrant youths' isolation, exclusion and stigmatization, it managed to avoid confrontations with the police. In doing so, it created favourable conditions for a debate that was inspired by the civil rights movement in the United States and by Gandhi in India. This was also reflected by the support of the Lyon parish and of Christian communities, which provided a crucial contribution to the march. Father Christian Delorme, a legendary figure in the East Lyon suburbs, stood out as a main leader of the suburban youth, alongside the

protestant minister, Jean Costil. Others have considered the 1983 march to be similar to the unemployment marches of 1932–33 in France, thus emphasizing that the march also addressed labour and class relations.[8] The march proved a successful way to attract the attention of a broad public and the political elite, while its peaceful nature was the result of strategic analysis by both the migrant youths and their supporters.

Above all the march from Marseille mobilized the communities living in the banlieus, yet it also mobilized radical left-wing activists (who had been working within the urban arena since the 1960s) as well as discontented youths.[9] Furthermore, it is important to emphasize the key role women played in the organization of the movement, due to their extensive social and cultural capital. Farida Belghoul and Djida Tazdaït are probably the two best-known women who fought against racial discrimination and for respect, equality and social and civil rights for young people from immigrant families – firstly from within the march and subsequently through other civic or political commitments during the previous thirty years. The central role women played could perhaps be explained by the fact that the Beur movement was initially driven from the bottom up and was not set up by a traditional political party or trade union organization – where gender unbalances had been a well-rooted practice. Moreover, it is interesting to note that religious questions hardly ever cropped up in the narratives of key figures in the early Beur movement. This would, however, change quickly, with the decline of the Beur movement. As residents of migrant neighbourhoods sank deeper into difficulty, the unmet needs for recognition and participation were transformed into a movement of withdrawal and the assertion of their position outside the political arena.[10] A portion of these youths was subsequently drawn to religion.

The overall synergy of the march that brought together this rich and varied mix of activists would last only briefly. In fact, as early as its conception, the movement was made up of two different and opposing forces. The first called for autonomous action by young people of immigrant backgrounds, so that they could prevail as a social entity in their own right, outside of the traditional political rationale. This call met with the approval of a large number of local activists and young suburbanites, who were disillusioned by the increasing harshness of daily life and did not see any perspective in forging alliances with traditional political forces.

Another school of thought, promoted by immigrants who were more settled into French society, had set its hopes on integration based on participation in the political system, usually on the basis of an alliance

with the left. Community leaders, trade unionists, political or anti-racism activists and many people who did not live in banlieus and did not suffer directly from social exclusion, often defended this strategy.

Whilst the Beur movement set out to be a unifying measure – between young and older generations, between 'native French' and people of immigrant backgrounds, between town centre inhabitants and those of the districts – divisions between them ultimately prevailed. The collapse of the Beur movement went hand in hand with the incorporation of a part of the movement into the political establishment, leaving the more disadvantaged residents of the banlieus without a political voice.

The movement's divisions were further exacerbated during a follow-up march in 1984, called Convergence 84, with the rallying slogan: 'France is like a moped: in order to start, it needs a good blend of fuel'. The second march focused on the need to live together, whatever the ethnic origin or social status. Yet as early as the preparations for the event itself, difficulties arose. Most of the organizers of the 1983 march refused to be part of it, or to even endorse it. Convergence 84 consisted of five marches, heading from different destinations towards Paris, but the marches were marred by incidents between the marchers and local support committees, with the first accusing the latter of being 'downtown anti-racists'.[11] It was an instance of the recurring tensions between socially well-integrated anti-racism activists, who aspired to represent all those suffering from discrimination, particularly in the suburbs, and residents of disadvantaged neighbourhoods who, on the other hand, expected concrete and immediate answers to their daily problems, which were primarily economic and social, starting with the lack of jobs. Up until this day, these are often two worlds that ignore each other or even clash with one another.

These divisions, however, did not prevent nearly 30,000 people from marching to the capital on 1 December 1984, under the watchful eye of the media (which was now far more alert after the great success of the first march). The final speech made that day by Farida Belghoul, one of the main leaders of the march was, however, like a cold shower for many supporters. In front of the stunned crowd, Farida Belghoul severely criticized anti-racism associations that were detached from the real concerns of young immigrants, who suffered from all kinds of discrimination – in their contacts with the police, but also in their everyday lives and above all when looking for a job. She even said she had 'become a dissident of her own initiative.'[12] By openly discussing the divisions that were threatening the movement, she ultimately condemned the demonstration that she herself had initiated.

Given the many misunderstandings, conflicts and resulting embitterment, the subsequent demonstrations were destined to fail. The following year saw the organization of two simultaneous and competing marches, which in fact met each other in several cities without merging. The first demonstration arrived in Paris on 30 November and only managed to attract 3000 people. A second demonstration arrived several days later (7 December) and included nearly 35,000 people. This shows that, in spite of the divisions within the movement, the ability to mobilize people remained strong. This was also due to the support of the media, which claimed that the dynamics of 1983 were still at work. Yet, the real impact of the Beur movement was declining. Young people in the suburbs withdrew from the movement and felt increasingly betrayed.[13] Many suburbanites witnessed continuing crime of a racist nature, the ongoing stigmatization of young people, the increase of unemployment in the suburbs and the fact that people were getting poorer. They tended to consider the Beur movement responsible because its raison d'être was specifically to defend the rights of the inhabitants of deprived neighbourhoods. As feelings of animosity grew, and sometimes became virulent, many young people felt abandoned by those who claimed to speak for them.

SOS Racisme, or the ambiguities of a political recovery company

Following the declining effectiveness of the marches, the organizations in favour of an institutional participatory approach appeared increasingly isolated. The fundamental objectives of the marches' organizers had not been realized, including the full participation of suburban youth in all social, economic and (especially) political activities of French society. Even so, this school of thought was soon revived through the establishment of SOS Racisme at the end of 1985. This new association – dedicated, as its name implies, to combat racial discrimination – was conceived and designed by close associates of President François Mitterrand, was generously supported for years by the governing left and enjoyed significant media support. SOS Racisme thus became a vast operation of political aid for young immigrants. Its goal was twofold. On the one hand, it was to prevent discontent among immigrant youth from spawning urban riots. On the other hand, SOS Racisme's activities aimed to convince this group of young people that the socialist party understood their problems, listened to them and was the (only) party that could help them.[14] The birth of SOS Racisme was thus the

result of political and strategic calculation, based on the idea of the ruling left that young immigrants were sociologically close to the left because most were poor and discriminated against. At the same time, the socialist party intended SOS Racisme to neutralize criticism of the party's policies and promote social action in the suburbs. This is why SOS Racisme was created by young left-wing supporters, who were often close to the socialist party and, themselves, mostly not of immigrant descent. The riots of 1981 showed that the risks of suburban youths growing disillusioned and uncontrollable were very real. This especially awakened concerns within the socialist party, as it seemed to be the first time that urban violence had erupted when the left was in power. The idea behind SOS Racisme was thus to promote associated players rooted in the banlieus, who could create social and political relationships with the socialist government.

To do so, SOS Racisme focused on organizing large, free music festivals, supported by various personalities, including artists, athletes and intellectuals, and thereby combining leisure with anti-racist actions. The organization's target audience was a broad, young and overall apolitical audience, and the organization made every effort to become a mass movement with which young people (immigrant or not) could identify. In order to appeal to a larger audience SOS Racisme portrayed itself as a young, apolitical organization delivering an ethical and moral message that was largely disconnected from social problems, such as unemployment, poverty and exclusion faced by many of those living in the suburbs. The music festivals gained the interest of journalists and the media, which the association needed for reaching as many people as possible.

SOS Racisme broke new ground in its search for fresh methods of mobilization, moving away from traditional political demonstrations or rallies and traditional political demands. In doing so, they were inspired by the Rock against Racism movement created in the UK at the end of the 1970s.[15] A symbolic badge with the image of an open hand titled 'don't touch my mate' was distributed during the first SOS Racisme concerts and quickly became the championing symbol and emblem of an activist generation. The design of the symbol was modelled on the badge worn in support of Solidarność (self-governing Polish trade union) by several French politicians and artists following the establishment of martial law in Poland in December 1981.

Whilst in keeping with a specific French social and political context, characterized by the rise of racism, unemployment and marginalization, SOS Racisme also attempted to expand its work to other countries and, in doing so, lay the foundations for a European anti-racism

movement. They organized an 'Equal Rights Journey' in 1985, which lasted for three weeks and travelled across several Western and Northern European countries (Belgium, Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands). Its aim was to compare the integration of immigrants in different national contexts and to make the necessary contacts in order to create a new global movement. Likewise, in 1988, a mondovision concert was organized simultaneously in Paris, Dakar and New York. The choice of cities symbolized the African slave-trade route until the nineteenth century, once again demonstrating the will of SOS Racisme to develop a universal struggle against all forms of discrimination and racism. Until 1992, when subsidies began to run out and, with them, the means to act, SOS Racisme dominated media coverage on antiracist activism and appeared almost exclusively as the legacy-bearer of the Beur movement. After that, SOS Racisme's mobilization capacity in the banlieus sank to almost zero because it lacked funds, but also because it was discredited for failing to address, let alone solve, the social problems that the suburbanites faced and are still facing. Even so, in the French public sphere, and particularly in political and journalistic circles, the association is still considered to be 'representative' of young immigrants.

An ambiguous legacy

What kind of changes has the Beur movement brought about, if at all, and what has been its legacy? Although it is always difficult to measure the influence of a social movement on society and politics, our analysis and judgement must focus on four points: the struggle against racism, the social situation in the suburbs, the political representation of young people of immigrant origin, and the movement's cultural influence.

With regard to the first point, it is difficult to say that racism has declined in French society, since the phenomenon is still too multifaceted and complex to measure. It should, however, be noticed that murders of a racist nature have been decreasing. From 1989 to 2006, about thirty murders have been committed in the suburbs.[16] The Beur movement as a whole, and SOS Racisme in particular, have undoubtedly played a positive role in this by raising awareness in French society and its main law enforcement and legal institutions, such as the police and the courts. If we look at the social situation in the banlieus, however, the situation has deteriorated, and inequality and segregation have increased. As a result, tensions between residents and police are still very high. Although it is true that some young people from these suburbs are moving upwards socially, this form of integration is mostly based on individual career

paths. In other words, some individuals are becoming socially more and more integrated, but this is not a mass phenomenon. Within the same family, school trajectories and social success are often highly variable from one child to another. Social indicators can therefore deteriorate, while the situations of a minority of individuals may see improvement. On average the rates of unemployment, poverty and exclusion are higher in the suburbs, while the social decline of the suburbs has taken on an especially dramatic form. While many academics argue that the term 'ghetto' does not today reflect the French situation during the 1980s, other academics no longer hesitate to use the term.[17]

Strictly speaking, the term ghetto necessitates the criterion of ethnic homogeneity in a district, while the situation in many French banlieus is more complex. On the other hand, numerous studies have pointed out that in certain districts a micro society has evolved, one which rallies around a set of common rules – be they implicit or unlawful – thus generating its own cohesion, its own norms and its own social order. This situation is considered to fit the definition of 'ghetto' as a specific cultural product, built as isolation from socially prevailing values.[18] It would be far too easy to blame the Beur movement for not having been able to halt this ghettoizing process. Yet, it underlines again that the message of integration that SOS Racisme was trying to spread was hardly acted upon, at least not in the disadvantaged suburbs, and that social issues were left unaddressed.

A result of the decline and partial failure of the Beur movement has been that a portion of banlieu youths have turned to (sometimes radical forms of) religion, rapidly provoking massive disapproval in a country built around a staunchly secular republican culture. When the 'Islamic headscarf' affair exploded in 1989,[19] political tensions crystallized regarding the Muslim population. The affair segregated the North African immigrants even more, as they were accused of not complying with the French model of integration. At the end of the same year, the government tried to respond to pressure from certain population groups by appointing a General Secretary for Integration. It then went on to create the High Council for Integration, which was designed as a body for reflection and proposals on conditions of integration for residents of immigrant origin. The openness of the beginning of the 1980s thus came to an end. Violent rioting, however, also made a strong comeback during the 1990s, showing that urban uprisings within the French polity were here to stay.

Politically, the failure of the Beur movement was even more obvious. Not only was the movement unable to promote the participation of

young people in the suburbs but, by failing to address and resolve social problems in the suburbs it probably increased the mistrust and indifference towards national politics among migrant youths. Across the right-left political spectrum, people with a minority background from disadvantaged suburbs were able to gain access to positions of responsibility and even to become spokespersons for their social or ethnic groups. However, the figures are not consistent: in 2008 only 0.4 per cent of mayors in France were of North African, sub-Saharan, Asian or Middle-Eastern origin.[20] Above all, at a national level, parliament is still not reflecting the multicultural reality of the population. It was not until the elections of 2004 that elected representatives of immigrants could take a seat in the senate. In 2009, only 3 deputies (of the 555 elected metropolitan representatives, or 0.54 per cent) and 4 senators (from a total of 305 metropolitan seats, or 1.31 per cent) could be described as coming from the visible minorities.[21]

The political parties, themselves, traditionally accept a very low number of elected members from visible minorities, the figures hovering between 3 and 8 per cent for the main parties. Therefore, as a whole, the French political system remains largely closed to the realities of contemporary migration and, from this viewpoint, does not play its representative role. This denial has justified accusations of being 'colour blind',[22] increasing the gap between the majority population and the people living in deprived districts, where the concentration of minorities is greatest. Of course, here too, the Beur movement cannot be held solely responsible for this situation, but still it is undeniable that it failed to produce a political elite from people of immigrant descent.

More dramatically, SOS Racisme contributed to a rift between immigrants and the labour movement. According to some: 'The ecumenical celebration of the march had the effect, if not the function, of condemning the struggles of immigrants and to further encouraging the generational divide.'[23] Among the main objectives of SOS Racisme were pacifying the suburbs and channelling the discontent of a portion of the youth – a condition at the root of the riots of 1981. That is why it did not promote the collective memory of migrants' struggles, but instead tried to deflect attention away from it. As a consequence, SOS Racisme had almost no interest in social struggles or even in social problems, such as youth unemployment, because to focus on them would have further highlighted the inability of the government to solve these problems. The various more socially aware elements within the Beur movement (albeit a minority, they were nevertheless present in the 1983 demonstration) were thus not only marginalized but also erased from public

memory. Even recent immigrant demonstrations have been erased from the Beur movement's legacy.[24] This is particularly the case of workers from Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and Lebanon, who joined the Arab community in the 1970s and protested together against detrimental labour and living conditions. *Le Mouvement des Travailleurs Arabes* was formed in June 1972 and was one of the first organizations to voice the need to improve immigrants' living and working conditions on French territory. Improvement was envisaged particularly on the social front, making specific claims against racism and discrimination, and for the regularization of illegal immigrants (often showing solidarity with the Palestinian struggle).[25]

On other occasions, major social movements were broadly mixed up with the struggles of immigrant workers, such as during the 1983 national strikes in the French automotive industry. The left-wing parties and trade unions always had an ambiguous relationship with immigrant workers. The latter's claims were often interpreted as an attack on secularism and led by Islamist manipulation, especially after the Iranian revolution in 1979. SOS Racisme was able to distance itself from these traditional forms of action, which were feared by both French politicians and the trade unions. Brandishing the issue of racism and universal humanism, the organization acted as a shield to this more political and radical wave that made concrete claims with regard to issues such as social housing allocations, the expulsion of foreigners and the building of mosques for Muslims.

However, acknowledging the limits and paradoxes of the Beur movement, most notably in the sphere of social and political struggle, does not mean denying its cultural or artistic contribution. The appearance in the public sphere of young immigrants from the suburbs has furthered the development, dissemination and gradual recognition of Beur culture, whose richness comes in a variety of forms. 'Beur music' is a blend of Arab, Afro-American and French folk melodies and sounds, a form of music that is widely appreciated today, and which has contributed to the enormous worldwide success of Raï music. 'Beur rock' also comes from this tradition, mixing ethnic and modern forms of music. 'Beur literature' has also emerged, bringing together young writers from different backgrounds, but with single, dual, or mixed identities, often both North African and French.[26] Cinema has also communicated with the Beur movement, devoting a dozen films on issues of migration and integration in France, some of which are of high quality (although most have reached only small audiences). Above all, the emergence in France of new urban cultures (hip-hop, rap, breakdancing and so

forth) is partly linked to the Beur movement, which cleared the way for new forms of artistic expression in the disadvantaged suburbs.[27] The challenging dimension of these urban cultures is paramount, and it deeply absorbs the codes and values of suburban youth. Its potential for protest, however, is largely disconnected from the organizations that (legitimately or not) represent the Beur movement. Undoubtedly, this dichotomy does not allow for discourse about a 'Beur counterculture' in the sense that this term refers to any artistic practice, notably musical, that challenges an established order. These tendencies were present at the 1983 march (and continue to be strongly present in those suburbs labelled as 'difficult'), but on a national level they have by now been absorbed into a more ethical dialogue, advocating equality and respect for all, and perfectly compatible with the republican values SOS Racisme has always promoted.

Notes

1. A. Sayad (1977) 'Les trois "âges" de l'émigration algérienne en France' *Actes de la recherche en sciences socials*, vol. 15, 59–79.
2. F. Dubet, A. Jazouli and D. Lapeyronnie (1985) *L'Etat et les jeunes* (Paris: Editions de l'Atelier).
3. The constraint was extremely strong since any association with more than 25 per cent foreigners amongst its membership, or having at least one foreigner on its board of management, was deemed to be foreign.
4. A. Hajjat (2013) *La Marche pour l'égalité et contre le racisme* (Paris: Editions Amsterdam). The true extent of racist crimes and killings is difficult to measure, especially because racist acts of violence are often not registered as such. As a result, such instances mostly went unpunished. In the early 1980s, a series of 'racist and security' crimes took place, with children as young as ten years old being killed as a result of 'police errors' and short-tempered neighbours shooting from the rooftop. For example, Djellali Ben Ali, 15, was killed 27 October 1971 with a bullet in the neck, following an altercation with the concierge of his building. 9 July 1983, Taoufik Ouanès, 9, who was playing too loudly outside his building, was assassinated by a resident. On the night of 13–14 February 1983, Nasser M'Raidi, 17, who drove a motorcycle without a helmet or lights was pursued by a police officer, fell to the ground, and was subsequently shot in the head by the officer.In response, young immigrants called themselves 'Indians', thus underlining the feeling that they were oppressed by the 'cowboys' and that neither the police nor the law could guarantee them security and justice.
5. The rise of FN was confirmed in the following year, when it achieved 11 per cent of the vote during the European elections. These were unprecedented results for an extreme-right political party. FN had existed for several decades, but had until this point always been a small political group, with no political influence.

6. The murder of Habib Grimzi on 14 November 1983, just as the march approached Paris, dramatically demonstrated the lethality and danger of racist and extremist movements and further legitimized the march as a crucial demonstration. The atrocious circumstances of this incident created a national uproar. Habib Grimzi was listening to music on his headphones on a train, just before he was murdered. He was stabbed several times, and then thrown out of a train window by three young members of the Foreign Legion (*legion étrangère*). None of the hundred or so passengers present in the train carriage intervened.
7. S. Bouamama (1994) *Dix ans de Marche des Beurs. Chronique d'un mouvement avorté* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer).
8. M.H. Abdallah (2014) 'La Marche pour l'égalité et contre le racisme n'est pas assez entrée dans l'histoire' *Vacarme*, vol. 67, 174–89.
9. F. Dubet (1987) *La galère: jeunes en survie* (Paris: Fayard).
10. D. Lapeyronnie (1993) *La France et la Grande-Bretagne face à leurs immigrés* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France).
11. P. Juhem (1998) 'SOS-Racisme, histoire d'une mobilisation 'apolitique'. Contribution à une analyse des transformations des représentations politiques après 1981' (PhD thesis in Political Science, Nanterre University).
12. Quoted by A. Jazouli (1992) *Les années banlieues* (Paris: Le Seuil), p. 39.
13. D. Chabanet (2005) 'Local Democracy under Challenge: The Work of the Agora Association in Vaulx-en-Velin, France', in B. Jouve and P. Booth (eds) *Urban Democracies. Transformations of the State and Urban Policy in Canada, France and Great Britain* (London: Ashgate).
14. Juhem, *SOS-Racisme*.
15. The idea to organize concert-meetings was initially taken up by the 'Rock against Police' movement in 1981. Similar to and borrowed from a British initiative, and created by young locals, it stands out by choosing to target the police and blaming them for all reported acts of violence and crime. At its start, it was mainly active in Parisian suburbs, but it soon gained a following in the suburbs of Lyon and Marseille. 'Rock against Police' organized free concerts and distributed leaflets to promote bands or rappers, who rehearsed in the basements of buildings and who had repeated trouble with the police. In doing so, 'Rock against Police' allowed young people to reclaim their living spaces while inviting other residents to do the same. The meetings were self-organized, without financial or other material support from established political players. By combining artistic production and anti-racist denunciation 'Rock against Police' became the proponent of autonomous politics, which were very critical of the functioning national institutions, and encouraging young people to organize themselves in order to defend their rights and dignity.
16. In the absence of official data, we rely here on figures published in a mainstream newspaper. http://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/mav/89/PIRONET/14098, date accessed 13 May 2014.
17. D. Lapeyronnie (2008) *Ghetto urbain. Ségrégation, violence, pauvreté en France aujourd'hui* (Paris: Robert Laffont).
18. L. Wirth (1998 [1928]) *The Ghetto* (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers).

19. This controversy pertained to the wearing of the hijab in French state schools. Three female students were suspended for refusing to remove their scarves in class at middle school in Creil, near Paris, and this led to heated debate and controversy. The most debated point was whether or not students have the right to wear the scarf in classes in state establishments such as primary and secondary schools, as well as universities. In November 1989, the Conseil d'Ètat ruled that the scarf's quasi-religious expression was compatible with the *laïcité* of public schools.
20. J-F. Amadieu (2009) *Les élus issus de l'immigration dans les conseils municipaux (2001–2008)* Report of the High Council for Integration to the Prime Minister (France), p. 23. http://www.observatoiredesdiscriminations.fr/images/stories/HCI_EtudeElusMunicipaux.pdf, date accessed 13 May 2014.
21. R. Garbaye (2011) *Émeutes vs intégration. Comparaisons franco-britanniques* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po), p. 115.
22. E. Bleich (2000) 'Antiracism without Races: Politics and Policy in a "Colour-Blind State"' *French Politics, Culture and Society*, vol. 18, no. 3, 48–74.
23. Abdallah, 'La Marche pour l'égalité', p. 186.
24. This was also evident during the 30-year commemoration march in 2013. The majority of the most outspoken and politicized leaders of the march were absent from the celebration. In particular, issues such as ethnic segregation, social inequalities among groups of foreign descent and the relationships between immigrants' struggles and workers' struggles were almost completely ignored.
25. R. Aissaoui (2006) 'Le discours du Mouvement des travailleurs arabes (MTA) dans les années 1970 en France' *Immigration et marché du travail*, vol. 1263, 105–19.
26. N. Redouane (ed.) (2012) *Où en est la littérature 'Beur'?* (Paris: L'Harmattan).
27. H. Bazin (1995) *La culture hip-hop* (Paris: Desclée De Brouwer).

Part V
Punk and Protest

12

A Place Called Johnny Rotten Square: The Ljubljana Punk Scene and the Subversion of Socialist Yugoslavia

Oskar Mulej

This chapter discusses the punk and new wave scene of early 1980s Yugoslavia, with special attention devoted to the significance of punk in the Slovenian capital, Ljubljana. The phenomenon of Ljubljana punk rock was very important for the development of alternative music scenes all across Yugoslavia, as well as also being of major significance to the social and political changes that unfolded in Slovenia during that decade. Arriving initially as a 'Western' product of pop culture and fashion, and containing a strong impulse of youth revolt, it found unlikely (but fertile) ground among the young generation of the early eighties in the capital city of this small socialist republic, where it transformed into a largely home-grown and diverse subcultural scene.

The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was ruled for decades by a communist regime that rested on a totalitarian ideology distinguished by the personality cult of Marshall Josip Broz Tito (d. 1980), on unquestionable myths about 'the struggle for national liberation' and 'the people's revolution', and on a high degree of militarism. Yugoslavia was, however, also a nonaligned state, geopolitically placed between the 'East' and the 'West'. State repression of the population was less severe than in the Eastern bloc countries and was less directly visible, with the regime showing a higher degree of flexibility, particularly with regard to popular culture.[1] This did not mean, however, that a monopoly of power did not lie in the hands of the Communist leadership – nor that any disrespect, not to say open critique, of the main ideological postulates centred around the 'magical' words 'Tito', 'Party', 'People'

and 'Army' – would have been tolerated. After failed attempts in the late 1960s to create independent intellectual movements and to reform the Communist Party from within, the 'leaden 1970s' commenced in Yugoslavia. After purging the reformers, the hard-line communists of the 'old guard' proceeded to re-consolidate their ideological monopoly, which expressed itself above all through symbolic politics (numerous new revolutionary monuments, mass totalitarian rituals). On the other hand, the 1970s were also years of improving economic standards for a large part of the population and marked the rise of mass consumerism.

During the 1960s and until the early 1980s, the Yugoslav regime was relatively relaxed in its stance towards rock music and other elements of mass culture. With the borders to the West open, it was possible for the latter to be 'imported' and to spread more easily than in the Eastern bloc. On top of that, cultural transfers from the West were possible because of the existence of a higher number of cultural institutions and a less-centralized administration, coupled with the presence of certain market elements in the economy.[2] The 1970s Yugoslav rock scene was largely tolerated by the regime, being politically benign and to an extent even incorporated into the system – with some of the groups actively promoting the official state ideology and iconography.[3]

Yugoslav new wave (novi val in the Slovene and Croat languages, novi talas in Serbian) emerged in the late 1970s, at the same time as the appearance of the first signs of an approaching economic and political crisis – and it developed further during the period of growing economic and political instability following the death of Tito in 1980, which was characterized by a timid yet persistent process of liberalization. The stylistically diverse and innovative new wave bands introduced original new elements into Yugoslav rock and left a lasting musical impact, with some bands becoming well established in late-Yugoslav popular culture. But in contrast to the early rock scene, new wave's relationship towards the regime was not one of servility or uncritical agreement but, instead, more critical or distanced.[4] Moreover, they laid the groundwork for the alternative scenes that arose in major Yugoslav cities during the 1980s – scenes that transcended the boundaries of mere music and entertainment. The crucial achievement of the Yugoslav new wave – and of punk in particular – was that it changed the general (self-)perception of youth, of its social role and the modes of its engagement.[5] For part of the urban youth, new wave and punk created their own channels of expression, which both criticized and compromised the official image of youth as the 'nation's future'.[6] During the 1980s, thriving alternative youth scenes in Ljubljana, Rijeka, Zagreb, Novi Sad and Belgrade inspired

similar scenes in the cities of Skopje, Sarajevo – famous for its mid-1980s New Primitives artistic movement – Split and other cities.

In many regards the Ljubljana alternative scene represented a unique case. First of all, it was the pioneering city of punk rock in Yugoslavia and provided the initial 'spark' for the Yugoslav new wave movement. Secondly, punk in Ljubljana represented not merely a musical or artistic genre but a strong and influential youth subculture. This subculture reached an extraordinary level of popularity, leaving a lasting imprint on the broader alternative artist scene that developed in the Slovenian capital during the 1980s. The alternative scene that formed around punk as its 'nucleus' was broad, diverse and quite inclusive. And, last but certainly not least, punk acted as a trigger and catalyst for major social and political changes that unfolded during the 1980s in Slovenia. In retrospect it may thusly be treated as an important subculture with great political significance, although its own 'aims' and 'motivations' were not political.

The unique place of Ljubljana

Along with Rijeka, the Croatian port city, and Novi Sad, the capital of Serbia's northern province of Vojvodina, Ljubljana was one of the places in Yugoslavia where punk first began.[7] Although it is contested which group was formed earlier – Paraf (Initials) from Rijeka or Pankrti (Bastards) from Ljubljana – it was the latter that in the autumn of 1977 first performed publicly, creating a 'shock' that began to travel throughout the country.

In their early years, the Ljubljana punk rock group Pankrti performed a kind of a 'missionary role',[8] spreading the 'punk gospel' across Yugoslavia. Especially notable were their early concerts in Belgrade Studentski Kulturni Centar (SKC) (November 1977) and Zagreb (December). This was perhaps best expressed by the Zagreb band Azra, which wrote a song, stating, 'I shave my beard and moustache in order to look like the Bastards'. The verse of this song also manifests the strong contacts that existed in the late 1970s between the evolving scenes of major Yugoslav cities. These contacts were especially strong within the so-called 'new wave triangle', Ljubljana – Rijeka – Zagreb. Lying close to western borders, the three cities mutually influenced and supported one another, and played a crucial role in punk's development during the first phase of 1977–80. This development was stimulated by the existence of relatively independent local institutions in Ljubljana. Among them were Radio Študent, which from the outset promoted the new sound and ŠKUC (Student Cultural Centre), which acted as the 'organizing

force' for most events. Together, they provided the crucial 'infrastructural support systems' that other cities lacked,[9] making the Ljubljana scene not only the first but also the most autonomous one.[10]

Particularly in Belgrade and Zagreb, the common pattern of development was that punk provided the initial stylistic impulse and inspiration to the future 'big names' of the scene, who afterwards soon 'reformed' into new wave, thereby also declaratively disassociating themselves from punk. The position and impact of punk however differed from place to place, and the same was true for the relationships between alternative artistic scenes and punk youth subcultures. The latter were composed mainly of teenagers (five to ten years younger than the members of the first punk bands, which had their roots in the former). In Belgrade and Zagreb for instance the role of punk subculture was rather marginal, while it was highly influential in cities such as Ljubljana, Rijeka or Subotica.

In Ljubljana, punk became increasingly popular during the years 1977–80, especially among teenagers. In contrast to the grown-up members of Pankrti, however, they did not perceive punk simply as an artistic expression. Rather, they adopted it as their lifestyle. Consequently, a subculture began to develop – one that was more visible and vocal than previous youth subcultures in Slovenia. This younger and more 'orthodox' punk generation would soon consider bands such as Pankrti to be 'pop' and 'commercial'. Nevertheless, it must be stressed that the creativity of younger punk rockers expanded, to a large extent, upon the 'work' initiated by Pankrti.

There was no real rupture between the early 'big names' and the new 'scene' in Ljubljana, with 'punk', 'new wave' and 'alternative scene' functioning more or less as synonyms deep into the 1980s.[11] This was different in Belgrade and Zagreb, where punk remained far more marginal. In Ljubljana, the punk element was central and especially strong.

In Belgrade, the subculture of 'pure' punks strictly followed the modes of expression adopted from the original English example.[12] This gave way to opinions that the only authentic punk in Yugoslavia was the Slovenian one, because it had developed its own independent form, become a mass phenomenon and created its own institutions.[13] Although it may be going too far to state, as Zoran Janjetović did, that 'except for those in Slovenia' punks in Yugoslavia 'were a bare imitation of the West and faking discontent'[14] – it is certainly true that only in places such as Ljubljana, Rijeka and Vojvodina did strong 'home-grown' and influential scenes develop.

The punk subculture truly flourished during 1979–81, when groups emerged such as Buldogi (Bulldogs), Lublanski psi (Ljubljana Dogs),

Kuzle (Bitches), Šund (Trash), Kuga (Plague) and Industbag.[15] The flourishing culminated in the 'punk spring' of 1980–81, when Ljubljana's punk youths, who previously had mostly gathered in the suburbs, became more visible and established a mass presence in the city centre. Among the most popular gathering places was Plečnik Square (renamed by the punks as 'Johnny Rotten Square'), only tens of metres away from the socialist realist Revolution Square, where the People's Assembly, Cankarjev dom (the newly built centre for high culture), revolutionary monuments, and the apartments of the communist elite were located. Despite being 'radical' (in terms of appearance and behaviour), the subculture was also popular and inclusive. Especially during 1980–83, punk reached a substantial part of a whole generation and not limited to a 'tribe of followers', as was normally the case in the West (as well as in Zagreb and Belgrade).

It would be somewhat pretentious to try to posit an overall 'synthesized' explanation for the rebellious and deviant attitudes of young punk rockers in the early 1980s in Ljubljana (or other places in Yugoslavia, for that matter). However, it was probably above all a reaction to the stuffy atmosphere of the late 1970s in Ljubljana, which was characterized by feelings of boredom and dissatisfaction. The atmosphere had on the one hand been characterized by a lack of possibilities and spaces for entertainment, free socializing and expression outside the official channels, and on the other by continuous regime propaganda and – after the time of Tito's death – increased rhetoric of 'alertness'.

The feelings of boredom and dissatisfaction were clearly expressed in the lyrics of the early punk bands. These lyrics mainly focused on problems of everyday life and growing up, but addressed these subjects in a manner that was fresh, uncompromisingly direct and often rude (compared to the standards of socialist civility). They were not condemning the self-management socialist order as such, or even openly attacking the ruling League of Communists, but rather engaged in imaginative criticism of social realities, which entailed a disrespectful disinterest towards the official ideology and its promises. In their song, 'Seventeen', Pankrti ridiculed the conformism of the career-making functionaries in the Union of Socialist Youth of Slovenia, but without explicitly mentioning the organization itself, whereas the 'The Anthem of Our Youth' by the group Lublanski psi described the official youth rituals as 'clenching our fists' and official slogans as 'alien thoughts'. Largely unmindful of the possible reaction from the authorities, the punk rockers mocked the absurdities of socialist everyday life and the hypocrisy of the officially sanctioned discourse.

The sometimes-extreme provocations should be interpreted in a similar way, for example the instance when the Novi Sad group Gomila G (Pile of Shit) performed a slightly re-worked Sex Pistols cover titled, 'God save Martin Bormann' at a local antifascist gathering. The performance was not an expression of the band's political orientation, but rather a thoughtless teenage prank, performed in a context where 'antifascism' was the officially sanctioned ideology. The contrasting case of the Paraf song 'Živela Jugoslavija' ('Hail Yugoslavia') is very telling as well: composed of official patriotic slogans in unchanged form and not containing a word of disagreement with the system, it was still censored completely. It was meant as a joke, but, as Tomc notes – the case reveals that the 'censor most probably reckoned that nobody with a sound mind was that sympathetic towards the Yugoslav official policy'.[16]

Punk was the initiator and continued to represent the core of an otherwise heterogeneous and open alternative scene that developed in Ljubljana, especially after 1981. Yet this alternative scene carried a strong 'underground' touch and subcultural sharpness. With regard to style, the scene continued to develop and pre-1980 new wave groups Grupa 92 and Berlinski zid (Berlin Wall) had already started working with synthesizers. In 1982, the more stylistically diverse 'second punk wave' launched bands such as O!KULT and Otroci socializma (Children of Socialism). They combined various genres and styles (including recitations), while at the same time espousing more directly political lyrics, which had been quite unimaginable back in 1977.[17]

At the same time the broader alternative scene in Ljubljana grew to encompass a broad variety of genres – including experimental and industrial groups such as Laibach and Borghesia, as well as synth-pop bands (Videosex). Furthermore, this scene was not limited merely to music but included various visual arts projects and theatre as well as, for instance, the first public LGBT movement in Yugoslavia, while also being closely connected to various environmentalist and pacifist projects.

The alternative scene that formed under the banner of punk varied in terms of the participants' social backgrounds, bringing together youths from different social milieus. In addition to working-class youth, many came from 'white collar' and educated families, and the scene was to a large degree composed of grammar school and university students. Despite being centred in Ljubljana, it also attracted many youngsters from the countryside. Nationalist tendencies and sentiments, not to say ideologies, were largely absent in the Slovene punk and broader alternative scene. Therefore it could be argued that punk in Ljubljana, representing a core of the developing alternative scene, was unusually broad

and popular while being quite open and diverse, and remaining strongly unified at the same time.

The Ljubljana 'Nazi Punk Affair' and the 'politics' of punk in Yugoslavia

In November 1981, a sensationalistic article appeared on the front page of the popular Ljubljana weekly *Nedeljski Dnevnik*. It was titled: 'Who Has Been Drawing Swastikas?' and combined two completely unconnected stories – a case of a group of high school students who had tortured a classmate, and the fact that a couple of swastikas had appeared on the walls of Ljubljana. It furthermore featured a contemporary photo of a British person dressed as a Nazi party member with the comment: 'English punk rocker in parade uniform' and a graffiti inscription in the background, reading 'punk'. The purpose of the so-called 'Nazi punk affair' was to tarnish the thriving punk scene in the Slovene capital with the label of Nazism in order to provoke widespread public condemnation and violent reactions. It partly succeeded, as for a while the streets indeed became quite unsafe for those dressed in punk attire.

The 'Nazi punk affair' echoed across Yugoslavia, and moral panic spread to the other republics, also making life harder for the punks there.[18] The main credit for this went to the Zagreb and Belgrade yellow press, whose reports exceeded even the sensationalism of *Nedeljski dnevnik* and tended to give the impression 'that Ljubljana was little short of being taken over by Nazis'.[19] In Vojvodina, for instance, a major wave of repression would follow in early 1983, almost a year after the Ljubljana affair, consisting of police intimidation against punks in the streets, school suspensions, control of correspondence, house searches, arrests and 'informative discussions'.[20] As Ljubljana first transmitted the sound and message of punk rock to the rest of Yugoslavia in 1977, it ironically also gave the first impulse for its persecution in 1981.

Previously, aggressive action against punk had not been part of a concerted campaign, but had been rather unsystematic, similar to in the West.[21] These actions were also not exclusive to Ljubljana, but rather the contrary. Harassment against punks in the streets, or acts of random police violence, were perhaps even more common in the less-developed southern republics, where punk would not develop at all or would remain less visible. Even in places such as Vojvodina, where the cultural climate was initially quite favourable, the space for overtly politically provocative lyrics was profoundly more limited.[22]

It was common in all of Yugoslavia that punk bands were censored, arbitrarily forbidden to perform or even seen as 'anti-socialist' by local authorities. It was, however, only in Slovenia that punk, attracting the attention of the political leadership, was subjected to a concerted and systematic crackdown, which included a whole range of formal and informal mechanisms of oppression. In the summer of 1981, after the general secretary of the Slovene League of Communists, France Popit, referred to punk in a disapproving way (although without directly calling for its suppression), the system was mobilized.[23]

During the autumn of 1981, even before the publication of the article that sparked the 'Nazi punk affair', a large-scale police operation took place, and more than a hundred members of the punk scene were systematically picked up by the 'People's Militia'. After being brought to the police station, they were intimidated, sometimes beaten, and forced to sign statements accusing their acquaintances of Nazi activities.[24] Three people were officially arrested, interrogated for several months and tortured psychologically, as well as physically, by agents of the State Security Service.[25] They were forced to 'confess' that they had been participating in 'counterrevolutionary' activities and were planning to organize a Slovene National Socialist Party.

The operation, however, failed in the long run as it provoked a major counter-reaction from the public, resulting in an open debate on punk, which also pointed to important social problems hitherto ignored. Many prominent intellectuals began defending the punk youth against these absurd accusations, and even reform-minded sections of the establishment, including a relatively large part of the Socialist Youth leadership, lent limited support.[26] In 1984, all the three accused 'Nazi punks' were acquitted of all charges, due to a lack of evidence. The 'Nazi punk affair' clearly revealed the repressive nature of the regime, while at the same time proving that the era of brute force and show trials was over. The 'social shock'[27] created by punk, together with the public debates that followed after this attempt to suppress it, resulted in the development of alternative institutions and civic movements, forming a 'new political culture with a distinctive political language at its core'.[28] In the long run, punk even contributed to the forming of a Slovene political opposition.

The editors of *Pank u Jugoslaviji* (Punk in Yugoslavia; 1991) stated retrospectively that although a 'reduction of 1980s punk to the dimension of teenage disagreement with the world may not appeal to some', an overall glance over the decade and the variety of scene creators revealed that this might be the only valid interpretation, which according to

them was 'more than OK'.[29] Despite their socially critical and autonomous stance, most of the big names of early Yugoslav new wave were apolitical.[30] They shared no political platform or program, and had no common ideological affiliation. Most importantly, their motive was not political but cultural engagement. The question of whether the critical stance of Yugoslav new wave was predominantly one of 'constructive criticism'[31] or one of rejection is contested. It is, however, certain that most of the bands were (at least explicitly) not against socialism and the Yugoslav federation. Even so, they had no specific affinity or respect for the ruling 'vanguard'. In terms of their autonomy, the different local scenes varied, with Ljubljana's being probably the most autonomous and Sarajevo's the least.[32]

Within the setting of a semi-totalitarian state led by a paranoid political elite,[33] even a modest degree of social critique – and above all an attitude of ignorance and disrespectful disinterest towards the ruling ideology, its myths, heroes and rituals – was enough to make a (sub-) cultural movement significant, also politically. It was not that difficult to (most often unintentionally) cross the fuzzy dividing line between 'proper' and 'improper', as they were determined by unwritten rules dependent on local contexts and changing political situations, where the system functioned according to the principle that everything which was not specifically allowed was (or could be) forbidden.

The graffiti that spread all over Ljubljana in 1981 included inscriptions such as 'down with the red bourgeoisie' and 'communism is terror',[34] which revealed that punk on the other hand was not completely apolitical. Yet, it would be wrong to treat punk as a political movement, as the authorities did. Rather, it was a subcultural scene that heralded provocation and a confrontational lifestyle. The regime, however, saw political provocation even in graffiti, in spite of it not being meant as such. Thus, a high school student was persecuted in the Slovenian town of Kranj for writing 'ska' on the school wall, which was interpreted by the police as Slovenska katoliška akcija (Slovene Catholic Action). The commonly occurring circled As, symbols of anarchy, were interpreted by the federal police journal *Bezbednost* (*Security*) as standing for 'Greater Albania'. According to the same journal, 'punk' stood for the abbreviation Pomozite Ustanak Naroda Kosova (Support the Uprising of the People of Kosovo).

Some of the more provocative Yugoslav punk bands mocked the political system and its official discourse, consciously transgressing boundaries and deliberately tackling taboo topics. Paraf for instance sang in 1979 about the infamous Goli otok (Barren Island), a prison camp where

suspected loyal followers of Stalin were kept under brutal conditions in the years after the 1948 expulsion of Yugoslavia from the Soviet bloc. The song did not appear on any of the band's officially published records at the time, and the lyrics of other songs also had to be adjusted following the demands of the record company. Paraf, however, similar to Pankrti,[35] were not bothered too much about such 'adjustments', as their main goal was to publish a record.[36]

The lyrics of Slovene punk bands from before and after 1981 mostly reveal attitudes that could be best labelled as 'anti-political'. This was not only due to the fact that they wanted 'to be neither left nor right', as the group Šund sang, but mainly because they did not bother about positioning themselves as either 'for' or 'against' the regime. Above all, their attitudes should be observed within the context of the very complicated system of Yugoslav 'self-management socialism', which largely functioned as a caricature of political participation. In this system, citizens were required to 'decide' on 'all matters' on various levels (such as schools, the workplace and the local community), while at the same time all real political power lay in the hands of the League of Communists.[37] Participation in this game was, however, nigh on obligatory, and the punks' greatest 'sin' was that they did not care about it and directly expressed what many 'ordinary citizens' also thought but did not dare (or care) to say out loud. As suggested by Mark Thompson, the idea behind the anti-political attitude of punk (and one of the reasons for its political significance within the discussed context) may be expressed as: 'Citizens have the right not to be politicized – the right to be punks'.[38]

We may agree with Kenney, that despite the often highly politicized lyrics, punk was more a form of aesthetic than of political protest.[39] Even after 1982, when the lyrics of some bands became more directly political and explicitly critical of the ruling structures, there remained no political project that united Ljubljana's alternative scene other than alternative cultural practices, striving for individual self-expression and 'spontaneous subcultural socializing'.[40] Furthermore, the alternative scene was as heterogeneous in terms of people's social background, personal styles and musical preferences as it was in terms of the political views of its participants. 'The alleged myth about some unified anti-socialist "popular front"' thus cannot hold.[41]

As a final remark, it may be stated that Yugoslav punk and new wave were not divided by ethnic boundaries or marked by nationalist tendencies. The punk scenes were quite strongly attached to their localities, often distinguished by a kind of 'local patriotism', but at the same time not nationalist. As the continuous exchange and connections between

various local scenes demonstrate, the national boundaries within Yugoslavia, as well as the borders between republics, did not play a major role in the punk scene. As such, the all-Yugoslav character of the new wave scene in many ways even realized the idea of a 'brotherhood of unity' without consciously striving to do so.[42] We may therefore speak of 'Yugoslav punk' in the 1980s, within which the Slovene scene acted to an extent as a 'special' and 'closed' case, primarily due to its profound and prominent position and to the language barrier[43] – but this was not because of any conscious demarcation from the other republics. On the contrary, the Ljubljana punk and broader alternative scene represented the first youth subculture in Slovenia that was largely open to children of the economic immigrants from the southern Yugoslav republics, towards whom the Slovenian society was otherwise rather closed.

The political events of the late 1980s, and the increasing national tensions, did not influence the punk subculture, whereby (particularly in the hard-core scene) an anti-nationalist stance did prevail.[44] In Slovenia, the first (and at the time still apolitical) skinheads appeared in the hard-core scene of the early 1980s.[45] By the end of the decade, however, chauvinist and racist attitudes gained increasing ground within the skinhead scene, and it grew increasingly separate from the punk and hard-core scenes.[46] The participation of punks in national(-ist) rallies or on the battlefields in the 1990s, which was quite common (especially in Croatia), was conditioned primarily by the circumstances of war and its (in the case of Croatia) defensive character.[47] In Serbia, where efforts were aimed primarily at protesting the post-Communist authoritarianism of Milošević, the punk scene was relatively open to nationalist orientations and in some instances moved towards the extreme right. The largely oppositional alternative scene thus allowed for the coexistence – not always peaceful – of bands that accused Milošević of inciting wars with those that held a grudge against him for the military defeats.[48] It may be argued, therefore, that also within the differing circumstances of the late 1980s and early 1990s, punk in the former Yugoslavia continued to be heterogeneous while lacking a distinctive political earmark.

Notes

1. S.P. Ramet (1994) 'Shake, Rattle and Self-Management: Making the Scene in Yugoslavia', in S.P. Ramet (ed.) *Rocking the State* (Boulder, San Francisco, and Oxford: Westview Press), p. 111.
2. Z. Janjetović (2011) *Od 'Internacionale' do komercijale: Popularna kultura u Jugoslaviji 1945–1991* (Belgrade: INIS), p. 140.

3. See V. Perica (2012) 'Međugeneracijski transfer partizanske mitologije kroz popularnu kulturu 1970–1990', in M. Velikonja and V. Perica (eds) *Nebeska Jugoslavija. Interakcije političkih mitologija i pop-kulture* (Belgrade: Biblioteka XX vek), pp. 56–57; Janjetović, *Od 'Internacionale' do komercijalepp*, pp. 152–55.
4. See Perica, 'Međugeneracijski transfer partizanske mitologije kroz popularnu kulturu 1970–1990', p. 57.
5. D. Mišina (2013) *Shake, Rattle and Roll: Yugoslav Rock Music and the Poetics of Social Critique* (Farnham: Ashgate), pp. 5–6.
6. Perica, 'Međugeneracijski transfer partizanske mitologije kroz popularnu kulturu 1970–1990', p. 69.
7. The first Yugoslav punk record (*Televizori* by Prljavo kazalište, 1978) was produced in Zagreb. The first wave of punk in Zagreb was brief, however, with the 'initial punk euphoria' swiftly transforming into a 'new wave "non-conforming" dance euphoria' (B. Perasović (2001) *Urbana plemena: sociologija subkultura u Hrvatskoj* (Zagreb: Hrvatska sveučilišna naklada), pp. 232–33). As far as punk in a narrower sense was concerned, Zagreb was thus not the 'crucial and absolute place' (Ibid., p. 233). In Croatia this role belonged to the northern port city of Rijeka, where a powerful scene evolved with the groups Paraf, Termiti (Termites), followed later by Kaos, Grč and others. The Autonomous Province of Vojvodina was the most economically advanced part of the Socialist Republic of Serbia, marked by ethnic and religious diversity and greater cultural openness. The Novi Sad punk group Pekinška patka (Peking Duck), first Serbian or – to use their own joke – 'first Orthodox Christian punk band' (B. Kostelnik (2004) *Moj život je novi val, razgovori s prvoborcima i dragovoljcima novog vala* (Zagreb: Fraktura), p. 198) was formed in 1978, also providing the initial impulse for the Belgrade scene.
8. I. Mirković (2004) *Sretno dijete* (Zagreb: Fraktura), p. 27.
9. Mišina, *Shake, Rattle and Roll*, p. 107. As Mišina notes, the Slovenian (particularly Ljubljana) scene was marked by three main characteristics – 'punk essentialism', 'the existence of independent media' and 'linguistic distinctiveness'. The first two points may be treated as connected to its pioneering role, whereas the first and the last taken together largely explain its relative closed-ness. All three taken together also account for the impression of 'self sufficiency' that it could have often evoked (in some instances also intentionally cultivating it).
10. G. Tomc (2010) 'A Tale of Two Subcultures: A Comparative Analysis of Hippie and Punk Subcultures in Slovenia', in B. Luthar and M. Pušnik (eds) *Remembering Utopia: The Culture of Everyday Life in Socialist Yugoslavia* (Washington D.C.: New Academia), p. 197.
11. See O. Mulej (2011) '"We Are Drowning in Red Beet, Patching Up the Holes in the Iron Curtain": The Punk Subculture in Ljubljana in the Late 1970s and Early 1980s' *East Central Europe*, vol. 38, no. 2–3, 373–89, 376.
12. I. Prica (1991) *Omladinska potkultura u Beogradu. Simbolička praksa* (Belgrade: Etnografski institut SANU), p. 99.
13. Ibid., p. 128.
14. Janjetović, *Od 'Internacionale' do komercijale*, p. 166.
15. Kuzle, Šund, and Industbag were not from the capital city but from the provincial towns of Idrija and Metlika. They performed, however, quite often in Ljubljana.

16. G. Tomc (2010) 'Cenzurirani punk: analiza primera cenzure Punk Problemov', in *Cenzurirano: zgodovina cenzure na Slovenskem od 19. stoletja do danes* (Ljubljana: Nova revija), p. 243.
17. O!Kult was for instance rhetorically asking 'whose comrades' were actually the communist functionaries, driving 'Mercedes cars'. The song was censored by the media.
18. See Perasović, *Urbana plemena*, p. 237.
19. T. Mastnak (1994) 'From Social Movements to National Sovereignty', in J. Benderly and E. Kraft (eds) *Independent Slovenia: Origins, Movements* (New York: St. Martin's Press), p. 97.
20. A. Petrović and M. Stoilkov (1990) 'Punk u Subotici', in D. Šunjka and D. Pavlov (eds) *Pank u Jugoslaviji: 1980–1990* (Belgrade: IGP Dedalus), p. 101.
21. G. Tomc (2002) 'Škandal v rdečem baru', in P. Lovšin, P. Mlakar and I. Vidmar (eds) *Punk je bil prej, 25 let punka pod Slovenci* (Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba/Ropot), p. 85.
22. See Kostelnik, *Moj život je novi val*, p. 210.
23. Tomc, 'Škandal v rdečem baru', p. 86.
24. A. Žerdin (2002) 'Kratki kurz zgodovine panka' in Lovšin, Mlakar and Vidmar, *Punk je bil prej*, pp. 38–39; 'Testimony of Brane Bitenc (December 1981)' (1985) in *Punk pod Slovenci* (Ljubljana: Univerzitetna konferenca ZSMS), pp. 485–89.
25. Žerdin, 'Kratki kurz zgodovine panka', p. 38.
26. Despite using the organization's facilities and means when they were offered – after all no 'youth event' could even be organized without a blessing by a local branch of Socialist Youth – punk always retained its inner dynamic and autonomy. A notable exception as to where punk artists' and young communists' goals coincided was the concert in support of the Polish 'Solidarity' movement in 1982 (Vidmar, I. (2002) 'Opombe pod črto', in Lovšin, Mlakar and Vidmar, *Punk je bil prej*, p. 93).
27. T. Hribar (2002) 'Pankrti, tovariši in drugi', in Lovšin, Mlakar and Vidmar, *Punk je bil prej*, p. 6.
28. Mastnak, 'From Social Movements to National Sovereignty', p. 95.
29. D.S. Šunjka (1990) 'Beograd punk', in Šunjka and Pavlov, *Pank u Jugoslaviji*, p. 2.
30. See Mirković, *Sretno dijete*, p. 133.
31. See Mišina, *Shake, Rattle and Roll*, p.7.
32. Tomc, 'A Tale of Two Subcultures', p. 197.
33. See Tomc, 'Škandal v rdečem baru', p. 86.
34. A. Potokar (1985) 'Pank u Lublan', in *Punk pod Slovenci*, p. 45.
35. Tomc, 'Cenzurirani punk', p. 244.
36. Kostelnik, *Moj život je novi val*, p. 106.
37. See Tomc, 'A Tale of Two Subcultures', p. 185; Tomc, 'Cenzurirani punk', p. 236.
38. M. Thompson (1992) *A Paper House: The ending of Yugoslavia* (London: Hutchinson), p. 42; see P. Stubbs (1995) 'Nationalisms, Globalisation and Civil Society in Croatia and Slovenia' presented at the European Conference of Sociology in Budapest in September 1995, accessible at http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/62/066.html, date accessed 30 November 2014.

39. P. Kenney (2002) *A Carnival of Revolution: Central Europe 1989* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), p. 181.
40. Tomc, 'Cenzurirani punk', p. 244; G. Tomc (1994) 'The Politics of Punk', in J. Benderly and E. Kraft (eds) *Independent Slovenia: Origins, Movements* (New York: St. Martin's Press), pp. 131–33.
41. N. Jeffs (2008) 'FV and the "Third Scene", 1980–1990', in B. Škrjanec (ed.) *FV: alternativa osemdesetih = alternative scene of the eighties* (Ljubljana: MGLC), pp. 349–50.
42. See Janjetović, *Od 'Internacionale' do komercijale*, p. 170; Mirković, *Sretno dijete*, p. 142.
43. See Mišina, *Shake, Rattle and Roll*, p. 109.
44. Especially in Serbia and Croatia, peculiar combinations of symbols appeared on city walls – for instance 'Anarchy' and the 'Celtic cross' standing together or names of anti-nationalist hard-core bands next to names of increasingly nationalist soccer fan groups (Perasović, *Urbana plemena*, p. 253).
45. M. Gregorčič (1999) 'Vikingi ali Valhalla', in P. Stankovič, G. Tomc and M. Velikonja (eds) *Urbana plemena: subkulture v Sloveniji v devetdesetih* (Ljubljana: Študentska založba), p. 100; M. Ogrinc (1991) 'Ljubljanski punk' in Šunjka and Pavlov, *Pank u Jugoslaviji*, p. 15.
46. Interestingly, the first white power skinhead band in Yugoslavia was most probably 'White Riot' founded in Sarajevo in 1987. According to its own fanzine presentation the band combined Yugoslav patriotism (including negative attitudes towards the anti-communist political émigrés) with a racialist ideology. (See: Šunjka and Pavlov, *Pank u Jugoslaviji*, p. 59.) The successor 'Sorab' still exists and is closely linked to the Serbian national socialist movement.
47. See Perasović, *Urbana plemena*, p. 334; An interesting phenomenon in Croatia was the association of subcultural styles (primarily punk) with patriotic defence, which was even partly reinforced by the media that strived to create an 'urban' and 'modern' image of the Croatian soldier in the first year of war, as opposed to the 'rural' and 'backward' enemies. (See: Perković 2011, pp. 59–61; Perasović, *Urbana plemena*, pp. 336, 338.)
48. M. Bosančić (2013) 'Nacionalizam i pank scena u Srbiji' *Margina*, vol. 2, 89.

13

Punk against Communism: The Jarocin Rock Festival and Revolting Youth in 1980s Poland

Grzegorz Piotrowski

One of the greatest turning points in Poland's modern history were the 1980s. The decade started with the emergence of the Solidarność trade union and the 16-month 'carnival of Solidarność', ending in martial law in December 1981. From this perspective, the 1980s ended with the semi-free elections of 1989 that marked the beginning of democratic change. The people involved in these movements and developments were a very heterogeneous group that cannot be reduced to the well-known democratic dissidents. By showing the significance of the lesser-known Polish groups in the process of overthrowing of communism – in particular youth groups and grassroots mobilizations connected to the punk rock subculture – this chapter addresses the question of whether punk rock helped to overthrow Poland's communist regime. My claim is that these youth groups, their subcultures (and punk rock in particular) have played an important role in mobilizing different cohorts of society and introducing previously unmentioned issues into public debate. Moreover, the groups that emerged in the mid-1980s have laid the foundations for future grassroots mobilizations. Therefore the analysis of the rise and the development of youth subcultures should not only be carried out from a cultural perspective, but should also take into account the democratizing potential of subcultures. In order to do so, I first describe the background of the events, after which I move on to an analysis of the emerging youth subcultures, with particular focus on punk rock and the Jarocin rock festival. Subsequently, I assess the significance of this festival – and the youth subcultures associated with it – for the democratic struggles and transitions at the end of the 1980s.

This chapter draws on data collected for various research projects, mostly interviews conducted for 'Anarchists in Eastern and Western Europe, a Comparative Study', funded by The Foundation for Baltic and East European Studies (2012–14) at Södertörns Högskola, Sweden, and the ERC-funded project 'Mobilizing for Democracy' at the European University Institute. The information gathered from the interviews was triangulated with publications by the activists, printed both in activist and mainstream media, and presented in the context of available academic literature. (I have presented a more detailed description of the Jarocin festival and the processes of grassroots democratization elsewhere.)[1]

Background and major political (historical) events

In order to understand the developments and characteristics of the 1980s, especially in cultural terms, one needs to go a bit further back in time. The 1970s was a decade of (relative) prosperity in Poland: sizable loans were taken out by the government and spent mostly on consumption. Thusly, Coca-Cola and affordable small cars (Fiat 126p) became available, and massive housing projects were undertaken. In terms of culture, the regime became more liberal, in comparison to its predecessors. Western influences in popular culture grew, although most of the music allowed by the censors remained apolitical. Foreign pop stars such as Boney M and ABBA were invited to Poland and performed on television and during music festivals (The Rolling Stones had already given a concert in Warsaw in 1967, but the media reception was rather negative). Polish pop and rock musicians drew heavily from these Western influences but generally avoided political involvement.

From the mid-1970s onwards, however, the economy experienced an increasingly deep crisis and, as a result, social unrest became more pervasive. This began in 1976with protests in the industrial cities of Radom and Ursus, protests that were brutally crushed by the communist militia. The introduction of martial law in 1981 only worsened the economic situation. Nearly all consumer goods were rationed, from sugar and toilet paper to cars and the plastic for producing vinyl records. As the black market grew, and the clandestine exchange of videocassettes with Western movies expanded, so did discontent. Collective memories of an era of relative prosperity in the early 1970s played an important role in this. As Kenney writes:

> The second explanation of communism's fall [...] [was] a growing familiarity with the West (as more people travelled, or as they

encountered Western media and Western products at home) which made the citizens of Central Europe more impatient to experience the benefits of Western-style markets.[2]

The increasing number of calls for freedom had, however, not only political, but also cultural and economic resonance.

Opposition to communism

Organized opposition to communism did not begin with the economic crisis of the late 1970s. Maryjane Osa shows the continuity of networks of Polish opposition since the late 1950s, which derived from the milieus of the Catholic journals *Więź* and *Znak*. She recalls that later, in 1967, 'a group of students at the University of Warsaw, called "commandos", organized political discussions and "political salons"'.[3] Initially, the activities of such groups were mainly of a reformist nature and focused on turning the official organizations, controlled by the communists, into independent associations. As part of this, students were also inspired by the student movement in France and West Germany and by the independent youth cultures of the 1960s. In March 1968 protests organized by Polish students (including the future leaders of the democratic opposition, Adam Michnik and Jacek Kuroń) soon spread to the biggest academic centres of Poland and lasted several weeks. The attempt made in 1968 by Czechoslovakian students to democratize socialism was also received with enthusiasm.

The most commonly cited turning point in this context is the founding of the Komitet Obrony Robotników (KOR, Committee for Workers' Defence) after the Ursus and Radom protests in 1976, which later transformed into Solidarność (Solidarity). KOR organized both members of the intelligentsia and workers initially to provide legal aid to leaders of the protests. Its structures soon evolved into a larger, national network of dissidents and workers including a strong presence of young people in their mid-20s, who were part of the demographic peak of that time. The emergence of KOR was made formally and structurally possible after the 1975 Helsinki Agreements were signed by most of the communist countries.

The majority of observers claim that the legalization of Solidarność in November 1980 and the subsequent introduction of martial law on 13 December 1981 marked the beginning of the transformation period. The Polish government's recognition of Solidarność as an independent trade union had been preceded by widespread strikes, including general (nationwide) strikes.[4] The legalization of Solidarność undermined the

state's monopoly on organizations and the representation of workers, while martial law signified the regime's helplessness when confronted with social mobilization. After the 16 months from legalization to the declaration of martial law, referred to as the 'Carnival of Solidarność', the government routed the opposition, with thousands of people detained. Only by around 1985 did the movement begin to recover its strength, a process that gained momentum after September 1986, when the authorities declared amnesty for political prisoners.

Early youth subcultures in Poland

Starting in the 1950s, communist authorities were deeply suspicious of subcultures. Anything that was alternative, even fashion trends (especially in the 1950s and 1960s), and anything that could not be controlled through official channels was regarded as a potential threat. Thus, in the 1960s, hippies were stopped by the police and escorted to hairdressers to have their hair cut and, if they resisted, faced problems at school or were issued a fine for 'unsocial behaviour'.[5] In the 1970s small enclaves of subcultures formed around galleries, artists and particular music groups, yet these remained small as they were mostly connected with avant-garde artistic movements.

For many youth activists in the 1980s, the actions of Solidarność were too moderate and failed to address several issues that were especially important to young people, such as compulsory military service and environmental issues. The latter became particularly pressing after the Chernobyl catastrophe of 1986, as plans were being made to build new nuclear power plants in Poland. Campaigns against planned nuclear power plants in Żarnowiec and Klempicz that started in 1986, as well as the simultaneous struggles against the construction of a dam in Czorsztyn, are considered to be the founding events of the Polish ecological movement.[6] Campaigns and causes shared many characteristics with Western European New Social Movements. Pacifism played an important role here, and elements of protest repertoires, such as peace marches (Easter marches in particular) and campaign issues (calling for the abolition of compulsory military service), as well as loose, network-type organizational forms were shared with Western groups. Women's issues were much less visible and more a topic of academic debate than social activism, both within the dissident sector and the countercultural scene. In the mid-1980s, movements referring to Born-again Christians (Ruch Oazowy) began to emerge and soon became popular, especially among young people.

From the mid-1980s onward, pacifist and other groups resisting compulsory military service, such as Wolność i Pokój (Freedom and Peace, WiP) began to attract more, mostly young, participants. The same was true of the anarchist Ruch Społeczeństwa Alternatywnego (Movement for an Alternative Society, RSA). Activist and influential anarchist author, Rafał Górski, recalled:

> A new form of protest was organized by the anti-military and pacifist–ecological movement Freedom and Peace. It involved veterans of KPN (Konfederacja Polski Niepodległej, an illegal nationalist opposition political party), Solidarność and a new generation of anarchists and leftists, as well as conservatives and Christian Democrats. Its main actions were small-scale hunger strikes, taking over trams for the purposes of demonstrations and chaining oneself to scaffoldings until the intervention of the MO (Citizens' Militia, the state police). In 1985, WiP initiated a campaign of returning military books to the Ministry of National Defence and encouraging young people to refuse taking the military oath.[7]

Numerous activists, especially musicians and thespians, did not join formalized and hierarchical groups, but instead relied on small, local networks and groups that focused on particular issues and campaigns. Many of them were university students who – together with high school pupils – formed the majority of the activists. According to Kenney:

> People aged 15–25 saw WiP as the new elite. They were fearless, determined and, as you could hear, seemed to throw the best parties. According to some people, this community presented what was the best in the culture of the late 1980s.[8]

The growing significance of the Jarocin rock festival

In addition to political dissident groups, in the 1970s a rock music scene emerged, which also turned rebellious, albeit in a different way. Rock music had been present in Poland since the early 1970s, although many of the performers had abandoned raising political issues in order to be allowed to perform. Their public performances were subjected to constraints of the censorship office, which resulted in depoliticized lyrics or the use of sophisticated metaphors. As a result, the rock scene grew but became, to a large extent, mainstream and apolitical. This was clearly visible at the Jarocin rock festival.

The Jarocin rock festival was a successor of the local Wielkopolskie Rytmy Młodych (Wielkopolska Youth Rhythms) festival organized in the 1970s. It changed its name to Muzyka Młodej Generacji (Music of the Young Generation) in 1980 (a festival under the same name was held before in 1978–79 in Sopot) and in 1983 the name was changed again to Festiwal Muzyków Rockowych (Rock Musicians' Festival). The festival was organized with the help of the youth section of the Communist Party, the ZSMP (Związek Socjalistycznej Młodzieży Polski) and thus fell within the framework of local cultural authorities. It had the 'blessing' of local party members; ZSMP was in charge of the campsite and the local festival radio station, and even ran the festival's beauty pageant. This meant that censors and other authorities were present during the festival and that the secret police were required to issue their estimation in order for the event to receive its permit (therefore, they were also present.) The communist authorities seemed to tolerate this youth subculture instead of opposing it as they had done in the 1950s and 1960s, probably because it seemed to pose no clear political threat.

Even so, the Jarocin rock festival became a breeding ground for a new independent youth culture, and its popularity rose accordingly. Between 1980 and 1983, the audience grew from 3,000 to 6,000, then peaked at 20,000 in 1984. In the same way, the number of bands that applied to take part in the contest for amateur groups grew rapidly, from 57 in 1980 to 327 in 1984. Rock had become a sizable subculture.[9]

Reports by the secret police (SB – Służba Bezpieczeństwa) offer an interesting insight into the social composition of the audience. In 1986, they estimated that 70 per cent of the 15,000 participants were not members

Table 13.1 Number of participants and contestants at the Jarocin festival

Year	**1980**	**1981**	**1982**	**1983**	**1984**	**1985**	**1986**	**1987**
No. of festivalgoers[1]	3000	3000	6000	12,000 (20,000)[2]	20,000	18,000	15,000	12,000
No. of bands applying to the amateur contest	57	104	164	305	327	336[3]	224	276

Notes: [1] Assessed basing on Lesiakowski et al. (2004), Kosiński (2006) and financial reports where the number of tickets sold was mentioned (however, due to unprofessional security comprising firemen, many people managed to enter without tickets); [2] Two different estimations can be found in the sources; [3] Number taken from Lesiakowski et al. (2004). There is a contradiction with other parts of the text, where it says, that the largest number of tapes – 327 – was sent in 1984.

of any subculture. According to other studies conducted during various editions of the festival, 'subculturals' constituted no more than 20 per cent of the audience.[10] In a report by the local SB chapter in Kalisz from 1986,[11] its author estimated the number of punks at 300 (with 1,000 sympathizers), and the heavy metal fans also at 300 (with 400 sympathizers). The report goes on to mention a group of 30 'white shoelaces' (białe sznurówki), who were connected with the skinhead movement. Notably, it was stressed that they 'follow the rules of hygiene and do not cause trouble', which was probably meant to indicate that they were 'oi' skinheads, not identifying with right-wing ideals.[12] According to Lesiakowski et al., the majority of the participants ranged from 20 to 25 and usually came from smaller towns.[13] This is interesting, considering that Solidarność and its various affiliated groups usually operated in large cities with heavy industry.

What motivated the participants of this festival, and what was its relevance in terms of the growing youth dissidence? In the 2009 documentary film about the history of Polish rock music, *Beats of Freedom*, one of the festival's participants from the mid-1980s says, 'We are coming here for the music, that is all we have left'; but many other festivalgoers stressed the feeling of belonging to a group and a sense of unity.[14] To properly assess the value of these relatively apolitical motivations, it can be helpful to invoke the concept of the 'Temporary Autonomous Zone'.[15] This idea, developed by the anarchist poet Hakim Bey, suggests that the best way to create a non-hierarchical system of social relationships is to concentrate on the present and on releasing one's own mind from the controlling mechanisms that have been imposed on it by society. This sort of prefigurative politics has educational as well as political consequences, both for its participants and observers.[16] In this framework, the anti-politics of punk rock can be seen as revolutionary, by its trying to change the rules of the game and not only the players participating in it. This was a major difference when compared with the 1950s dissidents' ideas of regaining national independence and framing it within a discourse of national liberation.

The 'third circulation', 'cultural anarchism' and political dissidence

From the mid-1980s a more dissident and critical environment emerged, becoming known as 'third circulation'. The term referred to publishing circulations under communist regimes, with the first circulation being the official one and the second being organized by the

dissident sector.[17] This pattern developed in all of cultural life, art and publishing, including music. First came the groups that enjoyed the sympathy of the authorities. They were played on the radio and on television, and had no problems in organizing concerts. The second circulation encompassed professional rock bands such as Manaam, Perfect and Republika, which had to struggle with the censorship office, but most of the time could make their living from the music they played. They were banned occasionally, as was the case of Manaam, which 'disappeared' from the hit chart of Polish Radio 3 after they refused to play at the International Congress of Socialist Youth in Warsaw.

The last circulation included groups that consciously rejected any form of complying with the rules – both in terms of aesthetics (the famous punk safety pins and razorblades as accessories) and lyrics content – and as such they were consciously placing themselves outside the social system and were far more anti-political than apolitical. The second half of the 1980s saw a steep rise in publication of zines, brochures and pamphlets, attracting a great deal of attention from rebellious youth, although the actual size of this scene is impossible to assess.[18]

The official channels did not distribute the recordings of these groups, so most of their circulation took place according to the do-it-yourself (DYI) principles. They had problems with getting recording studio time (censor's permission was required) as well as playing at concerts.[19] However the bands soon found creative ways to subvert these rules. One way to avoid problems with the censors during performances was to hand in different lyrics from those they would actually perform. Paweł Gumol from the group Moskwa recalls in the documentary film *Fala* that they even had a special song called 'La la la', which served both as the title and the lyrics. In case an official from the censorship office would come to the concert, they would play this song instead of their normal repertoire. The band was happy with this plan, although they doubted that 'anyone normal would survive it'.[20] It proved that the radical aesthetics of punk had a political meaning, as well as practical one.

Many of the bands belonging to the 'third circulation' had politicized and socially engaged lyrics, often bringing up radical political notions. Concepts such as radical environmentalism were often practised as a lifestyle (including, for example, vegetarianism). Many bands were 'politically involved' but, rather than making political claims, their anarchism focused on organizational issues (equality, horizontality, voluntary associations) and criticism of the state, represented usually by the police. Even so, the well-known slogan 'no future' was often voiced, referring to the political situation and youth unemployment. This slogan had a

different meaning than in Western Europe, according to Sabina Ramet, quoting an anonymously stated Polish punk position: 'In Britain, they sing "no future" [...] But I'd like to be on welfare payments there! If you want to know what "no future" means, come to Poland!'[21]

Jarosław Urbański characterized these attitudes and practices as 'cultural anarchism', stating that it was, 'anti-political, critical towards revolution and revolutionary violence, left anti-theology and anti-communist'.[22] Generally, the anti-politics of the punks did not directly translate into traditional protest events. It was more an attempt to create autonomy and carve out areas of individual freedom than a true political movement with a program or a manifesto. Rather, they framed their struggle for freedom differently than did the political dissidents, by shifting the emphasis towards individual rather than collective freedom.

Even so, the punk rockers' everyday rebellion (categorized as a lifestyle in today's terms) was in compliance with the more political understanding of anarchism by the RSA or WiP and, as time passed, the two scenes grew closer. In the second half of the 1980s, the Jarocin festival started to host an array of new music groups, including 'third circulation' bands. In doing so, it introduced anarchist concepts and radical environmentalism to a broader public. Available sources (mostly documents of the secret police) show that from 1987 onwards, there was an increase in political activities at the festival, mostly protests against compulsory military service. The first person to be arrested at the festival was Krzysztof Skiba, at that time (1985) a student at the University of Łódź, and later a musician and showman. He was arrested for handing out leaflets from the Movement for an Alternative Society (RSA) during the festival. Soon afterwards, the pacifist WiP and Solidarność started circulating leaflets. After 1985 there were clear signs of politicization and stronger links between the 'third circulation' subculture and more traditional dissident groups. Punk rock was especially significant because it mobilized newcomers, even if it was not the only force to do so.

The significance of this development is often overlooked in analyses of Poland's transformation of 1989–90. Youth subcultures and groups associated with the 'third circulation' mobilized different cohorts (mostly youths) and introduced novel issues and repertoires of protest, such as radical environmental actions. This development provided a counterbalance for pro-democratic dissidents turning neoliberal and engaging in a dialogue with the authorities during the late 1980s – a counterbalance that incorporated a different, more individualistic, understanding of freedom, and which was attractive to rebellious young people. Numerous grassroots initiatives that mushroomed in Poland during the

dawn of democracy in 1989–90 grew out of these processes and developments and had an impact on the shape of the newly emerged NGO sector and social movement scene.

Responses by the authorities and the political meaning of punk rock

A question that inevitably comes to mind is why the authorities paid so little attention to the emerging 'third circulation' sector connected to youth subcultures?

One of the possible answers was the aim of the communist authorities to channel the energy of contentious young people by giving them a space for their actions that would not be a threat to the regime. The other equally possible explanation was the ignorance of the authorities. Due to the fact that the Jarocin festival, as mentioned, replaced a previous music festival, the authorities were accustomed to the format and considered it 'safe'. They had no reason to suspect any subversive effects. It is also possible that the communist officials, having much bigger problems than some small rock music festival or some marginal subcultures, simply underrated its significance. After viewing the uncut version of the 1985 documentary *Fala* about the Jarocin festival (released as a director's cut in 2005), journalist Robert Sankowski wrote about the officials appearing in the film:

> The gibberish spilling out of their mouths is the best witness of the collision between two opposing worlds at Jarocin. Precisely these passages often involved censorship (animated scissors appearing on the screen inform about this), which shows that this was no incident, but endemic. Censors tried to have the representatives of the system not be presented as idiots, but they did not always succeed. *Fala*, thus, is a great example of both the mechanisms of censorship, as well as its total helplessness in the face of rock music.[23]

Officials working for the Ministry of Culture and Arts later admitted that Jarocin was not one of their priorities. Many of them considered it similar to the Woodstock festival, thus completely ignoring the punk spirit of Jarocin.[24] The authorities seemed to fail to recognize the political potential of the emerging subcultures, even as they occupied themselves with the more traditional forms of dissident organization. As Osa writes:

> In 1980–81, the repressive capacities of the state were significantly reduced as a result of social mobilization capacities. This was partly

> influenced by the low morale of the party apparatus and government, as well as the depletion of declining state resources and organizational effectiveness. Another reason was the growing number of nationalist organizations, which caught the attention of the security service. The leaders of the party had to suppress radical organizations, such as KPN, which undermined the socialist order and alliance with the USSR. Refusing to respond could have exacerbated relations with the Kremlin.[25]

Another possibility is that the secret police tolerated – and occasionally instigated – clashes between different subcultural groups, in particular between skinheads and punks, in order to control the vibrant youth subcultures and to criminalize them in the eyes of the public. It is said that the first skinheads grew out of the violent subculture of 'git' people (git ludzie), who had backgrounds in criminal milieus. Krzysztof Grabowski from the punk rock band Dezerter claims that skinheads were, if not supported, then at least tolerated by the authorities and the police.[26] In his opinion, and that of others (for instance musicians of Moskwa), it was a 'divide and rule' tactic of the secret police. They tried to spread a negative image of youth subcultures and control them by making sure they were busy fighting each other. In documents collected by the secret police, the first skinheads received a great deal of attention. Their emergence during the Jarocin festival configured the later anti-fascist movement as a subcultural struggle between young people.

Conclusion

The history of punk rock in Poland is inseparably linked to the history of the Jarocin rock music festival. The development of punk rock music and subculture coincided with the development of a democratic dissident movement, most notably organized as the Solidarność trade union. Martial law at first suppressed the dissident structures, but they began to re-emerge in the mid-1980s, with the help of the Catholic Church. Subsequently, Solidarność started looking more towards a position of 'constructive opposition', neglecting several issues and moderating the repertoires of contention. The void they thus created was filled by grassroots youth groups and activists who were labelled as 'konkretny' – a Polish term meaning a person focused on action, not on deliberation or discussion.[27] The emergence of this type of activist reflected the tensions between the 'reformists' (dissidents) and the 'revolutionaries' (punk rockers). Youth groups overrode the conservative–neo-liberal turn

of the democratic dissidents with a more individualistic (in opposition to national and collective) understanding of freedom. Punk rock, with its rebellious lyrics, nihilistic attitude and radical aesthetics, became a perfect language to express the needs and frustrations of young people in Poland during the 1980s.

Punk rock and the Jarocin festival have served several purposes for the people involved in the 'third circulation'. Firstly, they constituted networking tools for young, rebellious people. The DIY culture of punk rock developed dense networks of zines and groups of friends going to concerts and to places in which such events were held. Some of these informal networks were later used for demonstrations against compulsory military service, as well as in support of environmental protection and other causes. Punk rock was also used as a driving force for novel ideas such as anarchism and 'deep ecology'. For numerous young people, punk lyrics were often the first step towards entering a social movement. When analysing radical social movements, these close connections between subcultures and social movements still can be traced, even today.

Punk rock, and Jarocin in particular, also became a 'Temporary Autonomous Zone'. From this understanding one can explain the relatively low level of politicization of the festival (in political terms, there were not many political activists in Jarocin per se, although in communist Poland many everyday practices and lifestyles could be interpreted as being political). Although the lyrics of some of the songs were political, and some provocative leaflets were circulated among the crowds, Jarocin was not a political statement, explicitly, but rather more indirectly, through everyday resistance, clothing or radical aesthetics. The festival should thus be interpreted in terms of a counterculture, with its resistance to politics, but also to social norms and the cultural politics of the state. While it is worth stressing that dominant and official cultures are not one and the same[28] – the resistance of the artists and the audience at Jarocin festivals were aimed at both.

The youth revolt at Jarocin was not explicitly political: it was more against the social system and its lack of prospects, embracing the slogan 'no future'. The rebellion (in terms of lyrics but also in terms of the artistic language used to express it) was against more structured emanations of the regime's power: governmental programs for youth education, lack of prospects for the young and so forth.[29] The choice of punk aesthetics and lyrics stressed the non-conformity of the performers: Dezerter singing about being lazy and not wanting to work in the song 'Burdel' (Brothel) is a good example of this attitude, which was more than simply following a fashion. Punk rock perhaps had a small role in

overthrowing the communist regime in Poland, but it helped to mobilize different groups of people and create different tactics to be implemented as part of the process.

Notes

1. G. Piotrowski (2011) 'Jarocin: A Free Enclave behind the Iron Curtain' *East Central Europe*, vol. 38, no. 2–3, 291–306; G. Piotrowski (2012) *Grassroots Groups and Civil Society Actors in Pro-democratic Transitions in Poland* (Department of political and social sciences, European University Institute).
2. P. Kenney (2002) *A Carnival of Revolution: Central Europe 1989* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), p. 9.
3. M. Osa (2008) 'Sieci opozycji w PRL', in K. Gorlach and P.H. Mooney (eds) *Dynamika życia społecznego: współczesne koncepcje ruchów społecznych* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar), p. 223.
4. P. Ackermann and J. DuVall (eds) (2001) *A Force More Powerful* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan), Chapter 3.
5. K. Sipowicz (2008) *Hipisi w PRL-u* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Baobab).
6. A. Ostolski (2008) 'Między wschodem a zachodem', in P. Sadura (ed.) *Polskie odcienie zieleni* (e-book published by Boell Stiftung).
7. R. Górski (2007) 'Opór społeczny w Polsce (1944–1989) II' *Przegląd Anarchistyczny*, vol. 6, 102.
8. Kenney, *A Carnival of Revolution*, p. 82.
9. The 'golden age' of the festival is widely understood as the years 1980–1986, when Walter Chełstowski and Jacek Sylwin were in charge of the organization. After that, a gradual decline set in, and in 1994 the festival was cancelled due to riots involving the festival audience, skinheads and the police. Since 2009, a new, commercial version of the Jarocin festival has been organized annually.
10. J. Wertenstein-Żuławski (1991) 'Karnawał szarych ludzi: Jarocin 1980–1986', in J. Wertenstein-Żuławski and M. Pęczak (eds) *Spontaniczna Kultura Młodzieżowa* (Wrocław: Wiedza o Kulturze).
11. K. Lesiakowski, P. Perzyna and T. Toborek (2004) *Jarocin w obiektywie bezpieki* (Warsaw: IPN), pp. 144–47.
12. Lesiakowski et al., *Jarocin w obiektywie bezpieki*, p. 147. For some reason in other documents they are referred to as 'aj' skinheads.
13. Lesiakowski et al., *Jarocin w obiektywie bezpieki*, p. 45.
14. K. Wojciechowski, M. Makowski and G. Witkowski (2011) *Pokolenie J8: Jarocin '80 – '89* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo In Rock).
15. H. Bey (2009) *Tymczasowa Strefa Autonomiczna* (Krakow: korporacja ha!art).
16. See D. Graeber (2002) 'The new anarchists' *New Left Review*, vol. 13, no. 6, 61–73, for an exhaustive definition of prefigurative politics.
17. K. Kosiński (2006) *Oficjalne i prywatne życie młodzieży w PRL* (Warszawa: Rosner i wspólnicy), p. 349.
18. See Wertenstein-Żuławski, 'Karnawał szarych ludzi', and also Kenney, *A Carnival of Revolution*, p. 178, for a discussion.
19. Although in 1986 songs by punk group Tilt were number one in the charts of the 3rd program of Polish Radio in May and July, another song became

number one in 1989; in 1984 the number one was 'Jezu, jak się cieszę' by Klaus Mitfoch, another Polish punk group. See Kosiński, *Oficjalne i prywatne życie młodzieży w PRL*, pp. 350–52.
20. Lesiakowski et al., *Jarocin w obiektywie bezpieki*, p. 60.
21. S.P. Ramet (1995) *Social Currents in Eastern Europe: The Sources and Consequences of the Great Transformation* (London: Duke University Press), p. 241.
22. J. Urbański (2009) 'Anarchizm – kryzys i transformacja' *Przegląd Anarchistyczny*, vol. 9, 100.
23. R. Sankowski (2005) 'Fala bez cenzury' *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 21 June.
24. Lesiakowski et al., *Jarocin w obiektywie bezpieki*, pp. 56–57.
25. Osa, 'Sieci opozycji w PRL', p. 237.
26. M. Lizut (2003) *Punk Rock Later* (Warszawa: Sic!), pp. 31–35. Grabowski made the same claim in the 2000 documentary film *Dzieci Jarocina* directed by Petro Aleksowski.
27. See Kenney, *A Carnival of Revolution*, p. 13.
28. Ramet, *Social Currents in Eastern Europe*, p. 236.
29. Lesiakowski et al., *Jarocin w obiektywie bezpieki*, p. 8.

14

Riotous Assembly: British Punk's Cultural Diaspora in the Summer of '81

Matthew Worley

Britain's newspaper headlines made for stark reading in July 1981.[1] As a series of riots broke out across the country's inner-cities, *The Sun* led with reports of 'Race Fury' and 'Mob Rule', opening up to provide daily updates of 'Burning Britain' as the month drew on.[2] The *Daily Mail*, keen as always to pander a prejudice, described the disorder as a 'Black War on Police', bemoaning years of 'sparing the rod' and quoting those who blamed the riots on a 'vociferous immigration lobby' that sought 'excuses all the time for the excesses of the blacks'.[3] The *Daily Express* wrote of a 'permissive whirlwind' wreaking havoc; the *Daily Mirror* combined coverage of 'Riot Mobs' with condemnation of a Tory government that failed to recognize 'real, deep and dangerous problems' rooted in housing, education and unemployment.[4] Britain was 'close to anarchy', the *Mirror* insisted, as it juxtaposed images of battered police and broken windows with a message to Margaret Thatcher: 'Save Our Cities'.[5]

Of course, the riots of 1981 did not occur in a vacuum. Nor did they mark the beginning or culmination of any coordinated social protest. Rather, the violence that gripped Britain's inner-cites – from Bristol in 1980 through London to Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, Newcastle and beyond in 1981 – was but a spectacular expression of tensions that had long-simmered in communities affected by processes of structural and socio-economic change. Indeed, the problems of the 1970s are well-known: economic instability, industrial conflict, war in Ireland extending to mainland bombings and a sense of crisis embedded in political and media discourses that moved from optimism to declinism as the decade wore on.[6] Violence on the picket lines, the

Notting Hill carnival riot of 1976 and irregular clashes between the far-right National Front (NF), anti-fascists and police formed part of a continuum of disorder. But the 1980s were just as tumultuous.[7] For all the talk of Britain being reinvented as a financial centre geared towards the interests of the entrepreneur, Thatcher's premiership was book-ended by recession and disfigured by fierce industrial struggles and social unrest that culminated in the poll tax riots of 1990. Most disastrously, unemployment became endemic, having remained relatively low for much of the post-war period. The number of people out of work pushed towards three million in 1981 (12.4 per cent), before peaking at close to three-and-a-half million and remaining high thereafter.[8]

The young working class were particularly vulnerable to the changes effected over the 1980s. Government policies designed to eschew commitment to full employment in favour of controlling the money supply and 'freeing' the market from state intervention and trade unionism ensured many were caught in a toxic combination of deindustrialization, economic depression and political brinksmanship. Britain's black population suffered disproportionately, fuelling already-strained relations with local police forces riddled with racism.[9] Put together, youthful frustration, social disadvantage and racial tension coalesced to foment a period of unrest that scarred the landscape of the Conservatives' promised 'new beginning'.[10]

This chapter concentrates on a cultural context of the 1981 riots. More specifically, it looks at the diverse ways by which British punk's influence dispersed into the new decade, suggesting its cultural processes continued to provide for pertinent social and political commentary even after its 'moment' was deemed by many to have passed. Of course, equal attention could be given to other cultural forms and to other mediums.[11] Reggae, for example, had long charted the pressures seething in Britain's inner cities, with Linton Kwesi Johnson ('D Great Insohreckshan'), Benjamin Zephaniah ('Riot in Progress') and the MCs Roy Rankin and Raymond Napthali ('Brixton Incident') producing notable responses to the turmoil of 1980–81.[12] Punk, however, is examined here for the claims often made by its protagonists: namely, that it offered a cultural form relevant to and engaged with the world of which it was a part.[13]

Punk is dead/punk's not dead

Defining 'punk' – be it in a cultural or a political sense – is contentious and problematical. In the UK, at least, punk's meaning was constructed

as much from without as within, as music journalists, the wider media and marketers moved quickly to frame and decipher the look, sound, language and symbolism of the Sex Pistols, The Clash and Buzzcocks, among others. Simultaneously, debate soon raged inside punk and its associated cultures, primarily as competing interpretations made claim to punk's 'real' intent or disavowed its influence once any set definition became more restrictive than liberating. Depending on your preference or prejudice, punk could be read as a musical form, a fashion, an aesthetic, an attitude, a protest, a media-construed label, an anti-social gesture, a cultural moment or a lifestyle.[14] Politically, punk was claimed and denounced on the left and right before generating its own explicitly anarchist subculture. It also comprised many who rejected all and any political interpretation of its motives and substance.[15]

Despite all this, some defining characteristics may be discerned to give sense to the cultural initiatives generated during and after 1976–77. At the very least, punk appeared to challenge the rarefied echelons of popular music, inspiring agency and an impetus to 'do it yourself' that opened up youth cultural practice to anyone with an idea, an inclination or something to say. This, in turn, gave rise to a *modus operandi* driven by opposition to any dominant culture or perceived status quo, and an irreverent disregard for pre-established hierarchies. Punk set itself against things, be it other music cultures, the establishment, the industry, rock and roll clichés, gender roles, class divisions, society and even itself once codes and expectations of what punk should be became fixed. Canons and icons were there to be desecrated, subverted and demystified; punk's first rule – it was sometimes said – was no rules. Finally, punk's oppositionism suggested it provided cultural expression for the disenfranchised, a platform and a space for the alienated and disaffected. In short, punk may best be understood as a cultural process of critical engagement; it began with a negation that enabled multiple forms of expression to develop across a variety of sites.

Accordingly, punk – in Britain as elsewhere – evolved in a variety of ways. First, in 1976–78, divergence occurred between youthful iconoclasts like the Sex Pistols' Johnny Rotten and wannabe pop-stars who rode the punk bandwagon. 'Punk', commercially at least, was positioned against the more palatable 'new wave', while those influenced by The Clash adopted a street-level sense of social realism that began to contrast with the artistically minded who informed what later became known as 'post-punk'. In between, a distinctly DIY-culture developed around the production of fanzines and records self-released or issued through small independent labels. Anarchy, over time, was transformed

from a rhetorical device into practice, as embodied by Crass, Poison Girls and others; subcultural revivals began to flourish – mods, skinheads, rude boys, rockabillies – as punk scrambled pop's past to reconstitute its future. By the 1980s, therefore, it was possible to discern numerous punk and punk-informed styles, often overlapping but always fraught in their relationship to punk's starting point and their own perceived meanings.

Babylon is burning with anxiety

There is not space here to dissect in detail the political impulses that lay beneath punk's divergent diaspora. The objective, instead, is to briefly survey the different ways by which the various forms of punk-informed music engaged with or reflected upon the socio-economic, political and cultural pressures that provided the backdrop to the riots of 1981. The heightened political climate of the time must be borne in mind. As well as Britain's own internal tribulations, the reignited Cold War cast its shadow over the 1980s. Just as the 1970s had seen Rock against Racism (RAR) emerge in response to an upsurge in racial politics, likewise the 1980s saw the revival of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) spurred by worsening international relations between the West and the Soviet Union. Simultaneously, the early 1980s remained a period of vibrant but sometimes disparate political campaigns generated by a cultural turn in politics that located 'new' spheres of struggle (race, gender, sexuality, youth, culture, language, leisure) beyond the socio-economic or traditionally party-political.[16] Dating back to at least the 1950s, these 'new social movements' gained momentum to infuse and cut across the binaries of left and right. Concurrently, the global economic crises of the 1970s enabled a 'new right' to combine free-market economics with social conservatism in reaction to the liberal reforms of the earlier twentieth century. In amidst all this, punk's politics were bound up in – and arguably helped reveal – the shifting contours of British polity.

For those who continued to identify unashamedly with punk, the early 1980s brought the Sex Pistols' prophecy of 'No Future' into sharp relief. As is well known, the moniker of 'dole queue rock' sat uneasily with the class of '76; the spectre of unemployment formed but part of a far broader sense of disaffection cultivated in tertiary education and teenage bedrooms as much as on the streets.[17] But it rang true for many who adopted punk as it filtered into the provinces, particularly as recession began to bite, and the Cold War threat became evermore tangible. The election of Margaret Thatcher served only to augment the Orwellian

overtones evident in punk's dystopian vision, with a renewed emphasis on law and order becoming totemic of what Stuart Hall described as the Tories' 'popular authoritarianism'.[18]

As this suggests, many of the principal punk bands of 1980–81 had begun to shift attention away from the stifling greyness of stunted social democracy towards the deleterious effects of emergent Thatcherism. The likes of Blitz, Discharge, The Exploited, GBH, Vice Squad and countless others wrote songs and forged an aesthetic that depicted a country broken and violent. So, for example, Vice Squad's album, *No Cause for Concern* (1981), was reputedly titled after a Thatcher quote relating to growing youth unemployment. Their original label, Riot City, was Bristol-based and named in response to the disorder that broke out in the city's St Pauls area in 1980. Others, such as the Abrasive Wheels from Leeds, wrote songs that dramatized the impact of unemployment and its accompanying ennui. 'Vicious Circle', from their debut EP, depicted 'forgotten youth' wasting away, sniffing glue, walking the streets and signing on.[19] Indeed, a steady stream of dole-queue songs emerged from punk's hinterlands during the early 1980s, ranging from the defiant (Action Pact's 'Yet Another Dole Queue Song', Emergency's 'Points of View', Newtown Neurotics' 'Living With Unemployment') to the fatalistic (Discharge's 'Society's Victims', The Exploited's 'Dole Q', The Partisans' 'No U Turns'). In between, government schemes were dismissed, as in The Exploited's 'YOP', and conspiratorial scenarios of unemployed youths being conscripted into the army became rife as the spectre of (nuclear) war loomed.[20]

Such tropes were mirrored in punk's visual representation. By 1980–81, the culture's aesthetic had become more raggedy, the once-stylized apparel faded and worn, with battered jackets and boots serving as austerity wear. Images of deindustrialization repeated across record sleeves and posters: graffiti-covered walls and urban dereliction combined to represent a desolate vision of the UK. Band names – Chaos UK, Disorder, UK Decay – sought to evoke the temper of their times as they decorated t-shirts, badges and leathers. Appropriately, therefore, the riots of 1981 erupted just as the 'Apocalypse Now' tour traversed the country, showcasing four of the leading 'new' punk bands: The Exploited, Anti Pasti, Discharge and Chron Gen. Such bands were typically dismissed in the mainstream music press for their reductionist reading of punk. Their stripped down, sped-up, blunt punk rock rubbed against the experimental tendencies of much 'post-punk' and the arch 'new pop' favoured by most journalists at the time. But even the NME was forced to concede that the apocalypse bands appeared to connect with the events of 1981.

Writing on 18 July, as the riots continued to rage, Chris Bohn noted how 'last week's Commons reports [on the riots] read like paraphrased [Sex] Pistol songs', comparing the image and rhetoric of the ongoing tour to the 'anarchy [and] chaos' asserting 'its new reign elsewhere'.[21]

Not surprisingly, the riots of 1980–81 informed punk's cultural reportage to good effect thereafter. Just as the Notting Hill carnival riot of 1976 served as the backdrop to The Clash's first single, 'White Riot' (1977), so the events of July 1981 affirmed the social dislocation projected by 1980s punk. To take just a few examples, Discharge's 'Fight Back' (1980) had already insisted that 'Bristol's riots were a result of peoples' hatred towards the system' before Blitz's 'Nation on Fire', The Violators' 'Summer of '81' and The Straps' 'Brixton' provided further communiqués from the front line.[22] The Exploited's 'Dead Cities' (1981) EP, released just weeks after the riots petered out, even came wrapped in a sleeve compiling headlines from newspaper reports, while Chaos UK debuted in 1982 with an EP, 'Burning Britain', that appropriated the title of *The Sun*'s reportage. Indeed, 'riot' became an ever more entrenched part of punk's lexicon – repeated in band names and song titles and utilized as a symbol of the youthful disaffection that punk claimed to embody. Or, to quote The Exploited's Wattie Buchan's reconciliation of punk and the riots:

> Kids are fed up. If they've got nowt to do they'll do something stupid. Like vandalise or something [...] If kids go straight from school to the dole, it's not their fault is it? They cannae go out and get a job. The government creates boredom and there's no way you can protest about it [...] They never bother until something actually happens [...] Punk today is the backlash of reality.[23]

Closely related to the hard-edged punk bands resurgent in 1981 were those associated with 'Oi!', a term coined in 1980 by the *Sounds* journalist Garry Bushell to denote a punk-lineage that ran through The Clash's social realism to bands such as Cock Sparrer, Sham 69, The Ruts, Cockney Rejects, Angelic Upstarts and into the 1980s via the 4-Skins, The Business and others. Oi! was effectively the point where punk fused with the skinhead subculture and football terraces – its songs and imagery focused on local identities, youth cultural rivalries and ongoing societal problems.[24] More to the point, it was a gig featuring three Oi! bands that helped spark the 1981 riots, as local Asian youths mobilized in Southall on 3 July to protest against the arrival of a large skinhead presence in an area with a history of racial conflict.[25] A pitched battle with the police duly began,

during which the gig venue (the Hambrough Tavern) was burnt to the ground and a media-stoked moral panic centred on Oi!'s supposed fascist tendencies followed in the days thereafter.[26]

Of course, the first Southall riot of 1981 was a product of more than simply a gig. Local tensions with the police and the National Front were deep-set and had previously surfaced in 1979 when the NF's attempt to hold an election meeting provoked violent confrontation. It was The Ruts' Southall connections that fed into their depiction of a 'Jah War' and a society 'burning with anxiety' ready to combust.[27] Nor was Oi! inherently fascist or right-wing. Though young NF and British Movement (BM) members could be found among its milieu, it was a contested culture of various political stripes concerned primarily with questions of class. The Business, in particular, fused boisterous sing-a-longs with class-conscious social commentary that included the prophetic 'Work or Riot'. Infa Riot, too, produced a set that catalogued the frustrations of inner-city youth and predicted a violent response to problems of insecurity and inequality. For Garry Johnson, Oi!'s resident poet, '[The] real point of all these riots is that the middle class are terrified of the white working class and black working class teaming up and fighting the system instead of each other, and that's the message Oi! MUST promote'.[28]

Johnson's plea had already found expression in 2-tone, a fusion of punk and ska that first came to prominence in 1979. The Specials' 'Ghost Town' was number one in July 1981, the song's depiction of a British inner-city blighted by depression providing a resonant soundtrack to a summer of riotous disorder. As the clubs closed and jobs disappeared, the people got angry and violence ensued. In fact, such topics had long informed the lyrics of 2-tone's more 'conscious' bands. The Specials, The Beat and The Selecter all released singles and albums in 1979–80 that comprised commentary on Britain's deepening malaise, their dance-friendly, up-tempo rhythms enveloping lyrics about racism, violence, unemployment and social dislocation.[29]

Surprisingly, perhaps, punk's most overtly political strand passed little direct comment on the 1981 riots. Crass, who paved the way for what eventually became known as 'anarcho-punk', were somewhat dismissive. Talking to *Anarchy*, the band were quoted as having described the disturbances as 'a glorified demonstration of misguided street-fighting ideology', an example of 'people being pissed off being told to buy Seiko watches and not being able to afford them'.[30] Yet, the concerns of Crass and many of those influenced by them tended towards demystifying the underlying structures of 'the system' rather than reporting on specific

events or instances. To this end, as the band's Penny Rimbaud pointed out in a letter to *Sounds* in January 1983, the riots were symptomatic of a far more deep-seated concern: they represented 'the discontent of the poor, who are expected to live on less and less' as the war-state repressed the population and the ruling elite accrued ever greater wealth.[31]

There were exceptions. The Apostles – alongside anarchist zines such as *Pigs for Slaughter* – celebrated street-level disorder, criticizing both Crass's pacifism and those who posed by anarchy signs while 'in Toxteth + Moss Side, kids even younger than themselves hurl petrol bombs at police'.[32] Kronstadt Uprising, from Southend, also wrote 'Receiver Deceiver' in response to the riots, accusing the police of covering up the root causes of the disturbances behind misinformation.[33] More generally, however, anarcho-punk's trajectory led away from the urbanism that incubated the frustrations vent in 1981. Not only was the idea of gainful employment rejected as a fallacy, but the pressures of the city were soon replaced by a yearning for the bucolic existence exemplified by Crass' own Dial House near Epping and, later, the traveller convoys of the mid-1980s.[34]

Similar themes were apparent in the industrial culture associated with Throbbing Gristle, Cabaret Voltaire and others. Emerging parallel to punk and distinguished by its embrace of harsh electronic textures and tape cut-ups, industrial music fixated on the darker corners of the human psyche and those systems of control that constructed 'reality'. Murder, sexual fetish and the abject featured heavily alongside dissections of such forces as the media, religion and politics that imposed socio-cultural and political power relations.[35] Even so, Andy Gill's review of Cabaret Voltaire's 'Red Mecca' (1981), ostensibly a record about global religious tensions, was written just as news of the Brixton riots broke. With perfect synchronicity, Gill noted, the record's coarse dance beats provided a 'chilling musical representation of '80s Britain, [...] dance-as-riot. [...] the two activities inseparable parts of a wider lust for freedom and expression'.[36]

Ultimately, therefore, punk's propensity to social commentary and cultural critique provided context to the upheavals of 1980–81. Across its divergent forms, punk railed against the repressive pillars of 'the system'; it unpicked the alienating effects of commodification, work and media saturation. This was often instinctive, visceral – a politics of boredom. Simultaneously, punk's politics could be explicit. From as early as 1976, young activists had recognized punk's radical potential, be it via the social realism of The Clash or the opportunity to challenge social and cultural convention ushered in by the Sex Pistols. Beyond RAR's attempt to direct punk's cultural politics, a broader 'libertarian

left' influence can be discerned in punk and post-punk's engagement with gender relations, sexuality, consumerism, imperialism and so forth. The likes of the Au Pairs, Delta 5, Gang of Four, Ludus, The Pop Group and Scritti Politti drew from Marxist, feminist and situationist ideas to forge cultural critiques that located punk and pop as sites of political struggle. By the 1980s, however, the vagaries of post-modernism and the allure of pop's subtle subversions had combined to blindside many of punk's more cerebral exponents. Radical form was deemed counter-intuitive to pop's desires and pleasures; social realism was dismissed as reaffirming the inequalities that punk kicked against; the possibility of working 'outside' (or taking over) the music industry was pooh-poohed as an illusion.[37] That said, bands such as the Newtown Neurotics and The Redskins – alongside 'ranter' poets such as Seething Wells – continued to take inspiration from punk's attitude and claims to relevance in order to propagate avowedly socialist politics. A burgeoning independent scene also continued to function, facilitating benefits for the unemployed, the miners and others caught beneath the wheels of Thatcherism.[38] As a result, the riots of 1981 were occasionally evoked as a motif of Britain's deepening fissures, albeit long after the streets of Toxteth, Moss Side, Brixton and elsewhere had been (temporarily) cleared of rubble.

Conclusion

Punk's politics were expressed visually, verbally and physically. They were also communicated via cultural processes and modes of production. Taken as a whole, punk was too diverse and contradictory to constitute a coherent cultural or, indeed, political movement. It did, however, provide a space and a means for protest; it facilitated instinctive and often insightful critiques of politics and society more generally; it stimulated genuine moments of empowerment for those involved. By so doing, punk served as a formative social and political experience for many, an experience that thereafter helped shape opinions on and attitudes towards life. Most obviously, punk fed into or linked to broader political causes and ideas, be it CND, animal rights, anarchism or even the more disturbing politics of the far-right. Equally, punk brokered social and political negation through its processes of reflexivity and demystification: politicians lie, the media distorts, capital corrupts, the music industry is exploitative, birth-work-mortgage-death.

In the context of 1980–81, punk's penchant for social commentary served to provide snapshots of a distinct historical moment. If The Specials' 'Ghost Town' has become the standard reference point to capture

the mood of 1981's riotous summer, then various other or lesser-known songs could claim likewise. The Jam's 'Funeral Pyre' was released in May 1981, reaching number one as it railed against the scorched-earth politics of Thatcherism that sparked reaction a few weeks later. More obscurely, perhaps, Killing Joke's 'Tension' came out at the same time (on the b-side of 'Follow the Leader'), embodying the mood of the early 1980s in its title, sound and lyrics of entrapment: 'I can't get out'. Indeed, punk and its various permutations revealed a range of youthful responses to the world as it changed around young people. In Britain, this meant the sped-up transformation of a once industrial economy to one based on service industries and skewed towards financial sectors based in London and south-east; from broadly Keynesian economics to the monetarist – neoliberal – values of Thatcherism. It also meant the slower-but-nevertheless-real changes effected by geopolitical politics, technological advancements and attitudes to gender relations, class, race and sexuality.

Returning to the early 1980s, punk sounded and documented a country at war with itself, a country uncertain of its future, struggling to understand its past and caught in a period of transition. Though it failed to derail the Thatcherite juggernaut, punk offered alternative possibilities and sites of struggle. Against the pastel colours, champagne fizz and conspicuous consumption that fuels popular memory of the decade, punk's diaspora captured a darker narrative. If the riots of 1980–81 remain resonant, then it is partly as a result of punk's ability to distil their essence in cultural form.

Notes

1. This chapter stems from a Leverhulme Trust funded project on 'punk, politics and British youth culture'. Thanks to John Street and David Wilkinson, who also worked on the project.
2. 'Mob Rule Grips The Cities' *The Sun*, 11 July 1981, p. 1.
3. *Daily Mail*, 6 July 1981, pp. 1–2. The quote was from Tory MP John Stokes.
4. *Daily Mirror*, 10 July 1981, pp. 1–3.
5. *Daily Mirror*, 7 July 1981, p. 1.
6. See, for example, C. Brooker (1980) *The Seventies: Portrait of a Decade* (London: Allen Lane); P. Whitehead (1985) *The Writing on the Wall: Britain in the Seventies* (London: Michael Joseph); D. Sandbrook (2011) *State of Emergency: The Way We Were: Britain, 1970–74* (London: Penguin); idem. (2012) *Seasons in the Sun: The Battle for Britain, 1974–79* (London: Allen Lane). For interesting reassessments of the period, see N. Tiratsoo (1997) '"You've Never Had It so Bad": Britain in the 1970s' in idem. (ed.) *From Blitz to Blair: A New History of Britain since the 1970s* (London: Weidenfield & Nicolson), pp. 163–90; C. Hay (2010) 'Chronicles of a Death Foretold: The Winter of Discontent and Construction

of the Crisis of British Keynesian' *Parliamentary Affairs*, vol. 63, no. 3, 446–70; J. Moran (2010) '"Stand Up and Be Counted": Hughie Green, the 1970s and Popular Memory' *History Workshop Journal*, vol. 70, no. 1, 173–98; L. Black, H. Pemberton and P. Thane (eds) (2013) *Reassessing the Seventies* (Manchester: Manchester University Press).

7. For two differing styles of overview, see B. Harrison (2010) *Finding a Role? The United Kingdom, 1970–1990* (Oxford: Oxford University Press); A. McSmith (2011) *No Such Thing as Society: A History of Britain in the 1980s* (London: Constable).
8. J. Denman and P. MacDonald (January 1996) 'Unemployment Statistics from 1881 to the Present Day' *Labour Market Trends*, pp. 5–18. Note that measurements of unemployment rates were also regularly 'adjusted' over the 1980s to massage the figures.
9. The Scarman Report, commissioned in response to the Brixton riots of April 1981 that presaged the wider summer disturbances, recognized the police as carrying 'responsibility for the outbreak of disorder', citing prejudice and a failure to engage in community relations as integral to the sense of distrust that permeated estates up and down the country. Lord Scarman (1982) *The Scarman Report: The Brixton Disorders, 10–12 April 1981* (London: Pelican), pp. 118–19. See also J. Benyon (ed.) (1984) *Scarman and After: Essays Reflecting on Lord Scarman's Report, the Riots and their Aftermath* (Oxford: Pergamon); J. Rex (1982) 'The 1981 Urban Riots in Britain' *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, vol. 6, no.1, 99–113.
10. This was a term used in the 1979 Conservative Party manifesto.
11. Alwyn Turner and Graham Stewart are just two historians who have drawn from across the arts to find cultural complements to the prevailing moods and events of the early 1980s. See A.W. Turner (2010) *Rejoice, Rejoice: Britain in the 1980s* (London: Aurum); G. Stewart (2013) *Bang: A History of Britain in the 1980s* (London: Atlantic Books).
12. See also, for context, W. 'Lez' Henry (2015) 'Reggae, Rasta and the Role of the Deejay in the Black British Experience', in *Subcultures Network* (London: Routledge), pp. 91–110. For Bristol, see some of the tracks compiled on 'The Bristol Reggae Explosion', Bristol Archive Records, 2010, including 3-D Production's 'Riot' (1980).
13. See, for example, Johnny Rotten describing the Sex Pistols as an antidote to the 'non-reality culture' of hippiedom, in F. and J. Vermorel (1978) *The Sex Pistols File* (London: Tandem), p. 182; S. Walsh (October 1976) 'The Very Angry Clash' in *Sniffin' Glue*, no. 4, 3–6.
14. The best account of British punk's emergence remains J. Savage (1991) *England's Dreaming: Sex Pistols and Punk Rock* (London: Faber & Faber).
15. M. Worley (2012) 'Shot By Both Sides: Punk, Politics and the End of "Consensus"' *Contemporary British History*, vol. 26, no. 3, 333–54.
16. M. Kenny (1995) *The First New Left: British Intellectuals After Stalin* (London: Lawrence & Wishart); D. Dworkin (1997) *Cultural Marxism in Post War Britain: History, the New Left and the Origins of Cultural Studies* (North Carolina: Duke University Press).
17. D. Marsh (1977) 'Dole Queue Rock' *New Society*, 20 January, pp. 112–14; S. Frith and H. Horne (1987) *Art into Pop* (London: Methuen & Co.).

18. S. Hall (January 1979) 'The Great Moving Right Show' *Marxism Today*, pp. 14–20.
19. 'Vicious Circle' on Abrasive Wheels, *Vicious Circle EP*, Riot City (1981).
20. YOP was a reference to the Youth Opportunities scheme introduced by Labour in 1978 and extended by the Conservatives in 1980. For songs predicting conscription, see – for but a few examples – Abrasive Wheels, 'Army Song'; Chron Gen, 'Puppets of War'; The Clash, 'The Call Up'; Dead Man's Shadow, 'When Our Blood is Spilled'; Killing Joke, 'Tomorrow's World'; Subhumans, 'Who's Gonna Fight in the Third World War'.
21. C. Bohn (1981) 'Premature Burial' *NME*, 18 July, pp. 32–33.
22. Discharge, *Fight Back EP*, Clay Records (1980).
23. Cited in Bohn, 'Premature Burial', p. 32 and p. 61.
24. M. Worley (2014) 'Oi! Oi! Oi!: Class, Locality and British Punk' *Twentieth Century British History*, vol. 24, no. 4, 606–34.
25. D. Renton (2006) *When We Touched the Sky: The Anti-Nazi League, 1977–81* (London: New Clarion Press), pp. 136–55.
26. P. Donovan and P. Evans (1981) 'Exposed: The Racist Thug on the Cover of this Evil Record' *Daily Mail*, 10 July, p. 3; L. Hodges (1981), 'Racists Recruit Youth Through Rock Music' *The Times*, 3 August, p. 3; M. Duffy (1981) 'Playing with Fire – And Other Skin Problems' *NME*, 11 July, pp. 4–5; J. Rollo (1981) 'Sounds Familiar' in *Socialist Worker*, 18 July, p. 4.
27. 'Jah War', an account of the 1979 Southall riot and released as a single the same year. The other quotation is from 'Babylon's Burning', released as a single earlier in 1979. Both records came out on Virgin.
28. G. Johnson in *Sounds*, 25 July 1981, p. 33.
29. The Selecter made direct reference the riots in the song 'Bristol and Miami' on *Celebrate the Bullet*, Chrysalis Records (1981).
30. 'Crass' *Anarchy*, no. 34, (1981), 4–5.
31. G. Berger (2006) *The Story of Crass* (London: Omnibus Press), pp. 230–33.
32. 'Why Punk is a Total Failure' on undated flyer, circa 1982 in *Pigs for Slaughter*, pilot issue, (1981), pp. 6–9.
33. The track appeared on the *Bullshit Detector Two* compilation issued on Crass Records in 1982. See also A-Heads' 'No Rule' on *Wessex '82*, Bluurg (1982), which evokes the riots of Bristol and Brixton.
34. G. McKay (1996) *Senseless Acts of Beauty: Cultures of Resistance since the Sixties* (London: Verso).
35. S. Alexander Reed (2013) *Assimilate: A Critical History of Industrial Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
36. Andy Gill review of Cabaret Voltaire's *'Red Mecca' NME*, 22 August 1981, p. 35.
37. S. Frith (March 1983) 'Post-Punk Blues' *Marxism Today*, pp. 18–21.
38. See J. Robb (2009) *Death to Trad Rock* (London: Cherry Red).

Part VI
Expert Debates

15

Apathy, Subversion, and the Network Sublime: Envisioning Youth Unrest in West Germany, 1980–87

Jake P. Smith

The initial outbreak of the youth revolts that swept through European cities in the early 1980s caught many West German experts and social commentators completely by surprise. In the foreword to the 1983 publication of the West German Parliamentary Report on *Youth Protests in a Democratic State*, for example, Matthias Wissmann noted that 'since the middle of the 1970s, the conversation always centred on the fact that there had never been a generation that was so adjusted, so integrated, and so quiet as the current one'.[1] Such myopia was not limited to the representatives of the West German state. Indeed, according to Jörg Bopp, progressive social commentators' tendency to lament the generational shift from political engagement to hedonism, inwardness and terrorism meant that they too largely missed the early signs of widespread youth unrest in the late 1970s.[2] After years spent focusing on the failure of the younger generation to live up to their expectations, social commentators across the political spectrum were shocked when German youth took to the streets in record numbers to protest against bourgeois society in toto.

The cover of *Der Spiegel* from 22 December 1980 clearly illustrates this abrupt shift in the tenor of public discourse surrounding European youth. By prominently portraying a group of marauding, rock-throwing protestors framed by a ring of shattered glass, coupled with a caption reading 'West Berlin, Zurich, Amsterdam, Freiburg, Bremen, Hanover, Hamburg. Youth Riots', the cover drew attention both to the protesters' penchant for violent, irrational outbursts and to the rapid proliferation

of such protests across disparate geographic spaces. This was not, the article suggested, a phenomenon one could simply write off as taking place somewhere else. The interwoven fears of irrational acts of violence and geographic indeterminacy are clearly expressed in another article in the same issue of *Der Spiegel*, in which the authors described the youth activists as 'street fighters masked in El-Fatah bandanas who catapult steel balls at plastic armed police from dark windows'.[3] Such depictions of the 1980–81 youth protests are indicative of a discursive shift away from the familiar images of a passive, apolitical, and largely listless generation. Indeed, the comforting narratives of a quiescent generation were quickly being eclipsed by quasi-apocalyptic scenes of shattered glass, burning barricades, and masked European youths clad in the regalia of international insurrection.

After the initial shock began to fade, intellectuals, journalists and government officials from cities across Europe started demanding explanations for and solutions to the protest movements. Why, they asked, did such a seemingly apathetic generation suddenly take to the streets? What were the political goals of the protesting youth? Were these movements a sign of democratic vitality or of authoritarianism? And, most importantly, what was the most effective means for combatting this behaviour? As might be expected, the answers to these questions varied significantly based on political affiliation and mode of employment. For some, the youth protests represented a particularly acute form of adolescent misbehaviour, the roots of which could be traced back to an overly permissive social environment created by a combination of widespread affluence and the anti-authoritarian ideologies propagated by the generation of 1968. Others, to the contrary, saw the protests as surface indicators of much deeper social problems such as environmental destruction, unemployment and the dissolution of traditional communities. Yet another group of commentators viewed the protests within a legal-political framework and debated issues such as democratic legitimacy versus legality, the relative merits of majority versus minority forms of decision-making in democratic society and the role of violence in modern politics. Finally, a number of conservative politicians and journalists jettisoned attempts to explain the underlying causes of the protests and instead focused on the fact that the youth movements posed a serious threat to public safety and should be dealt with accordingly.

For the purposes of this chapter, I restrict my focus to two of the central analytical frameworks utilized in the early 1980s by West German experts, officials and journalists to understand the underlying causes and possible consequences of youth protest, namely: social-

psychological interpretations of this protest as a 'post-adolescent' phenomenon; and political-criminological analyses of youth violence and terrorism. Following this brief exposition, I move into more speculative terrain by exploring the structural similarities underlying these seemingly oppositional discourses. Rather than viewing these analytical frameworks as fundamentally opposed to each other, I argue that both social-psychological and political-criminological interpretations relied on a peculiar explanatory framework that can best be understood as a mode of 'network' analysis or what some have called 'network aesthetics'.[4] Such an approach moves beyond an analysis of the media as an institution of discursive social control and points towards the ways in which media depictions of youth protests produced an aesthetic of sublime networks, a visual and textual representation of the awe-inspiring social networks running beneath the surface of everyday life.[5]

'An egotistical concentration on the self'

Many analysts of the youth movement – on both the political right and the left – mobilized social-psychological arguments about the transformation of adolescent experience to make sense of the protests. By and large, these commentators relied on a theory of 'post-adolescence' to account for the sudden emergence and unfamiliar values of the protesting youth.[6] Whereas the normal period of adolescence was characterized as a brief phase of experimentation and rebelliousness between puberty and adulthood, post-adolescence was understood to be both quantitatively and qualitatively different. Indeed, due to a wide and, at times contradictory, array of historical transformations associated with late-twentieth-century modernity – including the shift to a post-industrial society, increasing rates of unemployment, the rise of affluence, high levels of consumption, overly permissive familial and educational environments, the commodification of lifestyles, the fading memory of wartime privation and the relative unavailability of adequate housing in urban areas – the established theories of adolescent behaviour were no longer believed to be entirely applicable. Therefore, rather than a short phase of rebelliousness and experimentation preceding the transition to stable adulthood, adolescence came to be seen as a 15–20-year period of transition, characterized by existential doubt, a weak sense of self and 'an egotistical concentration on the self that can be called narcissistic'.[7]

This phase of post-adolescence was often negatively viewed as an extended period of childlike irrationality, emerging both from overly permissive upbringings and from the experience of affluence. Post-adolescence,

according to this interpretation, was characterized by an infantile, narcissistic inability to engage on a rational level with one's social, cultural and political surroundings. Far from committed political activists, protesting youths were viewed as spoiled children who demanded immediate satisfaction of their (oftentimes wholly irrational) needs, took no heed of others and in so doing threatened to derail the reproduction of the social and economic order. For example, in a November 1981 meeting of the West German parliamentary commission tasked with exploring the youth protests, one of the participants pedantically dismissed the utopian/political leanings of the youth movement, arguing that 'one must be very clear [...] that in this society it is not possible to build an entirely new world on top of the existing one'.[8] Anyone expressing such utopian wishes, the participant argued, was deemed to be entirely naive if not pathologically disconnected from reality. Such references to the overwhelming naiveté and deep irrationality of the protesting youth were common throughout the period. In addition to dismissing their desires as infantile, many commentators questioned the authenticity of the youth activists' self-styled identity as members of the socially and economically 'downtrodden' or, as this group was often called in German, the 'Betroffene'. In an August 1981 article in the *Rheinischer Merkur*, for example, Jürgen Engert noted that 'most of those who incite each other to viciously engage in battle come from the so-called established families'.[9] Similarly, an article in the December 1980 issue of *Der Spiegel* devoted to the youth protests posited the argument that the protests were 'primarily symbolic', and that the protestors were 'not the down-and-out but primarily children from better circles, whose deep-seated discontent led them out of their houses and into the streets. The moral appeals of their parents leave them cold. The aura of Zurich's affluence repulses them'.[10] According to these commentators, then, the protesting youths of the early 1980s were neither authentic representatives of an oppressed social group nor effective crusaders for social and political justice. Rather, they were simply spoiled children from affluent families, children who refused to face the harsh realities of the world in a manner befitting rational adults.

Many commentators, however, disagreed with this equating of youth protest with narcissism and pointed instead to the fact that post-adolescent behaviour was fundamentally social in its orientation. Post-adolescent protest, they argued, was not only symptomatic of large-scale social, political and environmental problems but it also offered a possible way out of the various impasses faced by European societies in the late twentieth century. In the PROGNOS report commissioned by the aforementioned West German parliamentary commission, for

example, the authors quite clearly argued that the crises faced by post-adolescent youth were not limited to certain age groups but represented 'a mirror image of the entire society'.[11] The authors argued that due to their particular sensitivity to the contradictions and problems faced by contemporary society, post-adolescent youth could play a decisive role in the development of novel strategies for combatting the manifold crises of the late twentieth century.[12] Indeed, post-adolescent youths served as mediators between the present and the future, as pathfinders on the road to post-materialism. The Swiss authors of the 1980 pamphlet *Thesen zu den Jugendunruhen* made a similar point about the constructive elements of post-adolescent protest, noting:

> It is positive that values which act as a corrective to the one-sided materialistic and technological development of our society are again coming to prominence. A return to nature, to simple lifestyles [...] to one's own feelings, to more directness and spontaneity. What recently appeared as a wave of nostalgia contains the possibilities for a more humane future, if only the politicians would take it seriously.[13]

Such positive readings of post-adolescent protest were not limited to governmental reports but were also widespread in the media. Jörg Bopp, for example, echoed an argument that was often propagated by the activists themselves when he noted that, 'It is not the youth protests that are the central social and political problem but the dead-end politics that provoked their eruption'.[14] Far from irrational expressions of inwardness, youth protests were thus symptomatic reactions to larger social problems. Furthermore, as countless progressive social commentators argued, youth protests contained the blueprints for reorganizing society in the post-industrial era. Taking the Kerngehäuse complex in Kreuzberg as an example, Peter-Schultz Hageleit noted that youth activists occupied houses in order to develop novel forms of community and identity that were not possible in spaces that were 'standardized, rationalized and functionalized'. These new forms of social interaction, novel familial relationships and recast work environments allowed squatters and other alternative youths to overcome the loneliness and isolation of post-war society. Rather than answering the youth protests with police violence, Hageleit and others suggested that the state should work to integrate such novel strategies into official policy and, in doing so, take definitive steps towards creating a more just and more sustainable social order.[15] According to these progressive commentators, then, the structural relationship between youth protests and late-twentieth-century

social transformations meant that post-adolescent youth could act as a vector for the cultivation of post-materialist values. Far from a problem, these youths were thusly seen as a possible solution to the various crises facing modern, democratic society.

'Dr. Terror's House of Horrors'

Although these developmental explanations retained committed advocates throughout the decade, a number of commentators increasingly jettisoned social-psychological analyses in favour of political-criminological interpretations. While those employing such frameworks often emerged from the left, I am restricting my focus here to the ways in which political-criminological analyses were employed by the conservative right, who tended to point to the nefarious character of the youth revolts, to underlying 'structures of violence' and 'lawless zones', which endangered the very foundations of the Democratic State.[16] In West Berlin this sentiment was apparent from the very beginning of the protest movement, although it began gaining steam in the period following the July 1981 Grunewald demonstration in which activists from Kreuzberg 'visited the speculators' at their homes in the affluent Grunewald neighbourhood. Following this demonstration a number of local media outlets compared the actions of the protesters to Nazi anti-Semitism of the 1930s. In a July 1981 article in the *Berliner Morgenpost* entitled, 'They called themselves Psychoterrorists', images of the phrase 'Juden raus!' (Jews out!) were directly juxtaposed with images of a masked protester spray-painting on a wall the phrase 'Makler raus!' (Real estate agents out!).[17] In a July 1981 article in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, Hans Heigert argued that youth protesters were practising the same sort of lynch-mob justice that was practised by Nazis in the 1920s.[18] Similarly, other commentators portrayed the early 1980s protests as the work of wild criminal bands determined to destroy the city, the state and quite possibly even West German democracy. Jürgen Wohlrabe of the West Berlin CDU Party noted:

> These people have finally taken off their masks. At the very latest during the Grunewald action, they have made it quite clear that for them it has nothing to do with the abolition of housing shortages [Wohnungsnot] but with the intimidation of individuals and the terrorization of entire neighbourhoods.[19]

Wohlrabe's claim that the squatters were not actually concerned with improving living conditions in the city was common throughout

the early 1980s. An August 1982 article in the *Berliner Morgenpost,* for example, debunked the squatters' claims to be repairing the houses, arguing that the evictions have shown that the squatted houses were not 'occupied for the purposes of repair' (Instandbesetzt), but 'occupied for the purposes of destruction' (Kaputtbesetzt). 'Walls and floors were ripped out and ceilings broken through. Empty apartments are used as trash heaps or toilets'. Indeed, rather than repairing the houses for the purposes of creating 'living space', they were simply using them as 'refuges [Fluchtburgen] for criminals and for the drug scene'.[20] Youth protests, according to these commentators, represented modern instantiations of barbarian hordes descending upon the forces of peace and order.

These conceptions of youth protests and squatted houses as fundamentally criminal in nature increased significantly in the mid-1980s, especially in the discussions surrounding the large squatted complex on the Hafenstraße in Hamburg. Conservative media outlets tended to propagate a particularly frightening picture of this squatted complex on the Elbe River.[21] A 1986 article entitled, 'Chaos houses: Street fight with the police. New terror in the St. Pauli Hafenstraße', described the activities at the squatted houses as if from a post-apocalyptic Karl May novel, noting: '[F]rom the chaos houses there droned a deafening music. The police measured the music to be 90 decibels – the music was as loud as a jackhammer. Then suddenly it was quiet. Then 25 left-radical "Chaoten" stormed out of the house (including punks with yellow hair, ripped pants)'.[22] Sensationalist journalism of this sort transformed the activities of the youth activists into manifestations of chaos and terror. To quote a media analyst of the period: 'Stones are not used in this world for building, only for throwing; leather clothing is not seen as practical or as a fashionable accessory, but as the armour of chaos; bandanas are only used as masks; coloured hair is only a sign of the diabolical and music is only an atavistic ritual'.[23] Far removed from the more staid attempts to explain the protests as products of arrested development and post-adolescent angst, these descriptions posited youth activists as asocial intruders whose irrational actions were anathema to modern, bourgeois Western civilization.

The houses themselves came to be described in similarly ominous terms. A 1987 article in the famously reactionary *Bild* newspaper, for example, included an illustration of the houses on the Hafenstraße with the caption, 'Dr. Terror's House of Horrors'. The image was accompanied by a detailed explanation of how various rooms in the house functioned, including the attic, which was used for the production of illegal

radio programs, the kitchen, which served as a meeting point for the *Szene*, and the bedroom, where one could put together Molotov cocktails.[24] Such sentiments were not restricted, it should be noted, to sensationalist tabloids such as *Bild*. Indeed, as the sheer number of diagrams, photos and detailed observational reports clearly attest, authorities were positively obsessed with the dense materiality of the squatted houses. Looking at the hundreds of pictures of doors – which the *Frankfurter Allgemeine* compared to 'dark dangerous caves' – it becomes apparent that officials conceived of the squatted landscape itself as somehow sinister, as a crime-generating vortex in the middle of the city.[25] An intergovernmental letter about the Hafenstraße clearly enunciated this sentiment, noting that city officials should strive to prevent 'objects of a certain size in connection with structures, in which the rules of normal social control no longer function [where] connections between the houses, changing of locks, secret entrances, erection of closures and barricades, observation and alarm systems' served to prevent the entry of officials.[26] The houses were, to a certain extent, portrayed as non-spaces – as opaque landscapes that steadfastly resisted official attempts at mapping.

This conception of the squatted houses as dangerous criminal terrains marring the urban landscape is also apparent in Jan Guillou's popular crime novel, *Der demokratische Terrorist*, in which an undercover detective infiltrates the Hafenstraße only to discover an entire network of international terrorism.[27] As depicted in the novel, the brightly painted walls of the squatted buildings and the casual anarchism of the residents were nothing more than surface phenomena hiding a parallel universe of terrorists, drug-lords and weapons dealers. The Hafenstraße may have physically been located near the city centre of Hamburg, yet, according to the novel, it was actually a gateway to another world, an anarchist façade hiding something far more sinister. Although admittedly a bit far-fetched – it is, after all, a crime novel – Guillou's narrative does indicate the ways in which youth protest movements, and especially those surrounding squatted houses, were increasingly interpreted by the public as nests of terrorism, nodal points in an international network of subversion.

The network sublime

Given the significant differences between analyses based on psychological theories of post-adolescence and those claiming that the youth movement represented a terrorist threat to the democratic order, one could certainly make the argument that popular conceptions of squatting and

youth movements fundamentally changed over the course of the 1980s, that they underwent a definitive process of radicalization. While true to a certain extent, such arguments fail to account for the striking similarities between these frameworks. As an alternative, I suggest that these seemingly oppositional modes of analysis shared an underlying structural affinity, that post-adolescent 'apathy' and political 'subversion' were not as discrete from each other as they initially appear to be. Whether it was a psychologist pointing to shifts in the adolescent experience, a novelist writing about terrorist networks or a police officer lamenting the fact that the milieu is 'not easily manageable', experts, officials and the media understood the youth movement as a concrete instantiation of a larger network, one which was both irrational and awe-inspiring.[28]

There are two primary points of confluence between these seemingly disparate analytical positions. Firstly, both the social-psychological and the political-criminological discourses portrayed the actions of the protesting youth as fundamentally outside of modern, Western forms of rationality. Rather than calmly thinking through problems and making reasoned judgements, they argued, youth activists tended to act impulsively and based solely on their feelings.[29] Although they came to radically different conclusions concerning the ultimate repercussions of such irrational expressions of emotion – the authors of the *Thesen zu den Jugendunruhen*, for example, argued that such outbursts represented 'the most effective and most radical form of "Gegensprache"'[30] – the experts were in agreement that such behaviour fell outside the bounds of commonly accepted forms of rational action in modern, democratic states. Secondly, this deep irrationality was accompanied by a concomitant emphasis on the spatial rather than the temporal dimension of the protests. Indeed, within both analytical frameworks, youth protests were interpreted as primarily operating outside linear, historical temporality – be it as amorphous post-adolescents, as the harbingers of a vague shift to post-materialism/modernism, or as innately timeless perpetrators of senseless, terrorist violence. Such temporal indeterminism did not, however, imply a corresponding spatial indeterminism. As the countless references to 'lawless zones' clearly indicate, the spaces of youth protests (including squats, youth centres and even entire neighbourhoods such as Kreuzberg) were easily identifiable.

Given the fact that they viewed the youth revolts of the early 1980s as peculiar social phenomena that existed outside of Western rationality and linear historical temporality, commentators in government and the media clearly had for the most part abandoned typical modes of social-scientific and political analysis in favour of what might be called a form of network

aesthetics, which implied a focus on the spatial dimensions of the protests, on the web of interconnections between different groups and actors, and on the liminal social and emotional status of the participants. In a notable parallel to colonialist/primitivist visions of non-European populations a century earlier, protesting youths were often portrayed as the abject 'other' to European civilization, as groups that were so fundamentally different and inscrutable that they had to be comprehended through aesthetics rather than through rational social science. They were simultaneously terrifying and awe-inspiring, familiar and totally foreign, present and fundamentally absent – they were, that is to say, representatives of the sublime, on which rational people could only gaze in wonder and amazement. Thus, while commentators in the media and in government may indeed have produced a normalizing discourse that functioned as a means of social control, they also acted as the purveyors of sensationalist stories about the quintessential 'other', as ringmasters in a circus of alterity whose primary purpose was to shock and entertain the average reader.

Notes

1. M. Wissmann (1983) 'Vorwort', in M. Wissmann and R. Hauck (eds) *Jugendprotest im demokratischen Staat. Enquete-Kommission des Deutschen Bundestages* (Stuttgart: Edition Weitbrecht), p. 9.
2. J. Bopp (October 1981) 'Trauer-Power. Zur Jugendrevolte 1981' *Kursbuch*, p. 151. For a critique of the culture of inwardness and withdrawal amongst the left-alternative milieu, see W. Kraushaar (ed.) (1978) *Autonomie oder Getto? Kontoversen über die Alternativebewegung* (Frankfurt: Verlag Neue Kritik).
3. 'Da packt dich irgendwann 'ne Wut' *Der Spiegel,* no. 52, 22 December 1980, p. 23.
4. P. Jagoda (2010) 'Terror Networks and the Aesthetics of Interconnection' *Social Text,* vol. 105.
5. On the sublime, see among others, G. Hartley (2003) *The Abyss of Representation: Marxism and the Postmodern Sublime* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press).
6. For a detailed analysis of 'post-adolescence' see the PROGNOS-Bericht 'Jugendprotest: Einstellungen und Motive von Jugendlichen in 8 ausgewählten Gruppen' in Wissmann and Hauck, *Jugendprotest im demokratischen Staat*.
7. 'Bericht der Enquete-Kommission' in Wissmann and Hauck, *Jugendprotest im demokratischen Staat,* p. 37. As is clear from a letter sent by the Schöneberger Squatter Council to the Enquete Comission, the youth activists rejected this explanation of their behaviour, noting 'You can't make the youth into patients when it is the system that is sick' (Quoted in 'Bericht der Enquete-Kommission', p. 34).
8. K. Sontheimer 'Protokoll der 7. Sitzung der Enquete-Kommission am 30. November 1981' in Wissmann and Hauck, *Jugendprotest im demokratischen Staat*, pp. 250–51.
9. J. Engert (1981)'Flaues Gefühl im Magen' *Rheinischer Merkur,* 21 August.

10. 'Zürich: "Das Packeis schmilzt"' *Der Spiegel,* no. 52, 22 December 1980, p. 44.
11. PROGNOS-Bericht 'Jugendprotest: Einstellungen und Motive von Jugendlichen in 8 ausgewählten Gruppen' in Wissmann and Hauck, *Jugendprotest im demokratischen Staat*, p. 115.
12. The report identified four areas in which the youth had developed new forms of behaviour that were deemed more appropriate for late twentieth-century social conditions: (1) self-management [Selbstverwaltung], (2) personal emancipation and social cooperation, (3) pluralistic values, and (4) the proclivity to positively transform their environments.
13. Kommission für Jugendfragen (1980) *Thesen zu den Jugendunruhen* (Bern: Bundesamt für Kulturpflege), p. 21.
14. J. Bopp, 'Trauer-Power', p. 163.
15. P. Schulz-Hageleit (1981) 'Auf der Suche nach neuen Formen des gemeinsamen Lebens' *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 15 July. It is worth noting, at this point, that arguments positing a close correlation between the strictures of the social environment and youth unrest had a long history in Germany. See, for example, C. Bondy and J. Braden (1957) *Jugendliche stören die Ordnung: Bericht und Stellungnahme zu d. Halbstarkenkrawallen* (Munich: Juventa-Verlag).
16. For an overview of press reactions to the squatting movement in West Berlin in the early 1980s see R. Amann (1985) *Der moralische Aufschrei: Presse und abweichendes Verhalten am Beispiel der Hausbesetzungen in Berlin* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag). According to Amann, the press created a moral panic surrounding the squatting movement and in so doing acted as an institution of social control, p. 36.
17. 'Sie nannten sich selbst "Psychoterroristen"' *Berliner Morgenpost*, 14 July 1981.
18. H. Heigert (1981) 'Ein anderer Judenstern' *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 15 July.
19. 'Die Chaoten und Scharmachen wollen unsere Stadt ruinieren!' *Berliner Zeitung*, 7 August 1981.
20. 'Viele geräumte Häuser waren beschädigt und verwüstet' *Berliner Morgenpost*, 22 August 1982.
21. For another perspective on the press surrounding the Hafenstraße, see W. Lehne (1994) *Der Konflikt um die Hafenstraße: Kriminalitätsdiskurse im Kontext symbolischer Politik* (Hamburg: Pfaffenweiler). Lehne draws on sociological models of 'social constructivism' to illustrate the ways in which the media and Hamburg politicians successfully depicted the Hafenstraße as a space of criminal violence. His analysis attributes a major role to the media as the arena where 'frames' of criminality were propagated, although he also argues that alternative media outlets such as the *tageszeitung* (*taz*) formulated an oppositional discourse, which both blamed the city for initiating violent confrontations and interpreted the Hafenstraße as an instantiation of alternative living.
22. *Bild*, 7 April 1986. Reproduced in H.-J. Lenger (1987) 'Die Quelle des Chaos: Ein Pressespiegel', in M. Herrmann et al. (eds) *Hafenstrasse: Chronik und Analysen eines Konflikts* (Hamburg: Verlag am Galgenberg), p. 87.
23. Lenger, 'Die Quelle des Chaos: Ein Pressespiegel', p. 93.
24. 'Dr. Terror's House of Horrors' *Bild*, 15 November 1987. Reproduced in *10 Meter Ohne Kopf*, p. 44. Rote Flora Archive, Box 09.400 HH Hafenstrasse I.

25. T.V. Wolgast (1985) 'Traurige Visitenkarte einer Weltstadt' *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 26 April.
26. Letter from Rolf Lange to Eugen Wagner (05.12.1985) *Betr: Alternative Wohnmodelle*; Staatsarchiv Hamburg 331–1 II, A41, 20.37–3.
27. J. Guillou (1987/1997) *Der demokratische Terrorist*, translated by J.-J. Maass (Munich: Piper).
28. *Police Report FD721, Durchsuchungs- und Ermittlungbericht* (20 November 1987), p. 3. Attached to a letter from J. Klarmann (PUA) to V. Lange (11 May 1988); Staatsarchiv Hamburg 136–1, 4924.
29. The authors of the PROGNOS Report, for example, proposed that this behaviour stemmed from a set of social-psychological tendencies, including: an emphasis on feelings as legitimate means of cognition, a disregard for the logical connections between means and ends, a refusal to recognize factual constraints on action, and a deep distrust of the feasibility of completely overcoming internal contradictions (*PROGNOS-Bericht*, pp. 222–23).
30. *Thesen zu den Jugendunruhen*, p. 6.

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Defining Political Dissidence: The Swiss Debate on the Riots of 1980–81

Jan Hansen

During the nights of 30 and 31 May 1980, as citizens of Zurich protested against the cultural policy of the municipal government, the city's tranquil atmosphere was shattered to the core.[1] Starting from a fundamental disagreement over recent decisions and ending in profound discomfort with the state of Swiss society, the so-called Opernhauskrawall (Opera House Riots) became the focal point of what troubled many people in the early 1980s.[2] The concrete problem at issue was disappointment among the population of Zurich. In 1977, the city council had decided to establish an independent cultural centre at the Rote Fabrik in Wollishofen, where concerts, exhibitions and performances could take place.[3] This centre was supposed to be run by youth, themselves. In 1980, the Zurich public became aware that the local opera house, one of the principal cultural institutions in Europe, had rented the Rote Fabrik as a space for its storage needs. At the same time, the council approved a 60-million CHF funding scheme for the renovation of the opera house, which is located in the city's central district. Together, these two episodes caused anger among those who had hoped for an independent sphere of activity at the Rote Fabrik.[4] On the eve of a public referendum on funding, the protests escalated into prolonged violent confrontations with the police.[5] However, the Opernhauskrawall was not only directed against the policies of the council. It soon broadened its aims to include the positive goal of establishing an autonomous youth centre (Autonomes Jugendzentrum, AJZ). Speakers on the Zurich riots urged the city to turn a deserted factory complex in Limmatstrasse 18–20 into a self-governing meeting place for young people. After lengthy discussions and, in order to quiet the protests, the city council finally agreed to this idea. The AJZ

opened its doors on 28 May 1980 and, after a chequered history, it was shut down in March 1982.[6]

The Opernhauskrawall destroyed the Swiss postcard idyll, which was already beginning to lose its sheen.[7] For the elite of Swiss political, economic and cultural life, it became all too clear that society was far from a harmonious and homogenized entity.[8] Switzerland could no longer be considered as a whole, but rather it seemed to be a fractured and deeply estranged society.[9] Understood in this way, the riots cast 'doubts on Switzerland's unique form of consensus government', according to the *International Herald Tribune*.[10] Among its European neighbours, however, the situation proved to be quite similar. Urban conflicts erupted in Amsterdam, Vienna, Copenhagen, Hamburg and Berlin, to mention only a few. A deep sense of crisis pervaded social thought across the Western world.[11] People from all over Europe joined mass protests to articulate their fears of environmental abuse, nuclear catastrophe and increasing global injustice. Others were afraid of the economic downturn and their own unemployment, as well as being driven by a deep uneasiness over the future. Their state of mind was a general dissatisfaction and discontent about what was going on in their communities. As such, the European youth revolt of 1980–81 was part of a renegotiation of the very foundations that held society together.

This chapter deals with the process of rethinking the social contract. Primarily, it looks at the other side, at those who felt provoked by the riots: 'the establishment'.[12] The Zürcher Achtziger-Bewegung (Movement of the 1980s) wanted to challenge the political, economic and social elite of the country, and they obviously succeeded in doing so.[13] When people gathered to carry out protest activities, the establishment judged their behaviour as shaking the foundations of society. More than that, the establishment diagnosed increasing alienation within society. The protesters acted irrationally, according to voices in the establishment, because they no longer shared the common values and political principles that had brought economic prosperity and democratic stability to post-war Europe. The present chapter specifically investigates this reaction to the political unrest. At its core, it historicizes the visions of protest held by those who felt challenged by the events across the continent. Since 'disobedience' is always a matter of definition, the fundamental questions are: How did the establishment define social protest? How did it classify and conceptualize 'rebellion'? I assume that by describing citizens' activities as 'revolt' and 'unrest', the establishment sharpened its representation of the 'other' and, by this means, clarified its self-imagery.

In other words, protests helped members of the establishment to clarify what they wanted to be and how they wanted to be seen.

Here, I concentrate on the Swiss case and its transnational interconnectedness. This deserves a careful explanation, although my reasoning is simple. Switzerland is not known as the homeland of civic protest. Rather this Alpine country is famous for its consensus democracy, in which every single political party governs at the same time. That is not to say that the Swiss Confederation had not been experiencing heated political debate. But consensus had always been an important feature of its political culture.[14] Against the backdrop of this quest for unity, the country was affected brutally by inner protest around the year 1980. The Swiss elite struggled valiantly with the gap between intention and reality.[15] The shock even went so far that the government – the Federal Council – called for expert advice. It asked the federal commission of youth affairs to consider the causes and origins of the Opernhauskrawall. This process must be seen as part of a larger trend. Lutz Raphael refers to it as 'scientification of the social', a concept that has gained sustainable influence in contemporary history.[16] The scientification of almost every part of life was a basic process in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as experts with scientific knowledge became increasingly prominent in politics. Such experts played a vital role in social processes because they held the authority for defining social problems.

Founded in 1978 at the recommendation of Zurich politician Theodor Gut as an advisory organ to the government, the confederate commission comprised 25 members. They were nominated by Swiss youth organizations – such as the boy scouts, the youth branches of the trade unions or disabled rights organizations – and were appointed by the Federal Council.[17] The commission was an exceptionally young one because all members were born between 1936 and 1956. Guy-Olivier Segond, a 35-year-old liberal parliamentarian from Geneva, took over the commission presidency and was given the scientific task to 'identify the problems of youths in our country'.[18] So the commission was expected to take a stand on the Swiss Confederation's policy from the perspective of the country's youth. In order to do so, the Segond commission established a sub-group, which then drafted a report that was discussed by the whole commission. On the one hand, the members of this sub-group listened to community workers, pedagogues, scholars and politicians, among them the mayor of Zurich, Sigmund Widmer. On the other hand, they assigned the Federal Office for Cultural Affairs and the Swiss radio station DRS to compose an 'Evaluation of the Social and Psychological Origins of the New Zurich Youth Movement'.[19] All these

writings prepared the ground for the commission's final report, published in November 1980. It was titled *Theses about the Youth Upheaval 1980* (*Thesen zu den Jugendunruhen 1980*). Therein, the commission reported the conclusion that Switzerland's future was not threatened by rioting youngsters, but rather by the current state of its prosperous society. For that reason its members called the Opernhauskrawall a 'legitimate political expression'.[20] It is remarkable that they described violence in this context as a 'language of despair',[21] which emerged from anxiety about the future.[22]

The study created a domestic and international stir. The *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* mourned how the commission had led politicians down the garden path because its argumentation was 'naïve and dewy-eyed'.[23] The *Weltwoche* from Zurich suspected commission president Segond of understanding and pardoning everything young people did.[24] Meanwhile, media abroad read the study as a brutal criticism of Swiss politics.[25] German journalists lamented that there was no comparable and far-reaching account of youth upheaval in their country.[26] The findings were widely disseminated by report reprints[27] and were even taken into consideration by German Federal Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, who gave credit to the study in a parliamentary speech on 30 January 1981. In a certain way, Schmidt introduced the report to the wider German public.[28] In order to understand why this report resonated so deeply within Western societies, which were also affected by protests, I consider it essential to look at the report as closely as possible. In what follows, I shall therefore analyse the report and the response it received.

Understanding the riots

Segond's commission implicitly based this final report on four observations.[29] Firstly, it said that 'young people' or 'the youth' backed the protests on the streets. Secondly, it described their particular claims, in comparison to the student movement of 1968, as being somewhat unclear. Thirdly, the protests did not seem, to the commission, to threaten Switzerland's statehood, its constitution and public order. Fourthly, the report paradoxically said that the Opernhauskrawall was driven at the same time by pragmatic demands and a deep uneasiness over culture. The youngsters required more freedom of movement and spaces where they could express their creativity. They did not want anarchy; they desired peace and security, the report stressed at its core. One should state for the record that the commission's final report dealt with a number of core concepts, among them 'youth', 'political stability'

and 'self-realization'.[30] These concepts themselves can serve as means by which the report can be analysed thoroughly.

As such, the commission's message made sense only because it referred to the dichotomous differentiation between youth and adulthood. It is crucial to note that being 'young' or being 'adult' meant more than just an affiliation with a specific age cohort. The labelling was closely linked to the supposed capability of opposing the contemporary state of affairs in society, and protest seemed an act reserved exclusively for the young. Reasons were easy to find. The report said those who took violent action to agitate against the cultural policy of Zurich must have experienced wilful negligence when they were children. The problem was thus a pedagogical one, and all the difficulties were rooted in early childhood. The rioters lacked something that placed limits on their proficiency in adult life.[31] More than that, the commission took it for granted that the riots were closely linked with an assumed lack of dialogue between the generations. It stated: 'If we had not lost our ability to communicate between the generations, there would not have been any upheavals'.[32] This assertion implies that adults had also failed to communicate sufficiently, and the members of the commission spoke of a conviction that the Opernhauskrawall was much more than an adolescent revolt.[33] Such an interpretation would not explain anything, the report declared.

It strikes me that almost no one questioned the observation that street protests were the most common form of political participation for young people.[34] To make it clear, statistical evidence did support this observation, and social research seemed to prove that the appetite for protest was exceptionally high among young people.[35] However, contemporary patterns of interpretation need to be historicized, or, at least, expressly defined as such.[36] Philippe Ariès showed in the 1960s that the concepts of 'childhood' and 'youth' are social constructs, not biological givens.[37] In contrast, the commission indicated in a later publication that the 'adolescent is neither child nor adult, but something independent'.[38] At the time, many observers and researchers felt certain about the connection between 'youth' and social unrest.[39] This interpretation was pronounced more explicitly by the famous study of the West German Shell Company, which was published one year later.[40] The study identified riots as collective behaviour stemming from generational shifts. It announced that young adults no longer accepted the life plan of their parents. According to the study, they even constituted a threat to democracy because more than 30 per cent of survey participants indicated that they opposed the political system.

Two points are noteworthy here. Firstly, experts in Switzerland interpreted protest as a product of generational issues, which helped to

distance them from what was happening on the streets. The experts diagnosed a growing alienation between the majority older society and the minority younger society. Secondly, the commission asserted that young people no longer shared common values with the older generation because the elders did not understand young people's values. The emerging narratives based on the notions of 'generation' and 'societal values' were crucial for the reaction to the riots in Zurich. In this context, experts along with politicians and journalists took it for granted that the 'value change theory' could explain the attitudes among young people.[41] Ronald Inglehart developed this theory in the 1970s. He indicated that the value systems of younger people in Western societies was transforming from materialist values, emphasizing economic security, to post-materialist values, which instead emphasized autonomy and self-expression.[42] By referring to these concepts, scholars who engaged in this debate interpreted current political controversies as part of a structural and demographic problem on a higher level.[43]

The Segond commission report lacked the negative connotation of Inglehart's work. More than that, it even subsumed the attitudes of adults under the 'value change' scheme. Inglehart's theory can be seen, though, as forming an implicit backdrop for the commission's arguments. Starting with the differentiation of materialist and post-materialist values, the report voiced sympathy with the ideological standpoint of the protesters. Specifically, there is an unclear sense of loss throughout the published text. One could describe it as a profound criticism of modern civilization and a longing for the past, backed by a propensity for unity. On the one hand, the commission members seemed to fear the present, characterized by fragmentation, individualization and legal regulation; on the other hand, they dreamt of an idealized Swiss history, envisioned as a functioning organic community.

Swiss society was ill, allegorically. At its heart, the report groaned that Switzerland had lost its liberal tradition, its tolerance and pluralism: 'Itineraries, regulations, prescriptions, prohibitions, duties – a lot of details have summed up and are now restricting daily life'.[44] Individuals were lacking space, physically as well as metaphorically, the commission said. They were caught in factual constraints. Yet these constraints were derived from materialistic thinking. The confederate commission regarded society as striving for economic prosperity and, as a consequence, the commission feared that society may lose sight of basic human needs such as self-determination, autonomy and creativity. Young people experienced this poverty of thought when they searched for a job or a place to live, the commission reported. Their political and social claims were

vague, yet they instinctively perceived what was going wrong in Western societies. Although young people lived in a 'pre-conscious state of mind', they had the right intuition for the changes required.[45] In contrast, adults had suppressed this potential ability long before, the report said. Western societies should seek the utopia imagined by the young.

The commission report praised attempts to realize alternative ways of living together. Integrating fringe groups and outsiders and establishing self-help groups, as well as consensus decision-making should serve as blueprints for the curing of civilization's ills. The commission was glad to see the young lived according to values that altered the 'materialistic and mechanized development of our society'.[46] It postulated:

> A return to a closer relationship with nature, a return to simple living, to a more comprehensible social environment, to more integral modes of production, a return to real sentiments, to more straightforwardness and spontaneity and so forth. That which seemed to many as a wave of nostalgia not so long ago, now offers the possibility to design a human-like future.[47]

The commission report used the age-old juxtaposition of nature and culture. In this way it became imbued by the sense of crisis that prevailed during the 1970s and 1980s. Identifying adolescent life with a pure state of nature, and adulthood with a more elaborate yet depraved society, Segond and his co-authors advised their fellow Swiss citizens to listen to the reasoning of the young. What distinguished the commission report of 1980 from other theoretical papers on youth matters was its discursive use of oppositions: nature versus culture, purity versus degeneracy, unity versus fragmentation, freedom versus oppression, young versus old.

Accepting this, it is quite evident that the commission held modern society itself responsible for young people's problems and their protest concerns. 'Mass production and conspicuous consumption' would choke 'the unfolding of individual personalities', the report argued.[48] Beyond that, economic difficulties in the West clouded the future outlook for young people. Along with environmental pollution and global social injustices, society presented (from the perspective of the Segond commission) bleak prospects for the next generation. Even family as the nucleus of civilization had failed due to the fact it no longer provided children with enough love and warmth. Society hampered the family, the report explained, and pointed to small urban families, single-parent households and absent fathers. Obviously, the ideal family, for the commission members, was the extended rural family.[49]

If society itself was responsible for the Opernhauskrawall, the adult world had to change. This is why the commission report suggested the establishment should start a dialogue with the youth – and not vice versa.[50] First of all, politicians had to figure out what had gone wrong with the prevailing social order. Segond envisioned a chance for clarification of how Swiss citizens should live together and organize their community. Together with his fellow commissioners, he saw a chance for organic reconciliation and, not least, for democratic regeneration, too.[51] Change was essential for democracy, the report specified, and in response the commission aligned its perception of Swiss democracy with that of its youth, describing statehood as 'debilitated' or as 'rheumatic machinery'.[52] In contrast, the commission members understood the political as being fluid, not static. Their school of thought was far removed from the Hegelian tradition, which claimed the state was mind-objectified. Rather it was part of the Anglo-American history of political thought, according to which the political order rested on the consent of the governed and was thus undergoing permanent change.[53]

Repercussions

Many people from Switzerland could not let this pass unchallenged. What the confederate commission published in its theoretical report was a completely unexpected perspective on the urban riots because it dealt sympathetically with the protests, while others felt that they were opposed to the legal framework. Jeanne Hersch for example, a well-known Swiss pedagogue from Geneva who published an antithesis to the commission report in 1982, took a critical stance toward the reasoning of the experts.[54] She referred to the Opernhauskrawall as a criminal action by adolescents lacking authority and guidance. Police and state forces should react with full vigour to the upheaval. Switzerland's democratic order was born from its historical background, she said, and there was no need to alter functioning political structures. Taking the same position, Rudolf Friedrich, a member of the National Council from Winterthur, denied even before the report was published that there was a right to resistance,[55] and sociologist Ralf Dahrendorf underlined that political violence always questioned the primary social contract.[56] The rioters should not have been considered as legitimate partners for discussion, according to the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*. They endangered 'our liberal democracy itself'.[57] In this way, the debates surrounding the Opernhauskrawall were aspects of a conflict based on differing concepts of politics itself. The confederate commission's findings fell between

the cracks. Whereas the protestors aimed at political participation and viewed the experts' final report suspiciously, conservatives did not want to concede privileges to the young and judged their behaviour as destabilizing Swiss statehood. They predicted the Swiss state would become 'ungovernable'.[58] The confederate commission, however, tried to make sense of both those positions.

The true enemy of Swiss society was, in fact, nihilism.[59] From Hersch's perspective, opposing political concepts were a minor problem. Yet she suspected that the members of the commission were arguing in favour of relativism and therefore denying the existence of universal societal values. She addressed the problem by stating that the young were confronted 'with the vertiginous offer of "everything goes"'.[60] Young people were caught in a 'maze of numerous possibilities'.[61] Campaigning for absolute moral values, she claimed that the young had lost their 'sense for the truth that stands above all other truths'.[62] Hersch blamed the 1968 movement and pedagogical reforms starting at that time. In this way, she accused liberalism of being indifferent.[63] The only way to quiet the riots was, from her standpoint, the firm hand of state power along with a sure feeling for a righteous moral order. What the young were missing most was a form of structure in their lives. Nevertheless, Hersch's and the commission's accounts seemed quite similar insofar as they concerned themselves with criticism of culture and civilization. Where the commission proposed turning towards a romanticized past, Hersch distanced herself from modern Swiss society by agitating for a distinct conservative agenda. Among other things, she called for the prohibition of birth control and abortion, and even for forbidding female employment.[64]

The Segond report reverberated widely beyond the Swiss border. Compared to other European countries, the German public in particular paid a lot of attention to the debates in Switzerland.[65] Reasons for this are easy to find, seeing as Germany was also hit hard by urban conflicts. German officials responded in a fashion similar to what they learned from Switzerland.[66] They established a central forum to help understand the protest on the streets. The Bundestag's Enquiry Commission on Youth Matters was created in May 1981, about nine months after the Swiss circle of experts published its findings.[67] In contrast to its Swiss counterpart, the German group was made up not only of experts, but also of a number of high-ranking politicians.[68] These practitioners took the lead in the discussion. In the main, they debated the protests' causes, forms and goals. Furthermore, they reflected on how to improve the relationship between the older and younger generations by promoting an

understanding of the relationship between democracy and state power. The final German report, published in January 1983, shared certain similarities with the Segond report. Although detecting that a large majority of young Germans were in favour of the country's political principles (and did not aspire to a new form of government), the report exhibited profound fears that a small minority of the youth might turn away from democracy.[69] This would lead to the German state becoming ungovernable, the report said. Therefore, the enquiry commission suggested developing life and working conditions for young people in order to reconcile them with society.

More importantly, the German commission members took the Swiss case as example and tried to develop a dialogue with the young about the things they criticized.[70] In this context, Germany's federal government, political parties and media not only distanced themselves from the young protesters, but also started rethinking their concept of political action. Yet their endeavour ran far behind the compassionate stance of the Swiss experts. At its heart, the German report proposed, as did the confederate commission, to foster young people options for participation in the political process. It advised the federal government and the Bundestag to decentralize society by giving more power to local communities.[71] These plans were vague, but ambitious. They aimed at incorporating the protesters' claims to democratizing the German political system by implementing mechanisms of direct participation, thus revising the principles of the German representative political system. Even if these plans have not come close to being realized, the confrontation with the youth revolt led politics to redefine, in effect, the foundations of West German statehood. In its most interesting chapter, the final report deemed it necessary to invent a new comprehension of the political, which had to be seen 'as a process with the involvement of civic society'.[72] The report argued that political decisions should not be made solely by government but by all those affected. In the history of political thought in Germany, this was partly new.[73] Political action was no longer regarded as the exclusive task of the elected representatives. Instead, it was defined as 'daily active participation of as many citizens as possible in every sphere of life'.[74]

Conclusion

How did the political and social elite define abnormal behaviour? One could assume that they identified disobedience by comparing it to the constitutional law-in-force. Certainly, politicians, journalists and

scholars felt betrayed by the protesters on the streets, who were seen as undermining the very principles of society because they lacked an understanding of the importance of those values. The aim to acquaint deviants with what the establishment thought was the true nature of things was the most likely reaction to the protests. The picture, however, was multi-layered. In Switzerland, the homeland of political consensus, the government established a commission that aimed to make sense of the Zurich riots. This must be seen in the context of the aforementioned 'scientification of the social'. Reflecting on what was going on in Zurich, the experts developed an inclusive definition of protest. Their report marked protest as something positive. It regarded disobedience as a wholesome force to counter the technocratic deformation of society. This is why, from the commission's perspective, youth violence offered a way to overcome these deviations. If society dared to agree with the protesters' sense of utopia, it could emerge, strengthened, from its deep crisis. Although the commission stuck to the contemporary differentiation between a youth world and an adult world, stating that the will to protest was exceptionally high among a specific age cohort, it considered the current protests to be in the interest of society as a whole.

The commission report enjoyed considerable resonance. However, it is not hard to see why their conclusions fell on fertile ground in Switzerland, where consensus is held in such high esteem. Therefore, it is necessary to consider its findings against the backdrop of the Swiss cultural system. The report unfolded within a particular historical context, without which its appearance would have been inconceivable. Yet, its actual impact in terms of political decision-making was close to zero. What, then, do these conclusions tell us about the twentieth century's history of protest? I would like to highlight only one point here. It is necessary to refrain from binary divisions between 'the protesters' and 'the establishment'. There were, in reality, too many shades of grey. Even a government commission could comprise experts emanating from the subject group of the study, as the case of the Segond group proves. The confederate commission, not surprisingly, took a distinctly nuanced position on the Opernhauskrawall. Its reasoning must be seen as part of the overall search for identity in a society that stumbled over the question of its very own political principles. The Zurichers, along with the Swiss elite, aimed at integrating protest because there was no space for radical dissent in their own representation of their country. They did not define their identity by dissociating themselves from the 'other'; rather they embraced what they viewed as different and assimilated the rioters into their fold.

Notes

1. D. Venutti (2010) 'Vom Protest zur Dauerparty. 30 Jahre nach dem Opernhauskrawall: Wie die Jugendunruhen Zürich verändert haben' *Tagesanzeiger,* 29 May.
2. P. Amstutz (1980) 'Eine Jugendrevolte hat die Schweiz erfaßt. Aus dem Protest gegen ein Opernhaus wurde ein Feldzug gegen das Bestehende' *Frankfurter Rundschau,* 26 June.
3. T. Stenzl (2005) 'Rote Fabrik, Zürich ZH', in A. Kotte and S. Gojan (eds) *Theaterlexikon der Schweiz* (Zurich: Chronos).
4. H. Willems (1997) *Jugendunruhen und Protestbewegungen. Eine Studie zur Dynamik innergesellschaftlicher Konflikte in vier europäischen Ländern* (Opladen: Leske + Budrich), pp. 219–35.
5. 'Schwere Krawalle und Plünderungen in Zürich. Die Demonstrationen gegen das Opernhaus' *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 3 June 1980; U. Kägi (1980) 'Wutausbruch' *Die Weltwoche,* 4 June; F. Endler (1980) 'Die Schweizer Jugend probt den Aufstand. Wiens Alternativfest schläft fest weiter' *Die Presse,* 3 June.
6. The history of the *Zürcher Achtziger-Bewegung* is a desideratum of research, as first attempts to historicize the events see D. Rudin (2012) '"Im ersten Bundesrat saßen drei Guerillakommandanten." Zur Bedeutung historischer Bezugnahmen der frühen Zürcher 1980er Bewegung', in H. Balz and J.-H. Friedrichs (eds) *'All we ever wanted…' Eine Kulturgeschichte europäischer Protestbewegungen der 1980er Jahre* (Berlin: Karl Dietz Verlag); T. Stahel (2006) 'Wo-Wo-Wonige! Stadt- und wohnpolitische Bewegung in Zürich nach 1968' (University of Zurich: unpublished dissertation); H. Nigg (ed.) (2001) *Wir wollen alles, und zwar subito! Die Jugendunruhen in der Schweiz und ihre Folgen* (Zurich: Limmat Verlag); T. Kunz (1993) 'Das Zürcher Jugendhaus Drahtschmidli. Entstehung und Entwicklung' (University of Zurich: unpublished dissertation), pp. 253–74; H. Kriesi (1984) *Die Zürcher Bewegung. Bilder, Interaktionen, Zusammenhänge* (Frankfurt and New York: Campus).
7. Like other West European countries, Switzerland was deeply shattered by terrorist attacks in the 1970s; see D. Grisard (2011) *Gendering Terror. Eine Geschlechtergeschichte des Linksterrorismus in der Schweiz* (Frankfurt and New York: Campus).
8. K. Tozzer (1980) *Krawalle im Paradies. Eine Reportage über die Jugendunruhen in der Schweiz.* Aired by *Austrian public service broadcaster (ORF 1) on 16 October 1980* (Transcript: unpublished).
9. A. Mohler (1981) 'Was ist denn mit den braven Schweizern los? Ein Eidgenosse über seine Landsleute' *Die Welt*, 24 January.
10. I. Guest (1980) 'Zurich Tries to Preserve Peaceful Image' *International Herald Tribune*, 16 September.
11. N. Ferguson et al. (eds) (2010) *The Shock of the Global. The 1970s in Perspective* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press).
12. The concept of 'establishment' was coined by the student movement of the 1960s. Today, however, it is broadly accepted in the Anglo-American scientific community, see for example K. Fahlenbrach et al. (eds) (2012) *The Establishment Responds. Power, Politics, and Protest since 1945* (Basingstoke: Palgrave).

13. Up to date, '*Zürcher Achtziger-Bewegung*' is an established term in Swiss language practice, see Nigg, *Wir wollen alles, und zwar subito*.
14. H. Kriesi and A. Trechsel (2008) *The Politics of Switzerland. Continuity and Change in a Consensus Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
15. A. Schön (1980) 'Die Zürcher Krawalle. Ratlosigkeit gegenüber dem Aufstand der Jugend' *Die Rheinpfalz*, 16 September.
16. L. Raphael (1996) 'Die Verwissenschaftlichung des Sozialen als methodische und konzeptionelle Herausforderung für eine Sozialgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts' *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 22.
17. M. Danioth (1980) '2 Jahre bei der eidg. Kommission für Jugendfragen', *Puls: Monatsheft der Gruppen IMPULS + Ce Be eF*, 22.
18. Eidgenössische Kommission für Jugendfragen (1981) *Thesen zu den Jugendunruhen 1980* (Berlin: Landeszentrale für politische Bildungsarbeit Berlin), p. 1.
19. 'Keine blosse Laune eines Kerns von Randfiguren. Eidgenössische Kommission für Jugendfragen zu den Unruhen' *Tagesanzeiger*, 26 November 1980.
20. *Thesen zu den Jugendunruhen*, p. 20.
21. Ibid., p. 5.
22. S. Geiger (1981) '"Die Zukunftsangst der Jugend ist auch unsere Angst". Schweizer Studie analysiert Ursachen und Hintergründe der Züricher Unruhen' *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, 6 February.
23. 'Zu enge und einseitige Optik. Die "Unruhe" – Thesen der Eidgenössischen Jugendkommission' *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 7 December 1980.
24. '"Wir übertreiben bewusst". Kommission für Jugendfragen: Blauäugig und naiv? ' *Die Weltwoche*, 3 December 1980.
25. A. Mayr (1980) 'Herbe Kritik an Schweizer Politikern. Kommission: Bei Jugendkrawallen über dem Rechtsstandpunkt Motivfrage vergessen' *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 27 November.
26. P. Boenisch (1981) 'Beide Seiten müssen lernen. Die Jugendunruhen und Erkenntnisse einer Schweizer Kommission' *Die Welt*, 14 March.
27. Inter alia, in *Tagesanzeiger*, 26 November 1980; *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 12 and 20 February 1981; *Augsburger Allgemeine*, 6 March 1981.
28. Deutscher Bundestag (1981) *Minutes of Plenary Proceedings, 19th Session (30 January 1981)* (Bonn: Bundesdruckerei), p. 832.
29. *Thesen zu den Jugendunruhen*, p. 4.
30. At the same time, these concepts were widely used within the movement; see R. Hänny (1981) *Zürich, Anfang September* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp).
31. *Thesen zu den Jugendunruhen*, p. 3.
32. Ibid., p. 5.
33. Ibid., p. 14.
34. The Swiss newspaper *Tagesanzeiger* conducted interviews with some of the protesters, highlighting their age. 'Wie man in der "Bewegung" denkt' *Tagesanzeiger*, 14 November 1980.
35. IPSO Sozial-, Marketing- und Personalforschung Zürich (ed.) (1980) *Repräsentative Längsschnittstudie zur Devianz- und Integrationsproblematik bei Jugendlichen. Bericht 1: Auszählung der Antworthäufigkeiten der Befragung vom Frühjahr 1980* (Zurich: Self-published).
36. R. Graf and K. Priemel (2011) 'Zeitgeschichte in der Welt der Sozialwissenschaften. Legitimität und Originalität einer Disziplin' *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 59.

37. P. Ariès (1960) *L'Enfant et la vie familiale sous l'Ancien Régime* (Paris: Plon).
38. Eidgenössische Kommission für Jugendfragen (September 1981) *Stichworte zum Dialog mit der Jugend* (Bern: Bundesamt für Kulturpflege), p. 7.
39. This was already true for the 1968 movement; see D. Skenderovic and C. Späti (eds) (2012) *Die 1968er-Jahre in der Schweiz. Aufbruch in Politik und Kultur* (Baden: hier + jetzt), pp. 16–20.
40. Jugendwerk der Deutschen Shell (1982) *Jugend '81. Lebensentwürfe, Alltagskulturen, Zukunftsbilder* (Opladen: Leske and Budrich).
41. For example, 'Die Frage nach den Werten rückt in den Mittelpunkt. Senat und Schweizer Experten diskutierten über die Jugendunruhen' *Berliner Morgenpost*, 28 April 1981.
42. R. Inglehart (1977) *The Silent Revolution. Changing Values and Political Styles among Western Publics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press). To make it clear, the 'value change theory' was a contemporary pattern of interpretation, which one needs to historicize, see Graf and Priemel, 'Zeitgeschichte in der Welt der Sozialwissenschaften', pp. 486–88.
43. M. Schoch (1981) 'Zivilisation am Scheideweg. Werte – das Sinnproblem von Produktion und Arbeit' *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 26 February.
44. *Thesen zu den Jugendunruhen*, p. 8.
45. Ibid., p. 23.
46. Ibid., p. 21.
47. Ibid., p. 21.
48. Ibid., p. 12.
49. Ibid., p. 10.
50. Ibid., p. 15.
51. Ibid., p. 20.
52. Ibid., p. 17.
53. *Stichworte zum Dialog mit der Jugend*, p. 13.
54. J. Hersch (1982) *Antithesen zu den 'Thesen zu den Jugendunruhen 1980'. Der Feind heißt Nihilismus* (Schaffhausen: Verlag Peter Meili).
55. R. Friedrich (1980) 'Gibt es in der Demokratie ein Widerstandsrecht?' *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 13 September.
56. R. Dahrendorf (1980) 'Anmerkungen zu den Zürcher Krawallen' *Finanz und Wirtschaft*, 20 September.
57. K.M. (1980) 'Anfechtung und Resistenz der liberalen Demokratie' *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 28 December.
58. 'Zurich residents want troops brought in to quell youth rioting' *The Times*, 9 September 1980.
59. J. Hersch (1982) *Antithesen. Der Feind heißt Nihilismus*, p. 53.
60. Ibid., p. 10.
61. Ibid., p. 10.
62. Ibid., p. 31.
63. Ibid., p. 45.
64. Ibid., p. 44, 54.
65. See for example J. Busche (1980) 'Der verzweifelte Wechsel zwischen Jähzorn und Depression. Die Kinder von Zürich und ihre Auflehnung gegen Ordnung' *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 24 July; H. Unterstöger (1980) 'Wenn Eidgenossen Rebellion wittern. Der Konflikt um die Errichtung eines

Jugendzentrums macht offenbar, wie schwer der Stadt die Verständigung mit der Jugend fällt' *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 19 July.

66. H. Burger (1981) 'Keine gemeinsame Sprache mit der Packeisgesellschaft. Polizisten, Psychologen und Publizisten aus Österreich, der Schweiz und Deutschland tauschen Erfahrungen aus' ibid., 18 April.
67. Deutscher Bundestag (1983) *Bericht der Enquete-Kommission 'Jugendprotest im demokratischen Staat' gemäß Beschluß des Deutschen Bundestages vom 26. Mai 1981. Drucksache 9/2390* (Bonn: Bundesdruckerei), p. 5.
68. 'Enquête-Kommission soll Jugendproteste untersuchen' *Handelsblatt*, 29 May 1981.
69. *Jugendprotest im demokratischen Staat*, pp. 19–22.
70. P. Hartmeier (1981) '"Auf Gewalt nicht einfach Gegengewalt". "Weltwoche"-Gespräch mit Berlins Polizeipräsident Klaus Hübner' *Die Weltwoche*, 4 February.
71. *Jugendprotest im demokratischen Staat*, p. 41.
72. Ibid., p. 49.
73. G. Bannas (1983) 'Auch im Bundestag wird gefragt: Brauchen wir doch ein neues Verständnis von Politik? Der Abschlußbericht der Enquete-Kommission "Jugendprotest im demokratischen Staat"' *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 3 February.
74. *Jugendprotest im demokratischen Staat*, p. 49.

17

From 'Bloody Brixton' to 'Burning Britain': Placing the Riots of 1981 in British Post-Imperial History

Almuth Ebke

The 'short, hot summer' of 1981 started with a springtime misunderstanding.[1] On a warm and sunny Friday evening in early April, when police constable Stephen Margiotta, on duty in Brixton, first glimpsed a black youth running towards him, he could not have known that this was but the beginning of a long weekend of violent unrest that would trigger a national debate on the questions of identity and belonging in post-imperial Britain. Presuming that the youth had committed a crime, he and his colleague proceeded to attempt an arrest, only to discover that the young man was suffering from a stab wound to the back. Trying to help, the police officers called an ambulance, but these efforts went unnoticed by the group of onlookers that had congregated in the meantime. Rumours rapidly spread that the officers were arresting the stab victim rather than helping him, and agitated black youths dragged the injured young man away. Tensions that had been simmering for weeks in this district of South London soon escalated into extensive rioting that continued uninterrupted throughout the night and went on until Sunday evening.[2] The confrontations on Saturday evening alone saw 279 policemen and 45 members of the public injured and many police cars and 28 buildings damaged or destroyed by fire.[3]

Dramatic images of 'Bloody Brixton' – burned-out cars, looted shops and bloodied policemen – were widely circulated in the popular press and met with widespread consternation. Journalists were quick to dub the confrontations 'riots', while the involvement of black youths touched upon the sensitive issue of 'race relations'. The announcement of an official enquiry into the causes of the disturbances underlined the sense of political urgency senior government officials attributed to

the issue. Despite these efforts, more confrontations broke out in the London district of Southall in July of the same year. They were followed by riots across other parts of London and in several other English cities, spreading northwards through Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester and Leeds. Indeed, between 11 and 12 July, street violence was reported in 30 locations across England.[4] To borrow from the sensationalist captions printed in the pages of the popular tabloid *The Sun*, 'Bloody Brixton' of April had by July irrevocably morphed into 'Burning Britain'.[5]

The July disturbances differed significantly from the Brixton confrontations not only in scope, but also in terms of the social groups involved as well as the conditions that provoked their outbreak. This time, violence was not confined to the black population, but also involved members of the South Asian community as well as white working-class youths. While the events in Southall were sparked by clashes between British Asians and white skinheads,[6] the confrontations in the Liverpool borough of Toxteth – or Liverpool 8, as it was known to its residents – took place in an area that had been inhabited by black communities since the early twentieth century.[7] It was here in Liverpool 8 where tear gas was used for the first time on mainland Britain (that is to say outside Northern Ireland),[8] and the unrest resulted in its first fatality – a bystander run over by a police van dispersing rioters. The widespread looting of shops, more a sideshow during the street violence back in April, now made headlines, captured public imagination and ignited outrage.

The extensive media coverage contributed to the riots' air of uniqueness: the street violence was widely held to be exceptional in force, scope and intent. Journalists, politicians and – to a lesser extent – representatives of the various ethnic communities involved all tried, in separate ways, to make sense of the riots, thus provoking a contentious public debate about their short-term causes and long-term origins, as well as about measures that should be taken to prevent future disturbances. Notably, politicians such as Home Secretary William Whitelaw and Shadow Home Secretary Roy Hattersley issued statements, and influential lead editorials were published. The former Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Sir Robert Mark, and so-called community leaders also offered explanations of their own.[9] They were united in their understanding of the disturbances as 'serious', albeit for different reasons. Some even went so far as to declare them 'unprecedented'[10] – a claim that subsequent sociological research has proven to be far from true: riots *per se*, and a racialized understanding of them in particular, have been repeat occurrences throughout twentieth century British history.[11]

The riots of 1981 were not discussed in a political vacuum: the debate intersected with long-running discussions of well-known problems against the backdrop of on-going economic difficulties. Established preconceptions of destructive youthful behaviour overlapped with entrenched notions of the cultural distinctiveness of immigrant communities in the United Kingdom. The debate was mostly concerned with second generation youths, whose position in society became the subject of discussion. Consequently, the youth disturbances that shook other major European cities in 1981 featured only sparingly, as the violence appeared to originate from an essentially British problem. By taking as a case study the public debate following the 1981 riots, this chapter shows how the conflictual popular discussion about the place of post-colonial immigrants in British society was embedded in discourses concerning economic capabilities, imperial legacies and the changing structure of society. This analysis is based on the interpretation of articles published both in tabloid and broadsheet dailies, weekly newspapers, specialist journals and parliamentary speeches.

'Fire over England': debating the riots to define society

The search for the underlying causes of the riots commenced almost immediately. In the coverage following the April disturbances, the rioters' blackness was seen as the decisive characteristic of the events.[12] The violence against public authorities, although by no means a singular occurrence, was commonly considered as excessive, and disturbed journalists and politicians alike.[13] Few commentators went so far as to openly describe it as a 'race riot', but as the violence seemed to be limited to confrontations between black youths and the police, virtually no journalist or politician doubted the strong racial undertones of the unrest.[14] The so-called 'Brixton riots' were thus placed in direct connection to the disturbances only a year earlier in Bristol, where a police raid on an illegal drinking establishment had led to a night of rioting in a predominantly 'black' area of the city.[15]

The newspaper coverage, particularly in the tabloids, changed over the course of the July disturbances. The purely racial interpretation of the Brixton riots could not be maintained over the summer, given that the unrests in Manchester, Liverpool or Leeds involved a sizeable portion of white (working-class) youths. The debate became increasingly multifaceted and developed into a broader and more complex discussion about wider-ranging problems that British society had to face. Whereas the public discussion in April mainly understood street

violence as an indirect consequence of immigration, in July explanations and solutions were not so easily at hand: the role of skinheads in the Southall disturbances, and the involvement of white and South Asian youths – until then considered as generally peaceful, particularly in comparison with immigrants from the Caribbean[16] – undermined the predominant interpretation of simple antagonism between the police and black communities. The societal circumstances associated with immigration – problematic police-community relations,[17] inner city deterioration[18] and the emergence of racism as a serious political problem[19] – were now addressed as important factors in the making of the 1981 riots, together kindling a journalistic 'Fire over England'.[20]

Politicians and journalists across the political spectrum used the riots to construct an idealized image of British society. *The Sun's* headline, 'To think this is England' – a quote from an exhausted police constable after a 'night of rioting and looting in Liverpool' – neatly summarizes this important aspect of the debate.[21] Given the declinist discourse prevalent at the time, this shift in the public discussion was not altogether surprising: In prior years, virtues and practices considered as quintessentially British had increasingly been held responsible for the perceived economic and political decline of the country, and in return, the make-up of British society had progressively become subject to debate.[22] Even though references to the innate qualities of the British nation were common features of public discussion at the time, the intensity of the urban violence and the perceived depth and breadth of the social problems involved brought additional urgency to these efforts at national soul searching. Such attempts at societal self-definition quickly focused on the issue of belonging – more often than not on the characteristics that set the rioters apart from 'normal' British society. They did not form a separate part of the debate, but broadened its main focus. While politicians and journalists were trying to determine the causes for the riots, they implicitly and explicitly negotiated the questions of British immigrants' societal belonging.

Apart from sporadic explicit attempts at self-definition, politicians and journalists of all political persuasions principally negotiated their idea of society and societal belonging by means of two interrelated groups: the police and the (predominantly Caribbean) immigrants. The positions attributed to the two groups in the imagined societal order varied considerably according to the general assessment of individual commentators. More often than not, the immigrants' position in society, particularly that of second-generation residents, was determined by their relationship with the police. Thatcher, her cabinet, the

police and much of the tabloid press interpreted the riots from what criminologists Michael Rowe and John Benyon called the 'conservative' viewpoint, and what cultural theorists from the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) labelled the 'law-and-order perspective'.[23] Commentators of this persuasion were quick to blame second-generation residents and white 'hooliganism' for the 'mindless violence' directed against, as they saw it, policemen and 'respectable society'.[24] These explanations were based on a perspective that considered wilful deviant group behaviour as primarily responsible for the riots. The conservative government accordingly announced a decisive response to urban street violence, backing the police in their approach to containment even though it was often criticized as brutal.[25] In the 'law and order' interpretation, the police were portrayed as the proverbial 'thin blue line',[26] which separated the lawless chaos in the inner cities from 'orderly' British society, where the rule of law was still upheld. In return, immigrants were often presented as the disturbing factor, undermining the traditional cultural fabric of society.

This image of disruptive immigrants and the police as the defenders of public and societal order was not completely new; it leaned on an interpretation of police-immigrant relations that had been prominently discussed since the 1970s. The fear of 'mugging' was widespread in the 1970s, a decade in which street robberies increased. From a highly gendered and racialized perspective, male adolescents, predominantly originating from the 'West Indies', were linked to this particular offence; a perception that media coverage and criminal statistics supported, but that was contested by sociologists.[27] To combat these crimes, the police increasingly exercised their stop-and-search powers under the 'sus-law', short for 'suspected person', which allowed officers to arrest members of the public if the police were under the impression that they were acting suspiciously.[28] Such practices greatly impaired relations between immigrant communities and the police, eliciting accusations of institutional racism. By the end of the 1970s, mutual suspicion and tension were the norm. 'Operation Swamp '81', a London-wide, plain-clothed police operation that started a week before the April riots, arguably brought to boiling point black British hostility towards the police in Brixton.[29]

The focus on law and order and the blaming of the so-called permissive society functioned as two sides of a coin: whereas the criminal threat to society was met by demands to tighten the criminal justice system and punish defendants accordingly, in this perspective cultural changes had prepared the breeding ground for such deviant behaviour by eroding the moral fabric of society.[30] With this interpretation in mind, commentators

picked up on a debate about the changing mores of British society, an issue that had been discussed since the 1960s. Legislation granting easier access to divorce and abortion, and the legalization of homosexuality all fed into the conservative perception that the moral and sociocultural structure of British society was under threat. The effects of these societal transformations were soon labelled 'permissive society', a term often used as a polemical concept to decry what social conservatives identified as overly liberal attitudes to social mores in Britain.[31] These social changes, often referred to in a somewhat reductionist manner as a 'sexual revolution', were essentially an urban phenomenon, encapsulated by the image of the 'Swinging Sixties'.[32]

In the eyes of the socially conservative law-and-order perspective, criminal behaviour was traced back to deviation from moral values and social norms. By reducing the confrontation between police and rioters to juvenile delinquency, it was not only possible to effectively absolve the police of blame, but also to explain the participation of white youths in the unrest. Interestingly, while the social situation of 'the blacks' was analysed in great detail, only niche journals reflected upon the societal (self-)classification of white participants. Even then, the motivations of these youths were given only superficial scrutiny,[33] and problems with white working-class youths were predominantly reduced to bad parenting that led to 'lawlessness' and 'hooliganism'.[34] This is not to say that class did not feature as an analytical framework when discussing the riots, as many of the characteristics that were frequently associated with the rioters anticipated the discourse of 'underclass':[35] this concept that was set to re-define British thinking about class from the late 1980s onwards, located members of this group outside of British society, an opinion that mirrored the 'law and order' treatment of the rioters.

While the law-and-order perspective interpreted the riots as the culmination of a long-term decline in moral values in British society, the more left-leaning media and commentators stressed the importance of socio-economic factors in the outbreak of the riots. The majority of the Labour Party, representatives of the Anglican, Lutheran and Catholic churches, community leaders and parts of the 'quality media' such as the *Guardian*, voiced a socio-economic analysis of the disturbances. Even though violence of this kind was not condoned, they understood the riots as the inevitable consequence of adverse social conditions.[36] Commentators stressed, to varying degrees: the alienating atmosphere many immigrants experienced; bleak employment prospects for black as well as white youths; dilapidated and insufficient housing; entrenched racial discrimination; decaying inner cities;

and a lack of political representation for minority groups, as well as extraneous policing.[37] Lord Scarman, who headed the official public inquiry into the causes of the riots, was perhaps the most prominent and influential advocate of this perspective. Basing his findings on extensive interviews with, and written submissions by, members of all groups involved, he framed the riots firmly within an escalating cycle of substandard living conditions, dire economic prospects, a sense of alienation and the experience of everyday racism.[38] His conclusion was both frank and bleak: 'Young black people feel neither socially nor economically secure'.[39]

The role of the police quickly became the main point of criticism for the socio-economic commentators. They picked up the thread of a discussion of relations between police and the 'community' that had been debated since the 1970s: the 'English way of policing' as local, consensual and largely friendly was increasingly questioned amidst accusations of misuse of power, corruption and racism. Symbolized by the friendly 'bobby' archetype, this principle had long governed the self-conception of British policing and ensured considerable societal prestige. However, the role of the police in the 1981 riots was more defined by the use of Special Patrol Groups (SPG), a mobile and decidedly supra-local task force aimed to combat serious public disorder, and that was the subject of harsh criticism from civil rights groups and journalists alike. Between these two poles stood the increased centralization, technologization and specialization of the police that had started twenty years earlier and aimed to adjust policing to a changed societal reality. The riots of 1981 thus brought to a head a longer-running discussion of the role of the police in British society, while simultaneously contrasting a widespread image with the reality of an institutionally and operationally transformed police service.[40]

In all lines of interpretation, societal belonging was culturally defined: cultural difference became the most important divider, which effectively gave immigrants no real chance to ever truly belong.[41] This was most marked in the discussion of the so-called alienation thesis, namely the question as to whether British-born, second-generation immigrants refused the values of and felt rejected by the society they were born into.[42] This thesis was by no means a recent concept, but had been a prominent feature of race-relations sociology and policymaking since the late 1960s.[43] Alienation theorists traced the rioters' motivations back to their alleged refusal of British values, which was supposed to be a consequence of multiple forms of deprivation and harassment.[44] In a clear case of cultural essentialism, journalists and politicians arguing for

the alienation theory used this imagined cultural difference – most of the time unconsciously – both as the underlying basis from which they deliberated the problem at hand, and simultaneously as the result of those reflections.[45]

Defining the colonial immigrants as something alien to British society stood in stark contrast to earlier policies, which were intended to promote a feeling of 'Britishness' among imperial subjects.[46] These previous efforts were so successful that many of the Caribbeans who emigrated to Britain from the late 1940s until the 1960s considered themselves British, only to find out that apparently they were not – at least not in the eyes of many people in the 'host community'.[47] However, in the public discussion about the riots, there was little indication that the majority of the immigrants involved had come from a former British colony. The imperial context was relegated to the outer fringes of the debate: While it was normal to use the colonial term 'West Indians' when talking about immigrants from the Caribbean, it was less common to reflect on the fact that at the time of the disturbances, some of these islands were still British dependencies.[48] In studying in this context the debate about the 1981 riots and societal belonging, it becomes clear that while the Empire did not play an explicit role in that debate, the frameworks applied in the discussion have to be further analysed for their implicit colonial connotations.

The issue of societal belonging, particularly for second-generation immigrants whose place in British society was a matter of dispute, was an unmistakably fraught question for politicians and journalists alike. While the concept of belonging took on a central role in the debate about the riots, its conceptual twin, identity, was often presented as being in peril. In times of economic difficulty, fuelled by notions of virtually insurmountable cultural difference, the perception of the inner cities as a hotbed for social trouble and the perceived moral degeneration of a society – these all condensed into a notion of a societal order under threat. This perspective was particularly adopted by members of British society who were not directly affected by the riots, but for whom the riots epitomized everything that threatened their lifestyle and value system.[49] The debate's bias was reflected by its participants: attempts to define and re-define British society remained mostly confined to editorials of established newspapers and journals, where immigrant perspectives featured only intermittently. This was mirrored in the minuscule share of coverage the rioters themselves occupied in the national media: rather than being able to communicate their own story, they remained the silent subjects of the reporting.[50]

The twin topics of identity and societal belonging had been subjects of much debate and large-scale political projects since the late 1960s, not only in connection to post-war immigration. The apparent rise of Scottish and Welsh nationalism, epitomized by Winnie Ewing's by-election victory in 1967 and problematized by the failed project of devolution in 1979, had by touching upon questions of economic and cultural sovereignty revolved around the underlying problem of societal and national identity and belonging. Significantly, these two debates were not explicitly linked at the time. The slippery use of the terms 'English' and 'British' by journalists and politicians alike throughout the public debate on the 1981 riots, reveals much about the spatial confinement of the two discussions. Considering that both processes of national self-definition continued through the 1980s and 1990s, albeit embedded in a different discursive context, it becomes clear that the frameworks of societal and national belonging applied in the discussion have to be further analysed for their wider implications.

The 1981 debate, as such, is both telling in what is and what is not addressed: the focus on the economic and structural problems of the inner cities, race relations and immigrant belonging is testimony to the interconnectedness of these issues in the perception of many opinion leaders. However, matters that were not raised in the debate but analytically interwoven are conspicuous in their absence as they highlight the limits of public discourse. The debate about the riots thus serves as a key to a deeper understanding of the processes of societal self-definition at a time when profound structural and societal changes were starting to be felt.

Conclusion

Initially, the riots released a flurry of political activity: in an effort to appease opposition, both inside and outside the Conservative Party, Margaret Thatcher appointed Michael Heseltine, Secretary of State for the Environment, as head of the Merseyside Task Force. This was a public-private partnership with no notable funding, intended to coordinate urban renewal in the Liverpool area.[51] The spotlight on policing ensured that police administration and training were overhauled, and the notorious 'sus-law' repealed.[52] Under fresh Labour leadership, the Greater London Council made efforts to further integrate ethnic groups and to increase police accountability. Yet, true to *The Sun's* sensational storytelling, Britain kept on burning: in 1985, severe riots erupted in the inner city areas of Birmingham, Liverpool, Bristol and in the Tottenham and Brixton boroughs of London, resulting in four casualties, most

infamously a police officer who was attacked with machetes.[53] They again involved mainly Caribbean youths, proving government efforts in the wake of the 1981 riots inadequate. In retrospect, these earlier riots were not only the harbinger of worse to come, but were also the starting point for subsequent sociological and criminological research.[54]

The joint questions of identity and belonging remained a feature of British political discourse throughout the 1980s and 1990s. They made their way into academic arguments, inspiring an influential line of research: starting with the seminal works of Linda Colley and Keith Robbins in the late 1980s and early 1990s,[55] questions of identity and belonging were now addressed from a historical perspective. The ensuing historiographical debate contributed both to our understanding of the history of British identity formation from the eighteenth century onwards and to the wider-ranging political discussions on these issues in Britain in the 1990s and early 2000s.[56] The 1981 riots thus constitute a landmark for the history of these processes of societal self-definition: existing discussions about belonging were effectively popularized in a framework of perceived economic capabilities, contested imperial legacies and the changing structure of society. Analysing the riots in this wider context, particularly in relation to issues of class, Empire and Scottish and Welsh nationalism, is a crucial step towards uncovering why people – the general public and historians alike – started to think about problems of belonging in the first place. The summer of 1981 may have been 'short' and 'hot', but its events and subsequent debates could well provide the key to understanding the British preoccupation with identity and belonging in the last quarter of the twentieth century.

Notes

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1. L. Marks (1981) 'Riot Britain: Our Short Hot Summer of Discontent' *Observer*, 12 August, p. 13, p. 16; M. Kettle and L. Hodges (1982) *Uprising!: The Police, the People and the Riots in Britain's Cities* (London: Pan Books), p. 155.
2. For the official and widely accepted version of events see L.G. Scarman (1986) *The Scarman Report: The Brixton Disorders 10–12 April 1981*, reprinted edn. (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books), pp. 38–41.
3. See Ibid., p. 14.
4. See D.P. Waddington and M. King (2009a) 'Identifying Common Causes of UK and French Riots Occurring since the 1980s' *The Howard Journal*, vol. 48, no. 3, 245–56, 247.

5. *The Sun* used the captions 'Bloody Brixton' and 'Burning Britain' for its April and July coverage respectively, to guide their readers to the riot content of the paper.
6. See 'The Tops of the Volcanoes' *Economist*, 11 July 1981, pp. 19–20, p. 22.
7. See P. Fryer (1992) *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain*, 6th edn. (London: Pluto Press), p. 299.
8. See R. Rohrer 'CS Gas Cover-Up: Evidence that Police Fired Directly at Individuals in Toxteth Last July' *New Statesman*, 22 October 1982, p. 12.
9. See for example R. Mark 'Police are Easy Scapegoats' *Observer*, 12 July 1981, p. 14.
10. See 'Backing Up Scarman' *Economist*, 13 June 1981, p. 20; P.J. Waller (1981) 'The Riots in Toxteth, Liverpool: A Survey' *New Community*, vol. 9, 344–53.
11. See for example M. Rowe (1994) *Race Riots in Twentieth Century Britain* (Leicester: Centre for the Study of Public Order, University of Leicester).
12. See for example headlines such as 'Black War on Police' *Daily Mail*, 6 July 1981, p. 1.
13. See for instance *Hansard,* 'Brixton (Disturbances)', HC Deb 13 April 1981, vol. 3 cc23.
14. See for example 'Some Lessons from Bristol to Brixton' *Guardian*, 13 April 1981, p. 12.
15. See for example *Hansard,* 'Brixton (Disturbances)', HC Deb 13 April 1981, vol. 3 cc29.
16. See for instance R. West 'The Seeds of Hatred' *Spectator*, 18 April 1981, pp. 12–13.
17. See 'Police Off Brixton's Map' *Economist*, 18 April 1981, pp. 22–23; A. Wilson 'Immigration Policy and the Police State' *New Statesman*, 11 July 1980, p. 38, p. 40; B. Forde 'Routine Racism of the Met' *New Statesman*, 27 March 1981, p. 13.
18. See 'Britain's Inner Cities: Apocalypse Then?' *Economist*, 18 July 1981, pp. 34–36; R. Hattersley *Hansard* 'Disturbances (Southall and Liverpool)', HC Deb 6 July 1981, vol. 8 cc22.
19. See 'What Next in Britain's Inner Cities?' *Economist*, 22 May 1982, pp. 39–40; 'The devil's work' *Economist*, 27 June 1981, p. 23; (1981a) 'Editorial' *Race & Class*, vol. 23, no.2/3, i–ii.
20. 'Fire Over England' *Economist*, 11 July 1981, pp. 14–15.
21. 'To Think this is England' *The Sun*, 6 July 1981, p. 1.
22. The American Martin Wiener was one of the most prominent proponents of this perspective, see M.J. Wiener (1981) *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850–1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 158–59.
23. See J. Benyon (1987) 'Interpretations of Civil Disorder', in J. Benyon and J. Solomos (eds) *The Roots of Urban Unrest* (Oxford: Pergamon), pp. 23–38, p. 23; S. Hall, C. Critcher, T. Jefferson, J. Clarke and B. Roberts (1978) *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order* (London: Macmillan), p. 323; J. Solomos, B. Findlay, S. Jones and P. Gilroy (1986) 'The Organic Crisis of British Capitalism and Race: The Experience of the Seventies', in CCCS (ed.) *The Empire Strikes Back*, repr. ed. (London: Hutchinson), pp. 9–46, p. 32; M. Rowe (1998) *The Racialisation of Disorder in Twentieth Century Britain* (Aldershot [u.a.]: Ashgate), p. 2, p. 5.

24. 'Night of Shame' *The Sun*, 13 April 1981, p. 2; See also 'Help our Coppers' *The Sun*, 6 July 1981, p. 4; G. Greig 'Crackdown on Hooligans' *Daily Mail*, 13 July 1981, p. 1; *Hansard* 'Disturbances (Southall and Liverpool)', HC Deb 6 July 1981, vol. 8 cc23.
25. See for instance R. Rohrer '"You Black Bastard, You Jungle Bunny": Growing Evidence of Brutal "Reprisal Policing" on Merseyside' *New Statesman*, 24 July 1981, pp. 3–4.
26. See for instance 'To Think this is England' *The Sun*, 6 July 1981, p. 1.
27. See for example E. Pearce (1981) 'Copping Out, in Malign Neglect: The Policeman's Lot' *Encounter*, vol. 57, 45–48. On the contemporary sociological critique of 'mugging', see Hall et al., *Policing the Crisis*, pp. 323–28.
28. The legal basis for this practice was the suspicion to be in breach of Section 4 of the Vagrancy Act 1824.
29. The operation was criticized heavily by left-wing media, but also by High Court judge Lord Scarman. See F. Mount 'From Swing to Scarman' *Spectator*, 28 November 1981, p. 4; I. Brennan (1982) 'By the waters of Babylon: Scarman in retrospect' *Month*, vol. 15, 77–80; Scarman, *The Scarman Report*, p. 110.
30. See also Solomos et al., 'The Organic Crisis of British Capitalism and Race', p. 22.
31. For a critical discussion of the term 'permissive society' see F. Mort (2011) 'The Ben Pimlott Memorial Lecture 2010: The Permissive Society Revisited' *Twentieth Century British History*, vol. 22, no. 2, 269–98, 270–71.
32. Frank Mort deconstructs this master narrative of sexual revolution, see F. Mort (2010) *Capital Affairs: London and the Making of the Permissive Society* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press), pp. 349–51.
33. See T. Bunyan (1981) 'The Police Against the People' *Race & Class*, vol. 23, no. 2/3, 153–70, 153.
34. See for example D. Watson and K. Saunders 'The Kids Who Run Riot' *The Sun*, 8 July 1981, p. 4; B. James 'Don't Their Parents Care?' *Daily Mail*, 8 July 1981, pp. 1–2.
35. See J. Welshman (2006) *Underclass: A History of the Excluded since 1880* (London; New York: Hambledon Continuum), p. 158.
36. See for example Shadow Home Secretary Roy Hattersley in Parliament *Hansard* 'Civil Disturbances', HC Deb 16 July 1981, vol. 8 cc1404.
37. See for example 'Bad Housing Contributed to Riots, Says GLC Housing Chief' *GLC Public Relations Branch News Service*, 21 July 1981, no. 274, LMA, GLC/DG/PRB/35 vol. 37.
38. Scarman's position was supported by a number of magazines, see for example 'Scarman: For Action Now' *Economist*, 28 November 1981, pp. 15–16.
39. Scarman, *The Scarman Report*, p. 35.
40. On the changed role of the police see R. Reiner (2010) *The Politics of the Police*, 4th edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 81–89.
41. See P. Gilroy (2002) *There Ain't no Black in the Union Jack: The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation* (London; New York: Routledge), p. 46.
42. See for example *Hansard*, Disturbances (Southall and Liverpool), HC Deb 06 July 1981, vol. 8 cc1420.
43. See R. Tamme (2012) '"Promoting Racial Harmony": Race Relations-Forschung und soziale Ungleichheit in Großbritannien in den 1950er bis 1960er Jahren', in C. Reinecke and T. Mergel (eds) *Das Soziale ordnen: Sozialwissenschaften und*

gesellschaftliche Ungleicheit im 20. Jahrhundert. (Frankfurt am Main: Campus), pp. 183–217, pp. 211–13.

44. See for example R. Kerridge 'A Letter to Enoch Powell' *Spectator*, 10 July 1982, pp. 13–14; F. Ridley 'Will It Take a Match to Awaken Downing Street?' *Guardian*, 13 July 1981, p. 7.
45. Even in 1981 this argument was contested: see G. Gaskell and P. Smith 'Are Young Blacks Really Alienated?' *New Society*, 14 May 1981, pp. 260–61.
46. The impact of the Empire on British politics and society has been a contested issue in British historiography since the mid-1980s. For the attempt of an analytical middle ground, see A.S. Thompson (2005) *The Empire Strikes Back?: The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid-nineteenth Century* (Harlow, England and New York: Pearson Longman).
47. Anne Spry Rush analysed these conflicting conceptions of Britishness for middle class West Indians; see A.S. Rush (2011) *Bonds of Empire: West Indians and Britishness from Victoria to Decolonization* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press), p. 2, p. 236.
48. The imperial background was sometimes mentioned in opinion pieces or in specialized publications. See R. Kerridge 'Why These Blacks Hate the Police …' *Daily Mail*, 13 April 1981, p. 8.
49. On the perceived threat to society see also Solomos et al., *The Organic Crisis of British*, p. 27.
50. See G. Murdock (1984) 'Reporting the Riots: Images and Impacts', in J. Benyon (ed.) *Scarman and After. Essays Reflecting Lord Scarman's Report, the Riots and their Aftermath* (Oxford: Pergamon), p. 78.
51. See R. Kerridge 'Return to Southall' *Spectator*, 11 July 1981, pp. 12–13.
52. In August 1981, when the Criminal Attempts Act (1981) received Royal Assent.
53. Waddington, King, 'Identifying Common Causes of UK and French Riots Occurring since the 1980s', pp. 246–47.
54. See R. Reiner (1992) 'Police Research in the United Kingdom: A Critical Review' *Crime and Justice*, vol. 15, Modern Policing, 435–508, 437–39.
55. L. Colley (2009) *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837*, rev. and corr. edn. (New Haven; London: Yale University Press); K. Robbins (1988) *Nineteenth-century Britain: Integration and Diversity* (Oxford: Clarendon).
56. For an overview of the historiographical debate about British national identity and belonging see P. Mandler (2006) 'What is "National Identity"?: Definitions and Applications in Modern British Historiography' *Modern Intellectual History*, vol. 3, no. 2, 271–97.

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