Where was the economy in the global sixties?

Mary Nolan

This panel attempts to conceptualize the global sixties from above, rather than from the grassroots; its title privileges diplomacy and IR. Sean Fear plans to explore the Vietnam War after Tet and the ways it shaped antiwar publics, while Mario del Pero will examine détente, the emergence of Eurocommunism, and their impact on protest. These are central and richly researched aspects of the global sixties. The wars of national liberation and the wars against them resonated around the globe, providing a vocabulary or rather vocabularies for protest in Western Europe and the US, across vast swatches of what was then called the Third World, and even, as newer research has shown, in Communist eastern Europe. Détente in its multiple forms—between the superpowers, within Western and East Central Europe through Ostpolitik and later the Helsinki Accord, and between the U.S. and China reshaped on the broadest level the structures of foreign relations within which the social movements of the long 1960s operated, even as they were in some part a response to those movements. Détente from above and new social movements from below—New Left and Maoist, some advocating armed struggle, others non-violent resistance—challenged communist parties in the First and Third Worlds, to rethink strategies and tactics, to reevaluate political priorities and ideological positions, and to negotiate among Soviet and Chinese models and evaluate alternative one that came in many varieties—African socialism, the Arab socialism of Nasserite Egypt, the divergent Latin American experiments of Castro in Cuba, Che in Bolivia and Allende in Chile.
This focus on diplomacy and wars—traditional, national liberation, guerrilla—is certainly not misplaced. Yet, from the perspective of today, i.e. after the “great recession” of 2008, as it is modestly but inaccurately titled, something seems missing, namely the economy. The economy, the past, present and future of capitalism, are very much on the agenda today. I am sure that I am not the only person here who avidly and anxiously reads the business section of my morning paper before anything else. This was certainly not something I ever did or even considered doing when I was a student in the 1960s and 1970s. Capitalism was hardly ignored in the Sixties, and anti-capitalism, of course, was on the agenda but it was, I would suggest, often more a slogan and a sentiment encapsulating a desire for far-reaching ill-defined change than a developed program. Alternatives to capitalism would, it was hoped, come after political power changed hands, wars of liberation were won, imperialism defeated. Consumerism and American materialism were criticized, (even as Coca-Cola and American music were imbibed and enjoyed), but the thorny issues of restructuring production, reducing worker alienation and exploitation, and altering the hierarchies of economic and political power that structured the international financial architecture of the Bretton Woods system were seldom discussed in detail, or at least not in Western Europe and the U.S. Discussions of and opposition to dependencies of all sorts and obstacles to development did proliferate across the global south. Whether these were central to the new social movements of that decade as programmatic priorities as opposed to impetuses to protest needs to be explored.
How and why were things economic discussed and/or ignored by the social movements of the 1960s? If we focus on the diverse economic contexts and economic challenges faced by countries around the globe, how can we better understand what divided the global protests as opposed to what united them politically and culturally across different regimes. Nations lived in markedly different worlds of production, consumption, investment, and trade within a global economy that was increasingly integrated, including the second world, but increasingly unequally interconnected. What exactly were those worlds and what challenges did they present to social movements in capitalist, communist, and recently decolonized and nonaligned states? How were they understood both by social movements and by national governments, interventionist superpowers, and traditional left parties? What visions of a new international economic order emerged? Was any transnationally shared understanding of what needed to be changed economically possible and if so, among whom? In so far as the economy was thematized in terms of problems singled out and solutions proposed, did this prepare social movements to grapple with the new economic developments and structures that emerged in the 1970s and are still with us today?

I come to these questions by routes that are personal, political and intellectual. I am a ‘68er; I participated in the civil rights movement, the student movement, and antiwar politics as an undergraduate and graduate student in Massachusetts, Berlin and New York City. Like so many of my generation, especially those of us who are have remained active in the peace and social justice movements, I am struck by how different the world is now from the world that was so crucial for
my initial intellectual and political formation. The global sixties with protests both realistic and utopian have given way to the quiescent world of neoliberal globalization, punctuated by quickly appearing and quickly repressed uprisings like the Battle of Seattle, the Arab Spring, the Umbrella movement. U.S. wars and interventions, overt and covert, have hardly ceased but antiwar activism and anti-imperialism have been replaced by “humanitarian” interventionism and the global war on terror. We have moved from an opposition to authority in all forms to a proliferation of conservatisms and religious fundamentalisms; from collective challenges to cultural norms and gender systems to much more individualistic ones at best and at worst to deep opposition to those challenges.

In wrestling with these questions, I have shifted my historical research and teaching from labor history to transatlantic economic, political and cultural relations and exchanges, with special attention to economic history. My teaching has moved from a focus on Germany to a transnational and global one around the Cold war, human rights, and the global economy. I have read in the ever-growing literature on the Sixties, although admittedly there is so much coming out that I have still only skimmed the surface. But I have also delved into three other bodies of work that have much to say about the long 1960s by approaching global economic issues from different angles—histories of capitalism, histories of development, and histories of third world economic projects. Twentieth century histories of capitalism encompass a rich and growing body of work that explores the economic history of the long 1960s and 1970s, attending especially to the transformations that began with the US destruction of the Bretton Woods monetary order and the oil shocks and continued
through debt crises and the Washington consensus, through privatization, liberalization, and financialization, and finally, the collapse of communism. Some of these new works focus primarily on the evolution of neoliberal thought and the institutions that prepared and propagated it; others look at the successes and limits of the post World War II boom in the OECD countries; still others reconstruct the troubled economic history of newly independent states and the persistent economic dependencies of long politically independent Latin American nations. All rightly view the 1970s as a pivotal decade of contention and transformation.

Histories of development initially focused almost exclusively on U.S. modernization theory and practice, but now include colonial, Soviet, Chinese, and East European initiatives. They trace not only the visions and aspirations of those providing development advice and aid but also the complex ways in which recipient states negotiated with those offerings, often modifying them substantially and instrumentalizing them for quite distinctive projects of their own. And the economic successes and more often failures of development aid, its complex effects on politics and gender have received increasing attention. Finally, there are studies of a variety of third world economic projects, to borrow and expand the idea of Vijay Prashad, that have sought to contest and transform not only national economies but the global economic order. These have ranged from analyses of dependency theory and import substitution industrialization (ISI) to the anti imperialist and anti capitalist discourses and programs of the nonaligned conferences from Bandung through Belgrade and beyond. They include reconstructions of the formation of the G77 and the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and their
initiatives that culminated in the UN General Assembly passage of a proposal for a New International Economic Order (NIEO) in 1974.4

The boundaries between these categories of scholarship are blurry, individual studies often encompass more than one approach, and arguments engage one another. By and large, however, these literatures have developed in isolation from studies of social protest and social movements. Those studying social protest and social movements have paid equally little attention to these economic histories. Put in its most simplistic form, we have a new history of capitalism without class, work, and protest, and a history of social movements without economics. The US, Soviet, and Chinese governments, not to mention those of smaller powers ranging from East and West Germany, Sweden, and Cuba, enthusiastically embraced the exporting of competing development programs to win influence in Africa, Asia, and Latin America and these grew exponentially during the long 1960s, precisely when new protest movements of students and in places of workers and peasants were contesting domestic politics and criticizing both Americans and Soviets internationally. Yet, the two bodies of literature have not been brought into conversation. Connections are only made for the 1970s and after when those founding organizations such as Médecins Sans Frontières turned away from both their New Lefts pasts and any faith in US, Soviet or UN sponsored development projects, prioritizing ostensibly unpolitical humanitarian aid instead. Studies of Third World Economic projects have tended to focus on the theories and political projects of intellectuals like Raúl Prebisch and liberation leaders like Kwame Nkrumah, Gamal Abdel Nasser, and Julius Nyerere, while paying less attention to the
grassroots political radicalism and new social movements that swelled in the decades when nonalignment and UNCTAD seemed to hold such promise. And works on those social movements—or at least the ones I have read-- have not explored in depth whether participants engaged with these economic projects and saw them addressing their discontents and aspirations.

If studies of the Global Sixties engage with these varied economic histories, they may be able to ask new questions about underlying structural and conjunctural differences among movements that on the political and cultural levels shared so much. They might ask new questions about what Sixties activists had been reading and thinking about and been involved with before and after the protests associated with 1968 more narrowly, about continuities and ruptures in commitments, contexts, and goals. By bringing these diverse literatures into conversation, we may better understand why economic questions, now so popular among activists, academics, politicians, and the general populace, took second place to politics and culture in the 1960s.

Let me begin by looking at how the literature on the global sixties has dealt with or not dealt with economics. Then I will make some general observations on why both the movements of the Sixties and the historiography of them have given primacy to politics and how we might periodize the long 1960s in economic terms. The paper will then ask how politics, protest and economic intersected or might have intersected, and why these took such different forms in the First, Second and Third Worlds. There I will pose questions and suggest possible areas of research.
more than provide answers. The concluding section will explore links between economic change and the demise or afterlives of the Global Sixties.

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It is probably foolish to generalize about how the vast body of literature on the Sixties has dealt with economic issues; nonetheless, I will risk a few, admittedly preliminary observations. The economy has not been totally ignored; rather, it has been marginalized as context and condition of possibility for protest more than a major motivation or preoccupation. Works discuss the post war prosperity of Western Europe and North America, which brought full employment, unprecedented growth rates and new levels of mass consumption. They note the challenges of development for newly decolonized countries in Africa and Asia and the enormous disruption of the failed Great Leap Forward and famine in China. One key result of growth and prosperity in the First World, and of decolonization, and of communism in Asia and Eastern Europe was the vast expansion of higher education, a prerequisite for the prominence of students in the Sixties. This is frequently noted. But the social movements themselves are seen largely in cultural and political terms.

In so far as economics is considered, the focus is more often on consumption than production, especially when looking at the First and Second Worlds, where new commodities and forms of mass culture, especially music, and critiques of American consumerism have been extensively documented. The collection Between Marx and Coca-Cola provides one of innumerable examples of a concern with social movements as understood primarily as new youth cultures and lifestyle revolutions
defined by new music, travel, drugs, and sex. They were integral parts of a global youth culture that, of course, was nationally inflected, and that has captivated the interest of historians. Arthur Marwick’s *The Sixties*, not only documents all aspects of this cultural revolution in Western Europe and the US in rich detail; he also insists that however much it transformed lifestyles, identities, and behaviors public and intimate, it neither challenged bourgeois society nor developed ideas about an alternative economy. Indeed, it was permeated with an entrepreneurial spirit in his view. Long hair and new dress styles, communal living and music festivals, sex and drugs, were not as prevalent as many imagine, but they were very much on the minds of youth as a promise even if not yet a possibility, let alone a reality, and on the minds of established authorities as threats to morality, social order, and the political legitimacy of established parties and governments. And they are fun for historians to write about. Challenges to gender norms and hetero-normativity have also captured the attention of historians, although these came relatively late in the long 1960s and developed globally very unevenly rather than being an initiating part of Sixties protests.

Those looking at the Second World, or at least the European parts of it, have also discovered the new youth cultures that emerged in the 1960s, albeit on a much smaller scale as well as state attempts to create socialist consumer cultures. Communist international youth festivals spread the knowledge and experience of western youth culture; rock ‘n’ roll permeated the Iron Curtain, sometimes against the wishes of socialist states and sometimes at their invitation. The Russians promoted their own version of Elvis, Dean Reed, for example, even as they opposed
youth who dressed in Western styles and tried to record American music on old x-ray plates. The Polish government allowed the Stones to perform in Warsaw in 1967. Students in Yugoslavia developed distinctive subcultures as well as political critiques of the regime. But we know very little about these students’ economic assessments of life under Communism as opposed to their political critique. They wanted more and better goods, like their more conservative or Stalinist elders, but did they want a fully capitalist economy or some, ill-defined mixed one?

Has the historiography on the Sixties in the Third World shared this tendency to avoid economics in favor of politics and culture? Here my knowledge is much more limited, as is the historiography and I hope to learn much from the papers at this conference. From what I have read, it is, not surprisingly, the radical protests and often violent repression of them that have received the most attention—Che in Bolivia, the Tlateloloco Massacre in Mexico City, Pinochet's coup against Allende or the Indian government’s battle with Naxalite peasants. We know less about the movements behind them, ones which, as Arif Dirlik reminds us, were influenced by ideas and examples circulating from Western Europe and the United States, but which were politically and culturally rooted in their nation’s histories and contemporary economic and political contexts. We know from him and others that Maoist recommendations for a people-based development path and self-reliance so as to avoid American consumerism on the one hand and Soviet bureaucratism on the other hand had broad appeal. We know much less about how those vague and elastic concepts were translated into specific economic ideas and actual developmental projects.
Not all historians focus primarily or exclusively on cultural issues broadly defined. While some dismiss politics as a serious concern for the Western European and American New Left, many acknowledge its importance there and elsewhere, whether or not they approve of its content. Three political themes dominate the historiography of the Sixties: anti-imperialism, Vietnam, and the democratization of political and educational institutions. Discussions of anti-imperialism predominate over views of anti-capitalism. The divisiveness of the Vietnam War in the U.S., in across Western and Eastern Europe, and in China, its destructiveness in Vietnam, and the global resonance of criticisms of American actions, including in the Second World, explain the attention devoted to that conflict. Antiauthoritarianism and participatory democracy provided a flexible language that social movements in many locales could and did wield to question national leaders, traditional left parties, university administrators, and less often, factory owners and managers.

In the U.S. civil rights and African-American empowerment were both a forerunner to New Left politics and an integral part of 1960s protests. By the late 1960s, at differential rates and in different political and ideological forms, women placed their needs and liberation on the agenda. This has been widely studied in the U.S. and Western Europe, even if the more economically concerned socialist feminist movements have been neglected by historians. The central place of war, race, and gender contributed to the displacement of class, the issue central to the Old Left. The chapters of Van Gosse’s *Rethinking the New Left* are indicative of the primacy of politics, albeit politics broadly conceived. Ban the bomb, stop the war, Black freedom struggles and Red, Brown and Yellow Power, free speech and participatory
democracy, Gay Liberation and second-wave feminism are all discussed but there is nothing about transforming work, restructuring finance, trade, and consumption, or rethinking the global economic order. 

The primacy of politics in Sixties historiography reflects both the priorities of movements around the globe and those of historians. Across Africa and Asia decolonization and anti-imperialism were seen as the prerequisites for any kind of economic development—socialist, capitalist, or along a distinctive national path. This prioritization, Jeremy Friedman has argued in his new book, *The Shadow Cold War*, reflected the greater persuasiveness of Chinese priorities and appeals to the Third World over Soviet ones. Decolonization, anti imperialism, and the Vietnam War raised questions of armed struggle and the use of violence that preoccupied and divided movements for national liberation as well as new left social movement sin innumerable countries. Combatting the American war against Vietnam was of enormous practical importance for Americans and Vietnamese, and of symbolic significance for many others; it proved a more effective way to mobilize protest than more amorphous critiques of U.S. economic hegemony would have been.

These political issues not only seemed more pressing than economic ones; they were also less divisive. Social movements in many countries shared an opposition to colonialism and imperialism as well as to the U.S. war in Vietnam. Economic issues engendered less consensus, for countries were situated so differently in the global economy and faced such different challenges. For activists in the U.S. and Western Europe, there were fears of automation, concerns about alienating work, a discontent with the values affluence had brought, but little of the
fear and anger about national economic prosperity or one’s individual economic future that now pervades these countries due to limited job opportunities, soaring housing costs and in the U.S. exorbitant university tuition. Social movements had the luxury of not thinking about structural unemployment, growing inequality, and austerity and focusing on politics instead. For the Communist countries of Eastern Europe the perennial problems of shortages and shoddy goods, while not eliminated, eased considerably over the 1960s; housing improved, leisure and travel opportunities increased, and in some countries experiments with mixed economies or market socialism were tried. Protests focused on political repression, more than economic exploitation in the work place. People of all ages criticized the variety and quality or lack thereof of consumer goods, but this was an ongoing theme, not an innovation of the Sixties; people complained to one another and sales people and sent letters of officials but did not engage in street protests of the sort that had occurred in Berlin in 1953 or were to occur in Poland in 1980/81.

The Third World was deeply divided in terms of past economic experiences and present economic challenges; indeed, the term was always a political designation much more than an economic one. The newly independent countries of Africa and Asia faced similar economic challenges, ones which forced them to attend to economic issues, negotiate complex offerings of development aid by the U.S., the Soviet Union and China, and give priority to defeating imperialism as a prerequisite for establishing viable national economies. Yet, they developed quite different responses to those challenges, depending on their prior economic history, their resource base and commodity dependency, and the politics of often-dictatorial
regimes on the one hand and the power of neocolonialism on the other. Latin America, for its part, had viable national economies, but ones inserted unequally into global networks of trade and investment. Whether this could be altered by cooperative efforts and institutional pressure or required armed struggles would divide countries on that continent. For China, which straddled the Second and Third Worlds, the long 1960s opened with the wildly ambitious Great Leap Forward, which failed in industrial terms and caused a devastating famine. This was followed by Mao’s Cultural Revolution whose goals were primarily cultural and political, even if its effects were enormously detrimental economically. While the Third World came to agree on the need for reform of the international economic order and its key institutions like the IMF and World Bank, individual countries had very different ideas about how to reform their own economies. In short, if politics created unity around certain key issues, the hidden abodes of production, trade and finance proved sources of division.

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Periodization is always a contentious issue for historians, and economic historians are no exception. They agree that the three decades after 1945 in Europe and North America marked a long postwar boom of extraordinarily high growth, full employment, expanding social policies and diminishing inequality; it was the Wirtschaftswunder, Les Trente Glorieuses. They concur that all this began to unravel in the crisis-ridden 1970s. But was there an economic Sixties? Jeremy Varon suggests that it is fruitful to think of a long 1960s, stretching from 1954 to 1975. Globally that runs from the Geneva Accords to the fall of Saigon, reflecting the
centrality of Vietnam. In terms of US domestic developments it runs from Brown vs Board of Education to the mid 1970s ebb of social activism\(^1\) (at least in its high Sixties form, for the women’s movement and gay liberation became increasingly active throughout the 1970s). Marwick, who focuses on culture and consumption in Western Europe and the U.S., chooses c1958-1974. Similar dates but with different signposts for developments in the U.S. and Western Europe might be from the affluent society of the late 1950s and John Kenneth Galbraith’s widely read 1958 critique of it to the destruction of Bretton Woods monetary system and the crisis of Fordism in the 1970s. In more global economic terms one possibility is 1955 to 1974, i.e. from Bandung and its advocacy of mixed development and Third World autonomy to the NIEO, which although passed by the UN General Assembly by a wide margin, immediately became a dead letter due to opposition from the U.S. and Western Europe. Or perhaps the Washington Consensus with its preference for markets over states, balanced budgets and diminished social policy, that was fully articulated only in 1989 but implemented piecemeal throughout the 1980s marks a better terminus. Another, less neatly datable set of markers, which played out differentially in degree and timing in all three worlds, would run from Social Democracy and Keynesianism to neoliberalism.

The Second World in Europe and China disrupts this periodization, however, suggesting again how divisive economic issues were to the ostensibly shared experience of the global Sixties. In Eastern Europe in the 1960s an improved economy had not warded off political protest in Czechoslovakia and Poland above all, but in the 1970s continued growth, purchased at the price of growing
indebtedness to the West, made authoritarian politics and the suppression of social movements more bearable. Crises were to come in the 1980s. China followed a distinctive path, turning away from the primacy of politics with the shutting down of the Cultural Revolution by 1967, withdrawing from extensive global economic engagements, and by the late 1970s embarking on its unique state directed marketization.

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The Sixties in the U.S. is rarely seen as a period of deep economic thought or engagement. Yet, one of its founding documents, the 1962 Port Huron Statement talks extensively of the Military–Industrial Complex and pockets of poverty, of the threat automation posed to employment and meaningful work and the corrosive dangers of abundance. Inspired by this programmatic proposal as well as by Michael Harrington expose of poverty, *The Other America*, Students for a Democratic Society, launched ERAP, Economic Research and Action Projects in 1963 in the intercities of places like Cleveland, Chicago, and Newark. But the initial concern with employment, wages, and the intersection of class and racial inequality faded rather quickly and for multiple reasons. However well intentioned ERAP participants were, putting young white students in Black ghettos for a few months or even a year with little knowledge of economics and no clear agenda for how to eliminate poverty or create democratic participation was a recipe for failure, especially as relations between Black and Whites in the civil rights movement deteriorated. Although sociologists and economists debated the possibilities of humanizing work and blue-collar workers protested the inhumane speed of the line
in Detroit and other industrial cities, these found little resonance in a growing New Left movement that was predominantly student, middle class and white.

Following Herbert Marcuse and others, the new left activists might well see themselves as a new working-class and the key new agent of radical change, but they were much less clear on what those changes would look like. Certainly some just wanted “to turn on, tune in and drop out” in Timothy Leary’s phrase, but many others wanted to reform existing institutions and their future within them. They had a critique of the university and other impersonal, bureaucratized structures. But far too little thought was given to transforming the economy, for contacts with the American labor movement and working-class were minimal, and the Soviet Union no longer seemed an appealing model, in so far as it ever had. However much they admired the Third World, they saw it more as an inspiration to action and struggle, a model of masculine militancy, rather than as a prescription for economic reform or revolution. If Port Huron is indicative, at most the New Left imagined “industrializing the world,” but in a more democratic and participatory way, perhaps under UN auspices. The West remained the model, but it would be exported in a supportive and solidaristic rather than exploitative way. Exactly how this would or should impact the global economic order was not spelled out.

Above all, however, it was Vietnam that from 1965 on absorbed all of the movement’s political, analytical and organizational energies. Imagining economic reform at home became one more casualty of the war abroad, as American militarism and imperialism and the multiple ways in which universities seemed to underwrite both became the primary focus. Capitalism, which after all was still
providing butter as well as guns, was marginalized as an object of analysis and action, except in groups like the Union of Radical Political Economists, founded in 1968. To be sure, radical transformation and liberation were still much proclaimed goals, but they were inchoate ones. As Jeremy Varon said of both American and West German radicals, “they never specified how turmoil would lead to radical change, how they would actually seize power, or how they would reorganize politics, culture and the economy after the revolution.”¹³ He was speaking of the Weather Underground and the Red Army Faction, but his judgment holds for the more moderate, non-violent New Left as well. Black movements remained more attuned to economic questions—think of the 1968 Poor People’s Campaign and the Panthers’ breakfast programs, across the country--yet for them as well politics, questions about armed struggle, Third World solidarity, and the necessity of combatting repression took center stage. Peace corps volunteers, some of whom were close to the New Left, confronted questions of the development and the global economy, but it is not clear whether this encouraged a more critical view of capitalist development projects, incorporated them into their ideology and practice, or engendered disillusioned passivity.

Were there missed opportunities to build on the early economic critique of the New Left? Probably not, given the presence of the war and ongoing prosperity. Of equal importance, few on the left engaged with the problems of development and the global economic order. To be sure some were reading Marx and Andre Gunnar Frank, but many came to Marxism and dependency theory analyses of the global economy only as the long 1960s were waning. There was a kind of provincialism,
ignorance, and complacency about things economic that the left shared with many other Americans and that ill prepared them for understanding Third World projects that extended beyond opposition to the Vietnam War and anti-imperialism.

Western Europe had a mixture of movements some of which were virtually exclusively student based, for example, West Germany, and others of which saw significant interaction between workers protest and student activism, such as Italy and France. As Kristin Ross has argued, May ’68 in France is now remembered by a bevy of historians and sociologist exclusively as a cultural and generational revolt, not a political and class one. Yet, she argues, the three targets of the movement, one that encompassed workers—French and immigrant—as well as students were American imperialism, Gaullism, and capitalism. The protests of 1968 generated new solidarities across classes and new imaginings of how not only the university and everyday life but also factories might be reformed. Both French and migrant works struck with increasing frequency, making both demands for better wages and for qualitative goals—more democratic factories, respect, and the elusive but seductive idea of autogestion. And of course May ’68 culminated in the largest general strike in French history. Its material demands were the easiest to meet and protest subsided but not the continuation in a more muted key of egalitarian and participatory qualitative demands, the prolonged LIP watch factory occupation and self management being the most noted symbol thereof.

Yet, given the defeat of May ’68 and the dismissal of it by some of its staunchest student supporters, we still know too little about the economic imaginary and actual economic experiments and experiences of 1968.
Contemporaries were fascinated by these worker protests in France and during the extended hot autumn in Italy, where workers also challenged authority, demanded qualitative improvements as well as better pay, and organized on the shopfloor to exert more power. But except for a few historians like Gerd-Rainer Horn, little attention has subsequently been paid to them.\textsuperscript{15} In West Germany the quiescence of the working class, the solidity of the social market economy, and appeals of terrorism as a short cut to change, all encouraged the New Left to focus on exposing remnants of Nazism and demanding real political democratization. And historians have neglected those strikes and worker protests that did occur, overlooking especially those involving women and migrant workers.\textsuperscript{16}

1968 in East Central Europe saw protests in Poland and Czechoslovakia, and in neither were economic issues in the forefront. In Poland students and intellectuals dominated, and workers, who had been so active in 1953 and 1956 and were to be again in the 1980s, remained quiescent. The Prague Spring was more complex, as there was extensive worker activism in the spring of 1968, with workers demanding both better pay and working conditions and attacking factory officials. And after the Soviet invasion workers like students and many others took to the streets \textit{en masse}. Yet, Prague Spring is not remembered for either government attempts at economic reform nor demands for economic change from below. Rather, economic issues and protests are neglected in the dominant narrative that stresses demands for cultural openness, political reform or the anti-politics of living in truth, and the permanent discrediting of the Soviet Union. Not collective action but individual refusal is the remembered theme of the Prague
Spring. But how did those workers who attended factory meetings, went on strike, and pelted Soviet tanks envision a better economy? Did they have a vocabulary of participation, anti-authoritarianism and workers’ control or were their demands exclusively material and quantitative? Did they focus on short-term concerns or harbor longer-term visions of change?

In the Third World as well politics seemed to take precedence over economics. Economics seemed to have featured more prominently in Latin America and in works on Latin America than elsewhere, given that political independence was not an issue and given the Cuban Revolution as one experiment and Allende as another as well as the prevalence of dependency theory among intellectuals and students who featured so prominently in Sixties protests. But the rise of dictatorships across South America in the 1960s and the repression of protest movements, both peaceful ones and those committed to armed struggle, made political reform and political and civil human rights issues of more concern to contemporaries and historians.

For Asian and African nations from Bandung on, Vijay Prashad argues, political independence and the creation of a space between the blocs was the first priority. Nationalist leaders like Nehru, Sukarno, and Nasser were much clearer about anti-colonialism and nonalignment than about social development within their nations or the desired shape of the global political economy. Prashad traces the various meetings of Third World leaders and their efforts to build alliances within the UN and through UNCTAD in order to promote their own development agenda. But that proved elusive, not only because of U.S. and European opposition,
but equally because these efforts underestimated the obstacles to development on the one hand and because of the diversity of economic situations and interests across the Third World on the other. Prashad offers a provocative top-down history of what he calls the Third World Project and its failures and ultimate unraveling, but we learn little of how or whether these efforts to rethink dependency or reform the power relations within the international financial institutions had any resonance among students or workers who protested during the 1960s. Did knowledge of dependency theory radicalize those who came to participate in new social movements or were authoritarian politics, Vietnam, and Cuba more important in politicizing people? Did the G77 and UNCTAD have any popular resonance or were they either ignored or dismissed as ineffectual reformism? Which African, Asian or Latin American countries saw which other nations as possible models for economic reform or radical transformation—a question that is relevant to both leaders and those in new social movements. Cuba might well be an inspiring example of political revolution, but with its ongoing dependence on one commodity, sugar, it was hardly an economic model. Nor was war torn Vietnam. Friedman suggests that the Chinese emphasis on anti-imperialism as opposed to anti-capitalism and its advocacy of people based development and self-reliance was more appealing than the Soviet stress on anti-capitalism, which it eventually watered down to compete with the Chinese. But as various countries tried to negotiate their own developmental path, where did they draw their ideas from?

There is undoubtedly much work of which I am ignorant that suggests answers to some of these issues, and I look forward to learning about such work
from the participants at the conference. Yet, a more synthetic and complex understanding of the Global Sixties will need to bring the literatures on development from within the Third World and as promoted from the First and Second worlds and those on efforts to promote the Third World Project internationally into conversation with studies of the new social movements that emerged globally. Where they intersected with and mutually influenced one another on the one hand or failed to do so on the other hand will contribute to our understanding of the priority of politics over economics in social movements of the 1960s.

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By the mid 1970s the world of the long 1960s was rapidly unraveling. The Vietnam War was over, decolonization had been completed and most of the initial hopes for the postcolonial order had been dashed. The long post war boom in the US and Europe had abruptly ended, and countries across the Third World and in Eastern Europe were becoming increasingly indebted. Historians have explored how these changes contributed to the ebbing of student and worker protests, their splintering and redirection toward identity politics, environmental issues, and terrorism and the repression of social movements. I want to raise a slightly different question, namely, how did the primacy of politics in the movements of the 1960s shape the ability or inability of those in them to understand and respond to the new economic realities of the 1970s and beyond?

In the U.S. and Western Europe, the economic changes of the 1970s and 1980s made the analyses, policies, and hopes of Sixties activists in many ways
irrelevant and left them unprepared to respond to new economic and political challenges. The very successes of the post war boom had bred confidence about the economic future. Whether they were workers or students, most activists imagined that growth and full employment would continue. The challenge—once politics and universities had become more democratic and less hierarchical and the authority of expertise had been successfully challenged-- would be to democratize or socialize the prosperity that postwar Fordism had created. The challenge was to make work less hierarchical and alienating, to pursue the elusive goal of autogestion. It was to democratize and expand social policies. The New Left had not anticipated the dramatic slowing of growth and rise in unemployment, the crisis of Euro-American Fordism and outsourcing, and attacks on Keynesianism and the welfare state from the right. It had not attended to the growing body of neoliberal economic thought on which politicians, economists, and businessmen in the U.S and UK above all were to draw. US military interventions abroad had been subjected to much criticism, but not US domination of the IMF and World Bank. Colonialism was understood much better than neocolonialism.

Activists in Communist Eastern Europe faced a different set of economic challenges but ones for which they were equally unprepared. As the demands for political reform and cultural freedom of the 1960s gave way to calls for human rights in the 1970s, dissidents paid little attention to economics. Nor did the Helsinki Accords and subsequent monitoring process. Growing indebtedness to the West did not spark protests—except in Poland when it led to rising food prices; in 1980-8; indeed debt subsidized consumer goods and dampened discontent. There
were economic reformers in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary who theorized and tried to implement market socialism.\textsuperscript{18} They recognized the pervasive inefficiencies of total planning and advocated decentralization of control, prices that provided accurate information, and small-scale private plots and businesses. They wanted to enhance consumption and improve technology. They did not envision, however, a radical dismantling of socialism. But what of the students and workers who had been active in the 1960s? Did they have some vision of a mixed economy and market socialism? Or was an imagined vision of consumer capitalism their goal? It is unlikely that they either anticipated or wanted the transformation that ultimately came after 1989—a rapid and chaotic privatization and liberalization that created crisis, unemployment, and drastically reduced social benefits for a decade.

In parts of the Third World, the economic challenges faced by states remained similar—dependency, the commodity lottery, and failed development. But the political and global financial context changed dramatically with growing indebtedness, weakening commodity prices, the enhanced power of the IMF and World Bank while that of the UN diminished, and often-disruptive civil wars and repressive authoritarian regimes. How did those who had been active in the 1960s react both to these ongoing problems and to the greatly enhanced power of the Global North? Were they more receptive to the economic efforts of the G77 and UNCTAD? Were they involved in the UN Women’s Conferences from Mexico City to Beijing, which grappled with economic issues that divided women from various countries in ways that issues of violence against women did not? Ultimately, in Latin America, especially in the Southern Cone, once the dictatorships fell, new
social movements did emerge that pioneered creative discussions of the global economy at the Social Forums and initiated things like participatory budgeting, while states sought greater economic regional interconnection and cooperation. But what is the link between these social movements and initiatives and earlier activism and ideas? And why did they emerge in Latin America but not in most of Africa?

Asia was the home of the post 1960s success stories, first the Tigers, and later China. All embodied top down, authoritarian marketization and industrialization. All encouraged dissidents to make politics the top priority rather than economics. All showed just how fictive any economic or political unity among non Euro-American nations was. The Third World Project, in so far as it ever existed, was over by the 1980s. Divisions became increasingly evident. For all the talk of a global south, the preferred language of the left, or emerging markets, the language of economists, business people, and development agencies, there is little that unites the nations encompassed by these vague and shifting terms. Despite a great diversity of economic pasts, presents, and possible futures in the 1960s, the Third World shared anti-imperialism. In theory these nations still have common interests in improved commodity prices, reforming the Bretton Woods institutions, and securing aid from the North. But some can take the initiative to create their own institutions as alternatives to what they cannot reform—the BRICS, especially China, but most still cannot. As less developed countries learned from the 1973 OPEC actions onward, global commodities and natural resources divide as much as they unite. And efforts to secure aid on terms receiving countries deem advantageous is even more difficult in a world no longer divided by the Cold War, as
the failure of the 1986 UN Declaration on the Right to Development to achieve any practical results has shown. There are more continuities in the economic problems that poor nations outside Europe and America face than in those plaguing the old and new capitalist states of the First and former Second Worlds. Leftists and progressives there may be better positioned to analyze the problems of their national economies and those of the international economic order, but they hardly seem better able to challenge and change them.

2 For a sampling of this growing literatures, see Frieden, Rise and Fall of Global Capitalism, Shock of the Global. Eichengreen, Berend. On neoliberalism, Kim Phillips-Fein, Angus Bergen, Daniel Stedman-Jones, David Harvey.
3 Latham, Engerman, Hong
11 Jeremy Varon, Sixties, find full cite.
12 Port Huron Statement
13 Jeremy Varon, Bringing the War Home 309.

Prashad, 36-45.