Introduction

The Socialist 1960s in Global Perspective

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The 1960s have reemerged in scholarly and popular culture as a protean moment of cultural revolution and social transformation, a generational shift through which age and seniority lost their authority, perhaps never to be regained. In Europe and the United States, civil rights, feminist, environmentalist, peace, and other movements drew in millions of participants. New media and cultural technologies emerged to circulate ideas and trends that provided the cultural substrata of these movements. The era also saw explosive urbanization in all parts of the globe that generated its own technological possibilities and spaces for cultural cross-fertilization, spurred by unprecedented human, technological, and cultural mobility. Revolution in Cuba and cultural revolution in China presented new models for transition and for the future. This was a time of world competition for the hegemony of two antagonistic systems—capitalism and socialism—but also of contest and competition within both systems. As a moment when decolonization created immense possibilities for political and social transformation throughout the world, the 1960s became the heyday of efforts from both the developed capitalist “First World” and the emerging socialist “Second World” to obtain the allegiance of and patronage over these newly liberated states and societies, the “Third World.” Against the backdrop of Cold War tension and the political violence that it spawned across the globe, the First and Second Worlds also engaged in peaceful contest to demonstrate the superiority of their systems and the certainty of their triumph. The 1960s, writ large, was a moment when the “orderedness” of these three worlds was arguably the most prominent in popular discourse and culture, and a moment
when that order was contested and destabilized. The patterns that first emerged in the 1960s—cultural and political contest, identity politics, urbanization, youth movements, new patterns of mass consumption, the hegemony of popular over “high” culture as driven by new media—form the bases of today’s discussions of globalization.

First World perspectives, particularly those of the United States, have dominated reconsiderations of the 1960s. This volume seeks to use the Second World, socialist societies of the 1960s in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and Cuba as the springboard from which to explore global interconnections and uncover new and perhaps surprising patterns of cultural cross-pollination. What did the 1960s look like from within communist systems? The avowed internationalism of their socialist ideology should have opened certain kinds of connections across borders, but how far? How might we periodize the era from a perspective other than one highlighting the Secret Speech, Sputnik, the Cuban Missile Crisis, and Prague? We must first consider whether the 1960s is a meaningful term of analysis for the experiences and transformations that took place within these communist societies. But we can do so only by considering interactions and influences, by rigorously exploring the kinds of transnational flows of information, cultural models, and ideas that may have linked events and processes across the capitalist-socialist divide. By examining the sixties from inside socialism and looking out, we can assess the directionality of these influences and also discern important discontinuities and differentiation. We must firmly reject any assumption of a hegemonic “sixties” culture that transcended national boundaries, while at the same time being motivated to uncover the kinds of global connections that were made possible by the social, cultural, and technological developments of the time.

In formulating our approach to the socialist sixties, we chose to focus on arenas that we believe to be most fruitful in identifying the balance between global integration and continuing political differentiation. Acknowledging the moment at the end of the 1950s in which these socialist societies became predominantly urban, we have identified the city as our primary unit of analysis. Cityscapes at the middle of the century appealed to contemporary social scientists as models of universalizing and global processes. Cities also served as arenas for the transmission of popular culture within them and among them. We then looked to those particular forms of popular culture that might most effectively lend themselves to transnational connections, whether through technology, political movements, or shared material culture. Within the realm of popular culture, we became most interested in media (including television, cinema, and popular music); material culture (including spaces and their uses as well as commodities); and leisure (including tourism and other activities, but also the very consumption of popular culture). We consider these three areas exemplary of the circulation of objects, images, sounds, and impressions on a level different from that of political programs, literature, and “fine arts,” although we also acknowledge the ways in which the city helped to democratize “fine art” such as literature as well as to validate the cultural importance of popular music, sports, and television.
When Were the Socialist Sixties?

The essays in this book address a set of important and interrelated thematic commonalities, none more fundamental than the definition of the sixties as a historical period, its beginning and its end, its turning points and its greatest hits. We must first agree that there is a chronological commonality in order to test our expectations of cross-cultural influence and global phenomena. The precise dating of the “sixties” has generated its own scholarly debate. Few would accept a definition slavishly tied to the calendar, although this is the approach taken by Gerard DeGroot in *The Sixties Unplugged*, whose book is “the history of a decade, not of an idea. The Sixties is, strictly speaking, a period of 3,653 days sandwiched between the Fifties and the Seventies.”

More commonly, historians acknowledge that the myriad processes and consequences of the sixties had origins earlier than 1 January 1960 and created trends that persisted after the decade’s calendrical end. The editors of the journal *The Sixties* opt for a “long sixties,” starting in 1954 and ending in 1975. They note that 1954 marked the beginning of the U.S. civil rights movement with the Supreme Court’s decision *Brown v. Board of Education* and the Geneva Accords that legislated French withdrawal from Indochina, which led eventually to U.S. involvement in Vietnam. The year 1975 marked the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Southeast Asia and the decline of the social movements that the civil rights movement had catalyzed.

Arthur Marwick, who focuses on the rise of a conscious youth movement, also opts for a “long sixties” but begins with the more arbitrary date of 1958, marking the rise of a youth movement, its new musical forms, urbanization, automobility (interstate highways), and activism.

Both periodizations are firmly anchored in a U.S.-centered or a West European-American frame of reference. Should a global sixties necessarily reflect those same markers? Periodization requires us to balance global trends and local particularities. For many historians, the prevailing ruling system matters more than chronology: the Chinese sixties, for example, is subsumed in the Maoist era of Chinese history (1949–76); for historians of Cuba, the sixties are coterminous with the Cuban Revolution, beginning with the 1959 revolution that toppled the Batista regime. For many historians of the Soviet Union, the era of Khrushchev (1954–64), with its policies of the Thaw or “De-Stalinization,” is a more meaningful period than one defined by chronological years. In their provocative work on the Soviet 1960s, Petr Vail’ and Aleksandr Genis asserted their own definition of a limited sixties that began in the Soviet Union on 30 July 1961 with the publication of the new Communist Party Program and ended on 21 August 1968, when Soviet tanks invaded Czechoslovakia and put an end to socialism with a human face. Certainly no periodization of the 1960s can exclude 1968, which emerges in this volume and elsewhere as a global moment of heartbreaking complexity.

The “socialist sixties,” according to several of our authors, emerged in the throes of the fifties, and specifically the “Thaw.” Polly Jones’s chapter on the translation and
transmission of Soviet literature in Britain and the United States—“The Thaw Goes International”—is firmly located in the internationalism of the Khrushchev era. For Nick Rutter, too, Khrushchev-era internationalism is key; in his chapter, “Look Left, Drive Right: Internationalisms at the 1968 World Youth Festival,” Rutter sees the Moscow Youth Festival in 1957 as the opening act of a new outward-looking international socialist youth movement, the first of these youth festivals to embrace participation from nonsocialist youth and the precursor of festivals in nonsocialist capitals such as Helsinki and Vienna. Susan Reid also begins with the 1950s, even as her examination of Soviet consumerism moves well beyond it. In her chapter, “This Is Tomorrow! Becoming a Consumer in the Soviet Sixties,” she links the rise of Soviet consumerism to broader postwar processes of affluent consumerism on which British artists fixed their gaze at the This Is Tomorrow exhibition of 1956. Soviet consumerism is also intimately linked, she argues, to the increase in the number of private apartments, a policy of the Soviet regime that took off in the mid-1950s. Rossen Djagalov also begins with the 1950s in his chapter “Guitar Poetry, Democratic Socialism, and the Limits of 1960s Internationalism,” although he emphasizes the “long sixties,” carrying his analysis into the early 1970s.

Other authors in this volume call our attention to divisions, highs, and lows, within the 1960s, much as Arthur Marwick describes the years 1964 to 1969 as the “high sixties,” for reasons relating to capitalist societies’ cultural revolutions. Lilya Kaganovsky takes a “long sixties” approach in her account of the use of memory in Soviet film, noting a turn toward more intimate and domestic themes starting as early as 1954 in her chapter, “Postmemory, Countermemory: Soviet Cinema of the 1960s.” But she also describes a darker, more pessimistic turn in films after 1966, linking them with the growing pall cast on freedom of expression that came to be labeled “Stagnation,” but also with a turn away from transnationalism. As with so much of the literature on the international sixties, 1968 is a “high” moment for many authors in this volume, even if the conclusions drawn sometimes differ from much of the literature about 1968 in North America and Western Europe. Christian Noack’s account of the Soviet tourist song movement—“Songs from the Wood, Love from the Fields”—focuses on the emergence of the Grushin Song Festival in 1968, an outdoor event that continued through the 1970s and arose again in 1986. Despite the echoes of Woodstock, however, the timing of the festival’s birth would seem to have little to do with the logics of protest or counterculture sweeping other parts of the world. Indeed, Noack notes a growing institutionalization of the tourist song movement in the second half of the 1960s, stemming from an increasing stratification of the freewheeling tourist and musical cultures. Rachel Applebaum also focuses on 1968 in her chapter exploring the limits of international understanding between Soviet tourists and Czechoslovak citizens during the Prague Spring. Nick Rutter finds a turning point in 1968, arguing that the failure of socialist youth and the West European New Left to find common cause at the Sofia World Youth Festival of 1968 signaled another shock to the Soviet-led
international youth movement of the 1960s: in addition to Chinese and Cuban “ultra-leftism,” Romanian nationalism, and the Prague Spring’s liberalism, the festival now contended with a new “ultra-Left” from Western Europe. The significance of August 1968 for these socialist societies cannot be overestimated. Stephen Lovell, in his chapter “In Search of an Ending,” calls August 1968 the end of the road of hopeful socialist progress and the beginning of the huge gulf that would divide official and unofficial culture. In Czechoslovakia, the period of “normalization” that followed the August invasion led to an official emphasis on domesticity and the quiet life, as Paulina Bren documents in her 2010 book *The Greengrocer and His TV: The Culture of Communism after the 1968 Prague Spring.* In the Soviet Union, the gap between official and unofficial culture would underlie the notion of stagnation.

We should not be so quick, however, to accept that “stagnation” inevitably resulted from the imposition of the Brezhnev doctrine in Czechoslovakia. Socialist economies did not immediately plummet after 1968, and some of the themes of the sixties would persist well into the 1970s. Lewis Siegelbaum and Robert Edelman’s chapters focus on the “late 1960s”: for Siegelbaum in “Modernity Unbound: The New Soviet City of the Sixties,” the construction of the modern city of Tol’iatti was a quintessential sixties project combining expert planning and rational design, but it did not begin until 1966 and its contours continued to be shaped well into the 1970s. For Edelman, the moment of the withering of state authority came not in 1968 but in 1972, when the medium of television gave Soviet football fans a glimpse of world countercultures in hairstyles, fashion, and unruly fan behavior. Thus the title of his chapter: “Playing Catch-Up: Soviet Media and Soccer Hooliganism, 1965–75.”

Transnationalism or Globalization?

A second theme common to all of the chapters in this volume is transnationalism. Jeremi Suri, the author of an influential book on “global revolution” in the 1960s, describes 1968 in particular as a moment when “the entire world shook”: “Across cultures,” he argues, “people of all generations recognized the significance of the moment.” It should not surprise us that the two “socialist” examples Suri provides of this worldwide disturbance are Prague and the Chinese Cultural Revolution. The Prague Spring is the most common socialist reference for those looking to incorporate the socialist East into the international 1960s. As Applebaum describes, Prague was the “unofficial capital of cosmopolitan activity—and 1960s culture—in [Eastern Europe].” During the springtime festivities of the Majáles in 1965, young people in Prague famously crowned the bearded beatnik Allen Ginsberg, king of May. For his coronation speech he clinked tiny cymbals while chanting a Buddhist hymn. Ginsberg was not alone in his visit to Prague. In 1966, about three-quarters of a million people visited Prague from the West.

The flow of people and popular culture from capitalism to socialism, and the other way around, was not unique to Czechoslovakia among socialist countries, even if
especially evident there. Cuba, as described by Anne Luke in her chapter “Listening to los Beatles: Being Young in 1960s Cuba,” was also visited by Allen Ginsberg in 1965, and Cuban youth enjoyed listening to recordings of the Beatles, which, if still a clandestine pleasure, met with less official opposition than in many other socialist countries. The 1960s, we argue, ushered in a new era of human mobility, symbolized by the first manned space flight on 12 April 1961 by Yuri Gagarin, who was followed by numerous other cosmonauts and astronauts during the decade. On the ground, more prosaically, hundreds of thousands of earth dwellers continued to migrate from rural areas to the burgeoning cities. As Noack notes, it was in 1959 that the Soviet Union’s urban population first surpassed the 50 percent mark, and cities served as the staging ground for much of the effervescence, contest, and experimentation of the global sixties, whether in or between Prague, Hanoi, Tol’iatti, Havana, or Dar es Salaam. This urban population was disproportionately young, and many of them were students, a point to which we will return. The higher standards of living associated with urbanization and economic development also fueled a boom in leisure travel, a kind of personal mobility, sometimes domestic, sometimes international, that facilitated the circulation of ideas and artifacts as well as people. If most of the tourists traveling between Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union journeyed by rail, as explored by Applebaum, the development of passenger airliners accelerated the rate of tourist travel, which exploded around the world in the 1960s. Soviet football teams and others could readily participate in European cup championships through this new mode of travel, even if their fans could follow the matches only at home on television. Air transportation changed the nature of tourism in Western Europe, making mass low-cost excursions to seaside destinations the new norm for Scandinavians, for example, and bringing thousands of middle-class tourists and backpacking American students alike to observe the cultural treasures of Western Europe and/or share countercultural experiences with copains and mates abroad.

Domestic leisure travel in the Soviet Union and elsewhere also took off in the 1960s, creating new opportunities for exchanges of experience, songs, and perspectives. The number of tourists served by tourist bases and hotels grew tenfold during that decade (excluding untold numbers of “unorganized” tourists and vacationers who traveled without reservations). Noack paints a collective portrait of the Soviet tourist on the road, with knapsack and guitar. “Tourism,” he writes, “offered Soviet citizens a sphere that provided distance from the increasingly empty ritualism of state and party duties.” The youth festivals discussed by Rutter were made possible as well by this new leisure mobility. If they did not lead to mutual understanding and camaraderie, as they certainly did not in Sofia in 1968, they nonetheless provided the opportunity for mutual observation and the expansion of horizons. Noack describes the growth of a particular kind of festival devoted to the tourist song, which began in 1968 and attracted as many as one hundred thousand people to listen and compete for amateur glory. The circulation of tourists led to the circulation of music, and especially of texts,
in the form of the handwritten songbooks that tourists exchanged and in makeshift tape recordings as well.

Music and material goods, especially clothing, were the global products most likely to cross socialist borders, even if the latter sometimes crossed only as images to be reproduced with hard-won fabrics at home. Everywhere, media—whether the reel-to-reel tape recorder, radio, film, or television—were a major way in which sights and sounds crossed ideological borders. Jones analyzes the explosion of print translations of Soviet fiction in the early 1960s, made possible by the new form of the paperback. Songs of the guitar poets circulated through tape recordings, as Djalalov notes, a more stable technological medium than the X-ray plates on which the earliest Soviet rock ‘n’ roll fans circulated this music from the West. Some of these cultural crossings, as Edelman suggests in his account of the unexpected transfer of soccer hooliganism from Western Europe to the Soviet Union, were unwanted by authorities. In other instances, however, previously condemned aspects of “Western” culture—fashionable clothing, urban cafés, light jazz—were domesticated and made acceptably socialist.

Our focus on movement between the capitalist and socialist countries should not make us forget the vital importance of the circulation of goods, people, and information within and between socialist countries. We call particular attention in this respect to the chapter by João Gonçalves, “Sputnik Premiers in Havana,” which explores the impact of the 1960 Soviet Exposition of Science, Technique and Culture in Havana. “Cubans had long been heavy consumers of American movies, music, food, sports, magazines, architectural styles, electric appliances, automobiles, urban planning, and information,” Gonçalves writes. “The Soviet Exposition was the point at which items coming from the nearest mainland started being increasingly replaced by items of the same kind coming from the other side of the world.” Gonçalves argues, taking off from anthropologist James Ferguson, that for Cuba a better metaphor than transnational “flows” might be a series of sometimes sudden “jumps” and “hops” of objects, people, and culture from, for example, the Soviet Union to Cuba. These “jumps” created “alternative circulation patterns” among countries in a “growing socialist world.”

Much of the scholarly work on the 1960s as a global moment under capitalism is concerned with unofficial, global emancipatory movements. The focus is typically on cultural flows of countercultural style, music, or drugs, or political flows of anti-authoritarian protest between, for example, Berkeley and Paris. In contrast, many of the contributions to this book focus on officially authorized forms of cross-cultural contact. Reid’s and Siegelbaum’s chapters on Soviet appliances and the new Soviet city respectively suggest that technology, architecture, and, broadly speaking, the aesthetics of modernity were especially likely to cross political borders, facilitated by the willing assistance of authorities. Soviet architects and urban planners in the 1960s “openly acknowledged ‘points of contiguity’ with ideas and projects elsewhere in the world,” Siegelbaum argues. He observes that they, along with other professionals—“nuclear physicists and ballistics experts, obstetricians and sociologists, the designers of
products rapidly filling up the apartments described by Susan Reid, members of dance companies, Olympic gymnastic squads, and the football teams discussed in Robert Edelman’s contribution”—enjoyed a degree of professional autonomy that “encouraged the establishment of an essentially transnational set of standards and styles.”

This was also true for film. Officially authorized film festivals exposed socialist audiences to the new forms of experimental cinema originating in Italy and France in the postwar years, and a younger generation of directors, as Kaganovsky notes, adopted the new *auteur* style and made it their own. The Moscow Film Festival emerged as a biennial event in 1959, showing films from East and West and awarding its top prizes to films from the USSR, West Germany, Pakistan, Great Britain, and Czechoslovakia. In the officialness of much of Soviet internationalism, the Soviet sixties did not differ in principle, if they did in degree, from earlier periods in Soviet history when delegations of professionals were allowed to travel abroad to capitalist countries to learn about a wide range of topics relating to technology but also to consumer culture ranging from paper plates to window decorations. Until the late 1930s, the Soviet relationship to the West was cautious but not unreservedly hostile. Russia was eager to end the "international isolation in which the country found itself," Susan Solomon has argued elsewhere about public health professionals in the 1920s, and to “reclaim its place in the international arena.”

Socialist authorities did not encourage all forms of internationalism. Khru- shchev’s doctrine of peaceful coexistence enabled unprecedented international contact, even in contrast to earlier decades. In 1960, close to three hundred thousand tourists from capitalist countries visited the Soviet Union. Soviet citizens also crossed international borders in record numbers. In his memoir, Soviet intellectual Mikhail German describes encounters with the West (through language, culture, material items, personal encounters, and travel) as the defining experience of the Thaw. But as Jones argues in her contribution to this volume, the politics of the Cold War still intruded everywhere, something she demonstrates in her discussion of Western reception of Soviet literature. Unprecedented openings were accompanied by continuing anxieties. As Jones argues, “The ‘default’ ideological setting of the Soviet leadership remained distrust of the West.” The same held true for Britain and the United States. The politics of the Cold War also intervened in the guitar poetry Djagalov discusses. In contrast to the relaxed transnationalism of folkloric labor and protest songs in the 1930s, guitar poetry crossed borders with great difficulty in the 1960s. Its simultaneous expression in the Soviet Union, Germany, the United States, and Latin America (among others) should be attributed to a “simultaneity of feeling,” not transcultural contact. Instead, Djagalov argues, the Cold War state, whether of a state socialist or a capitalist variety, prevented intimacy and rapprochement. The exceptions, importantly, were again Prague for a few months in 1968 and, as with so much in this volume, Cuba. Authorities also limited internationalism at the 1968 World Youth Festival in Bulgaria, as described by Rutter. Even as young people from around the world
gathered in a supposed celebration of solidarity, authorities both Bulgarian and Soviet tried to control young Bulgarians’ exposure to ideological countercurrents. Only 250 of approximately eight million Bulgarians were allowed to participate in seminars and forums at the festival. This was a far cry from Berkeley’s freewheeling Summer of Love in 1967. It was also a far cry from Richard Ivic Jobs’s description, in a recent article entitled “Youth Movements: Travel, Protest, and Europe in 1968,” of a West European international youth identity, created in part through travel and mobility, that generated a “shared political culture across national boundaries.” “An alternative community was developing,” Jobs claims, “on the basis of informal interchanges and transnational cooperation.” Rutter argues otherwise, emphasizing the lack of communication and understanding between socialist youth situated on various points of the world Left.

As this suggests, if popular culture may have flowed across borders, politics did so much less easily. Jeremy Suri pointedly describes the political disruptions of 1968 as global, not as transnational. “Organizational ties between protesters across different societies were a minimal factor in these developments,” Suri argues. Instead, “domestic conflicts grew from local conditions that, though unique in each case, produced a similar dynamic of rising expectations and attempted repressions.” Paulina Bren concurs in The Greengrocer and His TV, in which she argues that even in Prague cross-border understanding was limited by the “particularities of geography and political happenstance.” Visiting West German students were optimistic about the utopian possibilities of Marxism. Czech students, if committed to socialism, were all too familiar with the limits of Marxism as practiced. They found it difficult to understand, let alone agree with, the rigidly orthodox theories of West German leftists.

Suggestively, Bren’s arguments about the limits of transnationalism stem from her study of television. Many forms of technology contributed to the acceleration of exchange of ideas and texts in the 1960s through the media of film, print, and sound recordings. Significantly, though, the advent of television, which did not become a staple appliance in socialist households until the end of the decade, tended more to restrict the circulation of ideas and images than to spread them. With the exception of the televised soccer games that are the subject of Edelman’s chapter, television served as a medium that reinforced national language communities rather than fostered global communities. For Czechoslovakia, Paulina Bren has analyzed the ways in which television serials reinforced the domestic norms preferred by the post-1968 regime. Sabina Mihelj shows in this volume how watching Yugoslav television, an experience shared by millions but in the privacy of their homes, aimed to foster a sense of Yugoslav citizenship but increasingly reinforced subnational distinctions. Lovell goes so far as to suggest that the expansion of television marked the end of the Soviet sixties, creating a domestic community united around the common postmemory (in Kaganovsky’s phrase) of the shared wartime experience, rejecting internationalism, and promoting a televised socialism in one country without allowing access to a wider world.
The contributions to this volume demonstrate that the socialist world was not a singular world, separate from what was happening elsewhere. But were the socialist sixties transnational, implying the circulation of information, organization, ideas, images, and people across borders? Or were they global, suggesting parallelism but not interpenetration? Our authors provide many examples of the former but emphasize the latter. This was in part because of the nature of socialist authoritarianism, but it was not only authorities—socialist but also capitalist—that challenged transnationalism and the universalism it implied. In his anthropology of late socialism, Alexei Yurchak encourages us to take seriously that by the 1960s, for “great numbers” of Soviet citizens, “many of the fundamental values, ideals, and realities of socialist life (such as equality, community, selflessness, altruism, friendship, ethical relations, safety, education, work, creativity, and concern for the future) were of genuine importance.”

Anne Luke argues similarly that young Cubans could both love the music of the Beatles and believe in the Revolution. When applied to the socialist world, transnationalism has too often meant Americanization, with the implication that cross-border flows of everything from jazz to jeans led inexorably to popular disillusionment and the downfall of socialism. This volume demonstrates instead that the Soviet, Czech, or Cuban citizen, like the American, French, or Canadian one, was discerning both about items and ideas at home and about those coming from abroad. If the socialist world became less exceptional in the 1960s, it did not necessarily become less socialist.

The World of Goods

Consumption was a preoccupation of both socialist and capitalist countries in the 1960s. In “The Politics of Privatization: Television Entertainment and the Yugoslav Sixties,” Sabina Mihelj argues that during the sixties, “both east and west of the Iron Curtain, long-established fault lines of political struggle, tied to the alternative visions of modernity espoused by communism, liberalism, and fascism, gave way to issues of living standards and social welfare.” Across the socialist East, “slowly but surely, average livelihoods were getting better, and it was becoming abundantly clear that both the domestic legitimacy and the international prestige of the socialist project, just like those of its capitalist rival, hinged increasingly on the quality of everyday life.” Consumption was a site of Cold War competition over the “good life,” the most famous example of which was the “kitchen debate” between Richard Nixon and Nikita Khrushchev at the 1959 American exhibition in Moscow about the relative merits of their economic systems. The exhibition launched the socialist sixties via a circulation of objects that brought East and West together materially, however different the meanings that were ascribed to them. For Reid and many observers of the Soviet 1960s, the exposition of American consumer culture marks a particularly significant juncture in the exchange of consumer products. The traveling exhibit drew thousands of Soviet visitors, ordinary people and experts, to catch a glimpse of alternative and wider consumer possibilities but also of a range of technology and design that expanded their
imaginations. The appearance in Havana of the Soviet Exposition, the subject of Gonçalves's paper, similarly provoked admiration, curiosity, and opposition. The materiality of the exhibits, their size, and their presentation moved visitors in ways that two-dimensional printed texts or film could never do.

In socialist countries as well as capitalist ones, consumption was not only an international issue, of course. The “fundamental difference” between the Khrushchev era and the Stalinist one, Reid has argued in an earlier article about the “Khrushchev modern,” was “the shift towards mass consumption and democratization of provision.”34 “The mood of the people and the productivity of their labor to a large extent depend on living conditions and good service,” Khrushchev insisted at the Twenty-Second Party Congress in 1961.35 The Soviet regime and the governments of most East European countries increasingly promoted consumer goods, even “luxury” goods, as emblems of socialist success. In Bulgaria, it was cigarettes “in their luxurious packaging and flavor variety” that were material evidence of the socialist “good life.” The 1960s and early 1970s were, according to Mary Neuberger, the “golden years” for consumerism in Bulgaria.36

Still, socialist countries had some catching up to do. Elements of “consumer socialism” were evident in the early 1950s in Hungary,37 and the East European countries of Poland, Czechoslovakia, and the German Democratic Republic (GDR) provided a cornucopia of consumer goods for tourists from the USSR throughout the 1950s and 1960s, even as these countries themselves struggled to recover from the war.38 For contemporary Western observers at worlds’ fairs and international expositions, however, Soviet goods in particular were thought not to have even made it into the sixties. Reid argues in her contribution to this volume that Cold War competition, but also a new “Soviet consumer consciousness,” led Soviet specialists to pay more attention to the visual aspects of design, “drawing energetically both on Western expertise and on that of socialist Eastern Europe.” East European experts in turn, often moved even closer to the West: Polish architects, for example, used Khrushchev-approved internationalism to justify publishing extensive articles about American architectural models while saying very little about Soviet design.39

If elements of socialist consumer culture were imported from the West—the international modernist conventions of urban planning or the sleek styling of refrigerators—socialist authorities, especially Soviet ones, forcefully maintained that their version was better. Sixties socialism was envisioned as an alternative modernity in which virtuous citizens would be cared for but not allowed to wallow in the hedonism of capitalist mass consumption. Khrushchev was eager, as György Péteri has argued, to “provide a workable way toward an alternative modernity” with “distinctly socialist characteristics.”40 Yurchak has explained the distinction as one between the positive, enriching traits of internationalism and the negative, undermining qualities of cosmopolitanism.41 Appreciation for “aesthetic beauty, technological achievement, and the genius of the working people who created [bourgeois luxuries]” was to be encouraged.42 The enthusiasm of the black marketeer for foreign clothing and culture was not.
For a brief moment in the “sixties,” this “hybrid form of modernity,” as David Crowley has called it, appeared promising, and not only to authorities. An examination of popular Soviet response to the American National Exhibition in 1959 shows that not all viewers were “captured by the allure of America.” “Many sought ways to define their difference from it, in terms and personae borrowed from Soviet public discourse,” Reid has argued. Socialist modernity was authoritative, open to learning from international models, and committed to satisfying needs and desires within the socialist framework. It was this model that the socialist Soviet Union hoped to export to the Third World.

Socialist modernity appears, however, to have been only provisionally successful, in part, György Péteri argues in a recent volume, because it was short-lived. If Khrushchev was eager to define a “socialist mode of consumption,” those who followed him in the Soviet Union and throughout the socialist bloc largely abandoned Khrushchev’s efforts, striving to imitate capitalist consumption but without the earlier ideology of socialist promise that made deficits seem justifiable. Consumption, indeed the private sphere in general, increasingly became a site from which citizens could articulate—if sometimes only to themselves—opposition. In East Germany, some individuals made a political statement via their preference for wooden and earthenware products over the regime-trumpeted plastics. East German authorities marketed products made of plastic as a successful melding of “socialism, modernity, technology, and functionality.” Oppositional consumers, in contrast, defined modernity as “tasteful,” and “cultured,” while rejecting plastics as kitschig. Of course, the opposite was also true. East Germans who supported the system welcomed the abundance of new, inexpensive, plastic goods as evidence of progress. Either way, consumption, like so much of the sixties under socialism, was political.

Culture High and Low

Of all the transformations of the global 1960s, the challenge raised by popular culture to prevailing modes of dominant cultures remained the most enduring. In the sixties, popular culture became legitimate: a profit center for capitalist business and an area of expansion for official socialist institutions such as the Young Communist League (Komsomol). The triumph of popular culture also licensed a proliferation of canons and subcultures: no one canon could exert hegemony, a development perhaps appreciated later in the socialist world than elsewhere, as Jones suggests in her paper on the translation of Soviet literature to English-speaking audiences. But the quintessential form of sixties popular culture, of course, was music. Two of the papers in this volume address the phenomenon of guitar poetry, or bard poetry, which appeared to assume global proportions, as Djagalov explores. The appeal of guitar poetry and tourist songs, write Noack and Djagalov, was their simplicity and immediacy, “a structure of feeling,” both in their musical forms and in the substance of the genre. Before the festivals and Komsomol sponsorship, Soviet tourist songs took place around the evening campfire,
performed among friends, for friends, about friends. Such was the emotional power of the genre, as Noack argues, that the tourist songs are preserved and remembered to this day through a dense network of clubs and Internet sites.

On the other side of the socialist/capitalist divide, of course, folk music with its guitars was yielding to rock ‘n’ roll in forms that rapidly proliferated and conquered new audiences with their powerful rhythm and music, rendering the texts less important. Robert Edelman notes that by 1970 every department at Moscow State University sponsored its own beat group; along with the circulation of tourists, touring football players, and objects of Western consumer culture came recordings of Western music on disks and on tape. The reel-to-reel tape recorder was a ubiquitous feature of Soviet urban apartments, at least as depicted in the films of the period. The Beatles were officially disapproved of in Havana, Luke tells us, but sixties youth cultures sought out their global beat along with the more native nueva trova. Socialist rock ‘n’ roll gathered its greatest momentum after the 1960s, as a counterculture, perhaps, in opposition to the growing domesticity of the new post-1968 normalization regimes. The Komsomol would remain divided about whether to support or to marginalize rock ‘n’ roll bands in the Soviet Union. In Czechoslovakia, the group Plastic People of the Universe emerged after 1968 in imitation of some of the more countercultural groups in the United States, including the Velvet Underground, only to incur the wrath of the normalizing regime and be driven into their own underground. Socialist rock music seems to belong more to the history of the decline of socialism than to its global moment of the sixties.

Our contributors note that “popular culture” in these socialist societies generated opposition and resistance. Not only did the state seek to censor and to block manifestations of culture that challenged the prerogatives of authority, but ordinary people maintained their loyalty to a canon of authoritative and approved cultural forms. Polly Jones notes that Western critics found some glimmers of modernism in Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich but that some Soviet readers reacted with disgust and horror at the crude language and the celebration of unlettered people. Rachel Applebaum writes that some Soviet tourists were shocked and repelled by the abstract art on display in state museums, by hippies in Prague, and by pictures of girls in miniskirts. Similarly, in Havana, miniskirts provoked public outrage. Popular culture shock also proved to be too much for Soviet tourists elsewhere in Eastern Europe, who refused to learn the twist from local Poles and taught their hosts Ukrainian folk dances instead. A demonstration of the latest twist by Algerian tourists in Bulgaria caused similar offense: “The movements and gestures suggested something sexual,” and the Soviets repaid the favor by performing another folk dance. “We let them know that we don’t accept the bad aspects of Western culture.” A German woman found Soviets like these “boring” and predicted that they too would eventually adopt contemporary dances that were now forbidden inside the USSR. That sexuality and sexual identity did not occupy a central role in the 1968 Sofia conference likewise
suggests that the socialist sixties were much more buttoned-down than their capitalist counterparts.

Who Made the Sixties?

The correspondence of the sixties with a generation of youth has become a commonplace in popular commentary. The demographic emergence of a postwar generation of young people, the expansion of institutions of higher education in which to train and empower them, and the resulting conflicts between generations are themes that run through scholarship on the sixties. Yet these papers also prompt us to take a more complicated approach to the question “Who made the sixties?” Socialist youth constituted a singular generation in the 1960s for many of the same demographic and economic reasons as in the First World: rising standards of living expanded access to higher education, providing young people with unstructured time, ideas, and ambition. Young people congregated in newly accessible spaces and participated in new forms of popular culture, such as the habitués of the Coppelia ice cream parlor in Havana that Anne Luke describes; amateur rock musicians in Moscow’s universities, as witnessed by Edelman; or young tourists on Soviet roads, described by Noack. Young faces emerged on Soviet screens, most notably in the films analyzed by Kaganovsky, Lenin’s Guard and July Rain, the faces of the future. Youth carried the banner of socialist internationalism across the World Youth Festivals of the 1950s and 1960s, the subject of Nick Rutter’s chapter.

Socialist youth also confronted their generational others, as most explicitly analyzed by Kaganovsky, who argues that the key films of the 1960s confront the question of postmemory of the critical juncture of World War II by a generation too young to have direct memories and too privileged to readily empathize with the sacrifices of those who came before. Generational distinctions shaped the evolution of guitar poetry and the tourist song movement in complicated ways. The movement of singer-songwriters owed much to the tradition of political song championed by an international Left during the 1930s; Djagalov shows how this generation, epitomized by the American singer-songwriter Pete Seeger, became marginalized both by the rise of rock ‘n’ roll and by the indifference of official cultural promoters in socialist states.

Several of the chapters emphasize the importance of “youth” as a state project and the conflicts that this created between countercultural and official youth. The World Youth Festivals considered by Rutter offer the most explicit picture of the bureaucratized world of the Komsomol: the Moscow-based state youth organization controlled every aspect of the biennial youth festivals, from the invited participants to the political agendas. Officials themselves were far from young, but even their young lieutenants dutifully followed the prescribed line. Christian Noack offers some insight into why this might be so: the Komsomol had resources to support the cultural activities of youth, and some participants in the tourist song movement readily sought Komsomol sponsorship to gain access to festival venues and funds. Official youth organizations
such as the Unión de Jóvenes Comunistas in Cuba, as Luke discusses, and the Free German Youth in the GDR, in Rutter’s account, also sought to impose their own statist agendas over countercultural manifestations like marijuana use and political heterodoxy. Student youth even without official sponsorship might also disagree: as Gonçalves recounts, in the battle over Soviet influence in revolutionary Cuba it was anticommunist students who took to the squares to protest the Soviet Exposition in 1960. All of the chapters in this volume point to the complexity and plurality of “youth cultures” as well as to the conflict of generations.

The emphasis on youth in the 1960s has sometimes obscured the importance of other actors who became empowered by the movements, culture, and events of the decade. The net effect of mobility, demography, mass education, and economy appears also to have produced a generation of “ordinary people” who gained new agency in shaping the trends of the global sixties. Kaganovsky makes this point in showing the new subjects of the cinematic “New Wave” in Western Europe and in Soviet film: “Instead of monumentalism and the ‘Grand Style,’ sixties cinema gives us daily routine and intimate, domestic lives,” she writes. Tourism, that quintessential leisure activity of the 1960s, also allowed ordinary people to engage in firsthand observation and even diplomacy. Socialist travelers throughout the East European bloc, as Applebaum points out, were expected to serve as everyday ambassadors, representing their country’s politics and culture to their counterparts abroad. Expositions such as those discussed in Gonçalves’s and Reid’s papers likewise depended for their raison d’être on the participation of tens of thousands of exposition visitors and sought their comments and approbation. Cultural exchange was no longer restricted to touring ballet companies and high-profile musicians. Spectator sports also created publics out of ordinary people: as Edelman tells us, Soviet football fans became fanatics after observing how ordinary people at Nou Camp stadium in Barcelona supported their teams, with the manic disorder that became labeled football hooliganism. Soviet fans learned that they did not have to depend on official emblems of support and instead fashioned their own scarves and other symbols of team loyalty.

In these respects—the emphasis on youth cultures and on the democratization of daily life—these socialist societies joined in a global phenomenon. Our volume, however, offers a third answer to “Who made the sixties?” that on first glance seems to contradict the prevailing emphasis on the sixties as a challenge to authority. The chapters by Reid and Applebaum in particular suggest that it was also experts who made the socialist sixties: design professionals, urban planners, and sociologists, all employed in support of state projects. They include the editors who helped disseminate Soviet literature abroad and who monitored its reception, the subject of Jones’s chapter. These were the intellectuals who styled themselves the “sixties generation,” and “Children of the Twentieth Party Congress.”52 As Boris Kagarlitsky has argued, “The Soviet intelligentsia constantly criticized leadership. But that same leadership was supposed to become their main audience. . . . The movement was essentially elitist. The
‘best minds’ spoke and the rest listened.” These experts and intellectuals, now graying, received new affirmation in the television serial that Stephen Lovell argues marked the end of the sixties, *Seventeen Moments of Spring*, a “characteristically 1970s blend of statist patriotism and cosmopolitanism.”

We note the special role of the international Marxist journal *Problems of Peace and Socialism*, published in Prague starting in 1958. Its first editor, A. M. Rumiantsev, went on to found the Soviet school of sociology based at the Institute for Concrete Sociological Research. Another Prague editor, Boris Grushin, would return to Moscow to pioneer the practice of opinion polling from his center based at the newspaper *Komsomol’skaia pravda*. (Note the linkage between experts and the youth organization Komsomol.) The influential Soviet rock critic Artemy Troitsky, as Applebaum tells us, spent his youth in Prague, where his parents worked for this journal, and it was this experience that sparked his enthusiasm for rock ‘n’ roll. The sixties, we argue, ushered in the heyday of “socialist modern,” when educated professionals gained authority and opportunity to apply global concepts they were now permitted to study, in large part because of the circulation of objects and ideas that was also a part of this global moment in an expanding socialist world.

We have organized this volume around three main themes, although the chapters overlap among them and others. Our understanding of “socialist modern” emphasizes the utopian and forward-looking quality of the socialist sixties as a moment when socialist societies entered the world stage and claimed their right to inherit the mantle of the new. The sixties also marked a period in which these societies willingly and confidently engaged one another and the world outside, creating contact zones of mutual learning and emulation as well as conflict. And while serious literature and classical art forms continued to be produced, these socialist sixties, like their counterpart in the West, depended to a greater extent than ever before on popular culture and the media.

These do not exhaust the topics and possibilities for exploring the relationship of First, Second, and Third Worlds in the global 1960s. We hope, however, that this volume can help suggest some questions and themes to be pursued further. The interdisciplinarity of our contributors—anthropology, art history, literature, history, media studies—illustrates the fascination the sixties holds for many disciplines. Our authors, however, make scant reference to gender norms and the ways sixties movements did or not transform them. So too for sexuality, a major topic of study about the sixties in other places. Nor do these chapters address the possibility of identity politics based on ethnic and other identities. Unequal power relations within the socialist bloc became manifest with the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968; the question of whether these relations can be described as imperial and not fraternal deserves further exploration, particularly if extended to relations among Second and Third World nations. The place of China deserves more attention: the Sino-Soviet rift created two poles of allegiance for aspiring socialist states, and scholars would do well to explore...
how the themes of popular culture, expertise, and transnational flows affected these political movements.56

What have we learned by approaching the sixties from inside socialism and looking out? We see the limits of international solidarity and mutual understanding, the constraints posed by national interests and national rhetorics despite the cosmopolitan principles of international socialism. We see a remarkable conservatism among many of the actors, whether Komsomol officials in three-piece suits or kitchen-based bard singers who felt little solidarity with their counterparts abroad. But we also see the sources of what today has become a powerful nostalgia for the original promise of socialism. As Padraic Kenney said in his remarks at the conclusion of the conference that initiated this volume, “The sixties were the sweet spot of socialism,” oriented toward the future; they were the heart of ordinary communism, communism as it was meant to be. Or as Shawn Salmon put it in her paper on the Soviet foreign tourist agency, Intourist, not included in this volume, the sixties represented “a return to the original promise of Soviet socialism: a system transparent and accessible to all, where the masses—not just the elite—were provided for; a world that celebrated mobility and welcomed outsiders, and a society that pushed ahead to the future in an effort to overcome its own backwardness.”57

Notes

1. This term was coined by the French demographer Alfred Sauvy, “Trois mondes, une planète,” Observateur politique économique et littéraire, no. 118 (14 August 1952): 5.


6. Our thanks to Jing Jing Chang on this point.


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19. See the works cited above; Jane Pavitt, Fear and Fashion in the Cold War (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 2008); Axel Schiltdt and Detlef Siegfried, eds., Between Marx and Coca-Cola: Youth Cultures in Changing European Societies (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).


29. Bren, Greengrocer and His TV, 26.


31. Bren, Greengrocer and His TV.


38. Gorsuch, All This Is Your World, ch. 3.


40. György Péteri, “The Occident Within—or the Drive for Exceptionalism,” Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History 9, no. 4 (Fall 2008): 937, 934.

41. Yurchak, Everything Was Forever, 163.

42. Ibid., 169–75.

43. Crowley, "Paris or Moscow.”


48. This is the theme of Tom Stoppard’s 2006 play, Rock ’n’ Roll (New York: Grove Press, 2007); Bren, Greengrocer and His TV, 53, 94.


50. Reports of group leaders of tourist trips to Poland, 1963, in Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (hereafter GARF), f. 9520 (Trade Union Central Council on Tourism), op. 1, d. 597, ll. 5–6.

51. Reports of group leaders of tourist trips to Bulgaria, part 1, 1965, in GARF, f. 9520, op. 1, d. 866, l. 156; reports of group leaders of tourist trips to the GDR, 1962, in GARF, f. 9520, op. 1, d. 487, l. 24.


55. For an example of what is possible for Eastern Europe in this respect, see Josie McLellan, Love in the Time of Communism: Intimacy and Sexuality in the GDR (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
