

AFTER '68:

TRANSNATIONAL POLITICS IN FRANCE AND WEST GERMANY, 1968-1980

In the postwar histories of France and West Germany, the year 1968 stands out as one of dramatic political protest. Numerous authors have asserted that “68” radically changed politics, but they are generally vague on details. As a visible subsection of the student movements in each country splintered into “Marxist-Leninist” *groupuscules* in the 1970s, allegedly “new” social movements driven by different actors stepped in to take their place. Pacifists, feminists, ecologists, and others all organised on their own issues throughout the 1970s; toward the end of the decade, they even rubbed shoulders with one another (and with Marxist-Leninists) at transnational demonstrations against nuclear power. With slogans like “think globally, act locally” and “the personal is political”, they actively confronted political problems in local spaces and everyday life. In doing so, they lastingly changed the very definition of politics.

But how is the transition between 1968 and these movements to be accounted for? To what extent was the broad politicization that these movements seem to reflect a product of earlier activism and to what extent was it something new? What accounts for the numerous parallels between these movements across national borders? I aim to answer these questions by studying individuals within three political networks that I feel reflect both change over time and different varieties of transnational politics: French and German Maoist organisations such as *Gauche Prolétarienne* and *Kommunistischer Bund*, which peaked between 1969 and 1973; anti-military activism of the kind that linked farmers on the Larzac plateau in Southern France to anarchist pacifists in Hamburg (especially around 1974-1977); and the later anti-nuclear movement, which brought together French and German activists from both of these earlier networks at international protests in Creys-Malville, France (1977) and Gorleben, West Germany (1980).

My research will combine archive visits with oral history interviews of (ex-) activists in these two countries. The former will help me partially reconstruct networks and collective identities, while the latter will allow me to trace individual trajectories, inquire about activists’ motivations, and grasp at their perceptions of the period’s political changes.