

The «Long 1960s» in a Global Arena of Contention: Re-defining Assumptions of Self, Morality, Race, Gender and Justice, and Questioning Education

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Abstract: I argue that the global dissent of the 1960s is part of a political cultural constellation with many fronts, political *conjunctures*¹ and religious intersections, in addition to a new sense of being that informed subjectivities and desires. The configurational components examined in this article include secularization, Vatican II, and the emergence of liberation theology in Latin America, as well as the New Left, the Cuban Revolution and the context of the Cold War; the legacy of the civil rights movement and its impact; second wave feminism and a new understanding of gender relations; art as a vehicle for ideas and agendas; the global dissension conveyed in the students' insurrection and repercussions; and education as a tool for change. The article identifies relevant connections between the events and processes that challenged the social and political order across space, and explores the emergence of a contesting ethical framework.

Keywords: «Long 1960s»; Secularization; Liberation Theology; New Left; Civil Rights Movement; Second Wave Feminism; Students Insurrection 1968; Educationalization; «Autonomy of Youth».

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1. Introduction

This paper made me feel old. In the process of writing it, I walked back through the events of the coup d'état in Argentina in 1966 and the intervention of the Universidad Nacional del Sur, where I was doing my Bachelor's in History, American interference, the renewed discourse of the Cold War after the Cuban Revolution, the death of Che Guevara in 1967, the student and labour insurrection of May 1968, and the

¹ Concept coined by Fernand Braudel (1980) to tackle convergences of medium time-length developments.

Cordobazo in Argentina in 1969. I tried to reconstruct my own process of radicalization in moving away from liberal conventional views. I remember an awareness of a new world in spite of our political constraints, the Onganía dictatorship, and the so-called Argentine Revolution in 1966. Things were happening. The Church – it was the past; authority was there to be challenged. I had choices to make and a chance to look at myself in a new light, if I had the courage. Neo-dada, new realism, and pop art inspired us, and the nueva canción – which reached even me, an opera fan. The films by the Beatles were shown in the city. It was the time of Fellini and Passolini films. We felt that a new world was coming. And, we were also tied by repression. There was a search for a left, but the right was no less active, and the repressive state moved through all spheres of life, including art, ways of dress, and poetry.

Image 1. Delia Cancela, *Corazón destrozado* (1964), private collection, Buenos Aires, 150 X 120 cm, mixed technique on canvas and wood. Source: photograph taken in 2012, by Wally Gobetz at Fundación PROA, at «Art of Contradictions. Pop, Realisms and Politics. Brazil - Argentina 1960», curated by Paulo Herkenhoff and Rodrigo Alonso. Creative Commons license: BY-NC-ND 2.0. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/wallyg/7850294580/>.



I remember my eagerness to know what Henri Lefebvre had written last, and early in the decade, I read my first book on cybernetics. Simone de Beauvoir left a lasting impression that I still feel; Jean-Paul Sartre's «theory of commitment» reached me deeply, and, of course, Herbert Marcuse opened my eyes. We also read Louis Althusser and his theory of ideology, but I liked Henri Lefebvre's critique. The writings and ideas of Mao Zedong were well known, while Trotskyism had a presence in the university. And then the long 1960s would usher in a generation of French philosophers: Barthes, Foucault, Derrida, Levinas, psychoanalyst Lacan. Foucault was the first one with which I became familiar.

Historians nowadays refer to the long 1960s, following the lead from Arthur Marwick (1988), to examine a period in contemporary history that goes from the late 1950s to the mid 1970s, a period that witnessed movements that challenged the order of things and generated breaks that eventually led to a re-definition of the pillars of the social ideas of Western society. In social and economic terms, post-war demographic and economic changes, urbanization, mass communication, and educational reforms had provided the initial framework. Then, the economic crisis of the 1970s and post-Fordism and new market models changed the scenario, signaling a new era.

The global dissent of the 1960s is part of a political cultural constellation with many fronts, political *conjunctures*², religious intersections, and a new sense of being that informed subjectivities and desires. The exploration of social, religious, and ideological configurations and the political interweaving that made up the landscape of the movements helps us to understand that the extended dissent, including the students' insurrection – that was in many cases in alliance with labour – was far from an unitarian phenomenon. In this paper, I will discuss components of the religious, political, and social configurations that emerged during the long 1960s, crossing often into Latin America as a way to show the multidirectionality and historicity of local and regional developments.

The configurational components to be examined include the following: secularization, Vatican II, and the emergence of liberation theology in Latin America; the New Left, the Cuban Revolution, the context of the Cold War; the legacy of the civil rights movement and its impact; second wave feminism and new understandings of gender relations; art as a vehicle that mobilizes ideas, agendas, and dreams; the global dissension conveyed in the students' insurrection, and later repercussions; and education as a tool for change, from educationalizing socio-economic issues for modernization to conceiving a prophetic education. In spite of the globality of the phenomenon, my argument moves within the parameters of the Western world³.

² Concept coined by Fernand Braudel (1980) to tackle convergences of medium time-length developments.

³ Publications of interest are: the June 2018 issue of *The American Historical Review*, 123 (3); Bourg, 2017; DeGroot, 2008; Jobs, 2009; Marwick, 1998; Oliver, Cadena-Roa, & Strawn, 2003; Sherkat and Blocker, 1994.

2. Social and ideological configurations and political interweaving

2.1. *Secularization, Vatican II, and the emergence of liberation theology in Latin America*

There was a decline in Church commitment by ordinary people, visible in the empty pews of traditional Protestant churches and the Catholic Church and in fewer religious vocations. Between 1965 and 1975, for example, the number of women religious in Canada fell 32% (Ebaugh, 1993; MacDonald, 2017). There was a process of the secularization of consciousness. What did this all mean? Religion lost social and cultural hegemony in Europe, North America, and Australasia, and by and large, people stopped perceiving their personal or national identity as Christian. McLeod (2007) defines this phenomenon as a rupture in the religious history of the west, an integral part of long-term changes, while Brown (2010) situates secularization as part of the crisis of the total culture and internal changes in the churches. The external challenges were many, including a rejection of parental control – parents being the ones introducing the young to Church life – questioning of the establishment, and urban migration that led to breaking communal ties (McLeod, 2007). As Brown puts it, «the majority were not trying to reform their churches, they were leaving them» (2010, p. 478). The revolt against Christian cultural oppression, including women's oppression, led to the dissolution of Christendom as we knew it. The conservatives foresaw the consequences very early on and unleashed a backlash against the permissive society, a catalyst for secularization. Certainly, the boundaries between right and wrong were becoming diffused (Christie & Gauvreau, 2013).

The roots of this process were in the social life of the post-war time, specifically the ongoing changes in societal values, including the rise of individualism – not alien to major changes taking place in the capitalist system – an extensive rejection of external authorities including the Church, and intense pluralism accentuated by processes of decolonization and the movement of people. Pluralism was indeed a challenge to religious faith, different from that of secularization because, as Peter Berger (2014) argues, cognitive contamination relativizes, while processes of further differentiation in the functioning of institutions, including the Church and state in relation to social services, further influenced the consciousness of individuals. The process of secularization spread in the western world even if it took different tempos. A new concept of the self started to emerge, shaking its relational dimension. However, the secularization of the 1960s did not erase religion and new forms of Christianity even took shape. These, in turn, had profoundly individualist tones such as in the Evangelical movement – strong in the US, with the characteristics of a reactionary ideology. We can also think of there being a spiritual turn with many differentiations, for example, a new age spirituality and a new cosmology exploring religious experiences in light of the rise of the self, of what is personal⁴.

The process of secularization and the challenge to established notions of authority and social order intersected with the Second Vatican Council, which sought

⁴ See Hugh McLeod and Werner Ustorf (2003), in particular McLeod's Introduction (pp. 1-28) and Chapter 2, by Callum G. Brown (pp. 29-46).

an aggiornamento with the modern world (O'Malley, 2008). The Council redefined the Church's relation to the world in terms of dialogue and cooperation; recognized a commitment to social justice as an imperative of the Gospel, a component of spiritual life; and recognized the need to reinterpret its teaching in view of the conditions of the time (Baum, 2011, p. 362). The implications were many considering pluralism and the relativization of Church positions. Meanwhile, liberation theology – influenced by theological developments in Belgium and France – took shape in Latin America in the long 1960s. Liberation theology – both Catholic and Protestant – had as its starting point the life of the oppressed and their experience in the process of theological reflexion (Smith, 1991). Agency and a critique of the social order became praxis. The Cuban Revolution had been an inspiration. Bishops in the south had contested the approach to Latin America taken by the North American Church and the Vatican as early as 1959. Helder Câmara, Auxiliary Bishop of Rio de Janeiro, who worked with Ivan Illich in the Center in Petrópolis that prepared missionaries, spoke with a revolutionary voice and actual social praxis (see Bruno-Jofré & Zaldívar, 2014; Garneau, 2001; Quintanilla, 2007).

Liberation theology developed hand in hand with popular movements such as the Agrarian Leagues, the Movement of Basic Education (MEB) sponsored by the bishops, and the idea of grassroots Christian communities within the contexts of national or regional projects. It is not surprising that popular educators, in particular Catholic pedagogues such as Paulo Freire, developed in Brazil – and also while in Chile after the 1964 coupe d'état – the principles of a pedagogy grounded in people's life and experiences (Löwy & Pompan, 1993). Of particular note was the emergence of Indigenous movements in the countryside in various Latin American countries, in which, in many cases, the popular church played a fundamental role. This is an issue often neglected in studies of the long 1960s. Jon Igelmo has pointed out that we cannot understand the Indigenous struggle of the 1990s and its place in the antiglobalization movement without considering the political and vindicative Indigenous organization of the 1960s and 1970s. One example would be the organization of Maya communities in the southeastern part of Mexico previous to the emergence of the Zapatista movement in Chiapas in 1994⁵.

One cannot actually fully understand popular movements in Latin America, the tortuous path of the left in the long 1960s, and the Latin American reception of the US and European social movements of the 1960s without considering liberation theology, and, in particular, the impact of the Cuban Revolution.

Furthermore, Third Worldism, the ubiquity of the guerrilla, whether in Cuba or Vietnam, the colonial wars, and post-colonial Africa displaced the Eurocentric approach to radical change, and the «other» entered into the picture with a different spatial sense and a new revolutionary internationalism⁶. It was a utopian model that went beyond both the social democratic approach and the traditional communist one. The changes in the capitalist structure, including the extensive process of industrialization, generated a global experience of the malaise of urbanization,

⁵ Jon Igelmo Zaldívar, personal communication, 17 August 2018.

⁶ See Watts (2001), in particular p. 170.

proletarianization, and so on. There was a sense of globalism that informed 1960s radicalism and not only in Europe and the US (Watts, 2001).

Crossing these processes were a central questioning of relational power and an emerging sense of justice and liberation that went beyond the typical revolutionary claims. This renewed sense of liberation would take the form of a cultural revolution. This was patented in the youth leadership of the student and labour movements of 1968-69 in France and Italy and in changes in social relations, as well as in the Catholic Basic Communities, Freire's pedagogy, and popular education practices in Latin America.

2.2. *The New Left, the Cuban Revolution, and the Cold War*

Politically, the Cuban Revolution and its grassroots character set the tone for the reception of the dramatic transformative changes of the long 1960s in Latin America. The scenario was framed by the Cold War, US interventionism, the inadequacy of the traditional left, the various Marxist trends, from Trotskyism through Maoism to Soviet Communism, regional forms of developmentalism including those with Catholic involvement, Christian Democratic programs, and socialisms of national character such as in Allende's Chile. Revolutionary utopias and a search for a more just society began to take shape. Existentialism intersected everywhere with notions of authenticity and responsibility. The universities in the Americas and in Europe were ebullient sites where the number of students increased dramatically, to the point that they outnumbered both the infrastructure and faculty resources.

Image 2. *Revolución Cubana.* Source: photograph taken in 2007, by José Porras, of a painting alluding to the Cuban Revolution on a street in Havana. Creative Commons license: 2.5 Generic. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Revoluci%C3%B3n_Cubana.JPG.



The US response to the Cuban Revolution was multipronged. The most palatable one was the attempt to modernize Latin America through the Alliance for Progress that was launched in Punta del Este, Uruguay, in August 1961. The related peace corps, the papal volunteers, and the call from John XXIII to religious communities to send missionaries to Latin America aimed at involving Latin America in a process of modernization in a counter-attack against «communism»⁷, Protestantism, and anti-imperialist expressions. The praxis took on its own characteristics framed by the political spectrum in the field. By and large, US politicians and the North American Catholic hierarchy portrayed Cuba and what they considered «communists» as a threat to national security and to values. However, student and labour unrest in Latin America were, by and large, motivated by policies and impositions from the World Bank that led to budget cuts and restrictions to social programs, and were connected to US interventionism.

The questioning of the traditional left was a feature of the time and had an intellectual counterpart. Many French intellectuals such as Sartre and Lefebvre left the Communist Party, and an intellectual shift began to take place toward the end of the decade. Cohn Bendit, leader of the French insurrection of 1968, said in a recent interview published in the *New York Review of Books*: «We left-wing libertarians were anticapitalists and anticommunists. So were the many factions on the left linked to an original communist tradition» (Leggewie & Cohn-Bendit, 2018, p. 6). There were, however, strategic political coalitions of new currents with the Communist Party and traditional social democratic forces. Many authors refer to the New Left as a loose designation for those participating and engaging in a variety of protest movements, who do not necessarily support the principles and methods of those of the revolutionary left engaged in armed struggles, also referred to as the radical left, including anarchists (Gould, 2009).

It is also of note that this generated a «source of inflection»⁸ internationally, with Berkeley, on the US West Coast, being a major site of Vietnam protests and the Free Speech Movement (FSM) in the mid 1960s. In the southern hemisphere, the Vietnam War nourished an anti-imperialist discourse. Indeed, Cohn-Bendit noted recently that «the revolt was far more American in origin than the Europeans care to admit» (Leggewie & Cohn-Bendit, 2018, p. 6).

Particularly prominent in the US landscape of the 1960s were the civil rights movement and second wave feminism, both with international connections. These led to challenging positionings and policy proposals in the early 1970s, a time when the gay movement also gained strength.

2.3. The legacy of the civil rights movement and its impact

Anti-racist activism was a major aspect of the global freedom struggle, and as Stephen Tuck (2012) tells us, civil rights activists in the US and Britain developed a close relationship in the 1960s, and this triangulated with developments in Africa and the Caribbean. The dominant notion of freedom as only being white in colour

⁷ The program of papal volunteers is known as PAVLA and was started in 1961.

⁸ See Watts (2001), in particular p. 170.

was deeply challenged. The turning point happened in the post-war years with the boycotts that started with Rosa Parks in 1955 and continued through the late 1950s and early 1960s, while Martin Luther King, who co-founded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, gained a national and international profile. There were certainly political gains in the 1960s, including the Civil Rights Act of July 1964, but the issue of non-political civil rights was still quite open after Martin Luther King's death in 1968 (Dudziak, 2002; Murch, 2018; Sitkoff, 1993; Sugrue, 2008).

The united front of civil rights groups in the early 1960s was not there a decade later, and it was difficult to build a common black political agenda. School desegregation in the 1970s brought both advances and setbacks. The important point is, as Rodgers indicated, that the forces of consciousness and aspiration moving the black freedom movement forward were far from being exhausted (2011, p. 113). Race consciousness was in the soul. A powerful network of African American intellectuals and writers emerged from the 1960s, and African American Studies set models for Asian Studies, Chicana/o Studies, and Indigenous Studies. The marks of racism left memories and molded selves, and, as Rodgers (2011) observed, racial languages were multiple, with Asian American, Chicano, and Latino movements springing out of the terrain of the African American civil rights movement. A central question remained: how to acquire non-political civil rights when discrimination continued in all spheres of life.

The issues were often situated in unexpected arenas of contention. Thus, Olive Banks placed the origins of radical feminism in the early 1960s, when small groups of women activists in the civil rights movement and in the New Left recognized their exclusion from decision making and the limitations to their roles (1986, Ch. 12).

2.4. Second wave feminism and a new understanding of gender relations

The second wave of feminism that took shape in the early 1970s was sensitive to women's experience in the family and at work and to women's sexuality, and aimed at expanding spaces for women, liberating them from the limitations of gender constructions generated under patriarchal power and its internalization. Language became important, and this importance was nourished by countercultural and dissenting elements that challenged dominant ways of being and expressing oneself. Thus, the 1968 student and labour upheaval in France certainly further ushered in the women's liberation and gay rights movements in the country, with the latter having a strong presence from the very early 1970s. Many varieties of feminist thinking and theorizing have been developed over the decades and have often been intertwined: from liberal feminism and consequent critiques; to the somewhat abandoned Marxist feminism; existentialist feminism; socialist feminism; psychoanalytic feminism; radical feminism on reproduction and mothering, and gender and sexuality; Christian feminism; and postmodern feminism (Tong, 1989; Wu, 2018).

Image 3. Demonstrations of May 1968 in Bordeaux (Gironde, France) - Rue Paul-Bert. Source: photograph taken in May 1968, by Tangopaso. Wikimedia Commons. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1968-05_%C3%89v%C3%A8nements_de_mai_%C3%A0_Bordeaux_-_Rue_Paul-Bert_1.jpg.



Feminist theology and Christian feminism often represent a complex synthesis of practices and ideas through grassroots organizations and diverse forms of activism. From the start, their activists questioned dualism and patriarchy well beyond the boundaries of their denominations. A photograph taken after the first national meeting of the National Organization for Women (NOW), in 1966, gives the historian a particular trace, a hint, that the binary opposition between religion and feminism deserves a nuanced analysis, as do other generalizations about the first years of the movement. The photograph shows a nun, Sister Mary Joel Read, in full habit, alongside United Methodist African American lay leader Anna Arnold Hedgeman, Betty Friedan, Richard Graham, Inka O'Hanrahan, and Dorothy Haener (see Braude, 2007, p. 238). Catholic women religious, or nuns, had been able to reach higher levels of education as a result of the Sister Formation Movement that spread over the world in the 1950s. It was not happenstance that many congregations became familiar with the work of Betty Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), at least in North America; it was in tune with the mood of the time, but also provided some answers to questions emerging from a disconnection between their life and what was happening around them. Feminist theo/alogians critiqued the dualistic patriarchal theology – a divided humanity in which man was made in God's image and dominant over nature, Eve was made his helpmate, the body was distinct from the soul, and disobedience

was a primary sin (Fiand, 1992)⁹. The conservative counter-attack soon developed as well and was in line with the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* opposing contraceptives. Feminist theo/alogy, which particularly spread in the 1970s and 1980s, gained a strong presence in women's congregations.

The women's movement and the counterculture reached every corner of the Western world, while the conservative forces encroached, including a counter-mobilization of women who felt their values threatened and their certainties dissolved, in particular in the Catholic right. The traditional left did not oppose feminism, neither did the New Left. However, the left in general strongly believed that women's issues were part of a broader socio-economic problem and neglected profound experiential changes, particularly those connected to daily life. When becoming familiar with Gloria Steinem, I remember thinking that she missed the point. And, of course, the process leading to the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), approved by the US House of Representatives in 1972, was followed by feminists around the world.

The movement – and NOW itself – moved from equal rights toward a conception of women's liberation. This move had tremendous repercussions in the politicization of private issues, in the relationships among genders, and in the construction of the woman's self at various stages of life (Banks, 1986, p. 216). In the 1980s, the movement, with its own fragmentation and contention, would lead to profound epistemological changes to the humanities and bring major questions about the discursive construction of our gender identities.

The second wave of feminism reached Latin America a bit late (Feijóo & Nari, 1996). It is interesting how new magazines appeared. I remember reading *Primera Plana in Argentina*, a magazine modeled after *Newsweek* that ran from 1962 to 1969 and covered what was called modern life, containing information on contraceptives, changes in family life, women's participation in the work force, and later, the anti-war movement in the US. Radio programs also addressed the issues of the time, in spite of the repression. A new literature was flourishing in Latin America. I remember *Rayuela*, written by Julio Cortázar, and, of course, *Cien años de Soledad*, by Gabriel García Márquez. The impact of psychoanalysis on gender relations and the self was wide and reached popular surveys in the mass media, and it became a personal tool for many in a time of readjustment, in particular, when dealing with changes to the relationships between the sexes. It reached every corner of Latin America; even Bishop of Cuernavaca Sergio Méndez Arceo made a presentation to the Second Vatican Council on the relevance of acknowledging psychoanalysis. However, nothing was as effective as music and art in general in carrying the message of change. Cohn-Bendit said recently, when discussing the revolt of 1968 and related US developments: «essentially the revolt was spurred by the idea of a counterculture, which was mainly carried via rock music. Woodstock Nation: that was the myth of a new America, and we were all for it» (Leggewie & Cohn-Bendit, 2018, p. 6).

⁹ Feminist theology would become very influential in religious congregations from the 1970s onwards, for example, with Rosemary Radford Ruether (2000, 2007) and Mary Daly (1984) from the mid 1970s, and Sandra Schneiders (2011) and Elizabeth Fiorenza Schüsler (1992, 2016) from the 1980s.

2.5. Art as a vehicle mobilizing ideas, agendas, and dreams

With its strong political messages, 1960s music converged in the 1970s with composers, *cantaors*, and chansonniers, becoming a powerful expression; the songs were a means to critique the system, denounce dictatorships, and convey a freer way of being, such as through national forms of rock. From the Beatles and the Stones to José Larralde, from rock music to the masticated poetry of Leonard Cohen, from Joan Baez to Bob Dylan – it all had an air of change and ethical renewal. In 1963, in Mendoza, Argentina, a Manifesto on the New Song, a musical literary movement supporting national music with popular content and inserted in the boom of Argentinian folklore, was released. In 1967, the Encounter of the Protest Song took place in *Casa de las Américas* (House of the Americas), in Havana, Cuba, with voices from Chile, Uruguay, Vietnam, Italy, Spain, Haiti, the US, and Mexico expressing anti-imperialism as a common spiritual thread. The Cuban Revolution was at that point inspirational.

Image 4. Photograph taken on March 5, 1960, in Havana, Cuba, at a memorial service march for victims of the La Coubre explosion. From left to right: Fidel Castro, Osvaldo Dorticós Torrado, Che Guevara, Augusto Martínez Sánchez, Antonio Núñez Jiménez, William Alexander Morgan and Eloy Gutiérrez Menoyo. Source: Museo Che Guevara (Centro de Estudios Che Guevara en La Habana, Cuba). Wikimedia Commons. <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:CheLaCoubreMarch.jpg>.



The protest song (*canciones de protesta*) had a strong place in Latin America and beyond: from Violeta Parra and the various members of the Parra family, to Oscar Jara from Chile, to Sylvio Rodríguez, Atahualpa Yupanki, and Alfredo Zitarrosa. In «Arauco tiene una pena», Violeta Parra denounced the colonizer with: «Que no la puede callar, Son injusticias de siglos, Que todos ven aplicar, Nadie le ha puesto remedio, Pidiéndolo remediar. Levántate, Huenchullán». And Alfredo Zitarrosa sang to the comandante Ernesto Che Guevara, «Las palabras no entienden lo que pasa,

Las vocingleras, las oscuras, las dóciles, las que llaman las cosas por su nombre, las que inventan el nombre de las cosas; las palabras que dije o me dijeron, las que aprendí en los libros». Leonard Cohen's «There is A War» reached everywhere, and the words said it all: «There is a war between the rich and poor, a war between the man and the woman; there is a war between the ones who say there is a war, and the ones who say there isn't. Why don't you come on back to the war, that's right, get in it, why don't you come on back to the war, it's just beginning».

The arts involved new ways of using public space, democracy in the street, the breaking of social rules, including the use of drugs as part of the creation process, the critique of mass culture, and pop art aimed at blurring the boundaries between high art and low culture and celebrating everyday life – all emerging in the footsteps of Neo-dada. In this respect, particularly interesting was the Independent Group in London and in the US (Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, James Rosenquist, and Claes Oldenburg). For many, pop art did not have a presence in Latin America since it was so linked to the consumerism of industrial societies, but it had a presence in Argentina, and here I have in mind Marta Minujín, Edgardo Gimenez, and others I don't remember.

Image 5. Robert Rauschenberg, *Rhyme* (1956), The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 122.6 x 104.5 cm, oil, fabric, necktie, paper, enamel, pencil, and synthetic polymer paint on canvas. Photograph taken in 2017, by smallcurio. Creative Commons: 2.0. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Robert_Rauschenberg,_Rhyme_\(1956\)_\(38668628735\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Robert_Rauschenberg,_Rhyme_(1956)_(38668628735).jpg).



There was, however, an environment of avant-gardism in Latin America in spite of increasing repression in most Latin American countries; an example was the Instituto Di Tella, in Buenos Aires, a famous avant-garde cultural center in Latin America founded in 1958 that sheltered music, painting, and theatre.

The counterculture that emerged in the 1960s – for some subcultures – conveyed new ways of relating to the world in the midst of improvements in material life in large centers, particularly in the northern hemisphere, and in the midst of family upheaval. The consumer society brought powerful social contradictions. By counterculture, I mean to refer to attitudes, values, practices, and ways of living, including new sexual mores and the use of drugs, that called into question the order of things. Of necessity, this questioning and praxis opened the way for new personal identities, power politics, and dominant ethics. For Marxists, there would be a revolution that never happened, as the issues of race, class, and gender were subsumed in the political project. In the southern hemisphere, repression provided the background landscape in many countries.

Music, art, and poetry conveyed a participatory educational message of action, and through television, popular culture reflected new ways of expressing the self. Fashion reached everywhere in the western world, from the introduction of jeans, to Mary Quant's mini skirt, psychedelic prints, and hippie ways of dressing that translated into bell bottom jeans, batik fabric, and unisex looks. The contesting values and ways of being soon became part of consumer society, a feature questioned by the rebellion. In the end, the counterculture, with its various social and political messages conveyed in music, visual art, paintings, fashions, and renewed literature, brought the power of its message to the bodily dimensions of the self, influencing dress, haircuts, relations, and self reflection. New ways of being that challenged social rules and the emergence of new utopias, socio-economic changes, and a developing role for youth were part of the landscape of the agitated long decade of global dissent, which reached a peak with the irruption of the student and labour movements of 1968-69. The students' insurrection took place one year after the release of the Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band album, and one year after the Flower Power movement in San Francisco; the student revolt acquired a revolutionary look, with jackets and ties being left on the barricades.

3. Global dissension conveyed in transnational students' insurrection and later repercussions

1968 was a year to remember. It opened in April with both the Prague Spring and Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination, which generated riots in all major US cities, and then, in June, Senator Robert Kennedy was murdered. The student insurrections of 1968 were global indeed in their search for democracy and a new freedom, but in their globalism were many local and regional articulations and the wave of the New Left acquired unique identities along the way (see Cohen & Frazier, 2018; Palmer, 2018; Wasserstrom, 2018). There were common issues, but distinct racial and national identity components. There was a counter-movement, particularly in the US, proclaiming to be «the defender of order and prosperity» (Barlow, 1991).

The scenario of student insurrections extended to seventy countries in Europe, the Americas, and Asia going well into 1969 (Barker, 2008; Barlow, 1991; Burkett, 2014; Watts, 2001). In Latin America, the students' movement reached dramatic tones in Mexico, and in particular, in Brazil and Uruguay (Marini, 1970; Pensado, 2008; Ventura, 1988; Vescovi, 2003; Zermeño, 1978); a year later, in Argentina, the student-labour uprising known as Rosariazo, followed by the Cordobazo uprising in the city of Cordoba, known for its militant trade union tradition, led to the fall of General Onganía (Gordillo, 1991; O'Donnell, 1979). Students in Europe, the Americas, and even Asia read the same authors: Marcuse, Franz Fanon, Mao Zedong, Louis Althusser, and Jean Paul Sartre. Anti-authoritarianism, opposition to the Vietnam War, a more open direct democracy, and social equality were common themes. The movement had an international flavour (Jobs, 2009). In Latin America, the visions were framed by anti-imperialist sentiments and intense repression by military-based, authoritarian governments, often justified on the grounds of a threat from the «radical left» (Grandin, 2004). The left in Latin America, in its rejection of bourgeois society, did not necessarily embrace the ethical shift of the counterculture, although there were many grey areas, as Gould (2009) wrote.

Image 6. Cordobazo Civil Uprising –1969. General strike to protest the military dictatorship, Cordoba, Argentina, May 29, 1969. Wikimedia Commons. <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cordobazo.jpg>.



The students' activism had been in action in the US from the mid 1960s, as well as in Italy and Germany, where the links between students – by and large belonging to the middle and upper middle classes – and workers grew from 1967 into 1968; these student rebellions preceded the May events in France (Hilwig, 2008; Kraft, 2015; Pizzolato, 2018). The student protests in Great Britain were of note as well, as discussed in the literature and as evident in the newspapers of the time (Thomas, 2002). However, the events of May 1968 in Paris, and in France overall, paralyzed the country and had an international impact. *The Guardian* of 21 May 1968 contained a

striking article, «Six million now on strike – chaos spreads in France» (Carroll, 1968, p. 1; Gilcher-Holtey, 2008). The situation in France had repercussions everywhere. *The Guardian* and *The Observer* covered protesters storming the French Embassy (Raphael 1968, p. 1) and students' fights with police in Liverpool (Correspondent, *The Observer*, 1968, p. 1), and one article read, «Communist move to take over French explosion» (Roberts, 1968, p. 9). *Le Monde* of 21 May 1968 had a title on the first page, «Millions of workers are henceforth on strike»; the opposition asked for the departure of the government and elections; and peasant barricades were placed around Nantes for May 24. The entire system was under question, not just DeGaulle's government. The movement was politically explosive. May 1968 in Paris became the global symbol against authoritarianism and of the quest for freedom. Thus, student leader Daniel Cohn-Bendit was prominent in Paris and well known beyond European boundaries and across the ocean. The ideological spectrum ranged from Situationist (the Situationist International (SI), initially a group of avant-guard artists and intellectuals, moved to become a revolutionary political theory, with elements of non-authoritarian Marxism and components of a disruptive irrationalist tradition)¹⁰, to Anarchist, to various interpretations of Marxism in the midst of doctrinal debates and what was called the New Left (*Nouvelle Gauche*). In a retrospective, Jürgen Habermas said, in an interview conducted by Rainer Erd published in the *Frankfurter Rundschau* on 11 March 1988, when referring to the political culture twenty years after the revolution, that there was a «fundamental liberalization» of German society as a long-term consequence of the revolution triggered by the student movement, even if there was a conservative backlash (Müller-Doohm, 2016).

We witnessed the «autonomy» of youth as a separate social stratum, as Hobsbawm put it (1994, p. 324). As Cohn-Bendit said, «we had become agents in world history. Not an easy thing to process when you're only twenty-three years old» (Leggewie & Cohn-Bendit, 2018, p. 6). The events of May in Paris, the occupation of the Sorbonne, the shutting down of universities across the country, the students' alliance with workers, and the paralysis of the country, generated a sense of camaraderie that touched students, workers, farmers, and intellectuals (Offe, 2002). The impact of the uprisings reached universities around the world and there would be challenges to the relationship between students and teachers. I remember that this occurred in the far corner of my city in southern Argentina, even if we lived under a repressive regime. As for a new learning subject? There was certainly a change in the configuration of institutional power. It has been argued that the threshold in examinations was lowered, thus expanding the spaces of social promotion (Maruin & McNally, 2008). We read in the May 21st issue of *Le Monde* that the principles of autonomy and co-administration were quasi-unanimous, approved in the Faculties and «l'Ecoles», and there are long articles on examinations, the selection process, and recruitment (*Le Monde*, 1968, p. 1). Miterrand stated that France had an immense need for democratic oxygen (*Le Monde*, 1968, pp. 1-2). In the long term, the liberating learner subject was to become a learner as a consumer within a neo-liberal framework, and the contestation around the division of labour

¹⁰ The main theoretical text for Situationism is Guy Debord's *La société du spectacle* (1967).

that still resonates in my ears was left behind, taking other shapes in line with the technological revolution and a new understanding of cooperation in late capitalism.

Image 7. Protests – French workers with placard – 1968. Five workers outside their factory in the south of France. Photograph taken June 2, 1968, by George Garrigues. Creative Commons license: BY-SA 3.0. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:French_workers_with_placard_during_occupation_of_their_factory_1968.jpg



4. Education as a torn tool for change: from educationalizing socio-economic issues for modernization to a prophetic education

However, the complex 1960s and the unique intersections of a fractured New Left, anti-imperialist sentiments, the Communist Party in some instances (the cases of Chile, and the labour scene in Brazil), the search for answers on the national question, liberation theology, and the profound social and economic injustices led some of the protagonists, once more, to think of adult education. Adult education linked to political understanding was conceived in terms of a technology for change, inspired not by US theories of modernization, but by a defined political utopia that took the shape of a poorly delineated notion of radical democracy. To an important extent, what was at stake was the construction of the political subject, the re-imagining of the self in relationship with others, and of course, the intellectual construction of society. It was not something new in Latin America. For example, the Argentinian National Association of Teachers called, in 1909, the first congress of popular education societies, organized by district school boards and members of the socialist party, as well as free thinkers, anarchists, spiritualists, and progressive educators (Bruno-Jofré, 2011). Popular universities briefly flourished after the wave generated by the university reform of 1918 that started in Argentina and spread to other Latin American countries.

The critique of the educational system and adult education in the 1960s was not unrelated to the critique of US projects in Latin America and the educationalization of political and social issues. What was at stake was the aim of educationalization. The process of change in Brazil taking place in the early 1960s, with its grassroots

characteristics and the development of processes of conscientization grounded in a radicalization of Catholicism, framed the innovative work of Paulo Freire on literacy and his counter-ideological pedagogy. The educatee emerged with all her/ his/their subjectivity and developed his/her/their political consciousness from the inside rather than receiving a revelation from a particular party (Bruno-Jofré, 2011).

Education was at a crossroads in North America, as a sense of crisis had been cultivated after the Soviet launching of the Sputnik in 1957, moving us toward a scientification of education. Residual elements from the progressive tradition were reinstated with a tired sense of reality that was unable to deal with diversity, in particular in Canada, while a radical critique of schooling, first framed by the beat generation and then by the counterculture, appeared with force, from Jonatan Kozol's dramatic portrait of the life of black children in the Boston public school system to Paul Goodman with his critique of programming education and canned culture. The end of the decade closed in the Latin American critical educational landscape with *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, the influential book by Paulo Freire, and *Deschooling Society* by Ivan Illich, who offered a radical critique of schooling and questioned the monopoly schools had on education. The influence of Paulo Freire was palpable in the popular education movement that expanded in Latin America in the 1970s and 1980s, and, although that influence remained largely outside the educational system, it extended all over Latin America and opened political and cultural spaces at a point when the traditional left had failed or was unable to channel growing popular movements. In countries like Chile, popular education groups made serious attempts at resisting political oppression and defended human rights in the 1970s.

5. Conclusion

Relevant axes connecting happenings and processes that questioned the social and political order across space in the long moment of break were the challenge to external authority that went hand in hand with secularization and pluralism; the emergence of a culture that stressed choice, the individual, contingency, and agency; an implicit «ethic of liberation» (Bourg, 2017) that emerged from the process of transformation – that would be trumped by narcissistic preoccupations and the politics of consumption (Watts, 1968, p. 165); new senses of justice and equality – from the sits-in of black students in Greensboro and Nashville, to Judy Chicago's Dinner Party installation, to the students' movements in at least seventy countries, to labour demonstrations; and liberation theology. Liberation acquired explicit and strong political and educational meanings in Latin America, as fully conveyed in Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. The scenario was global, although there were various ways of experiencing the momentum. The global character of the politics of the 1960s are explicit in the global black power movements, the Third World movement, and the strengthening of a global New Right in a multifaceted historical phenomenon. However, while the themes could be similar, the approach would bear the marks of regional and national contexts and memories, of ways of receiving traveling ideological configurations.

Even if we can see profound transformations, or a sense of rupture, they remained in the social and cultural realms even as they became embroiled with the

system. The boundaries of social reality changed, indeed. The ethical shifts and the emergence of flexible notions of the self in the wake of the civil rights and women's movements, the complex countercultural elements, and the later gay and genders movements would all lead to new ways of constructing subjectivities.

There were contesting/conflicting elements in the configurations. The political dreams did not become reality in Latin America as expected, although there has been a latent legacy expressed in various ways. The antisystemic dimension of the movements, particularly in the northern hemisphere, contained libertarian currents that would nourish the New Left, but also the new right; in Central and South America, the discourse of the two evils made the left and the right equally responsible for the bloodshed, and many of the refugees going back to their country in the 1980s found themselves being blamed for causing the repression. In a global sense, the anti-capitalist expressions were ideologically diverse. The political utopias were often absorbed or simply displaced with a new economic and political language of public choice grounded in self-interest. Changes in the new socio-economic structure, in particular, flexible accumulation at a global scale – going abroad for cheap labour, outsourcing, and breaking the compromise between labour and capital – set up the state for a different cultural logic of capitalism (Rodgers, 2011, p. 9).

The re-articulation of epistemology, politics, and new ways of seeing the world and of living would reflect ethical shifts with liberating components that became apparent in the arts, in intellectual life, and in a broader understanding of genders, personal freedom, and the workings of micro-powers. However, the resignification of these components by economic forces and technological changes remains an open question.

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