

Introduction

Cinema, Architecture, and Cities circa 1968

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The histories of cinema and of the city have been closely intertwined for over one hundred years. However, at few precise moments in time has their intertwining been more evident than in 1968, a year that witnessed political revolutions and a revolutionary cinematic engagement, both of which relied upon interacting with and using the city in new ways. As the various chapters in this book detail in city-specific case studies, from Paris, Berlin, Milan, and Chicago to New York, Los Angeles, Mexico City, and Tokyo, activists and filmmakers took to the streets, commandeered buildings and spaces, and sought to remake the urban landscape as an expression of utopian longing or as a dystopian critique of the established order.

Fifty years later, this book seeks to explore the degree to which the real events of political revolt in the urban landscape in 1968 drove change in the nature and attitudes of filmmakers and architects alike. On the one hand, they required filmmakers to reinvent their ways of making motion pictures because of the distinctive technical and artistic challenges of shooting on location in real urban environments, while encouraging many to rethink the line between filmmaker and activist. On the other hand, architects were forced to critically reflect on the role of their profession in creating or failing to solve the problems of the built environment that were such a prominent root cause of unrest, and this self-reflexive thinking prompted an opening of architecture to greater influence from other arts and to a reenvisioning of architecture as another kind of representation.

Cinema, Contestation, and the Built Environment

The films discussed in this book cover a range from avant-garde and agit-prop to mainstream narrative feature films, all sharing a focus on the city and, often, particular streets and buildings, as places of political contestation, and often violence, which the medium of cinema was uniquely equipped to capture. Equally, the various contributors investigate the ways in which cinematic representations of the city circa 1968 revealed and exposed to scrutiny processes endemic in all modern city growth but that were seemingly exaggerated then, including rationalist architecture and planning, the increasing encroachment of systems of control and observation by the state and corporate powers, and the increasing interpenetration of the urban landscape, media, and consumption. These important themes, which recur throughout the book, demonstrate that cinema's close interest in the built environment circa 1968 not only implicated the discipline of architecture but also that of urban planning—two fields that are not identical but that refer to overlapping micro and macro spatial scales, building and city, respectively, and are often taught and institutionally organized together in education, in professional practice, and in government and policy. In this Introduction, I will begin to enumerate some of the rich variety of filmmaking that 1968 inspired and the urban and architectural issues cinema of that era examined, while thinking through some of the key disciplinary issues raised by considering film and the built environment together. Identification of the broad questions at stake in the book will then lead me to highlight the important additions to knowledge and debate made by the contributing authors in the subsequent chapters.

The book is founded on the idea that this was a unique moment of parallel and intertwined contestations. For example, cinema was thrown into turmoil by the decision of the government of Charles de Gaulle to fire Henri Langlois, the much-admired director of the Cinémathèque française, in a move seen by filmmakers as dangerous state interference in cultural affairs. Filmmakers soon after shut down the Cannes Film Festival in sympathy with protesting students in Paris; censorship regimes in the United States and other countries were weakened; there was a precipitous (if temporary) decline in the power of industrial cinemas such as Hollywood, matched by a rise in interaction between narrative fiction film, experimental film, and documentary film; and there was an explosion of politically agitational filmmaking across Europe, North and South America, Japan, and Southeast Asia. This was a moment of exceptional tension, competition, and conflict at the box office, for financing, distribution, audiences, and critical attention, as the

various kinds of cinema articulated different ideological positions, different models of what film and film culture should be and, often, with a particular concern for marginal and oppressed social groups. Paramount was a clash between declining industrial, studio-based, genre-based, entertainment-oriented, profit-driven cinema (often known as “classical” cinema), and emergent new waves and undergrounds, usually low budget, thriving on low production values with strongly realist or abstract visual style, or new combinations of the two, and new utopian thinking (the high point of cinematic “modernism”).¹

This moment of turmoil also entailed an overhaul of critical and intellectual thinking about cinema, playing a decisive role in the very formation of the discipline of film studies (as well as media studies and mass communications), especially by encouraging interpretations of film in terms of ideology and ideology critique, and the proliferation of a rich canvas of Marxist, structuralist, semiotic, psychoanalytic, feminist, and post-structuralist analyses—to point to just one foundational example, the publication of Christian Metz’s *Essais sur la signification au cinéma* (1968).² The culmination of a longer evolution and growth of art cinema and political film that had dominated the international scene since World War II in the aftermath of fascism and accompanying a decline of European empires, 1968 became a high-water mark in the history of *engagé* film culture—reflected in the Paris-based journal *Cahiers du cinéma* or New York’s *Cineaste*—and especially among an outraged and burgeoning student generation in the major metropolises of advanced industrial nations. For example, Thomas Elsaesser has recently explained the decisive influence on his subsequent career of his experience as a young film critic living in Paris for much of 1968, from which he gained the belief “that the cinema was worth devoting one’s life to,” while Francesco Casetti in his comprehensive *Theories of Cinema, 1945–1995* privileges 1968 for “the perception of art as a particular battlefield, rather than as a mere extension of the battles fought inside society . . . a movement from cinema towards politics.”³

Likewise, both the practice and study of architecture were overturned by the political turmoil of the day, as contestations in the streets radicalized large numbers of professional architects, and faculty and students at schools of architecture and urban planning, by demonstrating the role of certain kinds of utilitarian architecture in alienating young people and minorities, and in aiding and abetting the repressive agendas of the state and capitalist powers. Planning and construction continued apace on iconic late modernist buildings such as the World Trade Center (1966–1973) and Tour Montparnasse (1969–1973). But leftist vanguards such as the Internationale Situationniste

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and Lotta Continua insisted that any successful change in the social, political, and economic status quo would require, as a fundamental ingredient, a redefinition of the physical and ethical character of cities. Architectural avant-gardes such as the London-based Archigram and the Florence-based Superstudio modeled futuristic urban utopias, and architectural historians and theorists such as Peter Cook, Reyner Banham, Aldo Rossi, Manfredo Tafuri, Denise Scott Brown, and Robert Venturi entered into intense, and often antagonistic, debates on the best future direction for buildings and urban planning. Interventions into these debates often prominently featured critiques of Le Corbusier or Mies van der Rohe and hypotheses on the emergence of postmodernism.⁴

The clash in architecture also often involved open conflict between government and/or private owners of buildings and land, intent on real estate development and supported by the military and/or police, and various oppositional groups, including racial minorities, bohemians, New Leftists, feminists, homosexuals, local residents, neighborhood activists, architectural preservationists, and especially the poor and the marginal in society, who were more often displaced by grand urban projects than others. In conflicts between these forces, land use, architecture and design, construction and environmental impact, and public access to and use of urban space were all at issue, while in terms of architectural history and preservation the conflict opposed modernist, rationalist, and functionalist planning and design to older styles and structures (e.g., ancient, folk, arts and crafts, art nouveau, art deco, beaux-arts, neoclassical) as significant parts of innumerable cities were subject to actual or proposed destruction to make way for new development.

Hence, a special—arguably unique—moment of intense experimentation and critique was evident in both cinema and architecture circa 1968, and the two were closely intertwined. Filmmakers engaged more directly than ever before in self-conscious examination of the built environment through rendering it on film, and often with an awareness of architectural debates of the day. And architects, who were often also cinephiles, reflected on the mass mediation of their profession and the cities it produced. Developments in the two fields of endeavor were not always exactly simultaneous: the chapters in this book take into account, and explore, the different timing of key events in film and architecture in and around 1968, and from one city to another. But, in a variety of cities worldwide, both film and architecture were gripped by self-conscious reflection on their *raison d'être* as much as by innovative making and creating. Forming the heart of the book, this exceptional conjuncture is central to its exploration of the two fields and of the historical

moment of “1968.” Indeed, it is an aim of this book also to make the case that the significance of 1968 as an historical moment continues to merit and reward documentation and analysis and ought to be actively remembered. The book will do this by honing in on key events of the era, and their representation, on the ground or at a grassroots level in specific urban contexts that were the scene of both planned and spontaneous revolt, seeking to rematerialize those events in space and time.⁵

1968 as a Revolutionary Moment

As a starting point, we have to ask ourselves why 1968 can be claimed as a revolutionary moment in the first place, a question around which a voluminous literature has developed in many countries and languages in the past fifty years. (See Figure I.1.) First, it surely has to do with that year’s particular density of turning points: in January, the Tet offensive against U.S. forces launched by Vietcong and North Vietnamese troops; in February, the French government’s incendiary decision to fire the director of the Cinémathèque française, Henri Langlois; in March, the outbreak of student protest on the suburban campus of the University of Paris at Nanterre; in April, the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. in Memphis, Tennessee (an event that prompted a two-day delay in that year’s Academy Awards ceremony); in May, the paralysis of central Paris by student occupations and street violence; in June, the assassination of U.S. presidential contender Senator Robert Kennedy in Los Angeles; in August, the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia; and so on. Second, 1968 stems from broader and long-term factors in the twenty-three years after World War II, too large to detail here but, briefly, including the postwar baby boom and new political and cultural importance of young people; rapid economic expansion in North America and Europe, as well as parts of Latin America and Asia, before recession in 1969 presaged the profound economic crises of the following decade; the objective expansion of technocracy and consumer capitalism as well as critiques of them; resistance to colonialism and imperialism in the Third World (the Vietnam War in particular); resistance to repressive state apparatuses by grassroots protest movements, fueling an intersection between extraparliamentary political activism and new political and cultural theories on the left of the political spectrum (i.e., the New Left, aided by the new prominence and size of youth populations in higher education); and attempts by leftists to connect protest by disaffected members of the white middle class with protest and resistance by colonized peoples, racial minorities, and the working class.



Figure I.1 CBS television news anchor Walter Cronkite broadcasts from Hue, Vietnam, during the Tet Offensive, February 1968 (CBS Photo Archive/Getty Images)

With respect to the specificities of urban life, other explanatory factors must also be reckoned with. These included the crisis of inner cities in the face of ongoing rapid and widespread suburbanization; an emerging sense of globalization given not only the ubiquity of trains, automobiles, and telephones but the increasing affordability of jet travel; the proliferation of media and media awareness (cinema, television, the mainstream and underground press,

and rock music); mass media reporting of urban unrest from Paris and Prague to Chicago and Tokyo; the emergence of computing and other new technologies in everyday life; and the first photographs of Earth from outer space produced by the Apollo 8 mission in December 1968. Those photos, the geographer Denis Cosgrove has explained, were “the very first photos of Earth taken from space by human observers” and they “forced humans to acknowledge the bounds of life and the need to share a small, fragile globe.”⁶ In this book, all of these transformations of the quotidian come together powerfully, for example, in Jon Lewis’s analysis of *Medium Cool* (Haskell Wexler, 1969), one of most notable feature-length films of a specific urban conflict of the day—the riots that overshadowed the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in August 1968, seen in Wexler’s film through the eyes of a TV cameraman.

There is, of course, a large and substantial literature on the history and meaning of 1968 and the larger era known as the sixties from Ronald Fraser’s *1968: A Student Generation in Revolt* (1988) to Kristin Ross’s *May 1968 and Its Afterlives* (2002) and Sherman et al.’s *The Long 1968: Revisions and New Perspectives* (2013), to name just three titles.⁷ Each of these has a different geographic emphasis or methodology, but all are cultural and political histories and involve not only documentation of the events of 1968 but reflection on their legacy for subsequent generations. This book aims to do some of the same kind of work, while also arguing that histories of 1968 have not yet sufficiently taken account of the specific roles played in the confrontations and crises of that era by film and by architecture. Seeking to add this new dimension to the history of the era and its distinctive political controversies and social movements, I hope this book will be taken as evidence that considering film and architecture in 1968 alongside each other is not only appropriate but necessary given that the era’s political activism, to a great extent, grew out of a reconsideration of the relationship between reality and representation in urban space.

It is also important to admit a certain complexity in the chronological definition of “1968” because it is an undeniable fact that many important events in architecture and film happened a few years before or after 1968 as such, even though we can still say that 1968 retains preeminent historical importance. Events unfolded at a different pace in each city—hence the title of this book refers to “circa” rather than “in” 1968. That was the most important year in every respect in Paris but, for example, in San Francisco the “death of hippie” was already declared in 1967 while in New York 1969 and 1970 were the biggest years for mass political protest. In China, the Cultural Revolution led by Mao Tse-tung was inaugurated in 1966 and ran until 1973 but was arguably at its height in 1967 and 1968, exerting a profound influence

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on many elements of the Far Left worldwide.⁸ In Italy, as Gaetana Marrone explains in her essay in this book, Pier Paolo Pasolini's film *Teorema* (1968) articulated growing social and political unrest in that year in Milan, but some of the most interesting political cinema from that country and city emerged in the even more intense atmosphere that took hold after the Piazza Fontana bombing in December 1969. Therefore, one also has to be precise about the chronology in cinema. For example, many histories of Hollywood cinema of "the sixties" highlight 1967 as the year in which the old-fashioned hegemony of the major studios was broken by Arthur Penn's revisionist gangster film *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967) and Mike Nichols's study of suburban youth alienation *The Graduate* (1967). Other historians, however, make a case for Penn's earlier *The Chase* (1966) as the beginning of the paradigm shift to the so-called New Hollywood, while still others point to Dennis Hopper's *Easy Rider* (1969). All agree that 1968 was a definite turning point in the era's relaxation of film censorship because of the inauguration in October that year of the so-called ratings system of the film industry—governing Motion Picture Association of America. Still others note that year for the publication of Andrew Sarris's highly influential *The American Cinema: Directors and Directions* (1968), for its pioneering popularizing in English of the idea of the movie director as an *auteur*.⁹

Meanwhile, in architecture, for example, Robert Venturi published his seminal *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* in 1966, but it was in the fall of 1968 that he and Denise Scott Brown taught the groundbreaking architecture studio at Yale that would result in their book *Learning from Las Vegas* in 1972.¹⁰ As I will explain further below, many historians of architecture acknowledge 1968 as a turning point, including Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre, Harry Francis Mallgrave, Anthony Vidler, and K. Michael Hays, all of whom pinpoint that year. It was not necessarily the one year in that era that saw the most signature buildings completed, but many paradigmatic structures were being built or in planning (e.g., the aforementioned World Trade Center and Tour Montparnasse) and some major buildings had been completed a couple of years before but took a little while to become a focus of attention—for example, as Andrew Webber explains in his essay in this volume, the Springer Building corporate media headquarters in Berlin, completed in 1965, became one of the key sites of student protest in 1968. Some of the most important protests of the year arose directly in response to actual architectural interventions in real communities—for example, Columbia University's plans for construction of a gymnasium in nearby Morningside Park, which sparked the student occupation of that university of April–May 1968. And several of the year's most notable films placed architectural critique at

their center—see, for example, Chris Marker's *The Sixth Side of the Pentagon* (1968), which anatomically dissects that building's gargantuan size and symbolic power while presenting the tens of thousands of demonstrators who massed around its walls on October 21, 1967, as a kind of spectacular architectural intervention.

Besides buildings, major events also took place in architectural education and theory: for example, students stormed and effectively closed the Milan Triennale architectural exhibition; the BBC first broadcast the series of radio talks by Reyner Banham that would become his famous book *Los Angeles: The Architecture of the Four Ecologies* (1971); and architectural journals such as *l'Architecture d'aujourd'hui* in France and *Casabella* in Italy published polemics and became deeply involved in the political controversies of the day.¹¹ Manfredo Tafuri moved to Venice to take up a new post as professor in the Institute of Architectural History, publishing *Teorie e storia dell'architettura* (1968), followed at the beginning of 1969 by his famous militant Marxist essay in sympathy with student strikes and occupations, "Per una critica dell'ideologia architettonica" in the new political journal *Contropiano*.¹² Nineteen sixty-eight was also something of a high point in experimentation by architects with the potential for cinema and cinema-related technologies: for example, in Charles and Ray Eames' tour de force filmic exploration of microscopic and interplanetary spatial scales in *Powers of Ten* (1968), in Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown's use of an automobile-mounted camera to film the Las Vegas Strip, and in Rem Koolhaas's decision to relocate from the Netherlands to London where he added to his early filmmaking training by studying at the Architectural Association and began to develop the especially cinematic approach to architecture that would underpin his subsequent fame.¹³

Reviewing the Literature

In insisting on the specificity of 1968, one of the aims of this book is to add to the rich range of literature on cinema and the city that has proliferated increasingly in the past twenty years, produced and used by scholars and students in a variety of fields including history of art and architecture, social and political history, urban planning and urban design, sociology, and cultural geography.

A significant number of valuable anthologies of scholarly essays present close analyses of the multiple aspects of the cinema-city relationship from the late nineteenth century to the present day, and in an international array of cities, from David Clarke's *The Cinematic City* (1997) to Yomi Braester and James Tweedie's *Cinema at the City's Edge: Film and Urban Networks in East*

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Asia (2010).¹⁴ There has also been a growing number of monographs addressing the cinema-city relationship from a broad historical or philosophical point of view—for example, James Donald’s *Imagining the Modern City* (1999)—and there have been several cinema histories of individual cities or geographically distinct groups of cities, including Paula Massood’s *Black City Cinema: African American Urban Experiences in Film* (2003), Charlotte Brunsdon’s *London in Cinema: The Cinematic City since 1945* (2007), and Lawrence Webb’s *The Cinema of Urban Crisis: Seventies Film and the Reinvention of the City* (2015).¹⁵ It is a premise of this book that as the cinema-and-the-city field matures, there is a need for further studies that document and examine interconnections between geographically dispersed cities at very precise turning points in history. This book seeks not to examine cinema and the city in general, nor cinema and the city in one particular place, but the ways in which more or less simultaneous events and representations across a network of cities were part of a crisis that was globally distributed but temporally concentrated. Hence, this book aims to strike a somewhat new balance between geographic range and historical depth, recognizing that cities are important both for their individual existence and their interaction through an intensified form of what geographers call “comparative urbanism” transposed to film studies.¹⁶ The edited collection is arguably an especially appropriate response to the methodological challenge of addressing in one book the diverse conditions and histories of urbanization and cinema in geographically far-flung locales, and the historical and ongoing inseparability of urbanization and globalization is surely one of the factors that explains the large number of edited books on cinema and the city.¹⁷

It seems to me, however, that the cinematic connection with cities has been more extensively explored by scholars than has the relationship of cinema and architecture, although the latter field is also rich and most books on cinema and urban history, or cinema and urbanization, discuss architecture to some extent. Certain studies seem positioned fairly squarely between film studies and the other two fields—for example, Linda Krause and Patrice Petro’s edited collection *Global Cities: Cinema, Architecture, and Urbanism in a Digital Age* (2003) and Pamela Robertson Wojcik’s monograph *The Apartment Plot: Urban Living in American Film and Popular Culture, 1945–1975* (2010).¹⁸ Some studies are especially concerned with historical contexts while others foreground techniques of representing architecture in films (real buildings shot on location or imagined ones created through studio-based *mise en scène*). Some studies emphasize formal and experiential homologies between the two (a building as a kind of narrative to the visitor or user moving through it, the ability of a film to map the particularities of a building’s structures and

spaces, the visual and acoustic character of both) and others deal with the ramifications of moving image culture and technology for current architectural practice and training (e.g., architectural computer-aided design or virtual reality walk throughs as screen-based media). Examples of such studies range from Donald Albrecht's *Designing Dreams: Modern Architecture in the Movies* (2000) and Giuliana Bruno's *Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture, and Film* (2002) to François Penz and Andong Lu's *Urban Cinematics: Understanding Urban Phenomena through the Moving Image* (2011) and Richard Koeck's *Cine-scapes: Cinematic Spaces in Architecture and Cities* (2013).¹⁹

In addition to Wojcik's book on apartments in cinema, particular building types are the focus of Merrill Schleier's monograph *Skyscraper Cinema: Architecture and Gender in American Film* (2009) and David B. Clarke and Marcus A. Doel's *Moving Pictures/Stopping Places: Hotels and Motels on Film* (2009).²⁰ In addition to Albrecht, several other titles focus on interwar cinema and modernist architecture—the era of art deco and streamlined moderne design having been particularly influential on set design in France and the United States, while others point to the special importance of Weimar Germany's expressionist and New Objectivity movements as film-architecture points of contact.²¹ Another cluster of books can be identified for their primary preoccupation with broad histories of cinematic set design and production design—most recently, Lucy Fischer's edited volume *Art Direction and Production Design* (2015)—although the degree to which they discuss architecture and architectural practice proper varies considerably.²²

This book aims to add to the many valuable insights this rich literature has provided, while pushing in three directions whose combination will distinguish it from existing work: first, and distinctively, in focusing on 1968, it examines the architectural environment at the very end of the era of architectural history generally described as “modern,” concentrating not on that tendency's artistic high points but drawing attention to its collapse and deconstruction, and the battering of its critical reputation in the turn toward postmodernism; second, in emphasizing the importance of actual contestation in real public and private buildings and urban places, it avoids discussion of movie sets almost entirely; and, third, where much of the existing literature examines how architecture in cinema reveals ideologies of class, race, or gender over long periods of time, by linking architecture and revolt this book implies that the built environment, like cinema, is especially interesting and revealing at times when ideological struggle breaks out in the massing of bodies in peaceful protest and the confrontation of forces prepared for, and sometimes using, violence.

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Surprisingly few books have been published in English that deal extensively with events in architecture in 1968, although most histories of modern and contemporary architecture, and of architectural theory, do acknowledge that 1968 was a key turning point in its effects. In the epilogue to his anthology *Modern Architectural Theory: A Historical Survey, 1673–1968* (2005), Mallgrave identifies it with “a genuine architectural crisis of colossal magnitude,” although he withholds judgment of its net effect, declaring open-endedly “whether one looks at the year as the beginning of the end of modern theory or simply as a period of retrenchment and critical reassessment, it cannot be disputed that architectural theory would never again be the same. A new (or old) direction had to be found.”²³ While Mallgrave suggests that architecture felt the effects of 1968 mainly “psychologically,” Tzonis and Lefaivre give it more weight in *Architecture in Europe since 1968: Memory and Invention* (1992):

In no other major political upheaval had architecture occupied such a privileged position. In the manifestos of Spring '68, from Berkeley to Berlin, from Paris to Prague, architecture became a central focus. In the varying degrees of sophistication or apocalyptic ecstasy typical of the period, architecture was used to attack the establishment in order to exemplify the poverty, pain, and pollution of the modern machine civilization, or it was held up as the sensuous, visionary, utopian “alternative” worth fighting for.²⁴

For Tzonis and Lefaivre, indeed, 1968 was also important because architecture had not played such an important role in the French, American, or Russian revolutions before it. Barry Bergdoll and Alice Thomine likewise contend that May 1968 had concrete implications for architecture in France, in forcing a wholesale reorganization of architectural education, especially as a result of the student occupation of the École des beaux-arts, “the locus of entrenched academicism, which by 1968 translated as a kind of modernist orthodoxy, and the reaction against it took the form of embracing historical research, a new respect for the city, and a rejuvenated interest in a critical historical approach to the modern movement.”²⁵ Bernard Tschumi has claimed that the two key consequences were an increase in the importance of architectural theory relative to practice and a much greater freedom among theorists and practicing architects to think across boundaries from architecture into “the arts, philosophy, literary criticism.”²⁶ K. Michael Hays has similarly pointed to a qualitatively new theoretical and technical self-reflexivity in the profession, chief among which was the realization that “architecture theory is a

practice of mediation” and as such was newly opened to Marxism, semiotics, psychoanalysis, formalism, phenomenology, and post-structuralism, “rewriting systems of thought assumed to be properly extrinsic or irrelevant into architecture’s own idiolect.”²⁷

The Importance of the City in 1968

The reenergizing of architecture by 1968 appears to have been matched by an intensified sense of the importance and distinctive textures of the city. One of the best photojournalistic accounts of May 1968 in Paris—Philippe Labro’s *Les barricades de mai* (1968)—expresses this lyrically: “This is Paris, the Paris of violence and enthusiasm, this is the street, with its horrors and surprises, its strangeness, its ugliness, its poetry, its immutable aspect which children wreak havoc with nevertheless. This is the capital of consumption, which is becoming, in the space of a few nights, the capital of contestation.”²⁸ The geographer David Harvey is adamant that urban protest in 1968 must be seen as a reaction to a post–World War II reconfiguration of space in which city centers were deprioritized: “in the same way that the Haussmanization of Paris had a role in explaining the dynamics of the Paris Commune, so the soulless qualities of suburban living played a role in the dramatic protest movements of 1968 in the USA.”²⁹ That year the dynamism of urban life was powerfully evoked by Norman Mailer in his electrifying account of the national conventions of the Republican Party and the Democratic Party, *Miami and the Siege of Chicago* (1968). In his distinctively brash tone, and with more than a hint of nostalgia, Mailer argued for the uniqueness of the latter city, contrasting it with New York, a world capital, Los Angeles, “a constellation of plastic,” and Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington “wink[ing] like dull diamonds in the smog”:

But Chicago is a great American city. Perhaps it is the last of the great American cities. . . . the urbanites here were . . . simple, strong, warm-spirited, sly, rough, compassionate, jostling, tricky, and extraordinarily good-natured because they had sex in their pockets, muscles on their back, hot eats around the corner, neighborhoods which dripped with the sauce of local legend, and real city architecture, brownstones with different windows on every floor, vistas for miles of red-brick and two-family wood-frame houses with balconies and porches, runty stunted trees rich as farmland in their promise of tenderness the first city evenings of spring, streets where kids played stick-ball and roller-hockey, lots of smoke and twilight. The clangor of the late

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nineteenth century, the very hope of greed, was in these streets. London one hundred years ago could not have looked much better.³⁰

And yet Mailer clearly had a sense of the susceptibility of the city to destruction, alluding to American conservatives' "visions of future Vietnams in our own cities."³¹ If the textures and dynamism—indeed, violence—of cities were to the fore circa 1968, it is also the case that the war in Vietnam, and other wars in former colonies, created a heightened awareness of the opposition of urban and rural space and in some contexts a perceived threat to the city from the countryside. This was partly because of the agrarian bases, or sheer underdevelopment, of many so-called Third World economies, but it was also due to a proliferation of theories of mass protest and revolutionary war centered in rural space.

The most widely read of these, Regis Debray's *Revolution in the Revolution?* (1967), argued for the validity and importance of power struggles across Latin America waged by the disenfranchised outside cities—peasants in Colombia, miners in Bolivia—and the inspirational models of Fidel Castro's overthrow of the Batista regime in Cuba and Vietnamese resistance to French and U.S. forces.³² As Debray described it, such movements were underpinned by long and careful persuasion and mobilization of the rural population first, followed much later by attacks on cities from outside. Here he evoked Castro and Che Guevara's small, secretive, highly committed cadres of paramilitaries hidden in the Sierra Maestra mountains and rarely descending to the cities for fear of entrapment or assassination:

The "fist," however well-armed it may be, must consult the head before making a move. The "head"—the leadership—is in the capital. After all, isn't that where the political life of the country is concentrated—the leaders of other parties, the press, Congress, the ministries, the post offices—in sum, the organs of central power? After all, isn't that the centre of concentration of the industrial proletariat, the factories, the trade unions, the university, in a word, the vital forces of the population? The norms of democratic centralism require the commander of the guerilla front . . . must sooner or later descend to the city.³³

Slightly later, and especially *after* the protests and attempted revolutionary actions of 1968, which were met by often brutal repressive violence and which disillusioned many leftists, interest in the "urban guerilla" became more pronounced. In a 1969 book of that name, Martin Oppenheimer traced the historical roles of the countryside and the city in progressive political revolt,

from the Middle Ages through Fanon, Mao, Lenin, and Rosa Luxemburg, arguing that one of the key questions for leftist political organizers had always been “is the lever for social change to be the peasantry or the urban working class?”³⁴ Oppenheimer analyzed various types, or degrees, of urban revolt, from marches and general strikes to terrorist groups and armed insurrection, evoking the situations of “the black guerilla” and the “inter-urban guerilla” by quoting the House Un-American Activities Committee report *Guerilla Warfare Advocates in the US* (1968), which described a possible future in that committee’s typically apocalyptic tone: “The new concept is lightning campaigns conducted in highly sensitive urban communities. . . . It dislocates the organs of harmony and order and reduces central power to the level of a helpless, sprawling octopus . . . Violence and terror will spread like a firestorm.”³⁵

Oppenheimer ultimately rejected what he characterized as the suicidal strategy of the urban guerilla, calling instead for nonviolent revolution with guerilla-like organization and commitment, but his analysis nonetheless tellingly and not unsympathetically traced the cycle of protest and repression that led many to greater and greater degrees of radicalization. In his autobiography *Underground* (2009), Mark Rudd, who was one of the leaders of the Columbia University student protests of April–May 1968, charted such a narrative in his own evolution from typical college freshman to chairman of Columbia’s chapter of the national organization Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and, later, membership in the armed revolutionary underground movement known as the Weathermen (also often referred to as Weatherman or the Weather Underground Organization). While tracing an arc from mass public protest to clandestine actions by small revolutionary cells, Rudd also emphasizes another distinctive spatial issue prominent in many cities at that time—that is, tension between the university and the city. Although many important universities, especially in the United States, have small-town or rural settings, Columbia University’s distinctive setting, embedded in but also aloof from the surroundings of Harlem, gave its buildings an especially charged meaning. Rudd describes his impression of the place when he first enrolled there as a freshman in 1965:

Columbia was built on one of the highest points in Manhattan, first called Harlem Heights and later Morningside Heights. An early battle of the Revolutionary War, in which the Americans finally proved themselves, had taken place here. Morningside Heights looked out over Harlem, a vast valley of apartment buildings, mostly walk-up tenements, extending miles to the east and north, at the time the largest black ghetto in the United States. Columbia University was set atop the

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Heights. At the loftiest point on the campus, the central visual focus, loomed the monumental Low Library, the seat of the university's administration, immodestly modeled after the Roman Pantheon, its enormous columns and huge rotunda the symbol of imperial power.³⁶

Although Rudd's account grounds Columbia University in New York City, he also points to many connections between that school's occupation and those in other far-flung places. The comparative urbanism principle organizing this book is intended to reflect a new sense of connectedness between cities at this time. The principle is evident in the book's range, dealing with a mixture of primary and secondary cities on three continents, with histories of different lengths, significant geographic, demographic, and architectural differences, varying types of demolition and construction in the built environment, varying degrees of political radicalization and mass protest, and different amounts and kinds of film production, whether industrial or avant-garde.³⁷ And yet the intention is to also underline a commonality of experience in keeping with the plentiful evidence that exists that one of the key ways in which 1968 differed from earlier revolutionary moments was in the rapid or even instantaneous manner in which news, ideas, and images were communicated from one city to the other, even across great distances.

In his almost-live analysis of the French student movement of May 1968, *Obsolete Communism: The Left-Wing Alternative* (1968), Daniel Cohn-Bendit begins with an evocation of revolt spreading in this way in a section titled "From Berkeley to Berlin":

A spectre is haunting Europe—the spectre of student revolt. All the powers of old Europe have entered into a holy alliance to exorcize this spectre: Pope and Central Committee, [German Chancellor] Kiesinger and De Gaulle, French Communists and German police-spies. But now it has become world-wide: Berkeley, Berlin, Tokyo, Madrid, Warsaw—the student rebellion is spreading like wildfire, and authorities everywhere are frantically asking themselves what has hit them.³⁸

Cohn-Bendit's tracing of the gathering pace of revolt, from what he sees as its origin in Berkeley, to Berlin, then Strasbourg, Nantes, Clermont-Ferrand, Nanterre, Paris, and Rome, is surely one of the most powerful statements of urban interconnectedness during the global events of 1968. This is a key feature of later historical accounts as well, such as George Katsiaficas's *The Imagination of the New Left: A Global Analysis of 1968* (1987) and Jeremy Suri's *The Global Revolutions of 1968* (2007). It is also a key theme of many

of the essays in this book—notably, for example, Stephen Barber’s analysis of political filmmaking in Tokyo’s Shinjuku district, where the neighborhood and its representation were profoundly, often violently, shaped by the international avant-garde and U.S. foreign policy in Asia.³⁹

Other evidence of this new interconnectedness is abundant, too. For example, the third published bulletin of the leftist film collective known as the *États généraux du cinéma*, published in October 1968, contained an article entitled “Paris-Mexico, un même combat.” This explained that the Mexican government’s recent massacre of protesting students at the Plaza de las Tres Culturas in Mexico City “demonstrates the latent fascist character of the regime” of Díaz Ordaz, while the bulletin’s back pages listed the latest militant films in exhibition in Paris, including titles from Caracas, Montevideo, Chicago, and New York.⁴⁰ The rapid growth of networks devoted to counter-information was known to the authorities, of course—Gassert and Klimke quote the executive secretary of the U.S. State Department’s Inter-Agency Youth Committee, who opined, “What happens in New York is known overnight in Paris and Manila. The speeches of [German student leader] Rudi Dutschke are in the hands of [New York student leader] Mark Rudd faster than you can seem to get your mail delivered.”⁴¹ However, the linking of cities also took artistic form—for example, on September 25, 1968, the Gruppo 1999 performance group mounted a “Projectual Happening” in Florence, in which three large-scale film images were projected on the Ponte Vecchio, showing an astronaut in space, animated geometric shapes, and an aerial view of a freeway interchange in Los Angeles.⁴²