

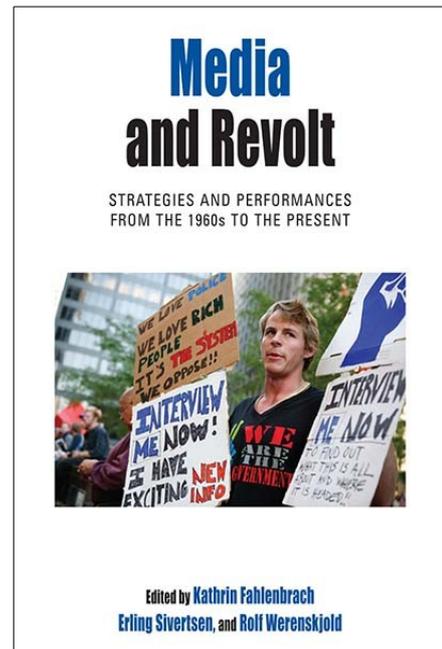


Reviews

Media and Revolt: Strategies and Performances from the 1960s to the Present, edited by Kathrin Fahlenbrach, Erling Sivertsen, and Rolf Werenskjold. Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2014, pp. 432, £75.00; ISBN 978-0-85745-998-5. Language: English.

The edited collection of essays *Media and Revolt* investigates the interaction between mass media and protest movements in Western Europe and the United States from the late 1960s to the present. Following the vast literature on the topic, the wave of student protests of 1968 is taken as a turning point in this process. This is the moment in which mass media (and television in particular) discovered the ‘news value’ of protests, becoming an ‘active player’ in the ongoing social conflict. In this same period, protesters and social movement organizers began shaping new strategies in order to appropriate, fight or attract the attention of the media, and to consider various news outlets as potential instrument of mobilization (see ‘Introduction,’ p. 1-19). Several chapters in the collection study the relationship between media and social movements from the point of view of framing theory, by analyzing competing frames and narratives produced by mainstream and independent media, as well as protest actors, in order to influence audiences’ interpretations of social and political issues. The book includes contributions by scholars in media studies, sociology, and history who use a range of qualitative and quantitative approaches to study the representation of social and protest movements in the media, as well as the use of media strategies within communities of protesters. The scope of the book is very ambitious, presenting case studies from several Western countries (West Germany, Norway, the United States, Italy, France, and, in one case, Mexico), and material from a vast array of different media, including the print press, television, photography, online news and social networks.

The first section of the book, ‘Systematic Approaches to Protest and Media,’ includes a series of theoretical contributions devoted to the investigation of general approaches to the



study of media and social movements. The section begins with an essay called ‘Changes of Protest Groups’ Media Strategies from a Long-Term Perspective,’ in which Dieter Rucht identifies four typical kinds of media strategies employed by protest groups, namely: *Abstinence*, *Attack*, *Adaptation*, and *Alternative*. He then applies this classification to the main mass protest movements in West Germany from the 1950s to the present, concluding that exogenous factors (such as, among others, the degree of openness to the group’s demands in a given society, and the plurality of the media system) are crucial in determining protest movements’ media strategies. In ‘Framing Collective Action,’ Bert Klandermans discusses the influence of mass media on various forms of collective participation, and on the level of activists’ engagement in a social movement from the point of view of social psychology. The type of communication channel employed in a given mobilization campaign, Klandermans concludes, affects various factors in the mobilization process, such as, ‘the companionship of the participants at the demonstrations, the point in time they decided to take part, the distance they travelled’ (p. 56). Next, in ‘Demonstrations, Protests, and Communication: Changing Media Landscapes—Changing Media Practices?’ Ralph Negrine offers a wide survey of scholarship on mass media and protest movements. By providing examples from British newspapers during the G20 summit of world leaders in London in 2009, Negrine argues that the ‘law and (dis)order’ frame is still dominant in mainstream media representations of protests, as it was in the late 1960s. At the same time, he argues, ‘the emergence of “new” media has not necessarily opened up more public spaces’ (p. 71). Baldwin Van Gorp’s contribution, ‘Culture and Protest in Media Frames,’ is devoted to the search for a systematic method of analysis of the representation of social and political conflicts in the press. Van Gorp proposes a methodology that he defines as ‘inductive framing analysis,’ based on a comparative study of a range of texts reproduced in the media about a given political issue in a certain period of time. He then applies this method to a case study related to the opening of an asylum seekers’ center in a Belgian provincial town at the beginning of the 2000s. Sigmund Allern’s chapter ‘When Journalists Frame the News,’ which concludes the first section in the book, also deals with questions of methodology. Allern focuses on the importance of studying shifting and competing frames in the construction of news, using the example of a debate and protests surrounding the case of police brutality in Norway in the mid-2000s.

The second section, ‘Protests in the Mass Media around 1968: Print, Film, and Television,’ consists of a series of essays discussing the representation of the protests of 1968 in various media outlets. In ‘Constructing a Media Image of the *Sessantotto*: The Framing of the Italian Protest Movement in 1968,’ Stuart Hilwig studies the way in which the main (and conservatively oriented) Italian newspapers combined texts and photographs to produce a negative image of the student protest movement, and how *L’Unità*, the Italian Communist Party’s official news outlet, reacted to this depiction by producing a more favorable counter-narrative of the protests. Next, in ‘Photos in Frames or Frames in Photos? The Global 1968 Revolts in Three Norwegian Dailies,’ Rolf Werenskjold and Erling Sivertsen present a quantitative analysis of the photo coverage of global protests in the three main Norwegian newspapers during 1968. The essay produces data and statistics on the presence of negative, neutral, and positive framings of protests, the establishment, and police behavior in these news outlets. Antigoni Memou’s chapter, ‘Revolt in Photos: The French May ’68 in the Student and Mainstream Press,’ also focuses on a case of visual framing and counterframing of

protests. Memou compares photos published in the French student and mainstream press during the revolt of May 1968, underscoring how these photos mirror differences and disagreements within the movement, and between students' and workers' organizations, in particular.

Transitioning to the study of alternative news outlets, in 'Guarding News for the Movement: The *Guardian* and the Vietnam War, 1954-70,' Naoko Koda discusses the role of the (*National*) *Guardian* in the anti-Vietnam War movement in the United States, and the way in which the New York newspaper established itself as an important source of counter-information in the country. Next, in 'From 'We Shall Overcome' to 'We Shall Overrun': The Transformation of US Media Coverage of the Black Freedom Struggle, 1964-68, in Comparative Perspective,' David Carter analyzes the transformation of the media strategies of the Black Freedom movement, and its depiction in American press and television between 1964 and 1968. In 'Taking the Revolution to the Big Screen: A Taxonomy of Social Movements' Uses of Cinema in the 1960s and 1970s,' Stefan Eichinger focuses on political cinema by attempting to create a 'taxonomy' of 'possible uses of cinema by social movements for political claim making' (p. 198), based on previous models of public discourse and media. The last two chapters in the section are devoted to the role of television in social protests. In 'Challenging Television's Revolution: Media Representations of 1968 Protests in Television and Tabloids,' Todd Michael Goehle analyzes representations of protests in West German television in the late 1960s, and the ensuing debate around TV and the 1968 movement in West German tabloids. In 'Protests in Television: Visual Protest on Screen,' Kathrin Fahlenbrach discusses the general evolution of media coverage and 'visual performance' of protests on television. In the first part of the chapter, she focuses on the close relationship between student movements and television in West Germany in 1968, and the way in which protest leaders took advantage of the favorable attitude of German TV journalists in this period. In the second part, she discusses the overall professionalization of the interaction between social movements and mainstream media, examining the 'guerilla tactics' implemented by the group 'Yes Men' in order to illustrate her case.

The third section of the book, 'Professional Strategies of Protest Across the Media after 1968,' focuses specifically on the increasingly professionalized strategies of appropriation of media spaces by more or less radical protest groups in social movements from the 1970s to the present. In 'Representing Black Power: Handling a 'Revolution' in the Age of Mass Media,' Craig J. Peariso explores the media and self-representation strategies of the Black Panther Party, and the inability of this organization to connect and communicate with the larger African American community as planned by its leaders. In 'Throwing Bombs in the Consciousness of the Masses: The Red Army Faction and Its Mediality,' Hanno Balz studies the complex relationship between the terrorist organization RAF (Red Army Faction) and German media during the '70s. In so doing, Balz interprets RAF's terrorist activity in terms of a larger communication strategy, aimed at proving the 'fascist' essence of the ideology of the West German state: 'The practice of the RAF in its collection of *performativity* (the speech acts of the RAF communiqués) and *performance* (the violent acts of its staging) represented the basic pattern of a communicative attack, with the RAF declaring the 'truth' in a ritualized act (p. 277).

Next, in 'On Dynamic Processes of Framing, Counterframing, and Reframing: The Case of the Greenpeace Whale Campaign in Norway,' Juliane Riese analyzes the professional me-

dia strategy of Greenpeace. In particular, she focuses on the ‘framing/counter-framing “contests”’ (p. 282) between Greenpeace and pro-whaling organizations and lobbies, as well as mainstream media, during the Norwegian whale campaign between 1980 and the early 2000s – contests which resulted in failure for Greenpeace. Finally, in ‘The Limits to Transnational Attention: Rise and Fall in the European Social Forums’ Media Resonance,’ Simon Teune analyzes data about the level of media attention produced by the first four editions of the European Social Forum in Florence, Paris, London, and Athens, concluding that ‘commercial and public mass media... are not very likely to be interested in the ESF as such. The attraction rises, however, if the event involves conflict, or if it can be related to debates relevant to the editorial staff’ (p. 313).

The fourth and final section of the book, ‘Protests in the Digital Age: Performing and Covering Protest on the Internet,’ presents a series of contributions focusing on the relationship between social movements and the internet. Many of the studies presented in this section seem to contradict the widespread conviction that a close link exists between new media and the emergence of grassroots social movements in the digital age. In ‘Global Protest in Online News,’ Øystein Pedersen Dahlen focuses on the representation of protests in online news outlets. By drawing on a limited number of online sources and information agencies, most web news outlets offered an overly simplified picture of the WTO’s 2005 protests (which Dahlen uses as a case study). Moreover, Dahlen claims, ‘when the web news outlets are assessed to analyze how they created a broader political debate, and if they showcased alternative voices via the case of the WTO, they are still seen as immature forms of media’ (p. 331). In the following essay, ‘Cyberprotest: Protest in the Digital Age,’ Luca Rossi and Giovanni Boccia Artieri discuss the emergence of new forms of political participation linked with the use of social networks, comparing the blog of the Italian comedian/political leader Beppe Grillo and the use of tweets during the 2009 Iranian revolution. In ‘Insurgency in the Age of the Internet: The Case of the Zapatistas,’ Roy Krøvel investigates the media strategies of the Mexican revolutionary organization EZLN. Basing his conclusions on extensive fieldwork in the region, Krøvel claims that the Zapatistas had in fact planned a more traditional war and were only later turned into ‘icons of the war in the digital age’ through the activity of Mexican and European activists and supporters. Next, in ‘Punks, Hackers, and Unruly Technology: Countercultures in the Communication Society,’ Hendrik Storstein Spilker looks for possible connections and alliances between musical countercultures, hackers, and digital strategies of disobedience by studying a local Norwegian punk community. Against expectations, Spilker’s fieldwork revealed that punk communities have not embraced open source or other forms of contestation through the use of new media: ‘the punk counterculture has competence when it comes to more traditional political issues such as resistance against American cultural or political imperialism, suppression of women, and police violence. Cyber activism is not part of this established political repertoire’ (p. 380). Finally, in ‘Public Spaces and Alternative Media Practices in Europe: The Case of the EuroMayDay Parade against Precarity,’ Nicole Doer and Alice Mattoni show how the creation of a transnational network of political activists, connected with the organization of various editions of the EuroMayDay Parade during the 2000s, and the ensuing discussion on working conditions in various European countries, has required ‘cultural translation’ of legal and political concepts in order to favor communication and exchanges between international political organizations.

Media and Revolt is a very useful and informative introduction to the study of the interactions between mass media and social movements in the Western world. At the same time, the book suffers from a certain lack of cohesiveness, and it would benefit from a discussion of possible connections, differences or similarities between various cultural and national contexts and historical periods, either in the introduction, in a conclusion, or in transitional chapters between different groups of essays. Given the broad temporal and geographical scope of the book, this would help address the way in which specific historical, socio-economic, and cultural conditions influenced the evolution of national media strategies and political agendas, beyond general trends in the evolution of mass media and social movements in the West. Nonetheless, *Media and Revolt* provides a wide range of original approaches and research on the topic, and it constitutes an important contribution toward the promotion of an interdisciplinary debate on the making of social movements and protests on a global scale.

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