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## ***Re-thinking Student Radicalism: the case of a Provincial British University***

**Sam Blaxland**

email: [s.blaxland@swansea.ac.uk](mailto:s.blaxland@swansea.ac.uk)  
*Swansea University. United Kingdom*

**Abstract:** This paper explores the 1968 moment in the British University of Swansea. It discusses four main flashpoints of protest and unrest that occurred there from 1968 to the early 1970s. Much of the evidence is drawn from local and student newspapers, which chronicled these events by watching them very closely and reporting not just on what happened but also on what students and members of the surrounding community thought about them. This is cross-referenced with small examples of the author's oral history collection that he has compiled as part of his research. By using these sources and by taking evidence to form a broad picture, the paper suggests that, in the late 1960s, whilst the events taking place in Swansea were dramatic, they did not represent a majority of what the student body at the time thought, or how they behaved. This was partly a result of Swansea's provincial character and its inherent social conservatism. A more crucial period, when the tone regarding student unrest really started to shift, was the early 1970s. Therefore, it is important to continue thinking of these events in terms of a «long 1968».

**Keywords:** Provincial; universities; radicalism; conservatism; sixties; testimonies; Swansea.

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### **1. Introduction**

In May 1968 the streets of Paris were barricaded by upturned cars and unrooted trees, put there by students as a blockade in their pitched battle with police during one of the iconic moments of post-war Europe (Jackson, 2011, p. 3). These students were rebelling against authority, against being told what to do by the out-of-touch and apparently draconian authorities, and – they claimed – against the injustices of the world (Fink, Gassert and Junker, 1998, p. 1). A month later, a slightly less extreme but nevertheless dramatic event took place just in front of a relatively small University College in the British town of Swansea, which is located in south Wales. In front of the University ran a busy road that separated it from a footpath and a beach. After two students were knocked down by cars on this road, around 300 of their peers, angry that there was no safe way to cross without dodging traffic,

marched down to it, sat down, and blocked vehicles trying to get passed. The police were called and there were fights between them and the rebellious students<sup>1</sup>. Cries of «shame!» were heard when the new President of the Student's Union, who was also the protest's ring-leader, was taken away in a police car<sup>2</sup>. The next day a larger protest saw more dramatic scuffles with the police, as students blocked traffic along the road again<sup>3</sup>. A van, its «horn blaring» tried to force its way through the crowd but was surrounded and forced back as students sang «we will not be moved»<sup>4</sup>.

These activities were the spark for a spate of political demonstrations, sit-ins, strikes and rebellions at the College in Swansea from the late 1960s through to the early 1970s. This paper will briefly explore these events, and the wider context they took place in, before discussing their significance and implication. It will argue that in the late 1960s the young people who were attracting all the media attention and grabbing the headlines were actually in a minority of students in Swansea. The majority were either apathetic, or they actively distanced themselves from this kind of activity, pleading for caution or calling openly for calm and order. This tells us something about the sporadic nature of the 1968 movement, particularly in more rural and provincial areas of Britain. In places like Swansea, where a socially conservative culture had deep roots, this was to be expected. Historians rarely focus on such places, understandably preferring instead to turn their attentions to urban and metropolitan centres like London or Paris, where, for a variety of reasons, the most vivid and intense protests happen. Whilst such epicentres of activity are vitally important, they are not representative of countries as a whole. Nonetheless, what were the activities of a minority in the late 1960s turned into a true cultural shift in the early 1970s. This paper, therefore, will reinforce the need to think in terms of a «long 68», one where, in places like this provincial university under study, the so-called «spirit of 68» was much more applicable to the decade that followed it.

## 2. Contextualisation

The events of the long 1968 – not just in the most commonly cited case of France but also in countries around the world, including Italy, Japan, Mexico, and the USA – will be well known to many, especially as 2018 marked its fifty-year anniversary – and a flurry of newspaper reports, radio documentaries, television programmes and academic pieces of work appeared to dissect exactly what happened, and why it took the form it did. Needless to say, countries experienced the moment in different ways (Italy, for example, saw a stronger element of support from industrial and manufacturing workers), but several factors yoked together the protest marches, sit-ins and, in some cases, riots. It was a moment where hitherto unseen and unimagined levels of student demonstrations took place. Sit-ins and «teach-ins» at universities in cities across Europe meant that students took over lecture theatres and classes in protest at draconian rules and the lack of voice they had in

<sup>1</sup> (1968, 21 June). Students stop cars in road safety protest. *Western Mail [WM]*.

<sup>2</sup> (21 June 1968). Action, or More Chaos – Students. *South Wales Evening Post [SWEP]*.

<sup>3</sup> (22 June 1968). Police, Students Clash on Second Day of Road Protest. *SWEP*.

<sup>4</sup> (22 June 1968). Scuffles as Traffic Held Up For Miles, *SWEP*.

decision-making processes at their institutions. They took to the street, protested, and, in some cities, allied with workers in general strikes. In some circumstances, this turned into armed pitched battles with police, and the forming of barricades as part of this clash, like what famously happened in Paris (Judt, 2007, p. 409).

The events in Swansea, which will be used in this article to highlight the diversity of the «long-1968» experience, did not, therefore, take place in a vacuum. Indeed, one of the most notable things about what happened there at the end of the 1960s was that the tactics, methods and causes students rallied behind were, in many ways, imitations of similar things happening across Britain, and Europe more widely. This is true to such an extent that many of the historians who write on the subject find it possible to take a transnational approach to the subject, comparing the student experience of 1968 in various countries. Hence, authors like Arthur Marwick were able to write important and very revealing books on the topic that encompassed Britain, France, Italy and the United States (Marwick, 2012). Similarly, Klimke sets out his study on the topic as a comparison between West Germany and the United States whilst stressing the «global» dimension to the period, as he does in his edited collection with Scharloth, where the common (and the different) experiences of fifteen different countries are analysed in one volume (Klimke, 2001; Klimke and Scharloth, 2008). The 1960s was a decade of movement and mobility, which meant that links between countries and between the protagonists of the 1968 moment were easier than ever. Perhaps the symbolic moment of this was when the de facto leaders of many of Europe's student movements met in London to conduct press conferences and sing the Communist anthem in front of Karl Marx's grave<sup>5</sup>. It was the forging of these links that meant there almost seemed to be some unity to the European student movement where its protagonists were demanding or fighting for similar things.

This was a student movement, led, largely, by a broadly middle-class coalition of comfortable students, unhappy about the lack of say they had in the governance of their universities and the nature of their education, but also concerned about the wider «injustices» of global capitalism (Fink, Gassert and Junker, 1998, p. 1). They had grown up in an era where most people, in the words of the former British Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, had «never had it so good». They had not had to fight in a world war, and had grown up in an era where disposable income and pocket money, rather than ration coupons, was becoming common (Morris, 2014, p. 33; Thomas, 2002, p. 292). Aided by new social and cultural trends like satirical television shows, the «rock 'n' roll» music of bands like Bill Hayley and the Comets, or Elvis Presley, a growing youth-consciousness, prolonged education, international travel, and a rapidly expanding mass media, it became more common for students around the world, and particularly in its developed parts, to question authority (Harrison, 2009, pp. 474, 478, 484). Although 1968 was therefore about forming, and acting as part of, large groups, it was also an act of celebrating the autonomy of the self in a breakaway from notions surrounding supposedly old-fashioned, collective, stuffy and conservative ideals centred on things like the nuclear family. Indeed, as one historian has argued, the «primary aim» of students in this period was the «removal

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<sup>5</sup> (13 June 1968). Cohn-Bendit shows how to wield student power. *Times*.

and humiliation» of authority (Judt, 2007, p. 409). Of course, 1968 did not mark the sudden arrival of activity. As in many other places, the politics of pacifism after the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1963, discontent about universities acting too paternalistically in their *in loco parentis* capacity, and political dramas in the form of further stirrings of Welsh nationalism all meant that some form of activism and protest was visible at the College before they key year of 1968<sup>6</sup>. However, 1968 witnessed a pivotal moment with a burst of intense political activity, and one that Swansea and its College's students were very much caught up in.

### 3. Protest

In all protests and disruptions, national and international concerns fused with specific local circumstances, allowing the opportunity for particular grievances to be aired. Matters were no different in south Wales (Hoefflerle, 2013, p. 2). In Swansea's case, the initial stimulus was the Mumbles Road and its lack of safe crossing spaces that was outlined at the beginning of this article. Students had discovered that an average of 16,000 vehicles every twelve hours used the road that ran right in front of the College's grounds. With this data they formed a petition that was delivered to the Ministry of Transport<sup>7</sup>. More action followed with two days of protest, placard-waving, and blocking traffic, eventually forcing the town council to do what they had not done for years (despite being asked), which was to commit to the building of a pedestrian foot-bridge over the road and install a traffic light system<sup>8</sup>. This marked a victory for students who had been peacefully campaigning and petitioning to try and solve a serious problem for years. Their tactics, however, spurred on a spate of much more nakedly political disruptions. Months later, at the same spot on the same road, the College's Anarchist Society organised another demonstration. This time, the issue was not road safety but «the overthrow of capitalist society»<sup>9</sup>. As one of its leaders, Ian Bone, was quoted as saying of the society when it was first set up: «If we can't run a university on anarchist lines we can't run the outside world»<sup>10</sup>.

Not all activities were marshalled by the Anarchists, however. Between 1967 and 1969 the Student's Union was run by two particularly left-wing Presidents, Les Brook (whose nickname, because of his Socialist credentials, was «Red Les») and Roger Trask. Both heavily supported a cause that was becoming popular across the world at this point: student representation at university, and the lack of power students had to affect change or have their voices heard on decision-making bodies within their institutions (Ruegg and Sadlak, 2011). This had been one of the driving forces behind the initial student protests at the London School of Economics (LSE)

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<sup>6</sup> (16 November 1963). College Pacifist Group Founded, *Crefft*; (1 May 1955). Would be MP is sent to Jail. *Sunday Dispatch*; (19 February 1965). Student's Protest. *Times Educational Supplement*.

<sup>7</sup> (5 January 1967). Students demand action on «danger» road probe. *WM*.

<sup>8</sup> (31 July 1968). Footbridge – so students win their fight. *SWEP*; 5 July 1968. Traffic lights the answer – students. *SWEP*.

<sup>9</sup> (12 November 1968). Extremists at work in the Colleges of Wales. *WM*.

<sup>10</sup> (20 October 1966). Anarchy Soc. Set up, *Crefft*.

in 1966<sup>11</sup>. When Les Brook was first elected as Swansea's Union President he used the front page of the student newspaper to tell his peers: «now is your chance to shout your mouth off [...] Complain – constructively or destructively»<sup>12</sup> Despite the fact that in October 1968 the National Union of Students and the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals agreed, through «an unprecedented joint statement», to develop greater student participation in university affairs, some students were clearly not satisfied<sup>13</sup>.

In March 1969, those at Swansea's College demanded more say in its governance (specifically on Senate, Council and Faculty boards) and an increase by 30 per cent in their per-head grants<sup>14</sup>. As one of those leading the demands explained, «all around us we see the inability of authority to bridge the generation gap, to understand the new morality that is, and must go on developing»<sup>15</sup>. 250 people marched to the administrative block to begin a protest that, it was announced, «could last indefinitely»<sup>16</sup>. Food, drink, and popular music were all provided and the Union President told the assembled crowd in the Registry «we are the bosses and that's how it's going to stay, brother»<sup>17</sup>. Secret and confidential documents from this period, which still survive in the University's Archives, reveal that the College's authorities canvassed the opinions of staff about the prospect of these kinds of events getting out of control. They were clearly concerned, and this was evidenced when the sit-in ended when the College's Registrar offering the students more concessions. But it began again in June 1969 after the editor of the College's Socialist publication «Red Letter» (a publication that was at one point deemed so controversial that it was censored by the College)<sup>18</sup> was suspended by the authorities for writing something unflattering – and supposedly libellous – about the Principal, for whom much of the student ire was reserved<sup>19</sup>. The kind of action they chose to follow was designed to create maximum impact and gain attention. In the words of one staff member from the time working in the Administration Department who was forced out of her office in the Registry: «sit-ins were difficult...I couldn't do my job and I burst out crying...it was that sort of stress»<sup>20</sup>.

More dramatic than these sit-ins, however, was the violent protest against the South African rugby team, which happened in Swansea in 1969. Apartheid in South Africa meant that the Springbok tour had faced many protests around the country, including at Twickenham and in Aberdeen, but the Swansea incident was

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<sup>11</sup> (18 November 1966). L.S.E. Students to Boycott Lectures. *Times*.

<sup>12</sup> (2 March 1967). An Open-Letter From The President Elect, *Crefft*.

<sup>13</sup> (8 October 1968). Greater student role agreed by universities, *Times*; (8 October 1968). Student's demands met in university reform pact, *Times*.

<sup>14</sup> (14 March 1969). 50 Welsh students start «sit-in», *WM*.

<sup>15</sup> (23 January 1968). The voice of change. *Crefft*.

<sup>16</sup> (14 March 1969). 50 Welsh students start «sit-in», *WM*.

<sup>17</sup> (14 March 1969). 50 Welsh students start «sit-in», *WM*.

<sup>18</sup> (3 November 1966). Censorship. *Crefft*. Richard Burton Archive, UNI/SU/PC/6/4.

<sup>19</sup> (24 June 1969). Sit-in again at Swansea, *Guardian*.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with Judy Ganz, 27 September 2017.

the most violent. Up to 2,000 protesters (not just from Swansea but from various other universities around the country, mostly from England) walked down the road towards the rugby stadium where the game was being played. There, they met 1,000 police officers and a group of «vigilantes»<sup>21</sup>. The crowd pushed towards police and in the ensuing scuffles people were arrested. The use of smoke bombs by the police caused confusion and led to more arrests being made.<sup>22</sup> Finally, there was an invasion of the pitch by protestors which was where the worst of the violence happened. Claims of serious assault were made against both groups. 67 arrests were made, 30 demonstrators were taken to hospital, with four needing significant operations for their injuries<sup>23</sup>. However, for some who were there, it was both a thrilling and a morally correct action to take. In the words of one student: «That was the year that... the tour was stopped. I think that is very formative if you are part of a campaign that's been going on for a very long time. If you [win] it empowers you...»<sup>24</sup>. The late 1960s in Swansea, therefore, without doubt, witnessed dramatic and newsworthy protests, the scale of which had simply not been seen at the College before.

#### 4. A different perspective

Despite the drama of these various campaigns, however, when the facts and figures surrounding them are scrutinised it is possible to give a more nuanced – and a less sensationalist – account of such flashpoint moments in the College's late 1960s history. As Sandbrook argued, «pop-cultural stereotypes of the sixties bear little resemblance to the experiences of millions of people», and this can be applied to these stories outlined above (Sandbrook, 2014, p. xiii). The reaction from the local community in Swansea, for example, far from being supportive, was openly hostile. Letters to local newspapers continually described protesting students as «ill-mannered», a «small fraction of the very large student body», a «minority», «rude and impertinent», «extremists», «thugs and hooligans» and «shameful»<sup>25</sup>. And this was not confined to the local press but to the in-house student newspapers as well. In the run up to the first wave of protest, one called the Union's actions «completely abhorrent»<sup>26</sup>. They continued that Brook, the President, should «grow up. And if you can't grow up, shut up»<sup>27</sup>. What made this particularly noteworthy was that it was the viewpoint of fellow members of the College, and not just from disgruntled locals looking on suspiciously from their nearby homes.

<sup>21</sup> (28 November 1969). Swansea Shame, *Crefft*.

<sup>22</sup> (5 February 1970). Demo Student: «I Don't Care How Much I'm Fined», *SWEP*; (5 February 1970). Student is Fined After Swansea Demonstration, *SWEP*.

<sup>23</sup> (28 November 1969). Swansea Shame, *Crefft*.

<sup>24</sup> Interview, Winkie Williamson, 28 February 2017.

<sup>25</sup> (18 March 1969). Abusive students. *WM*; (12 November 1968). Extremists at work in the Colleges of Wales. *WM*; (13 November 1968). «The student thugs should lose grants», *WM*.

<sup>26</sup> (16 February 1967). *Crefft*.

<sup>27</sup> (16 March 1967). *Crefft*.

When the College's Principal, therefore, called the protestors the «squalid few», he was not voicing an isolated or marginal opinion<sup>28</sup>. Vote after vote in the Student's Union revealed a student body that was far from militant. The USA's war in Vietnam was often the loadstone of student protest in this period, uniting most young people in horror at America's actions, and yet a majority of Swansea students voted to boycott an anti-Vietnam protest in 1968<sup>29</sup>. A much bigger body of 500 students packed into a hall in 1968 to hear then then Conservative leader of the opposition, Edward Heath, give a talk. He supposedly received a 'rousing reception' from people who wanted to see him, demonstrating that more students preferred the comfortable normality of familiar (and Tory) party politics than this new wave of uncertainty and radicalism<sup>30</sup>. The decision to stage the first major sit-in was made at a meeting attended by 700 of the College's 3,300 students. 396 voted in favour, 201 against, whilst 116 abstained, proving that only a minority of students turned up to the meeting, and of those who did, a minority voted for the sit-in action<sup>31</sup>. In 1969, only seven Anarchist students voted to support protests at the LSE, with more than 200 condemning what they claimed to be a «vocal minority»<sup>32</sup>. A couple of days later a petition of nearly 800 signatures was collected in a matter of hours further condemning these seven. Those organising that collection of signatures wrote to the local press to claim that a «sizeable proportion of Swansea University College students wish to pursue their studies conscientiously»<sup>33</sup>. In other words, sizable proportion, were against the action, and most students simply were not present at all. When a supposedly key meeting was held to determine how the College would operate a shop on its premises only 110 of the 3,500-strong student body turned up<sup>34</sup>. The majority were probably studying, in a local pub, or in one another's halls of residence rooms drinking coffee – a convivial and very common activity in this period<sup>35</sup>. In anger at the small numbers turning up to meet and vote on these matters, the Union President condemned the «disinterested, untidy, abusive, idle, and frankly, spoilt students of this College»<sup>36</sup>. More than anything, however, they were simply apathetic, and certainly not militant. This was the case around the country, too. At Leeds University, only 100 (albeit disruptive) students tried to halt a meeting taking place to discuss student discipline in 1968, by occupying part of the building it was taking place in<sup>37</sup>. At a further meeting, of the 7,900-strong student body 650 – much

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<sup>28</sup> (29 November 1968). The «squalid few» lashed by Principal, *SWEP*.

<sup>29</sup> (25 October 1968). Students will march on, *WM*; (12 November 1968). Extremists at work in the Colleges of Wales, *WM*; (13 November 1968). «The student thugs should lose grants», *WM*.

<sup>30</sup> (30 November 1968). Heath emerges on top after stormy student meeting. *SWEP*.

<sup>31</sup> (14 March 1969). 250 Welsh students start «sit-in», *WM*.

<sup>32</sup> (6 February 1969). Reaction Group, *Crefft*.

<sup>33</sup> (4 February 1969). Swansea students – rational and responsible, *SWEP*.

<sup>34</sup> (12 December 1970). University leader threatens to resign, *WM*.

<sup>35</sup> Interview, Roger Edwards, 31 October 2017; Murray Thomson, 24 July 2017.

<sup>36</sup> (15 December 1970). President slams students for lack of interest, *SWEP*.

<sup>37</sup> (21 June 1968). Students fail to stop discipline meeting, *Times*.

less than ten per cent – attended, after which 300 occupied the gallery outside the Vice-chancellor's office<sup>38</sup>.

There is also a regional dimension to the Swansea case-study. Society in south Wales in this period was still, on the whole, more culturally conservative than many other parts of Britain (Johnes, 2012, p. 162). This clearly had an impact on the students who came to the College, with many actively describing how, having come from temperate nonconformist backgrounds, they did not even go into pubs during their time as students, let alone join sit-ins or go on marches<sup>39</sup>. In the words of one student, Swansea was not «swinging» like it was elsewhere: «I certainly wasn't involved in the "flower power"...they talk about the drugs scene [in this period]...we didn't see any drugs!»<sup>40</sup> One of the most significant things about the ring-leaders of the major protests is that they had come from more urban and metropolitan areas in England – and especially London (Morris, 2014, p. 36). The figures are telling: in 1960, 70 per cent of students at the College were Welsh. By 1970, with transport making people ever more mobile, that figure had dropped to 41 per cent<sup>41</sup>. Although it involves taking a telescoped snapshot, in the late 1960s all Student Union Presidents from the Welsh University Colleges were profiled and surveyed about their opinions. The results are intriguing. The two who were from outside Wales expressed significantly more radical views than their Welsh counterparts, who advocated calm and cautious behaviour from students during this turbulent period<sup>42</sup>. Similarly, the majority of those protesting at the South Africa rugby match, for example, were bussed in from other areas and other universities across the United Kingdom. Therefore, we need to be careful when thinking about such things as a truly «national» moment. Some historians have classified it as such, but this is perhaps too general. We need to think in more nuanced terms when it comes to studying protest and radicalism in the late 1960s.

In time, however, the mood did change, demonstrating in the process that the real «spirit of 1968» took place in the 1970s. For example, in 1970, students at Swansea's College demanded that the principle of «autonomy» within each student accommodation block be respected – in other words, the right of students to decide what they did, instead of being guided by staff<sup>43</sup>. Again, such calls were mimicking similar ones around the country. At Swansea's Beck Hall, the all-women's hostel, there was a vote to abolish all existing regulations in force there<sup>44</sup>. The College set up a new committee that had the power to suspend any student for a term if they disrupted College life<sup>45</sup>. It ended up suspending the studies of fifteen women from Beck Hall and ordered them to leave immediately after they refused to sign a

<sup>38</sup> (26 June 1968). 300 students in Leeds «sit-in», *Times*.

<sup>39</sup> Interview, Ken Board, 5 October 2017.

<sup>40</sup> Interview, Rob Slater, 3 September 2017.

<sup>41</sup> (28 November). Principal denies claim, *WM*.

<sup>42</sup> (28 January 1969). As the student presidents see it. *WM*.

<sup>43</sup> (11 February 1970). «Action» threat by Swansea college students', *SWEP*.

<sup>44</sup> (9 February 1970). Girls at hall of residence back autonomy, *SWEP*.

<sup>45</sup> (13 February 1970). Ban warning to students in college row, *SWEP*.

declaration that they would accept the hall's regulations<sup>46</sup>. Seven members of the Student's Union's Executive Committee, including the new Union President, were also suspended<sup>47</sup>. In protest against this, a student strike was called – on the same day, as it happened, that the famous «Warwick files» incident made headlines<sup>48</sup>. 2,000 of the College's 3,400 students participated in this strike – with some estimates of numbers significantly higher than that<sup>49</sup>. For the first time, a majority of students seemed to be fully behind the action. In a special «official strike issue» the student newspaper supported this action, arguing that the College never took demands for proper representation seriously and that each step of the process to achieve representation «has been slow and difficult, each concession having to be wrung out of our administrators»<sup>50</sup>. Indeed, the tone of the main-stream student newspapers in the early 1970s changed markedly, shifting away from the inherent caution of the late 1960s. The strike lasted for ten days before it was fully called off, after the College agreed to set up enquiries to investigate some of the students' concerns<sup>51</sup>. The early 1970s, however, witnessed many more similarly well attended strikes and sit-ins.

This interpretation of the long 1968 is rare in the historiography. Certainly, authors like Sandbrook and Donnelly have argued convincingly that the stereotypes of the «sixties» experience were not relevant to many who lived through that period. But few have grappled with the subtle and varied dynamics within the student population at the key '68 pivot moment. The best author who deals – albeit briefly – with this topic is Sylvia Ellis, who argues that 'the moderate nature of British student politics' needs to be recognised alongside the more headline grabbing incidents from places like the London School of Economics. She suggests, for example, that the north-east of England was an area that was «particularly insular, introspective and conservative», and that «the scale and nature of North-Eastern student protest more accurately reflects the whole British picture; a picture that the more militant events in the nation's capital have long overshadowed» (Ellis, 1998, pp. 54-55). Ellis' piece is welcome in that it highlights the different textures throughout the student protest movement, but she does not explore in any detail those students who were either apathetic or actively hostile to the politics driving demonstrations and protests. The case of Swansea proves that they existed in droves and therefore deserve a much greater prominence in the history of youth culture and social movements from this period.

## 5. Conclusion

The period of protest and disruption that occurred in Swansea between 1968 and the early 1970s undoubtedly involved a great deal of drama. Whilst not on the scale

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<sup>46</sup> (14 February 1970). Welsh students order strike after 22 banned, *WM*.

<sup>47</sup> (16 September 1970). Boycott by students has «great effect», *SWEP*.

<sup>48</sup> (14 February 1970). Welsh students order strike after 22 banned, *WM*.

<sup>49</sup> (16 February 1970). Campus strike set to spread, *WM*; (17 February 1970). Militant students attacked, *SWEP*.

<sup>50</sup> 20 February 1970. *Crefft*.

<sup>51</sup> (26 February 1970). Student's Strike is Called Off, *SWEP*.

of events in many cities around the world, the series of protests, sit-ins and strikes shocked students and the surrounding townspeople. The blocking of the Mumbles Road on more than one occasion, sit-ins on campus, and the violent clashes with the police at the Springboks rugby match, meant that Swansea and its University College undoubtedly experienced a dramatic and noteworthy «long 1968». However, newspapers seeking headlines sometimes look for the most sensational version of a story. What has been outlined briefly here is an attempt to bust some of the myths about 1968 by suggesting that we need to consider Colleges like Swansea, as well as other institutions outside of the main urban and metropolitan centres of countries like the United Kingdom. By doing so we realise that 1968 was a very partial experience, driven by an effective and vocal minority who were often not representative of the area they were causing disruption in. A quieter minority apathetically, or actively, distanced themselves from such people and activities. It was only in the following decade that what we associate as 1960s culture really took hold. Only then, for example, did a majority of students engaged in a College-wide strike after their calls for «autonomy» were rejected. The tone of reporting about events also changed in this period, as long-term forms of socially conservative resistance amongst young people melted away. The «sixties» and 1968 had an impact, but it was a delayed one. Therefore, this study should remind us to continue thinking both in terms of a «long» sixties and a «long» 1968 – so that both encompass a broader period that extends out of that iconic decade and year all together.

## 6. References

### 6.1. *Primary material*

Newspapers:

South Wales Evening Post

Sunday Dispatch

Times

Times Education Supplement

Western Mail

Oral interviews with: Ken Board; Roger Edwards; Judy Ganz; Rob Slater; Murray Thomson; Winkie Williamson.

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Anderson, R. (2006). *British Universities: Past and Present*. Humbledon: Continuum.

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