

Conference Report

"The Revolution will not be Televised?" Media and Protest Movements International Conference, Volda University College, Volda, Norway

November 26-28, 2008

Conveners: Erling Sivertsen, Rolf Werenskjold (both Volda University College), Martin Klimke (GHI Washington/ HCA, University of Heidelberg), Joachim Scharloth (German Department, University of Zürich), Kathrin Fahlenbrach (Communication and Media Studies, University of Halle)

A multi-national and multi-disciplinary collection of scholars descended upon the beautiful town of Volda in Norway's Westfjord land. For three days this eclectic group explored the interaction of the media and protest movements since the end of the Second World War. Much of the discussion centered upon the concept of media framing and the myriad of ways that frame theory could be applied to late twentieth and twenty-first century protests. More than just an academic series of keynote speakers and session papers, the conference succeeded in capturing the love-hate relationship between post 1945 social movements and the media through a variety of expressions including an installation by scholar/artist Rudi Maier. The conference was further enriched by the participation of former activists Rainer Langhans (member of the West German *Kommune 1*) and Luca Meldolesi (member of the "gruppo 39" that led the occupation of the University of Rome), as well as international journalist Per Olav Reinton who offered firsthand accounts of their activities during the tumultuous protest movements of the late 1960s. The conference culminated with the screening of a rare BBC television panel discussion of 1968 student revolutionaries. The conference received generous funding from Norway's Freedom of Expression Foundation and Volda University College. The conference also received support and organizational assistance from The Interdisciplinary Research Forum on Protest Movements, Activism and Social Dissent (IFK); and the Marie Curie Research Network, "European Protest Movements since 1945."

The three keynote speakers offered theoretical models and examples of the media's relationship with modern protest movements from a variety of fields. Dutch professor of applied psychology Bert Klandermans provided the scholars with a model of media framing developed from his work on social psychology. Professor of journalism at the University of Oslo, Sigurd Allern, sought to explicate the meaning of frames from the standpoint of newspapers and television. Ralph Negrine, a professor of communication studies at the University of Sheffield, offered a humorous explication of the ways that the media uses and is used by protesters in examples of the "Super Dads" protest movement in England.

For two intense days, the twenty-two participating scholars explored the role of the media in shaping and adapting to social protest movements since 1945. Employing a "working conference" format, each presenter was paired with another scholar who would serve as commentator and received their paper prior to the conference. During the sessions, the commentator spoke first offering a short synopsis and critique of the presenter's work. The presenter then replied to the commentator's critique and this exchange was then followed by a short question and answer session. Geographically, presenters covered protest movements on three continents and the high seas from the Zapatistas in Mexico to the Black Panthers in the United States to Green Peace protests against Norwegian whalers. Chronologically, the topics discussed ranged from the

Czechoslovak media's coverage of the Hungarian Revolt of 1956 to the televised protests against the World Trade Organization's meeting in Hong Kong in 2005.

Hanno Balz, "The German Media and the Red Army Fraction" suggested that not only did the German media exploit the image of the RAF as terrorists in the 1970s but that the RAF in turn used the media to redefine the meaning of terrorism in the popular discourse.

David Carter, "From 'We Shall Overcome' to 'We Shall Overrun'" noted that prior to 1964, the American media coverage of the African-American Civil Rights movement typically depicted activists as victims of white southern violence, but, with the rise of more violent forms of protest in the second half of the decade, the media exploited images of chaos in American cities to fuel white backlash against the movement and to draw attention to the failures of LBJ's urban renewal programs.

Oystein L. Pedersen Dahlen, "Violent, but silent—Popular Protest against The WTO in Online News" analyzed the online news coverage of five prominent media outlets in the UK and Norway of the 2005 World Trade Organization's Ministerial Conference in Hong Kong to show the differences in coverage between online news services and more traditional televised news coverage.

Stefan Eichinger, "Taking the Revolution to the Big Screen" offered a Third World perspective by comparing the ways Cuban filmmakers chose to depict Castro's revolution of 1959 with the strategies used by Thai filmmakers to portray the unsuccessful student revolt of 1973.

James Godbolt, "Representation and Reception: The Case of the Vietnam War and Anti-War Protest in Norway" explored the complex interaction between anti-war demonstrators in Norway and the media suggesting that Norwegians and other Scandinavians' disapproval of the US war in Vietnam did not necessarily translate to support for anti-war protesters in their own countries.

Todd Michael Goehle, "Challenging Television's Revolutions: Politics, Economics, and Vision in Tabloid Representations of West German Social Protest, 1967-1968" dealt with anti-student media mogul, Axel Springer's attempts to grapple with the growing influence of the less anti-student images of protest offered by television in West Germany during the peak years of student activism. Ultimately the Springer press continued to hold on to its monopoly of the tabloid press by adopting a strategy that questioned the legitimacy of the television's ability to accurately portray student demonstrations and at the same time questioning the legality of left-wing student actions.

Stuart Hilwig, "Constructing a Media Image of the *Sessantotto*: The Framing of the Italian Protest Movement in 1968" applied Todd Gitlin's theory of a "protest paradigm" for framing student movements to the Italian presses' coverage of the Italian student revolt in 1968. Using a qualitative approach, Hilwig concluded that the conservative Italian newspapers did use a 'protest paradigm' to negatively frame the student activists and the communist press inverted these frames to offer a positive image of Italian students to its readers.

Naoko Koda, "The Guardian in the Anti-Vietnam War Movement" analyzed the role that the left-wing newspaper, The National Guardian, had in informing and shaping the ideologies and tactics of the American

Anti-Vietnam War movement. Koda's work provides an overlooked insight into the ways that the small but influential left-wing press influenced protest in the United States.

Roy Krovel, "The Ejercito Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (Zapatista Army of National Liberation—EZLN) of Mexico Meets Global Media and Global Solidarity" discussed how the indigenous Zapatista movement in Chiapas, Mexico has used the internet and other new media to "re-frame" a post-modern guerilla movement against the Mexican government that has abrogated portions of the Constitution to impoverish poor people in southern Mexico.

Hannes Lachmann, "Comrades in Arms? The Hungarian Media on the Prague Spring and the Czechoslovak Media on the Hungarian Revolution of 1956" chronicled the media bias each nation had toward each other during their brief attempts to cast off Soviet hegemony. Lachmann conclusively showed that the Czechoslovak media portrayed the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 in negative terms until their own attempt to break from the Soviet bloc in 1968. The Hungarian media, in turn, welcomed Dubcek's "Prague Spring" framing the Czechs and Slovaks as "comrades in arms" but then became highly critical and negative to their "comrades" after the Warsaw Pact invasion of August 1968.

Rudi Maier, "...As Revolution Turns: From 'Fit Back In' to 'Radicalize Life!'" was an artistic and scholarly installation of selected commercial ads that use revolutionary icons such as Che Guevara, Karl Marx, Delcroix's "Liberty," and Ulrike Meinhof to show how these revolutionary figures have been re-adapted over time to 'brand' items in what has become an increasingly commodified and commercialized image of revolution.

Rune Ottosen, "From Maoism to Journalism. The Making of the Revolutionary Newspaper, *Klassekampen*" described the improbable success of a Norwegian newspaper that began as the voice of a Maoist party in 1977 and re-adapted its editorial policies in favor of a more journalistic approach over a dogmatic line that has enabled the daily to survive as a respected left-wing journal to the present day.

Niek Pas, "Around the Algerian War (1954-1962). Decolonization, Activism and the Dutch Sixties" posited that the Dutch media's representation of the Algerian war for independence passed through three phases: up to 1957, the media showed little interest in the Algerian conflict; from 1957 to 1959, Dutch pacifist, left-wing and Catholic media outlets began to show increasing footage and column space to the conflict and portrayed it as an Algerian struggle for liberation; finally after 1959, the major outlets of Dutch media including television offered increasing coverage of the conflict characterized as an Algerian movement for independence that coincided with increasing Dutch activism and support for the Algerians.

Craig Peariso, "Representing Black Power: Handling a 'Revolution' in the Media Age" used the story of the variable media reception of the Black Panthers' Ten Point Program and their decision to enter the California State Assembly armed with guns in 1967 to demonstrate the various strategies and increasing awareness of media coverage that many protest groups adopted since the 1960s. Peariso noted that the media greeted the Panthers' Ten Point Program with little enthusiasm but the Panthers' decision to enter California's capital building with weapons immediately catapulted them onto the national stage.

Juliane Riese, "David vs. Goliath—Bambi Lovers vs. Viking Butchers" detailed the less successful campaign of Greenpeace activists who sought to stop Norwegian whalers from hunting in the North Sea. Riese noted that Greenpeace had previously adopted the successful media strategy of being portrayed as environmental 'Davids' against insidious nature destroying 'Goliaths' but this strategy backfired when nationalist Norwegians responded with their own media self-identification as 'Davids' struggling against global 'Goliaths' attempting to force environmental standards that would halt time honored practices of their people.

Dieter Rucht, "Changes of Protest Groups' Media Strategies from 1950 to the Present" attempted to illustrate broad trends in the tactics used by left-wing protest groups to elicit media coverage since the "Ban the Bomb" movements in the 1950s. Focusing primarily on German protest movements, Rucht theorized that the 1960s activists were more likely to adopt an aggressive "attack" strategy in attempting to elicit or confront media coverage, more recent global justice movements have used strategies of autonomy and adaptation in dealing with the media.

Andreas Schneider, "Just No Amazon State: The Media and the New Women's Movement in 1970s West Germany" contended that the women's movement that began in the late 1960s was given almost no media attention in West Germany until the mid 1970s. From 1974, greater attention was given to the women's movement in the BRD by *Spiegel* and *Stern* and with often ambiguous results ranging from positive reception to an angry backlash against feminism.

Erling Sivertsen and Rolf Werenskjold, "Photos in Frames –or Frames in Photos: Framing Photos in Black and White—the Global 1968 Revolts in Three Norwegian Dailies" examined the Norwegian presses' framing of the 1968 protests around the globe through a quantitative analysis of news photos in the conservative *Aftenposten*, the socialist *Arbeiderbladet*, and the liberal *Dagbladet*. Sivertsen and Werenskjold boldly attempted to count and categorize the frames used by these dailies and daringly conclude that, contrary to expectation, the *Aftenposten* offered the most positive framing of international protests and the *Arbeiderbladet* used more negative frames in its portrayal of social movements. Although the authors are still revising their conclusions to account for this phenomenon, one can not but think their results offer another example of Norwegian exceptionalism!

Hendrik Spilker, "Punks, Hackers and Unruly Technology: Countercultures in the Communication Society" dealt with relationship between the punk movement of the 1970s and emerging internet countercultures.

Gunnar Strøm, "From Monterey to Altamount, The Festival Rockumentaries of the 1960s: Rebellious Representation of Commodified Popular Culture?" analyzed the documentaries made about the Woodstock Music Festival during the 'summer of love' (1969) and the music festival held in California at the Altamount racetrack that ended in tragedy (1970). Strøm sought to determine if the festival organizers who made the documentaries were motivated out of a sincere desire to convey the rebellious nature of the festivals or profit motives.

Rimko van der Maar, "Covering the International War Crimes Tribunal on Vietnam. The Media Strategy of Dutch Student Leader Ton Regtien" focussed upon the key student leader in the

Netherlands, Ton Regtien and his strategy of mobilizing Dutch students in the 1960s. In particular, Regtien had the opportunity to report on the International War Crimes Tribunal held in Stockholm and Roskilde in 1967 to the left-wing media in the Netherlands allowing Regtien a unique opportunity to be both an activist and journalist at the same time.

Marko Zubak, "Preparing the Ground: The Coverage of the 1968 World Turmoil and Student Revolt in the Yugoslav Youth Press" explored the ways that communist youth groups in Belgrade, Zagreb and Ljubljana portrayed the 1968 protest movements in their newspapers. 1968 turned out to be a transformational year for the youth press in Yugoslavia as their coverage of worldwide protest proved far more accurate and thoughtful than the mainstream Yugoslav media and provoked a kind of journalistic rebellion among these youth media outlets. The Yugoslav youth press often agreed with left-wing students outside the communist bloc and offered stories of foreign revolt that also conveyed a subtle critique of the regime at home.

CONCLUSIONS

After two days of scholarly analysis and debate, the conference participants concluded that "the Revolution most certainly was and will be televised." Beginning with social movements in the mid-twentieth century, the media has become inextricably linked with modern protest. More than just a 'big screen' or loudspeaker, media intentionally amplifies and deforms the meanings of protest for both participants and observers. The motivations of those who produce this media are complex—some manipulate the words and images in their media to defend a political ideology, others re-stage protest to increase sales, and still others reframe social protest according to what they believe are proscribed standards of journalistic objectivity. Ultimately, the participants' work provided new examples of the ways that frame theory and other forms of media analysis can be applied to modern protest movements. Furthermore, the papers produced by the conference participants unequivocally showed that the media not only shapes and creates a discourse between the protesters and society but, as such, the media acts as a third entity in a non-binary movement of ideas and images circulating among social movements and the public.

A publication of selected papers as part of the publication series "Protest, Culture and Society" Berghahn Books (New York/Oxford) is firmly planned.

For further information please visit: <http://www.hivolda.no/protest>
or go to: <http://www.protest-research.eu>

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