# MEDIA REPRESENTATION OF THE PROTESTS AGAINST THE G20 2017 SUMMIT. AN ANALYSIS OF THE GERMAN MEDIA

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**ABSTRACT.** In 2017 Germany has had the presidency of the G20 and organised the annual summit between the 7th to the 8th of July. The chosen location for this event was Hamburg, and it was disputed because of the high difficulties to secure the city accordingly to the security requirements. Police from all around Germany were positioned in Hamburg for the days of the summit to protect the city from the rioters.<sup>2</sup>

The first protests that took place were rather peaceful and without major crimes, however starting with the "Welcome to Hell" demonstration on Thursday, the 6th of July, rioters began throwing glass bottles, burning down cars and aggressing the police. But this is only one side of the truth. Peaceful protestors were also aggressed by the police<sup>3</sup>.

In this article we intend to analyse if the ethical reporting standards were respected by the German media, in their coverage of the G20 summit protests.

**Keywords:** framing, protests, Germany, media ethics, G20

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> http://www.spiegel.de/panorama/justiz/g20-gipfel-in-hamburg-wie-die-polizei-sich-ruestet-und-womit-sie-rechnen-muss-a-1154613.html (12.12.2017)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> https://g20tohell.blackblogs.org/ (12.12.2017)

# The German media self-regulatory system

The German Press Council, formed by 5 newspaper publishers and 5 journalists in 1956 to avoid a Federal Press Law, adopted the German Press Code in 1973, as an instrument used to guarantee the liberty of information, the liberty of press and the liberty of opinion in Germany. It is a code of honour and should be taken as a guideline for ethical journalism by all german journalists.

The German Press Code is divided into 16 sections in order to make an ethical approach for journalistic work measurable. Those sections are continuously being kept up to date. For example, in 1978, because women complaint about sexist pictures of women in a newspaper, a section against the discrimination of different groups was introduced.<sup>4</sup> Today, the German Press Council is taking the digitalisation of journalistic work into consideration. The goal is to modify the German Press Code, in order to make it fit to the changes in journalism, as for example the function of online comments.<sup>5</sup>

Readers can complain about a disrespect of the ethical code. The German Press Council receives those complaints. The most complaints in 2016 were directed against regional and local press (523) followed by popular magazines (191) and boulevard press (178)<sup>6</sup>. Thus, 67,2% of the complaints in 2016 were against online articles and 24,2% against print articles<sup>7</sup>. Readers can send complaints to the council per post or online. In meetings, the chairmen of the four mayor organisations who form the council (The The Federation of German Newspaper Publisher, The German Journalist Organisation, The

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> http://www.presserat.de/pressekodex/chronik/#panel-faelle\_die\_den\_kodex\_veraenderten (17.01.2017)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> http://www.presserat.de/pressekodex/chronik/#panel-digitalisierung\_im\_blick (17.01.2017)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> http://www.presserat.de/beschwerde/statistiken/#panel-beschwerdegegner (17.01.2017)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> http://www.presserat.de/beschwerde/statistiken/#panelverhaeltnis\_zwischen\_print\_und\_onlinebeschwerden (17.01.2017)

German Journalist Union from ver.di<sup>8</sup> and the Union of German Newspaper Publisher) discuss about the relevance of the complaint. Is the complaint relevant, three actions can be taken: First, a hint, were the editorial department is non-publicly told that the article disrespected the ethical code. Secondly, a disapproval, which is also not public. And third, an objection, which is the hardest sanction from the German Press Council. The editorial department is asked to print the objection, except if a victim has to be protected.<sup>9</sup>

## The ethical provisions relevant for our research

## Section 8: Protection of Personality.

Section 8 does not advice to publish a full name or an image of a person without their consent. In the case of public figures such as politicians, actors or artists, two parameters are important for the question whether the names and pictures can be used or not. First of all, its the space. Is it a public space or is it a private space? If its a private space, there cannot be a general interest into publishing the name or picture. And secondly and more complex, is the question about the context. What situation is the person in? Why could it be important for the public, what is this person doing?

And why is it important to dispose of the right of ones picture and name? During our research we found an article, which showed pictures of people throwing rocks or bottles during the demonstrations against the G20 summit. The article said, that these people were chased by the police and that any advice would be more than welcome.<sup>10</sup> But these people were never searched for by the authorities. The pictures were used by the media outlet, so that everyone could recognise those

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> a german labour union

<sup>9</sup> http://www.presserat.de/pressekodex/uebersicht-der-ruegen/ (17.01.2017)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> http://www.bild.de/news/inland/g20-gipfel/wer-kennt-diese-verbrecher-52493328.bild.html (12.12.2017)

people on the streets. Neighbours, the colleagues and family could recognise this picture in the media outlet. All of them will think, that the authorities are looking for those people who's picture were shown. But there is no truth behind it.<sup>11</sup>

Another situation where the protection of privacy is important, is in interviews. Sometimes, the content which a person is stating in an interview could bring them into trouble. With authorities, with a certain group of people or with individuals. It could be because they witnessed something, for which people are looking for them or because they have a special kind of interest which is against the beliefs and values of a certain group of people. It is crucial for those interview partners to have the right to dispose of their image and their name stay undercover and to protect themselves or their family.

## Section 9: Protection of Dignity.

The first article of the german constitution of 1949 is based on the human dignity<sup>12</sup>. The law is protecting the individual but equal values of human beings, despite their religion, their gender or age. Also everyone who is ill, whose parents are dead or if they fled to Germany is integrated into the protection of human dignity implied by the first article of the German Constitution. If an individual or a group feels their rights are being impinged, they can sue the state in any court.<sup>13</sup>

One importance of this section is again found in the historical context. German media was controlled by a regime to fit to their beliefs and values, to build one valid truth in the minds of the people (s. Introduction). Horrible things happened which do not fit to the notion of an equal and individual worth for every human being. The idea behind the basic law is to prevent the unequal treatment of human beings by the state. The idea is to take the power of the state to discriminate people because of their religion, their gender or their age.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> http://faktenfinder.tagesschau.de/inland/gzwanzig-147.html (12.12.2017)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> http://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/gg/art\_1.html (11.12.2017)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> http://www.bpb.de/politik/grundfragen/politik-einfach-fuer-alle/236724/die-wuerde-des-menschen-ist-unantastbar (12.12.2017)

But after more than 68 years after the inauguration of the basic law in Germany, there are still inequalities. Highly discussed at the moment is the Gender Pay Gap'<sup>14</sup>. Women nowadays in Germany are earning one fifth less then men for the same job done. Moreover, the protection of human dignity includes the freedom of opinion and religion. On the 9th of December 2017, demonstrations against Trump accepting Jerusalem as the capitol of Israel took place in Berlin. Protestors burned Flags of Israel and chanted anti-semitic slogans.<sup>15</sup>

In times of political instability, it is crucial for media and journalists to protect the human dignity in their work. It does not give the right to media or journalists not to protect the human dignity, because certain individuals or groups are doing it. Media and journalists should not be influenced by this and stick to the ethical code in order to guarantee people to make their own opinions.

# Section 11: Sensational reporting, protection of young people.

But why is it important to refrain from sensational reporting? Media outlets should easily be accessible for everyone, without regard on their religion, gender or age. In different forms as newspapers, online or television, to skip the burden of media accessibility caused by social inequalities and a digital divide. Everyone has the right to build their own opinion, and this is why the accessibility is highly important. However, this easy access also implies that younger people are confronted with those reports - in which form does't matter.

But why do children need to be protected in front of violence if it is a fact? We will explain with Edward Bernays, Sigmund Freuds nephew, who knew, that it it easier and more successful to trigger the emotions of the masses instead of their reason. He was responsible for the public relations of different products such as Lucky Strike, Procter

http://www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/zeitgeschehen/2017-03/gender-pay-gap-lohnunterschiedfrauen-maenner-deutschland-bezahlung-statistisches-bundesamt (12.12.2017)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/berlin-antisemitismus-bei-protest-gegen-jerusalem-beschluss-die-fakten-a-1182687.html (12.12.2017)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> http://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/digital-divide (12.12.2017)

and Gamble or Cartier. What he did, was creating an incident, this incident would create a message and this message a demand.<sup>17</sup>

Putting Edward Barnays system into our context of the sensational reporting and protection of young people would mean, that the violent events presented in media sent a message to the public which will then create a demand. Sensationalist media causes people who do not have the ability to differentiate (because of a lack of access to different information, lack of media literacy or other reasons) to create one certain message and then create a demand. It could be, that one ethnic group is shown in a violent act. The message will be either, that this group is bad or that it is ok to act like this. The demand followed would be either to punish this ethic group or to do the same they did.

Therefore, the protection against sensational reporting is important for everyone. The protection and education of children is crucial, to ensure an ethical future of our society, as children are the adults of tomorrow.

# Research objective

In this research we intend to examine German media outlets and how journalists implement the German press code. How ethically correct is journalists' work? What are the differences between the different media outlets concerning the information published? What crimes during the G20 protests are represented and how? The following paragraphs present the research methodology.

## **Research Questions and Hypothesis**

To narrow down my field of interest and for the purpose of having precise results, I formulate the following research questions and hypothesis.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> http://www.spiegel.de/einestages/pr-erfinder-bernays-a-948512.html (12.12.2017)

# Research questions

- 1. Regarding the respect afforded to the provisions of the ethical code In which degree do the media outlets respect the German press while reporting on the protests?
- 2. Regarding the media representation of crime and criminality
  - How do the media outlets differ with regard to the published information in the three chosen points in time?
  - How do the media outlets differ regarding the manner the information is published?

# Research hypothesis

- 1. Regarding the respect afforded to the provisions of the ethical code
- Overall, German media does respect the ethical code.
- Seldom, some of the media products published during the summit that disrespect the ethical recommendations of the code
- The right and the left media outlets will break the ethical codes than the centrist ones.
- Representation of crime

The main information will not vary from the conservative media outlets to the left ones. Some information will only be found in individual media outlets

# Methodology

In order to verify if the work of german journalists is ethical, we chose three sections from the German press code which we examined: Section 8: Protection of the personality, Section 9: Protection of dignity, Section 11: Sensational reporting, the protection of young people. Are the journalists sticking to those particular sections? To answer this question, we examined if the indicators reflecting the chosen sections

are present or absent in the examined media products. If we couldn't find those indicators in an article, the journalist is working ethically correct, and if we did find the indicator, the article is ethically challenging. But what do the different sections mean?

We will further on briefly explain the chosen sections and their relevance for the research. First, we am going to explain section 8. This section is about the respect of the private life of a person and his or her right to self-determination about personal information. However, the code also states, that information can be published, if a persons behaviour is of public interest and publishing the information would not only be for sensationalism. We chose this section for the research about the representation of criminality, as we are interested to see, if the german media respects this section. Do they publish personal details? If yes, who does it? What kind of details? About what person?

Section 9 also presents interest for the paper: Protection of the Dignity. This section is against the violation of people's dignity with inappropriate representations in word and image. However 'dignity' is never well-defined. To explain the importance for this research, it is crucial to understand, that the german constitutional law is based on the human dignity. It stands against discrimination of all groups. For this research, it is interesting to see how the chosen german media outlets are protecting the dignity of the different groups involved. Police, demonstrators, rioters, witnesses: All of them are stakeholders in the protests and the riots. How are the german media outlets coping to represent the events authentically and still protecting the dignity?

Last but not least, we chose to use section 11 for our research. This section gives advice about the protection of young people. Sensational description of violence, brutality and suffering is therefore not advised. Guideline 11.2 specifies how to report acts of violence. Again, the press should weigh the public interest against the interest of the victims and other people involved whilst reporting. The media should report in an authentic way, but shouldn't use as tool of the criminals. No interviews shall be given during an act of violence. And, the media should not try to mediate between criminals and the police.

This is interesting for out research, as the riots have been violent. The demonstrations haven't. Did the chosen media outlets represent the violent riots in an authentic way without crossing the line to sensational report?

The following table presents the chosen sections and the matching indicators for this research.

Section 8	Section 9	Section 11
PROTECTION OF	PROTECTION OF	SENSATIONAL
THE PERSONALITY	THE DIGNITY	REPORTING
		THE PROTECTION
		OF YOUNG PEOPLE
Names published	Discrimination	description of
<ul> <li>predators</li> </ul>	<ul><li>opinion</li></ul>	violence
• suspects	• race	<ul><li>pictures of</li></ul>
• witnesses	<ul> <li>gender age</li> </ul>	violence
Pictures published		interview of
<ul> <li>predators</li> </ul>		predators during
<ul> <li>suspects witnesses</li> </ul>		act of criminality

## Media monitoring

We chose to analyse seven German online media outlets from different political backgrounds to be able to give a broad view on the representation of crime in German media. We have therefore selected two conservatively positioned, one liberally positioned, two left-liberally positioned and two politically left positioned<sup>18</sup>. In the following graph the media outlets are classified through their political orientation, and their runs are stated below their logos.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> https://www.eurotopics.net/de/ (13.12.2017)



We chose to examine three periods of time. First, we will concentrate on the time before the summit. We chose the 3rd of July, as this is the point in time the media outlets have in common for starting to report about the protest taking place against the G20 summit. The first period we examined was from the 3rd to the 6th of July, the day before the summit. The second period was during the summit, therefore the 7th and the 8th of July. Finally, we also examined the period following the summit. The beginning of this period is the 9th of July and it ends on the 16th of July, as this is the day when reports about the protests stopped being uploaded frequently.

This research uses the method of content analysis in order to analyse seventy seven articles from seven German media outlets and the respect they afford to the provisions of the German press code. To achieve this we verified if the three ethical guidelines, which are separated into thirteen indicators, are respected in these articles. To find articles, we always used the same Keywords in the search engine Google: Media Outlet G20 Protest Date. To find an article for the 08.07.2017 in Bild, I therefore used the Keyword: Bild G20 Protest 08.07.2017.

## **Results**

First, we am going to sum up the results of our research regarding the respect of the ethical code on the part of German media outlets when reporting about the G20 protests. Secondly, we will sum up the results regarding the representation of crime in the chosen German media outlets during the three periods of time previously identified. The presentation of the results will follow the structure of the research questions and hypothesis, however the presentation of the results regarding the media representation of crime, criminality and protests will include an ethical discussion as well, as the subjects were unseparable.

# 1. Respect of the ethical code

In which degree do the media outlets respect the German press code in regard of their representation of the protests?

We found out, that 14 out of 77 articles did not respect the provisions of the German press code that were monitored for, which represents 19% of the articles published on the subject. All of these disrespecting articles were published in the conservative media we used in our research. 9 disrespects were found in the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung and 5 disrespecting articles in Bild Zeitung. Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung therefore published 60% of the articles disrestecting the recommendations of the ethical code and the Bild Zeitung 40%. This also means however that the liberal and left media outlets all respected the ethical code in all published articles we looked at for this research. Regarding the chosen periods of time, our research shows that 4 disrespects were found before the summit, 5 during the summit and another 5 after the summit. One can conclude, that the disrespects of the ethical code does not depend on the period of time as the amount is similar during all the periods examined.

Concerning the hypothesis that section 9 of the German press code, the protection of dignity, will be the most disrespected section, the qualitative analysis indicated that the hypothesis doesn't verify, as section 8 of the ethical code regarding the protection of personality was disrespected the most. Section 8 was disrespected 12 times, which is 86% out of all disrespects of the ethical code. Section 9, the protection of dignity was disrespected 2 times, which is 14%. Section 11, the sensational reporting and protection of young people, was always respected.

All in all, the majority of german media outlets respected the German press code. Our research shows, that mostly the conservative media disrespected the provisions, and these are the media outlets which have the highest publishing rates in print. Therefore we conclude that the hypothesis that the majority of German journalists are respecting the ethical code is verified and proven accurate.

# 2. Representation of crime

How do media outlets differ in regard to the published information in the three chosen periods of time?

The research shows that the disrespect of the ethical code does not differ significantly in the three periods of time monitored, as we found a balanced distribution of the situations in which the recommendations of the German press code were disrespected, 4 being identified in the reporting before the summit, 5 during the summit and equally 5 after the summit.

However, the different media outlets did not publish the same information. Even if the timing of the events, the numbers and the stakeholders are identified and presented mostly the same in the different articles, some information is always left out. For example, only the Tageszeitung did report about Neo-Nazis also taking part at the protests against the G20 summit. Or the Bild Zeitung was the only

one to look for accused rioters. In the light of these results of the media monitoring, we cannot accept as correct the hypothesis that the main information will not vary between the different media outlets chosen.

How do media outlets differ in regard to the way the information is published?

In order to answer the question regarding the way information is published, we made notes during the research about what surprised us or what we noticed to be particular. We noticed, that the Bild Zeitung and the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung had similarities, as they are often not quoting names. They are quoting ,an expert' or ,someone'. What those two media outlets also had in common, was that the demonstrators and rioters were not separated from each other. All of them were described as ,Left-slobs'. Moreover, to describe the demonstrations, those two media outlets used the pictures of the rioters: burning cars, people throwing bottles or a black masked mob.

The left and liberal media outlets reported differently about the demonstrations and riots. They did not use the pictures of the rioters to report about the demonstrations as they used peaceful images or no images at all. The liberal and left media outlets also separated the rioters from the demonstrators and accused the rioters of harming the peaceful demonstrations. Moreover, they asked questions to find out how those violent acts were possible. Either by direct or indirect conclusion, according to the media outlets, the police and security measures were found guilty or the choice of Hamburg as location for the G20 summit was identified as being the main reason for the identified problems.

All in all, we found out that the conservative media outlets we chose had similarities in reporting about the G20 summit, just as the other media outlets. In the next part, we will first discuss the overall importance of an ethical code and then discuss the results we worked out in this research.

### Discussion of the results

As the majority of the chosen media outlets respected the German Press Code, we can conclude that the chosen media outlets do respect the Ethical code.

We have found interesting to see which media did not respect the ethical code: the conservative one. The ones with the biggest runs. The oneswhich are the most accessible. The Bild Zeitung can be found everywhere in Germany, it doesn't matter in which part of Germany, even the smallest town will sell the Bild Zeitung. Either in a Kiosk, in a Supermarket or a special vending machine only for the Bild Zeitung. Also, the Bild has a website, a Twitter account, a Facebook page and an Instagram account. Bild has therefore a lot of possible touchpoints for the public. Of course, to address as many people as possible, it is important to speak a language everyone understands, even those with a lower education background. Bild is therefore using an easy sentence structure, strong images and emotional phrases that everyone can understand. So the Bild Zeitung entertained people to get as many persons as possible to read their article. Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung did not put such a strong accent on entertainment, as they rather gave incomplete information. They used quotes of ,someone' or ,an expert' - no names were stated or more information given. This media outlet is focuses on another target group. They want to reach more educated people who have a conservative way of thinking. We believe that the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung looks more serious and therefore better researched than the Bild Zeitung. Each author has its own specialisation and has its picture next to the article. They usually quote people - even if the quotes are sometimes not very meaningful.

The conservative and nationalist movements are regaining power in Germany and other European countries at the moment. We do believe, that the pretended seriousness and narrow framed information given in those kind of media is reinforcing this movement in the society. They feed the public, which is looking for explanations and people to accuse with answers - even if they are not right. Even if there is more to talk about and to think about.

We think that it is crucial to have a diverse media landscape and believe that the Bild Zeitung and the Frankfurter Allgemeine should be aware of the impact they are having on the consumers of their media. Instead of using their articles for sensation, they should inform people.

Leftist media outlets Tageszeitung and Neues Deutschland were broader in their reporting. They reported about rioters., demonstrators, police violence. They reported about police being kind. They reported about Neo-Nazis demonstrating. Their reports are not black and white, the contrasts are not really strong. Their reporting is nuanced, as the world is a complex one, which cannot be understood through a simple 'bad or good' frame.

In the reports of the protests and riots, the liberal media went on a meta-level. Those articles discussed the reason why these riots were so violent and how it was possible for a lot of individuals to act as one mass and forget their own moral barriers. Therefore we have to admit, that these media gave more than just information. They delivered processed information, opinions, to the public. But the difference is, that these authors shared their way of thinking with the consumer. Bild is only giving the result of this process.

The limits of this research makes it hard to state which information given was ethical and which not not. Moreover, the limits depend on the educational background, on the experiences one has, what kind of people one is surrounded by, where one lives, what kind of culture one is used to. It is really hard - or even impossible - to forget about all of this and to judge something on the basis of its degree of ethical correctness.

#### Conclusion

Our research showed some big differences in the way German media has represented these events, when it comes to comparing the left-wing outlets to the conservative ones. While the liberal media

mostly published nuanced representations of reality and more or less focused on putting each stakeholder group into the light, the latter has heavily emphasised the sensational aspects of the stories. Although ideological bias cannot be denied in either of the cases, our research has identified a clear tendency of breaking the German press code especially in the case of the conservative media.

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