

Claiming Democracy: The Paris 1968 May Revolts in the Mass Media and Their European Dimensions

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ABSTRACT

The paper explores the existence of a European public sphere drawing upon the example of the Paris 1968 May revolts. It addresses questions as: How European was 1968 when it happened? And what does European refer to? Is it European already when it happens in more than one European country or city? Can one ignore the influence of the USA and still call it European? Are the European experiences so distinct from the American ones that one can carve out a clear-cut European version of 1968? Why do we ask the question of whether or not 1968 was European when it clearly was one of the crucial events in recent history?

Keywords: 1968. Paris. European public sphere.

Reivindicando Democracia: Las Revueltas del Mayo del 68 en París en los medios de comunicación y sus dimensiones europeas

RESUMEN

El artículo explora la existencia de una esfera pública europea centrándose en el ejemplo de las revueltas de Mayo del 1968 en París. En él se pregunta acerca de cuán europeo era 1968 cuando tuvo lugar, qué significa "europeo" referido a ello. También se examinan cuestiones como: ¿Es algo europeo cuando sucede en más en un país o ciudad europeo? ¿Puede uno ignorar la influencia de los EEUU y seguir llamándolo europeo? ¿Son las experiencias europeas tan distintas de las americanas que uno pueda trazar una versión exclusivamente europea de 1968? ¿Por qué la pregunta de si 1968 fue o no un fenómeno europeo es crucial para nuestra reciente historia?

Palabras clave: 1968. París. Esfera pública europea.

1968 today represents a sign for a period of change, protest, and pluralisation, a kerf in the histories of Europe and the United States. It illustrates a shift in the basic setup of societies in Western Europe in relation to values, political activism, and forms of social protest; in the dialogue between generations and in the very imagination of what a democracy should be like. It also represents a stepping stone in many interpretations of Central and Eastern European dissident movements leading up to the changes of the late 1980s and early 1990s¹. In recent debates on Europeanization, memory of experiences and changes that affected most if not all European societies are newly scrutinised and 1968 is a hallmark within these debates alongside the Europeanization of the Holocaust. The value production promoted by the European Union, which increasingly incorporates European experiences in its self-understanding, fuels this process additionally.

The way in which 1968 can be narrated from a European point of view remains an open debate, however. Post-materialist theories², modernisation theory³, and realist international relations approaches⁴ point at two firm explanations for the shifts of 1968: 1) economic prosperity as the basis of new values and a complete overhaul of the younger generations' space of experience and value systems, 2) the general climate of détente between East and West following Willy Brandt's 'Ostpolitik' among other policy changes that mark a swing from the stability paradigm of the early 1960s. However, these explanatory models merely account for Western European and North American cases. To be sure, the possibility of contained revolt in Hungary and Poland and the open protestations of Alexander Dubcek's Czechoslovakia needed a minimal room for manoeuvre on the side of the dissidents. To include Central European cases in these explanatory frameworks would stretch their main points, however. Thus, it must be simply admitted that a comprehensive European narrative of 1968 that incorporates not only student movements but the whole complexity of social change is simply non-existent.⁵

Recently, Tony Judt's *Postwar* illustrated that a European history from 1945 to the present day can be written comprehensively, bridging East and West and inserting European integration into a wider historical narrative rather than vice versa.

¹ NIEDERMÜLLER, P.: Kultur, Transfer und Politik im ostmitteleuropäischen Sozialismus. In: KAEUBLE, H., KIRSCH, M. & SCHMIDT-GERNIG, A. (Eds.) *Transnationale Öffentlichkeiten und Identitäten im 20. Jahrhundert*. Frankfurt/M, Campus, 2002; LUTZ, A.: *Dissidenten und Bürgerbewegung. Ein Vergleich zwischen DDR und Tschechoslowakei*, Frankfurt am Main et al, 1999.

² INGLEHART, R.: Political Value Orientations. In: JENNINGS, K. & AL., E. (Eds.) *Continuities in Political Action: a longitudinal study in three western democracies*. Berlin and New York, de Gruyter, 1990

³ KAEUBLE, H.: *Sozialgeschichte Europas*, Munich, Beck, 2007; GILCHER-HOLTHEY, I.: *Die 68er Bewegung. Deutschland, Westeuropa USA*, München, C.H. Beck, 2001.

⁴ FINK, C., GASSERT, P. & JUNKER, D. (Eds.): *1968: The World Transformed*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1998.

⁵ KAEUBLE, *Sozialgeschichte Europas*, p. 301

Unfortunately, as Geoff Eley observed, the part of Judt's book that treats the 1968 period is "one of the weakest in the book", meandering into "an oddly diffuse and decontextualised treatment of the surrounding cultural radicalism"⁶. Judt thus loses his punch in one of the crucial stages of postwar European history, a period of marked change in the way European societies want to mould their present and their future in which established ways of reaching political and social legitimacy were profoundly challenged.

However, rather than brushing away the possibilities of gaining an entangled perspective on 1968 or sneering at the utopian radical theories inspiring the Western European left, as Judt did, the effort at including the period in a European historical narrative has also put forward new points of view beyond the true but somehow superficial labelling of 1968 as 'a European year'⁷. Indeed, Etienne François, continuing his critical and creative reflection on the European dimension from 1997 of 1968 puts forward an interesting framework of grasping the phenomenon by proposing an approach under the auspices of European *lieux de mémoire*. Building on the works of Pierre Nora and his own adaptations of the concept to the case of Germany⁸. François gathers the years around 1968 under the term 'geteilte Erinnerungsorte', which only translates into English as 'divided places of memory', missing the double meaning the author intends when he points to a "memoria divisa e condivisa", a memory that is divided and shared simultaneously. A 'divided yet shared' memory means that these forms of European memory represent both a dividing line between European societies marking their differences and a combining thread between the societies simultaneously⁹; 1968 appears as an umbrella concept for a variety of different stories uniting variations of a theme.

However, as promising as this approach appears, it is an approach to the memory of 1968 and to ways in which the European variations of the theme have been installed as points of reference and self-description in different European contexts. One of the reasons for creating such an umbrella approach to a transnational study is rooted in the fact that the goals and values of the 1968 movement are, in their politically correct and of course non-violent form, embraced by European societies as cornerstones for the legitimacy of their polity as well as for the European Union: peace (most of all!), democracy, justice, tolerance, solidarity, human rights, environmental protection, participation, gender equality, etc. The list can be prolonged.

⁶ ELEY, G.: Europe after 1945, *History Workshop Journal*, 2008, pp. 195-212, here p. 199.

⁷ FRANÇOIS, E., MIDDELL, M., TERRAY, E. & WIERLING, D. (Eds.): *1968 - Ein europäisches Jahr*, Leipzig, Leipziger Universitätsverlag 1997.

⁸ NORA, P. (Ed.): *Les Lieux de Memoire*, Paris, Gallimard, 1984-1992; FRANÇOIS, E. & SCHULZE, H. (Eds.): *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte*, Munich, C.H. Beck, 2001.

⁹ FRANÇOIS, E., *Europäische lieux de mémoire*. In BUDDE, G., CONRAD, S., JANZ, O. (Eds.): *Transnationale Geschichte. Themen, Tendenzen und Theorien*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006, pp. 290-303, p. 296

But how European was 1968 when it happened? And what does European refer to? Is it European already when it happens in more than one European country or city? Can one ignore the influence of the USA and still call it European? Are the European experiences so distinct from the American ones that one can carve out a clear-cut European version of 1968? Why do we ask the question of whether or not 1968 was European when it clearly was one of the crucial events in recent history? Why should this question beg answer when it obviously did have a European dimension? Is the agenda one of finding European commonalities uniting us Europeans and showing a road towards a European society? Is this a society shaped by the EU or has European social integration fuelled European institutional integration or are these mutually dependent systems? These questions are valid questions that will be with us in the future.

In the following, however, I will ask which core values and *topoi* framed the debate in the mass media during the period of crisis in May 1968 in Paris. I will then move on to consider the European character of the debates found in the media coverage in a twofold way: by asking whether or not the core values and *topoi* were consciously connected to anything European and by asking whether or not a European public sphere can be detected from the analysis of the debate and the communicative networks emerging in the debate. Thus, this article tries to contribute to a debate on the Europeanization of 1968 by looking at the role of Europe in Western European and GDR media at a moment in time when 1968 was a present day experience; in order to do this, a focus week of analysis was chosen: 18-27 May.

Background and Method

When former French President Charles de Gaulle welcomed the year 1968 in his New Year's speech he proclaimed that it will be the year in which a new social order would be implemented in France. The social order he imagined was very different to the changes France experienced during and following the most deeply cutting crisis of its post-war existence, however. Social unrest exploded in May 1968 in a situation of heightened critical tension inside many Western societies due to anti-war movements and a generally expressed need of the younger generations to break up encrusted social, political, cultural and economic structures. The assassination of Martin Luther King on 4 April and the gunning down of German student protest leader Rudi Dutschke on 11 April were manifestations of deep conflict inside Western societies. The intensity and violence of the Paris crisis was yet more evidence of this deep conflict.

The protests of the late 1960s changed the character of Western democracies and germinated continuous opposition among dissidents and the subversive political culture in Czechoslovakia and to some degree in Poland, too. The opposition to the Vietnam War and the call for peace and for democratic change united most protest

movements. Furthermore, many protagonists of the late 1960s and early 1970s were interconnected in a network of personal and media relations. A certain lifestyle expressed a global message beyond the national boundaries. Surely, it can be argued that 1968 was thus somehow European. But simultaneously this would be a clear over-interpretation and it would also mean a *post factum* transposition of a certain interpretation of events. Consequently, this chapter looks at the media discourses at the very moment of crisis in mid-May 1968 and analyses the role of values and Europe during the crisis within the mass media.¹⁰

The daily press and its routines of news reporting, actor referencing and discourse construction is a genre that does not cover *the* public opinion in its total sense; it maps a part of it, which explains why many transnational themes and actors are not present or dominant. Parallel public spheres existed and exist, overlapping only partially. Here, the questions put to the daily press seek to unearth the degree to which Europe as a value-based concept, as referential discourse or indeed as a future scenario features during what is undoubtedly a process of critique and crisis of European scope and perception. In the following, the discourses and value-based statements in the print media in France, the Federal Republic of Germany, and the United Kingdom, are analysed.¹¹ The East German paper *Neues Deutschland* is included in order to show cross-Iron Curtain references and the way in which the official German Democratic Republic media constructed the interpretation of the protests in France. While the paper clearly was not supporting a democracy, it was still part of a pan-European communication network, quoting from and being quoted by newspapers in both the East and the West.

The crisis was intensively covered. The goal of the following analysis is to identify the main *topoi* and the role of values in the political debate and the legitimacy discourses attached to these values. Furthermore, the role of Europe is analysed. A further aim is to assess whether a transnational discursive space emerges from the newspaper coverage on the event, and whether this can be qualified as European and in what way. Which were the main *topoi* of the media debate, which were the values used and discussed in the media discourse and which role did Europe play in the crisis context? Did it indeed appear as an appellative idea as it has been characterised by some¹²? In order to avoid a too rigid deduction pattern, an inductive ap-

¹⁰ The goal is not to follow Ranke's idea of showing 'how it really was', but looking for the role of Europe at the point of crisis culmination. And I am asking this question with very present day oriented perspectives that are related to values and to the public sphere, two issues of high relevance today.

¹¹ The newspapers analysed are *The Times*, *The Guardian*, *Le Monde*, *Le Figaro*, *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* and *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*.

¹² REQUATE, J. & SCHULZE-WESSEL, M.: Europäische Öffentlichkeit: Realität und Imagination einer appellativen Instanz. In: REQUATE, J. & SCHULZE-WESSEL, M. (Eds.) *Europäische Öffentlichkeit. Transnationale Kommunikation seit dem 18. Jahrhundert*. Frankfurt/M, Campus, 2002.

proach was applied. Thus instead of pre-formulating the *topoi* and values and checking the source material for the appearance and relevance of these pre-formulated items, first a close reading of the media texts was carried out. From this close reading, *topoi* and values as well as the role of Europe could be described and put into perspective with the research question. The second step included the assembling of data in a database from which Tables 1 and 2 were generated.¹³ Building on the notion of a European communicative network based on national public spheres and transnational networks connecting national actors and discourses¹⁴ a historical discourse analysis was carried out.

The early stages of the crisis

It is difficult to say when exactly the crisis that culminated in May 1968 in Paris began. Daniel Cohn-Bendit's student organization at the Paris University of Nanterre called itself the Movement of 22 March, which referred to the day it was founded. Norbert Frei claims that the day the protests reached Paris on 13 May was the decisive event triggering the revolt and the massive confrontations between the state and its citizens in the French capital and throughout France. This day was not the first day of demonstrations and revolt in Paris, however¹⁵.

Following months of conflicts between students and authorities at the University of Paris at Nanterre, the city administration closed down the university on 2 May

¹³ For more data emerging from this analysis see SCHULZ-FORBERG, H., *Case Study on Media Discourse, The Protests and Upheavals in Paris, May 1968, Report to the European Commission*, European University Institute, Florence, 2006. The data for this article have been generated in the framework of the European Framework sponsored research project entitled EMEDIATE: Ethics and Media in a European Public Sphere from the Treatises of Rome to the 'War on Terror' (project number CIT2CT2004506027). A first publication of some of the data used in this article has been published with TRIANDAFYLIDOU, A., WODAK, R., KRZYŻANOWSKI, M. (Eds.), *The European Public Sphere and the Media. Europe in Crisis*, Basingstoke and New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

¹⁴ Cf. RISSE, T., *An Emerging European Public Sphere? Theoretical Clarifications and Empirical Indicators, Annual Meeting of the European Union Studies Association*, Nashville, TN: Working Paper, 2003; PETERS, B., et al., National and Transnational Public Spheres: the Case of the EU, *European Review*, 13, Supplement 1, 2005, pp. 139–160; SCHULZ-FORBERG, H.; *Theoretical Paper on the Notion of a European Public Sphere. EMEDIATE. Media and Ethics of a European Public Sphere from the Treaties of Rome to the 'War on Terror'*. European University Institute, Florence, 2005; TRENZ, H.-J., Media Coverage on European Governance: Exploring the European Public Sphere in National Quality Newspapers, *European Journal of Communication*, 19(3), 2004, pp. 291–319; WESSLER, H., Europa als Kommunikationsnetzwerk. Theoretische Überlegungen zur Europäisierung von Öffentlichkeit. In VON HAGEN, L. (Ed.), *Europäische Union und mediale Öffentlichkeit*, Cologne, Halem, 2004, pp. 13–28; WIMMEL, A., Transnationale Diskurse in der europäischen Medienöffentlichkeit: Die Debatte zum Beitritt der Türkei, *Politische Vierteljahresschrift*, 46, 2004, pp. 459–483.

¹⁵ FREI, N.: *Paris, 13. Mai 1968: Kulturprotest und Gesellschaftsreform*, Munich, dtv, 2004.

1968. Immediately, student solidarity kicked in. On 3 May students of the Sorbonne gathered to protest against the closure of Nanterre and the threatened expulsion of several students. On Monday, 6 May, the national student union – the UNEF (Union Nationale des Etudiants de France) – and the union of university teachers organized a demonstration against police measures. Well over 20,000 students, teachers and supporters headed to the Sorbonne. The next day, this time accompanied by pupils and young workers, they gathered at the Arc de Triomphe and demanded that all criminal charges against arrested students be dropped, that the police leave the university; and that the authorities reopen Nanterre and the Sorbonne. Students gathered for another demonstration in Paris on 10 May and when the riot police blocked the demonstrators, barricades were built and another violent street fight occurred, which lasted until dawn the following day.

After the early days of student demonstrations and violent clashes with the police, oppositional parties as well as workers' unions joined the students' cause. The *Parti Communiste Français* (PCF) supported the students reluctantly, however, since it held the position that they were adventurers rather than a politically motivated force. The biggest trade unions, the *Confédération Général du Travail* (CGT) and the *Force Ouvrière* (FO) called a one-day general strike coupled with a demonstration for Monday, 13 May, and over a million people marched through Paris. The police did not take any steps against them and Prime Minister Georges Pompidou announced the release of the prisoners and the reopening of the Sorbonne. It was too late to stop the strikes, however, which had spilled over from the student movement to a general strike.

When the Sorbonne reopened, students immediately occupied it and declared an autonomous people's university. Furthermore, action committees were set up in Paris and elsewhere, in the weeks that followed, gathering information and demands to be held against the government that saw its policies challenged on all levels. Students, workers and other civil society groups demanded nothing less than a complete change of society and democratic reorganization.

Workers' unions used the momentum and organized the occupation of factories throughout the country. A strike at Renault spread from Rouen through France and reached Paris where workers occupied the factories in the Paris suburb of Boulogne-Billancourt. During one week, workers were able to take over some 50 factories and more than 200,000 were on strike on 17 May.

The focus week 18–27 May

Since the actors during the crisis were manifold, the data abundant, and many discourses entangled, a short summary of the events during the focus week is useful. Between Saturday, 18 August, and Saturday, 25 May, the following two narrative threads help give a better understanding of the overall situation: (1) the work-

ers' movement and the students' movement, and (2) the government's protagonists and main political challenges by the opposition.

(1) The workers' biggest union, the CGT, did not push the events of this week; it was rather trying to gain control over its unbound members. In order to get a grip and to lead instead of following the events, the CGT formulated political demands to hold against the employers and the government. Higher wages, improved social security, a rise in minimum wages, shorter weekly working hours and more was on the list. But even after securing a 35 per cent increase in the minimum wage, a 7 per cent increase in the normal wage and half the wage during strike days during first negotiations, workers did not stop their protests.

Students mainly demanded participation in the organization of curricula, the university administration and decision-making processes, which meant a radical change in the setup of French universities.

Daniel Cohn-Bendit, dubbed Danny the Red, occupied centre-stage and received a large amount of media attention. He was one of the protagonists of the week in focus, too: after a visit to Germany, he was not allowed back into France. The ban on Cohn-Bendit triggered a wave of solidarity and support from student organizations all over Europe. Belgian, German, Dutch and English students declared their solidarity, and when he headed back to France at the border crossing near Saarbrücken, hundreds of French and German policemen, aided by the German border patrol and their dogs, guarded the crossing while Cohn-Bendit made his bid to reach the other side. He did not make it back to France that day. But German students were ready to support his move and prepared his return to France also at Kehl in southwest Germany.

(2) De Gaulle was away from Paris on a state visit to Romania and in his speeches in Bucharest he declared European unity beyond the Iron Curtain. Taken by surprise, his government lacked the capacity to gain control at home. Furthermore, workers' organizations, political parties and government authorities reacted to the student initiatives and demonstrations but de Gaulle chose to stay silent, and after his government survived a censure move by the opposition in parliament he took one decisive step to cut through the Gordian knot and regain legitimacy: he called for a referendum. De Gaulle's political cunning helped the political institutions of France weather the crisis, but his ignorance of a new, mediated political discourse and a new way of expressing social and political opposition cost him dearly later. He understood the students to be a group of young hotheads that had not had a good enough education, as he remarked in his speech in Romania.

One of de Gaulle's first reactions, which translates into English as 'Reforms yes, but no shambles', became a key phrase for the students, who used it against him. The reason was the original meaning of the word he used. He talked about *chienlit*, which means 'fouling one's own nest'. This revealing choice of words can be found in all newspapers analysed including foreign ones. *The Guardian* from 21 May

begins its article on the French crisis by quoting the *chienlit* remark (*The Guardian*, 21 May 1968: 1).

The elected political opposition in the French parliament remained ineffective throughout. François Mitterrand, then leader of the left-wing federation called *Fédération de la Gauche Démocrate et Socialiste*, could not gather decisive momentum against the government even though he called on the government to resign almost every day. Mitterrand's contributions to the debate were rather limited. He mainly repeated his claim that the government must resign. He also declared solidarity with the workers and the students and he talked of a new policy combining socialism and freedom; however, he failed to rally enough support and was unable to change the government (and indeed had to wait until 1981 until he finally was elected to the presidency).

Furthermore, the PCF was strong and hoped to seize power. Other left-wing and socialist parties did not share its demands, however. While the workers' movement and the students were remarkably well organized, highly disciplined and unforgiving in their political claims, the political opposition failed to unite. It was Prime Minister George Pompidou who managed to begin the social dialogue between the parties and the trade unions. After de Gaulle's government survived the census move in parliament, the political opposition had lost the chance for a quick change of government. In general, the parties of the political left were not able to play a leading role. The strong and institutionalized public sphere of the French parliament did not connect to the non-parliamentary opposition.

Following the focus week

On 27 May, an agreement between the unions, employers' associations and the government was quickly reached. The minimum wage was raised, working hours cut, earlier retirement was introduced and the right to organize themselves was granted to the workers. Workers at Renault and other big firms refused to return to work, however. The crisis unearthed a fundamental distortion of the internal settings of French society.

The following days saw de Gaulle in action: he left Paris for Colombey-les-Deux-Eglises, his resident village, on 29 May, and met with General Jacques Massu who had summoned troops stationed in Baden-Württemberg, Germany. He dissolved his cabinet and announced general elections for late June. With a reshuffled cabinet he organized his political moves in the next weeks, and the French economy and everyday life sputtered back to normality. After some weeks, petrol stations got hold of fuel and cars began running again.

In the first round of the elections, the federation of left-wing parties, led by Mitterrand, and the Communists both lost ground. In the second round, one week later, the parties of the right even won an overwhelming majority. Left-wing groups lost

61 seats and the Communists lost 39. Pierre Mendés-France, a former prime minister and a possible candidate for succeeding de Gaulle in May, was not even re-elected in his Grenoble constituency. The French context of May 1968 is decisive for an understanding of the media debates. The *topoi* generated from the discourse emerged mainly from this political crisis. The crisis of Paris 1968 was a bottom-up process of massive critique that could not be absorbed by the political institutions.

The international context of 1968

The main international context uniting most of the movements from the late 1960s and early 1970s in Europe and the United States was the protest against the Vietnam War as well as a global peace movement, often combined with a revival of Marxist ideas and the introduction of Maoism to the European left.

However, while this was an international commonality, and while all the 1968 movements are marked by generational conflict and shared the values of peace and self-determination, these movements – in their political and social protest – mainly engaged themselves in national political systems.

While the movements were thus nationally contained, this cannot be held against them or disqualify them. Furthermore, political structures on a transnational level were non-existent since the European Economic Community only had six members then. Patterns of a globally networked communication can be mapped out, however. Icons travelled, as did ideas, music and media. In this respect, 1968 certainly was a European, indeed a global event¹⁶.

The year 1968 had thus a certain ‘Europeanness’ in its effect on the way that values were negotiated in the respective countries and their specific contexts all over Europe and subsequently it changed societies profoundly,¹⁷ yet actors did not demand any form of European government or governance, at least not to a measurable degree in the mass media discourse analysed here. Thus, while the cultural changes that took place were a transnational phenomenon, and while the younger generation in each country took the older generation to task, the concrete political and cultural conflicts were national. The Provo movement was typically Dutch¹⁸; the designer Mary Quant, the fashion model Twiggy, and the lifestyle attached were

¹⁶ SCHMIDTKE, M. A.: '1968' und die Massenmedien - Momente europäischer Öffentlichkeit. IN REQUATE, J. & SCHULZE-WESSEL, M. (Eds.) *Europäische Öffentlichkeit...*

¹⁷ In the sense of SCHMALE, W., *Die Europäizität Ostmitteleuropas, Jahrbuch für europäische Geschichte*, 4, 2003, pp. 189–204.

¹⁸ MOERINGS, M.: *Protest in the Netherlands: Developments in a pillarised society. Crime, Law and Social Change*, 2004, N. 7, pp. 95-112.

typically English; Rudi Dutschke was very German; and May 1968 was most of all a French affair¹⁹.

While Britain suffered least from the generational conflict that spread on the continent and in the US, youth movements mainly did oppose the traditional British way of life, censorship and false morality. In Poland, 1968 saw a small-scale student revolt – and freedom was the main subject. When the Polish national theatre was not allowed to stage a nineteenth-century drama, angry students marched to the censorship office – and 50 of them were immediately arrested.

The leaders of the movement, Adam Michnik and Henryk Szlaifer, were expelled from university, and some university lecturers, among them the young Zygmunt Bauman, lost their positions. Bauman was influenced by American sociology, the official version claimed. In reality, the authorities in Poland reacted with an anti-Semitic reflex to the crisis. For a detailed description of 1968 in Czechoslovakia see Igor Zagar (2006).

In Italy, corruption and political scandals were at the centre of protests, as well as the state of the educational system and violent police interventions. In Belgium and Germany, protests had their own dynamics as well, just as in Prague. While Provo, for example, was mainly a so-called fun-anarchy project, it nevertheless was highly political and illustrates another common feature of the 1968 protests in many European countries and the US: aesthetics. Media and art, new ways of expressing political and social statements as well as popular music were heavily and successfully used by the young generations. Finally, even though the national discourses and interests may have been decisive in the end when it came to the translation of protest into political crystallizations, and while there was no transnationally organized movement like today's *Attac*, for example, a large amount of anger and optimism was shared by all the protest movements. A certain utopian vision about the possibility of and necessity for change was shared in Europe and the US.²⁰

Crisis topoi

The main *topoi* emerging from the media during the focus week are shown in Table 1. These *topoi* have been generated from an in-depth first analysis of the media texts as described above examining the question of which *topoi* frame the discourse of the May crisis.

¹⁹ MAK, G.: *In Europa. Eine Reise durch das 20. Jahrhundert*, Munich, Siedler, 2005.

²⁰ CARRIÈRE, J.-C.: *Les années d'utopie: 1968-1969*; New York - Paris - Prague - New York, Paris, Plon, 2003.

Table 1. Main *topoi* (% and frequencies)

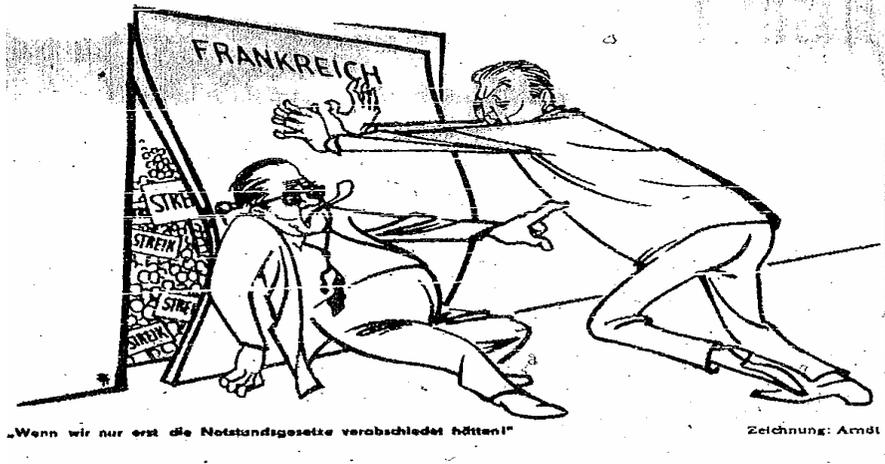
	<i>SZ</i>	<i>FAZ</i>	<i>LM</i>	<i>LF</i>	<i>TT</i>	<i>TG</i>	Total %	Total N
Civil society demands participation	6	18	10	17	8	18	13	130
Civil strife, strike, demonstration	26	17	13	18	29	30	19	187
Counter-measures	4	8	4	3	16	0	5	48
Dialogue between actors	9	8	12	9	4	8	9	89
European institutions	3	6	2	1	1	5	2	24
French government crisis	35	28	25	24	38	20	27	258
Political demands	6	14	21	17	1	11	15	145
Solidarity with students	5	1	7	5	3	2	5	44
Solidarity with workers	6	1	8	5	0	5	5	48
Total %	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	
Total N	80	136	302	283	79	93		973

The main *topoi* negotiated during the focus week were clearly related to the governmental crisis, the protests, and the demands for participation and political change. The governmental crisis was evident and Gaullism as such was put on trial by many voices in the media. This was a general European awareness and the end of Gaullism was debated in both English and West German newspapers. Nesta Roberts, *The Guardian*'s correspondent in France, reflected on this in her commentary on 21 May 1968 titled: 'Gaullism of the old kind has already died'. And the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* wrote in a commentary:

"The belated homecoming of de Gaulle [from Romania] almost opens up the possibility to take on the role of France's saviour for a third time. The difference with the previous cases lies in the fact that this time he has to cope with a situation that was created by the Gaullist regime itself". (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 20 May 1968: 1)

For French newspapers it was not necessary to enumerate statements from the debate on the government's crisis because it was plainly evident. *Le Figaro* wrote in big letters on the top of a whole page: 'The political consequences of the crisis' (*Le Figaro*, 20 May 1968: 6). *Le Monde* opens its edition of 21 May with the words 'The social and political crisis' as the header of its main article on the front page. This headline continues over the next few days. In *Le Monde* the political opposition concluded on the end of Gaullism. Waldeck Rochet, a prominent Communist politician, claimed: 'Gaullist power must finish' (*Le Monde*, 20 May 1968, p. 6). In general, the French governmental crisis was perceived in the media on a wider global scale from China to Yugoslavia to the US as is evident from the media quoted in the newspapers analysed here, which map out a global framework of reference. In the *Neues Deutschland*, a daily section entitled 'reports from the class struggles in France' was devoted to the strikes in Paris. De Gaulle's government was depicted as being in full crisis, ready to use violence to restore order and the left wing and communist parties appeared as united and ready to take over. Clearly, this is a misrepresentation. The East German paper regarded Gaullism as finished and painted a picture of ever-growing protest, uniting all of France's workers, farmers and also the students. Furthermore, a revolutionary logic can be found in the *Neues Deutschland*; the fact that solidarity from Belgium workers was declared led to a depiction of a revolutionary wave ready to roll over Western Europe. "Also on Sunday, the whole bourgeois press of West Germany as well as the Springer papers showed unclothed fear of the events in France." (*Neues Deutschland*, 20 May 1968: 7) Not only was Gaullism finished, the *Neues Deutschland* did not even ponder possibilities of change within the existing political system in France but introduced a future horizon that was clearly revolutionary for all of Western Europe. The fire would catch on in West Germany. This is illustrated by the cartoon below:²¹

²¹ From *Neues Deutschland*, 22 May: 2. The cartoon shows Konrad Adenauer from the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and Herbert Wehner from the Social Democratic Party (SPD) united against the threat of popular revolt from France. The caption reads: "If only we had passed the State of Emergency Laws (Notstandsgesetze) yet." Mainly, the East Press targeted the West German government when commenting about the Paris crisis. The fact that France would fall into communist hands appeared, discursively constructed, as a fact beyond any doubt. The state of emergency laws were ratified on 30 May 1968 against the backdrop of student protests and growing protest in order to secure the state's possibilities to act.



Indeed, on 25 May, Harri Czepuck commented on the global situation of 1968 as follows:

“The working class of the whole world experiences in these weeks where the main tendency of development leads us to. The crisis of imperialism is more obvious than ever before. Those who connect with imperialists in these days will be pulled into the maelstrom of this crisis” (Neues Deutschland, 25 May 1968: 6).

Thus, those living in the West should learn the lesson of the time, recognize that de Gaulle’s fall is only a sign of the times and actively change society. Another cartoon illustrates this train of thought very well:



“You have to speak French with your government if you want to avoid the State of Emergency law” (Neues Deutschland, 25 May 1968: 2), the caption reads. The West German, depicted in the typical form of the rather lazy ‘Michel’ as his hat connotes, has to finally wake up, follow the call of change in order to avoid collapse.

Further *topoi* emerging from the media debate are captured in the headlines: ‘Civil strife, strike, demonstrations’, ‘Political demands’, and ‘Civil society demands participation’ (see Table 1). The fear of an extension of civil strife dominated the thoughts of most politicians. Paris had turned into a scene of open violence too often. All organizations active during the strikes issued statements about strike reasons, about political demands and mainly pronounced a clear goal: participation within the political process. The civil society actors imagined a different form of participation than de Gaulle, however, who had been talking about participation for years already. The papers, especially the French papers, were filled to the brim with claims made from the largest to the smallest civil society organization. As a matter of fact, it is a miracle that both French papers analysed here were published in the first place since many journalists’ and press unions went on strike, too.

A listing of all the civil society organizations and lobby groups would take up too much space. The largest – and for this chapter also the most important – were the CGT, the FO, the UNEF, the CFDT, the CFTC, and the FNSEA.²² The *topos* summarized under ‘civil strife, strike, demonstration’ is characterized by factual news reporting. Strike actions, violent confrontations between the police and the students, and mass as well as smaller demonstrations were covered minutely. The discursive character of this *topos* does not show any more complicated arguments. Thus, values and their different interpretations and applications in the discourse are rare. The *topoi* ‘political demands’ and ‘civil society demands participation’ show a very different quality. Here, naturally, values are used in order to legitimize claims and demands.

Democracy! What democracy?

The main value emerging from those two *topoi* as well as from the *topos* of governmental crisis is democracy. According to Hans Joas, values have been appropriated by European societies in complex mutual relationships. They overlap with each other and they form a cluster around the following main concepts: freedom, inwardness (spiritual), esteem for common life, self-fulfilment, rationality and acceptance of plurality²³. However, this broad generalization of European values cannot be convincingly argued for throughout all discursive settings in all of Europe. It remains an ideal-type list that ignores specific discursive settings. Today, the EU is the projection area as well as the self-proclaimed representative of these values.

²² CGT, FO and UNEF (see above). CFDT is the Confédération française démocratique du travail, CFTC is the Confédération française des travailleurs chrétiens and FNSEA is the Fédération National des Syndicats d’Exploitants Agricoles.

²³ JOAS, H.: Die kulturellen Werte Europas. Eine Einleitung. In: JOAS, H. (Ed.) *Die kulturellen Werte Europas*. Frankfurt am Main, Fischer, 2005.

Values change, however. Peter Wagner argued that values in Europe were shaped in a dialogic process of political and cultural reactions to religious wars, reformation, democratic revolutions and class struggle. Values are of a generally universal nature through their function in discourses of legitimacy; they have been shaped by historical experiences and they change their meanings within social legitimacy discourses continuously.²⁴

I want to argue here that values need to be performed and that a universally true meaning of so-called European values does not exist. They are verbally continuous but semantically discontinuous; they are heterogeneous semantic shifters²⁵. They do not assemble to a neatly defined catalogue of moral units with a universally agreed-upon meaning. However, while they are semantic shifters, they also have a normative function. Thus, the dilemma of value analysis is to accept that values must be understood as inherently changing, yet that values simultaneously, due to their normative function, have to be defined by social and political actors during the process of legitimacy negotiation. Thus, a different understanding and way of analysing values in historical discourse has been employed than in existing sociological research on European values, which is more focused on the value structures of European societies rather than the role of values in discourses of legitimacy²⁶.

The values presented here have been generated from a *topos*-relation variable. *Topoi* were filtered out of the media discourse and the values attached to these *topoi* have been collected. I base my representation of the media debate on the Paris crisis from May 1968, and thus on an inductively gained generalization. As can be seen in Table 2, solidarity emerges as an important value beside democracy. However, here the focus is on democracy because it shows much more interpretative variation. Solidarity as a value, at least in the discourse of the Paris crisis, is rather one-dimensional in its interpretative settings.

²⁴ WAGNER, P., Hat Europa eine kulturelle Identität? In: JOAS, H. (Ed.) *Die kulturellen Werte...*

²⁵ Cf. JAMESON, F., *A Singular Modernity, Essay on the Ontology of the Present*, Verso, London, 2002.

²⁶ HARDING, L., et al., *The European Values Study: a Third Wave. Source Book of the 1999/2000 European Values Study Surveys*, Tilburg, European Values Study, 2001; HARDING, L., et al., *Contrasting Values in Western Europe: Unity, Diversity and Change*, Basingstoke and New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 1986.

Table 2. List of values (%)

	<i>Germany</i>	<i>France</i>	<i>UK</i>	<i>Total %</i>
Solidarity in general	3	1	–	2
Solidarity among civil society actors	34	35	59	37
Unity in general	5	4	–	4
Law	4	4	–	4
Freedom	7	6	–	6
Peace	3	4	–	4
Democracy	36	35	35	35
Security	5	5	6	5
Humanity	–	2	–	1
Self-determination	3	3	–	3
Total %	100	100	100	100
Total N	110	406	51	567

Democracy is interpreted differently by different actors and for different reasons. It emerges as the key value of legitimacy for the actors involved in the media debate. The notion of democracy does play an insignificant role in the Neues Deutschland, it has to be said. Here, a people's democracy is simply advocated and taken as the one and only goal. Thus, the very possibility of debating what democracy should look like and how to implement it was not even imagined. In the East German press, democracy was a value that was not contested, but pre-defined. Therefore, the following debate about democracy does not show any East German references.

Democracy in the Western European papers is contested and a cluster of further values is attached to it depending on the argumentative setting. For example, historical references were evoked in the discourse and often served as an argument for future change in relation to democracy and the way in which French society should develop. The historical references found in the mass media clearly paint a French picture, not a European one. The only two transnational historical events mentioned in the debate – the French Revolution of 1789 and the Russian Revolution of 1917 – played a minor role and were not often adhered to. A crucial historical reference

was made by allusions to the end of the Fourth French Republic in 1958 when the old constitution, adopted after World War Two, was abandoned and a new one based on a powerful presidency personified by Charles de Gaulle was introduced. The event most often referred to, however, was the general strike of 1936. The mid-1930s saw the beginning of the Popular Front in 1935, the Leon Blum-led government and, in May 1936, a massive strike movement that saw newly confident workers fighting for higher wages and shorter working hours.²⁷ The Renault plant in Paris was occupied then just as it was in May 1968 and workers negotiated with the government in an open dialogue. During a large strike at the shipyards of St Nazaire on 19 May 1968, trade unionists could be heard comparing the events:

“This is no ordinary strike for higher wages, shorter hours, improved working conditions, and security of employment, although all these figure on the strike committee’s claims. ‘You have to go back to 1936 and the Popular Front for a parallel’, a young trade unionist told me at strike headquarters”. (*The Times*, 20 May 1968: 8)

Historical comparisons were made in order to give the correct interpretative emphasis to the events of the present day and to serve as an argumentative background for the introduction of a new future horizon. The comparisons are mainly representative of an inner struggle for a change in society, however, and thus support the main theme of democratic change. Daniel Cohn-Bendit, when asked about the differences between the workers and the students by the correspondent of *The Times*, made the following connection to a change in the democratic order of France: ‘The question was not one of attacking the trade union movement, M. Cohn-Bendit went on, but to create conditions for a workers democracy, where each, whatever his slogans or his banners, could have his say’ (*The Times*, 20 May 1968: 8). This is clearly a different form of democracy to the one imagined by Charles de Gaulle and his authoritative referendum-based idea of presidential democracy.

May 1968 in Paris saw an eruption of dissatisfaction with the way society and democracy were organized. As reflected in the list of *topoi* presented above, the main concrete political claims of the students as well as the workers were made in relation to democratic participation. The claims by politicians, both oppositional and governing, were framed around democratic legitimacy and the representation of power as well. And finally, de Gaulle himself referred to democracy when he called for a referendum and put his own position into question.

The strike spread very quickly through the whole of France soon after the general strike of 13 May. The workers’ unions increasingly raised their voices; this is measurable in the media: ‘After student power, the union power’, wrote *Le Figaro*

²⁷ Cf. SHORTER, E., TILLY, C., *Strikes in France, 1830-1968*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1974.

on 20 May. The *Confédération française démocratique du travail* (CFDT) concluded: ‘Democracy wants to affirm itself on all levels’ (*Le Figaro*, 20 May 1968: 4(a)) and furthermore stated: ‘Our action joins the fight of the students who have affirmed their claims for democracy and shown their consciousness of having responsibility’ (*Le Figaro*, 20 May 1968: 4(b)). Similarly, the *Fédéchimie FO*, the *Force Ouvrières* section of the chemical industry, joined the call for democratization:

“On top of demands concerning working hours, salaries, and simple employment itself, this federation has demanded the socialization of all trusts and the democratization of economic and social life on all levels of industrial life”. (*Le Figaro*, 20 May 1968: 5)

Many voices of this kind could be heard in the early days of the workers’ strikes. The CGT, the largest union in France, for example, supported the ‘democratic reform of school teaching and the University’ (*Le Figaro*, 20 May 1968: 6). The *Syndicat national de l’Enseignement* (SNES) joined in by claiming: ‘Parents understand the decision by the teachers who wait, too, and for a long time already, for the meeting of their demands and the implementation of democratic reforms of teaching. They are sensitive to actions taken by the teachers, [and] proclaim solidarity with the students and the workers’ (*Le Figaro*, 20 May 1968: 7). Clearly, the concept of democracy overlapped with the concept of solidarity in the discourse of the French trade unions. Participation in processes of democratic deliberation was the aim of all civil society actors, including the students.

More radical voices can also be heard, which demanded more than a change of government and called for a reform of democratic life in general. Political actors often connected their demands with concrete political change, even with a change of the whole political system. The Communist Party (CFP), for example, believed that a people’s democracy should grow in France:

“The conditions are rapidly approaching the point when we can finish off the Gaullist power and promote true modern democracy in accordance with the interests of the people and of France. Only the union of the forces of labour and democracy, the union of the workers in town and country, manual and intellectual, can create the conditions for victory”. (*The Guardian*, 18 May 1968: 9)

For many politicians, the claim for more participation in democratic deliberation was connected with the end of Charles de Gaulle’s power. Waldeck Rochet said:

“Everywhere, demands from workers and citizens are rising for more participation, for being the masters of their own destiny, for the elaboration of this country’s politics. In the immediate sense, this means satisfying the workers’ essential demands, in the long run the question of power has to be asked. This is to say that the Gaullist system is called into question”. (*Le Figaro*, 22 May 1968: 4)

Jacques Duhamel, a member of parliament from the Jura, and members of federations of the political centre such as the *Centre Démocratie et Progrès*, held against the government that it ‘did not find the balance between state authority and citizen participation’ (*Le Figaro*, 22 May 1968, p. 4). Pierre Mendes-France reached a similar conclusion:

“By its comportment over the last ten years, he said, the Government had created a revolutionary situation. It could no longer resort to force without releasing tragic consequences; nor could it begin a useful dialogue with the masses that were rising against its policy”. (*The Guardian*, 20 May 1968: 1)

As a final example for the political discourse, François Mitterrand should be mentioned: ‘M. Mitterrand, in top form, attacked the Government’s lack of a permanent dialogue which had helped to widen the gap between it and millions of striking Frenchmen. In the name of socialism, it was necessary to change the policy’ (*The Guardian*, 23 May 1968: 1). During the events, Mitterrand declared solidarity with the workers and students and joined demonstrations and organized marches. On 20 May, he said, already beginning a debate of legitimate representation:

“I have to simply say that a political formation like ours cannot but declare solidarity with the fight that has led millions of workers to strike. The politics of low salaries cannot be our politics. This great movement should as a first consequence provide the French with civic responsibility. We cannot leave one single man or a political faction of his to decide on the future of this country. France has an immense need for democratic oxygen”. (*Le Monde*, 21 May 1968: 2)

Politicians thus rose to the occasion to claim the end of Gaullism and to promote their own legitimacy. How did the government react? After all, de Gaulle was in Romania when the strikes began and there he was greeted with cheers and was pleased about his European discourse, promoting his vision of a united Europe of fatherlands in Romania. Back home, his glory had waned. However, his reaction to the demands was framed by his own understanding of democracy and citizen participation. *The Guardian* wrote: ‘When General de Gaulle addresses the French people on Friday evening he is expected to announce a “new deal” whose main features will be the participation of the people in many departments of social and economic life’ (*The Guardian*, 22 May 1968: 1).

Preparing the scene for de Gaulle’s television address to the French nation, Prime Minister George Pompidou had been active in making his arguments heard. Legitimacy and representing the people were highly important for him. Thus, he joined the discourse on democracy, shifting the debate from the form of organization of democratic life to the forms of representing democratic society, and thus posing the question of how power should be distributed in a democracy. Pompidou had been active in propagating a dialogue with civil society organizations. He had done so

throughout the crisis, but did not reach a broad audience in the beginning. Slowly, more and more civil society organizations agreed to the proposed dialogue, however. The question of legitimate representation was a key to Pompidou's argument:

“M. Pompidou claimed that the immense mass of the population would give without reserve its support to the President, and all those ready to form a group under his legitimate authority to undertake the reforms which were indispensable”. (*The Guardian*, 23 May 1968: 1)

Pompidou continued by saying that de Gaulle was the ‘qualified and authentic representative of the nation’. He was the one to promote renewal, ‘because he is Head of State and because he is General de Gaulle’.

He himself [Pompidou] was ready to enter into discussions with the unions once they had established that they represented the legitimate claims of the workers. If, on the other hand, the strike was political, the union could not take the place of the sovereign people. (*The Guardian*, 23 May 1968: 1)

The question of legitimate representation was discussed in the *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* as well. In a commentary on the events, it said:

“Thus the French have to ask themselves how far de Gaulle, how far the continuation of his system is identical with the republic. The answer of the opposition is clear: The presidential rule by de Gaulle falsifies the republic. The answer of the Gaullists is not less precise: If there was someone who secured the republican order, this is de Gaulle”. (*Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, 20 May 1968: 4)

Finally, de Gaulle himself added his voice to the discourse on democracy by claiming that a direct vote from the people was the most democratic form of legitimacy. However, in his typical way of mixing the so-called destiny of France with his own, de Gaulle inserted democracy into his personal style of direct democracy. At the long-awaited television address to the French people on Friday 24 May he said:

“I am ready again this time, but again this time – and above all this time – I need, yes, I need the French people to say what they want. And indeed our Constitution wisely foresees the way in which it can do so. It is the most direct and most democratic way possible – the referendum”. (*The Guardian*, 25 May 1968: 1)

De Gaulle succeeded in the end, winning the referendum once more. His regime was finished, however. For de Gaulle, legitimacy was never truly restored after May 1968. Already following his announcement, media reflected the critical reaction to de Gaulle's understanding of democracy.

“The parliament has missed its chance to chase away the government and save the institutions. Today's France is on its way from parliamentary democracy to a

‘direct democracy’. Who is more important, the general elected by the people or the people? The will of the parliamentary majority of doubtful representative quality or the will of today’s millions, the will of the people: That is the question after the unsuccessful bid by the parliamentary opposition”. (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 25 May 1968: 2)

The Guardian wrote in a similar vein:

“De Gaulle’s broadcast showed that he still does not seem to understand what his countrymen are trying to tell him. They did not go on strike in order to win the chance to vote in another yes-no referendum. They want much more than that”. (*The Guardian*, 25 May 1968: 8)

In France, the papers *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro* amply reported the parliamentary speeches following the bid for the referendum by de Gaulle. Mainly, the arguments were framed around the same main elements from before the announcement. The opposition did not accept the government’s legitimacy and the government did not accept the non-elected legitimacy of the strikers, either. Democracy as a concept proved to be highly flexible and framed almost all political claims made. Only rarely did extremist parties call for an end of democracy. In general, democracy connected to the idea of solidarity that was fundamental in the discourse as well, and it connected to the notions of participation in democratic deliberation processes that were called for. Furthermore, democracy as the main value provided legitimacy to political decisions and visions.

The role of Europe during de Gaulle’s Romania visit

In relation to a European horizon of reference parallel discourses can be found. Synchronically, and coincidentally, to the Paris crisis, Europe was mentioned in all the media during the focus week in connection with de Gaulle’s visit to Romania. His European speech was also widely commented upon in the papers. In Romania, de Gaulle remarked that it was important to ‘strengthen collaboration with all European countries irrespective of their regimes to give additional importance to our continent . . . Our first duty is to work together for the unity of Europe, for its independence, progress, peace and brotherhood’ (*The Guardian*, 18 May 1968: 9).

The Romanian president, Nicolae Ceaușescu, answered his French counterpart with an equally enthusiastic European speech, stressing the unity of the continent beyond the Iron Curtain as well. In itself, this was a remarkable event in a time of full-blown Cold War. However, it remained completely detached from any other event at that time. There was no connection to the Paris crisis, nor was the statement connected to the other European discourses on the debate on the European Customs

Union, Britain's possible second bid to join the European institutions and the general consequences of the French crisis for European economic stability.

Another important event took place at the same time. The American government met with the North Vietnamese to begin peace talks about the Vietnam War – in Paris! Again, links between the Vietnam peace talks and the French revolt were non-existent in the media. A link to anything remotely European within this context was also missing.

The role of Europe in the crisis of May 1968

It remains to be shown whether and to what extent Europe played a role in the crisis of May 1968. The first question concerns the connection between the main values used within the dominant *topoi* settings and Europe. Secondly, while a crisis–value relation is no surprise in the general debate, and it has been shown how variations of the concept of democracy dominantly framed the discourse, did a crisis–Europe relation exist, too?

The first and obvious result is that Europe played an insignificant role in the debates. Europe – be it as an economic entity, as a value-based community or as a mere geographical area – was of almost no importance in the media. Furthermore, the European Economic Community or the economic space of Europe was only referred to; it did not speak.

But which European references, insignificant as they may have been, were made? First, in relation to the second question formulated above, Europe does appear with a clear link to crisis. All references found in the media include a crisis–Europe connection. The main link between the crisis in Paris and a European level were the assumed economic consequences. The fact of the EEC's existence and the move for a Customs Union in July 1968 motivated these references. The links to Europe were made mainly by state actors or by media actors. Civil society actors in France, West Germany and the UK did not consider the mid-term consequences of a paralysed French economy, and neither did the East German media. Rather, European integration among the workers seems to have been regarded negatively. *The Guardian's* correspondent, Nesta Roberts, interviewed workers at the Renault factory and asked them questions that reached beyond their specific political demands. Among the questions was a reference to the EEC. The answer by the workers was discouraging from a European perspective:

“Workers demand participation in management. And beyond the wider stage? ‘De Gaulle is an antiquity that must go.’ What about the students? ‘Well, up to a certain point we have things in common, but each of us has its own interest that we must defend separately.’ The Common Market? No hesitation here. ‘It is dangerous, France will drown in it’ ”. (*The Guardian*, 24 May 1968: 11)

Government actors regarded the European Economic Community as an important factor for growth and stability in Europe. While it was also said that European competition might have harmed French industry (*The Guardian*, 21 May 1968, p. 9), the main reaction in France as well as in Germany and the UK in relation to Europe was especially concerned with the EEC and not with any values the EEC may represent:

“The workers are asking for an immense variety of concessions, ranging from a straight wage increase to the lowering of the retirement age to sixty, passing by longer holidays, a universal forty-hour week and repeal of last summer’s cuts in the social services. Any of these would individually be inflationary, and would have to be matched by a relaxation of the present strict control of prices – moving the costs-prices spiral upwards. If the regime survives the political challenge, it may thus have to face an economic crisis of the first order: unfortunately for Europe no financial crisis can be confined to one country”. (*The Times*, 21 May 1968: 9)

Thus, already in 1968 *The Times* clearly put Europe on the agenda as a space in which nations’ economies are too closely connected to have a chance of escaping the influence of a French economic slump. And the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* wrote:

“With sorrow, Brussels awaits the further developments of the events in France, which have become completely unpredictable . . . Should the French industrial businessmen be forced to raise social benefits it cannot be ruled out that the already latent resistance of the French industry against the realization of the customs union on 1 July may come to the fore openly. Chain reactions cannot be excluded after this. One asks oneself whether France – which France? – will appeal to the solidarity of its European partners for the adjournment of the customs union’s implementation”. (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 22 May 1968: 4)

Here, solidarity on a European level comes into play for the first time. It is solidarity among European governments, however, not among protest movements.

In the French media, a similar discourse in relation to the Customs Union can be found. ‘With the fulfilment of the common market on 1 July, with the first infringement of the national rights to customs, we cannot organize a contained inflation’ (*Le Figaro*, 20 May 1968: 5). The consequences of the economic crisis could lead to an economic isolation in Europe and devalue the franc (*Le Figaro*, 24 May 1968: 7). Furthermore, the economic dimension of the crisis was translated on to a European level by the agricultural union, the FNSEA. A European agricultural policy should be implemented, the union claimed and stated bluntly: ‘What’s important, that’s Europe’ (*Le Monde*, 19 May 1968: 10). British Foreign Secretary Michael Stewart said that the United Kingdom would not be disposed to join the common market if France did not soon put its interior affairs in order (*Le Monde*,

22 May 1968: 7). The European institutions were thus drawn into the crisis scenario, but only as an entity fulfilling national interests. Europe did not occur as representing any values or as a speaker or actor in its own right. The then president of the European Commission, the Belgian liberal federalist Jean Rey, remained silent and unmentioned.

Europe, thus, was absent from the relevant crisis discourse. Only one actor actually drew a direct conclusion from the French crisis to explicitly signified European values. And this actor even included President de Gaulle's discourse on European unity in Romania. It was the Duke of Paris who wrote an open letter to President de Gaulle, which was reproduced in *Le Monde* and in *Le Figaro*. The Duke of Paris was, at that time, Henri d'Orléans, the pretender to the French throne belonging to the House of Orléans and a right-wing conservative who favoured a return to monarchy in France. In a statement that has not yet been accurately confirmed by historians, de Gaulle is supposed to have said of the Duke: 'The Duke of Paris? And why not the Queen of Gypsies?' However, only *Le Figaro* cited the Duke's European references. *Le Monde* cut them out. It reads:

“The insurrection of the young, the determination of the workers are an obligation for us to objectively search for the real values that should guide the orientation given to the country. These values are naturally very close to those propositions that you untiringly offer to Europe and to the world and that you have once more pinned down during your journey in Romania”. (*Le Figaro*, 20 May 1968: 6)

Thus, while a crisis–value connection surely existed, notions of Europe were not necessarily debated during the crisis. The single voice of a right-wing aristocrat does not change that overall finding. It seems to be the case that references to Europe, at least in the 1960s, were either made in relation to the European institutions from a national perspective²⁸ or bound to specific discursive settings and argumentative framings, such as a general utopian discourse on the one hand and fact-based European institution-related discourses on the other.²⁹

²⁸ MILWARD, A.: *The European Rescue of the Nation-State*, Berkley CA, University of California Press, 1992.

²⁹ SCHULZ-FORBERG, H.: Europas post-nationale Legitimation. Überlegungen gegen eine Essentialisierung von Kultur und Identität. IN SCHÖNINGH, M. & SEIDENDORF, S. (Eds.) *Reichweiten der Verständigung. Intellektuellendiskurse zwischen Nation und Europa*. Heidelberg, C. Winter, 2006; SCHMIDT-GERNIG, A.: Scenarios of Europe's Future - Western Future Studies of the Sixties and Seventies as an Example of a Transnational Public Sphere of Experts. *Journal of European Integration History*, 2002, N. 8, pp. 69-90; REQUATE, J. & SCHULZE-WESSEL, M.: *Europäische Öffentlichkeit: Realität und Imagination...*

Conclusion: a European public sphere during the May 1968 crisis?

The Paris crisis of May 1968 did not trigger a debate in which a notion of Europe was connected to certain understandings of values. The analysis of German, English and French media shows an intense debate of values independent of a European connection, however. The main values emerging from the media debate were democracy and solidarity and all participants in the conflict and public debate claimed to have the truly legitimate formula for a society in which these values could thrive.

Europe appeared only as an economic entity. During the Paris crisis, the idea of European security played a certain role, but this time security did not depend on military power, but on economic stability. Only one actor within the media discourse, a right-wing Europhile aristocrat, connected the European discourse of de Gaulle's Romanian visit with a possible solution scenario for France.

In relation to the existence of a European public sphere, it can be concluded that a soft public sphere model that deliberately formulates an approach to the public sphere independent from institutional structures can be confirmed.³⁰ What is more, the Paris crisis clearly shows that a communication between the national spheres of France, the UK and both Germanys took place. This public sphere can be found in terms of communication between actors in the papers, i.e. English actors referring to French ones, and vice versa. This is most apparent in the episode of Daniel Cohn-Bendit's expulsion from France. In the case of the East German media, the main network of European communication was one of pan-European communist support against a so-called bourgeois capitalist class enemy. Thus French communist or left wing political actors, such as all trade unions and politicians like Mendes-France or Waldeck Rochet, appeared frequently in the *Neues Deutschland*.

Secondly, articles and statements were very similar, often identical in the West European press, and a commonality in reporting can be confirmed despite the national characteristics of the quality newspapers studied here. Many political and civil society actors are represented with identical claims in all the newspapers. Furthermore, the media themselves have been regarded as a sign of the emergence of a European public sphere. The very fact of growing mass media consumption and the close attention devoted to the whole process of social change in the late 1960s has created ties between and knowledge about other European countries.³¹

A strong European public sphere is completely absent from the debates, either on the level of actors or on the level of values or ideas – values are debated independently of Europe. Although there is transnational communication, a strong European public sphere that serves as an institutional setting for political debate

³⁰ SCHULZ-FORBERG, H.; *Theoretical Paper...*

³¹ SCHMIDTKE, M. A.: *'1968' und die Massenmedien...*

cannot be detected; neither as a desideratum nor as a political reality of cooperation between national governments and the EEC acting as important elements within the crisis. A strong public sphere is here understood as having one or more power centres as the main addressees for the negotiation of conflict and change³². Due to the absence of such a strong power centre in European history, Europe was conceived of as an appellation entity³³. Yet, this conception cannot be confirmed by the findings either. Europe as an appellation entity does not occur during the crisis of May 1968.

Interesting debates on values such as democracy have occurred within Europe and have left their mark in its history, sometimes generating profound changes in society, a European public sphere only existed in its soft form as a network of communication across borders. This does not imply that this soft public sphere was devoid of power. Both the soft and the strong public spheres are characterized by power relations. The consequences of the debates and conflicts in the soft public sphere during the 1968 crisis were subsequently negotiated in national strong public spheres that had the means to absorb the social pressure. In the case of Paris 1968, this link between the soft and the strong public sphere was missing during the focus week and this dismemberment of the institutionalized political deliberations and the non-institutionalized ones aggravated the emerging social and political tensions.

Thus, while the 1968 movements have been decisive for the implementation of a pluralistic notion and reality of democracy in Europe – and have created a language as well as a reference system for this advanced democracy – they did not embrace Europe as a notion and a cluster of values. Today's European Union promotes values that have been fought for by the 1968 movement, especially claims for democracy. These values were not identified with Europe in the mass media public spheres of France, the UK and both Germanys in the first place, however.

³² SCHULZ-FORBERG, H.; Theoretical Paper..., SPLICHAL, S.: In search of a strong European public sphere: some critical observations on conceptualizations of publicness and the (European) public sphere. *Media, Culture & Society*, 2006, N. 28, pp. 695-714.

³³ REQUATE, J. & SCHULZE-WESSEL, M.: *Europäische Öffentlichkeit: Realität und Imagination...*