

Schildt, Axel; Siegfried, Detlef (Hrsg.): *Between Marx and Coca-Cola. Youth Cultures in Changing European Societies, 1960-1980*. Oxford: Berghahn Books 2006. ISBN: 1-84545-009-4; 424 S.

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In order to theorize questions of historical change in the 1960s and 1970s, Axel Schildt and Detlef Siegfried propose a focus on the tensions between increasing consumption on the one hand and politicization or growing „political interest“ (p. 2) on the other. The different articles in this edited volume show that historical change and societal innovations can be understood and theorized as emerging out of the very tensions that define these two decades. The five sections of the book offer different perspectives on their respective topics, complementing and contradicting each other in productive ways. They address problems of periodization and definition by carefully navigating both the processes of transnationalization and specific national developments.

While the introduction gives an overview of the different areas of societal change, it also points to a central methodological problem: the historical narrative reads too linear at times (p. 7) and fails to apply the tension between mass consumption and politicization to certain societal issues, i.e., the discussion of education and sexual liberation. In these sections the authors rely too exclusively on quantitative data, readily admitting, however, that there is a need for more qualitative research (p. 28).¹ For the purpose of this review I therefore break up the contributions into two groups. The first group contains a smaller set of articles, which focus on giving an overview of the historical developments in Northern Europe. These articles offer reliable and solid descriptions of facts and present important data but few new methodological insights, a fact that leads me to conclude that the book's intended audience consists of German Studies scholars who are not necessarily familiar with the developments in Northern Europe. The second and larger set of contributions takes up the challenge posed

in the introduction and lays out innovative perspectives on how to conceptualize and understand the intersections between mass culture, counterculture, and innovation. In both cases, questions emerge.

In the first case, the questions focus on historical chronology and how we interpret the effects of innovation and change, which can be exemplified by a brief look at the articles that shed light on developments in Denmark.² Steven Jensen summarizes the evolution of the Danish student movement. Even though the students understood themselves in connection with international revolutionary movements, they failed to trigger violent responses from the state, as was the case in France or West Germany. Kaare Nielsen's analysis also compares the developments in Denmark to West Germany and argues that the anti-nuclear power movement „exercised a powerful influence on the established political system“ in Denmark (p. 222). Confining his analysis of West Germany to the 1960s and 1970s leads him to conclude that the West German state, in contrast to Denmark, succeeded in marginalizing the movement – an assertion that can easily be contradicted, however, by a brief look at the complicated politics of the 1980s. Thomas Ekman Jørgensen's investigation of utopia and dystopia in Copenhagen's youth cultures casts further doubt on these conclusions. He shows how parts of the radical movements in Copenhagen moved towards a more isolated and self-sacrificial mode; similar, in fact, to what could be observed in West Germany. Questions of how to understand the effects of „counter cultures“ on the state and on the „dominant culture“ remain central and depend on the perspective; the authors come to differing conclusions. Rather than exploring the intersections and correlations between different national contexts, the focus on a comparison between two nation-states further limits the perspec-

¹ I consider the first two articles by Arthur Marwick and Detlef Siegfried as part of the introduction. Both authors discuss the general questions posed by youth culture and the concept of „cultural revolution“ (p. 61) caught between „Changing the World“ and „Having a Good Time“ (p. 46) and lay out the foundations for the following analyses.

² Thomas Etzemüller's article on the Swedish student movement is also part of this group of contributions.

tive.

In contrast to this, the second set of articles proposes a different understanding of societal innovation and historical change that includes simultaneities and contradictions and concentrates on the tensions that surface when consumer cultures 'travel': Advertisement and video clips (Rob Kroes), music (Peter Wicke, Konrad Dussel, and Barry Doyle), youth travel (Axel Schildt), illegal and legal drugs (Klaus Weinbauer and Dagmar Herzog), and concepts or ideas (Uta Poiger, Wilfried Mautsach, and Julian Bourg) change meanings and produce contradictory effects as they cross borders or challenge boundaries. Processes of reception are determined by various overlapping moments of signification and re-signification as „cultures“ enter into specific national or new transnational contexts at certain moments in history. The articles show that the process of innovation fostered by „this confrontation between mass culture and counterculture“ (p. 2) is ambivalent and inherently contradictory.

Wilfried Mautsach argues that „the majority of rebellious youth did not want to assault technology, mass culture, and consumerism, but outflank and outwit it“ (p. 195) – which distinguishes them clearly from conservative cultural critics of the time, but also shows how they did not follow a concept of political revolution alone but further demanded a general change in attitudes or „sensitivity“ (ibid.). Dagmar Herzog's article points to another complicated set of relationships between consumer culture and liberalization by tracing the discourses around the Pill. She shows that the Pill created the condition for change precisely by producing contradictory discourses and arguments between mainstream media, intellectuals, and feminists that ultimately helped to „make that particular revolution real“ (p. 281).

In addition to Herzog's excellent article, the section on gender transformations contains two further contributions of interest that move the spotlight away from West Germany to France and Great Britain and focus on the still under-researched question of the relationship between cultural and political movement and concepts of masculinity. Julian Bourg shows how „French Pedophilic Discourses

of the 1970s“ are interpellated by a particular concept of masculinity, and he manages to point out the complexities of sexual liberalization. In a Foucauldian manner he concludes³: „Western societies have become more open and tolerant about sexuality since the 1970s, but they have submitted certain behaviors to ever-more-exacting and precise 'regimes' of legal, psychological, medical and social management“ (p. 396). As an interesting complement to Bourg's investigation of masculinity in France, Barry Doyle explores the connections between politicization, consumerism, and masculinity in Great Britain. His focus on Northern Soul allows him to show that a much more complex and possibly contradictory concept of masculinity existed among British working class youth than prominent media images have suggested.

The articles on „cultural travels“ pose a variety of questions that have been central to cultural studies for the last decade, i.e., how much agency do we attribute to the consumer? How do we understand the complicated process of cultural reception? It becomes clear that „it is one of the fundamental misconceptions about the 1960s that youth culture [...] possessed an anticommercial impetus“ (Peter Wicke, pp. 120-121). But how do we understand the relationship between „the commercial form of organizing“ and its „social functions“ (p. 121), how can the commercialization of youth cultures be described without arguing that it automatically reduces its political impetus? Further, how do we describe the transnationalization of culture without ignoring particular national manifestations, especially when it comes to questions of race, gender, and ethnic identifications? The volume does not answer these questions, but the articles present inspiring and groundbreaking approaches for reading contradictory processes of cultural and societal change.

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³ While I find the application of Foucault's theories convincing in his article, a more critical discussion of the limitations of such an interpretation, which itself originates in the 1970s in France, would have been fascinating.

Changing European Societies, 1960-1980. Oxford 2006, in: H-Soz-Kult 26.05.2006.