

The Indignados protests in the Spanish and Greek press: Moving beyond the 'protest paradigm'?

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Abstract:

The protests of the Indignados in Spain and their counterpart of Aganaktismeni in Greece have been the most vocal expression of civic discontent against the ways the Euro crisis has been handled by national governments and the Eurozone. This paper studies how these protests have been covered in the mainstream press. Drawing upon the 'protest paradigm', which longstanding research has employed to describe the template and biased way protests have been traditionally covered, we have conducted content analysis of mainstream Spanish and Greek newspapers. We argue that the overall coverage moved beyond the protest paradigm. It adopted a more positive tone in reporting the protests, including the individual voices of the protesters and covering the performative aspects of the movement in positive terms. At the same time, however, the protests were overwhelmingly reported as a mere expression of resentment against the status quo rather than as offering valid political alternatives.

Keywords: protests, Indignados, protest paradigm, media framing, content analysis

A response to the Euro crisis and the austerity policies employed to tackle it, as well as a critique of the overall failures of finance capitalism, the protest movement of the

Indignados has been a defining moment in the ever unfolding Eurozone drama. The movement, named after the 2010 essay of the French diplomat Stéphane Hessel (Hessel, 2011), placed indignation at the centre of political engagement. Born on the streets and main squares of Spain in the spring of 2011, the Indignados (or 15-M movement), inspired similar protests across Southern Europe, and was more vividly replicated in the case of the Greek Aganaktismeni (Greek for Indignados), who occupied the squares of a number of Greek cities over the summer of 2011. The Indignados has been the most organised and vocal form of citizen resistance to the ways European governments responded to the Euro crisis, and the austerity measures they implemented (Hyman, 2015). Part of the global uprisings of 2011, the movement has been linked to the Arab revolutions of the same year, and has been celebrated as the predecessor of the Occupy movement (Oikonomakis & Roos, 2013). Its political legacy has been seen as the root of the launch of the radical Podemos party in Spain and the electoral success of left-wing SYRIZA in Greece (Errejón & Mouffe, 2016).

Orchestrated and mobilised mostly through the use of social media, such as Facebook and Twitter (Gerbaudo, 2012), the protests of the Indignados are an example of networked social movements (Castells, 2015). At the same time, as protests challenging the political status quo in different European countries, their coverage by mainstream media, often theorised as instrument of the established order (Herman and Chomsky, 1995; McChesney, 2008), is also a question open to investigation. Research has repeatedly shown that the template reporting adopted by mainstream media in their coverage of protests tends to marginalise and vilify protesters, an observation condensed in what has been widely known as 'the protest paradigm' (Chan and Lee, 1984). Given the mass and international

character of the protests of the Indignados, it is important to explore whether the mainstream reporting followed established practices and the protest paradigm was still the main narrative through which the mass media covered the protests.

In this article, we address this question by focusing in particular on the mainstream press in Spain and Greece and the way it reported the protests. The article is empirically based on a content analysis study, which draws upon the principles of the protest paradigm (Chan and Lee, 1984; McLeod and Hertog, 1999) and framing theory (Entman, 1993). It argues that, in contrast to the dominant paradigm of protest coverage, the protests of the Indignados were not negatively covered by the national press in the two countries. The movement was even reported as a national celebration, with citizens at the forefront. At the same time, however, this focus on the spectacle, albeit in positive terms, hardly constructed the movement as an effective political force or presented its voice as a valid alternative to austerity politics.

The Indignados as a protest movement

The Indignados movement made its first appearance on the streets of Madrid and Barcelona on 15 May 2011. Puerta del Sol in Madrid and Plaça de Catalunya in Barcelona became the protest sites of thousands, as did the squares of all major cities in Spain. Adopting peaceful means of demonstration, the protests started as an expression of citizen disappointment and anger against the national government and the austerity policies adopted to tackle the problems caused by the European financial crisis. They soon became an expression of the crisis of political representation with its demands mostly focusing on the rejection of the political establishment and austerity policies, as well as on the

implementation of mechanisms for citizen participation (Casero-Ripollés and Feenstra, 2012). Soon after the Spanish Indignados first appeared in central squares, on 25 May 2011, demonstrators in Greece took over Syntagma Square in Athens as well as other main squares around the country. Adapting their name from their Spanish predecessors, the Greek protesters self-described themselves as 'Aganaktismeni'. The occupation of the squares lasted for months and came to an end towards the end of summer 2011.

There are two significant characteristics of the Indignados as a protest movement. First, it had an unprecedented mass character, enabled by - although not exclusively due to - its nature as a plural, horizontal movement (Taibo, 2013). Placing themselves in direct opposition to traditional hierarchical politics, protesters organized and defined themselves as horizontal networks of cooperation (Prentoulis and Thomassen, 2013). Uniting through emotions of anger and desperation people whose lives had been affected by the crisis, the protests brought together diverse social groups. The movement appealed not only to established activist networks but also to people who had hitherto not actively engaged with political processes, forming a base which was broadly middle and to a lesser degree working class (Casero-Ripollés and Feenstra, 2012; Taibo, 2013). This horizontality and openness was also enabled by the use of social media. The movement, both in Spain and Greece, was illustrative of new forms of political mobilisation through online and social media, which further expanded the scope of protesters (Anduiza, Cristancho, & Sabucedo, 2014; Gerbaudo, 2012).

In that respect, the Indignados constitute an example of 'personalised politics', namely the 'expression of large-scale individualised action coordinated through digital media

technologies' (Bennett, 2012: 20). A major characteristic of such forms of action, according to Bennett, is the emergence of the individual as an important catalyst of collective action through the mobilisation of her social networks, itself enabled through the use of social media (Bennett, 2012: 22). Bennett and Segerberg (2012) name this networked mobilisation 'connective action' as opposed to 'collective action'. Examples of this include the Occupy movement and the Arab Spring(s), as well as smaller scale mobilisations, such as campaigns against corporations, which are conducted across personal action frames, as opposed to narrower collective action frames more commonly adopted by social movements. Personal action frames embrace diversity and inclusion, lower the barriers of identification with the cause, and validate personal emotion (Bennett, 2012: 22–23).

Such accounts of the relationship between new media and social movements have been criticised as an expression of individualistic politics embedded in neoliberal frameworks (Fenton and Barassi, 2011) and for a techno-optimism that obscures the corporate nature of new media operating on the business model of data accumulation (Kaun, 2016; Loader and Mercea, 2011). The significance of these critical arguments aside, new media are central in the organisation of contemporary social movements. We, therefore, approach the protests of the Indignados here as an expression of connective action enabled through social media, which function as 'a language and a terrain of identification' and 'a source of coherence as shared symbols, a centripetal focus of attention, which participants can turn to when looking for other people in the movement' (Gerbaudo, 2014: 266).

The protest paradigm and mainstream media

Although current literature has explored in depth the centrality of digital media as a platform for the mobilisation and realisation of the Indignados protests (Bennett and Segerberg, 2012; Gerbaudo, 2012), it has largely ignored the way these have been covered in the European mainstream media. Research on the dynamics between media and protest movements has repeatedly highlighted the use of established templates (McLeod and Hertog, 1999) or frames (Gitlin, 1980) in the reporting of protests. Chan and Lee (Chan and Lee, 1984) have described this template mode of reporting the 'protest paradigm', according to which the coverage of protests differs in terms of whether they were (a) supported, (b) politicised, and (c) moralised within cultural boundaries. These frames vary according to the newspapers' ideological leanings with right-wing newspapers focusing on social order and safeguarding the status quo, whereas left-leaning papers privilege the perspective of the protesters (Chan and Lee, 1984).

One of the main characteristics of the protest paradigm is its focus on the spectacle, especially sensational images of aggression, which highlight the controversial and violent aspects of the protests at the expense of their causes (Gitlin, 1980; McLeod and Hertog, 1999). At the same time, mainstream media heavily rely on official sources for information about the protests (McLeod and Hertog, 1999). Other journalistic tools for the marginalisation of the protesters include, according to Dardis (2006), a focus on the appearance or mental abilities of the protesters, calls to - disapproving - public opinion and judgement, statistics, generalisations, eyewitness accounts to counter the demonstrators' claims, and counterdemonstrations. The ultimate consequence of these media template processes is the de-legitimisation of the protesters' claims and ultimately their demonisation (McLeod and Hertog, 1999).

Relevant literature draws its assumptions from framing theory for the study of the ways media choose to discuss political issues. According to Entman (1993: 52), 'to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient'. This process is important not only for the way an issue is described but also because it implicitly suggests how this issue should be thought about or dealt with (Nelson and Oxley, 1999). The framing of the protests, therefore, is important as it significantly impacts on public discourse and understanding, and support for the protesters (Gamson, 1989; 2005).

Although more recent framing studies have been criticised as reducing frames to story topics and therefore detaching media frames from the context in which they are produced (Carragee and Roefs, 2004: 217), we believe in the usefulness and significance of early framing research in highlighting the links between news media and ideology. It allows us to identify the construction of political understandings and value judgements within the news. Such an exploration of news texts is essential as, despite the proliferation of new media, mainstream media representations are still central in the opportunity structures of social movements, and therefore their degree of influence in the public sphere (Cammaerts, 2012).

The case of the Indignados movement provides an interesting case for exploring the 'protest paradigm'. On one hand, the Indignados explicitly defined themselves in opposition to the political status quo; as such, and based on patterns of reporting observed in existing literature, we expected the Indignados to be marginalised in mainstream media. On the other hand, unlike protests aligned to traditional political ideologies or expressing concerns of trade unions, the Indignados did not seem to include a distinct minority of the

population. They largely, if not mostly, included lay citizens, namely people that did not actively identified as members of a movement and in many cases had never mobilised themselves politically before (Taibo, 2013). Given the movement's idiosyncrasies, it is interesting to explore how such protests with mass appeal were covered in the mainstream national media. Veneti and her colleagues, employing the protest paradigm to analyse the way the Aganaktismeni movement was covered on Greek television, concluded a 'lack of serious marginalization attempt of the indignants by the media' (Veneti, Poulakidakos, and Theologou, 2012: 117). This paper aims to further expand on this inquiry.

Research outline

Our aim in this article is to explore the way(s) the Indignados as a protest movement was framed in the mainstream press. We focus here on the press coverage of the Indignados in two countries, namely Spain and Greece, where the protests of the Indignados and Aganaktismeni, respectively, took place. There are two interrelated reasons we adopt this comparative perspective. First, we approach the Indignados and Aganaktismeni as two expressions of the same European protest movement, mobilised against austerity policies implemented in the Eurozone. In this sense, it is reasonable to expect that the media coverage in the two countries may share a clear connection to one another. Second, a comparative portrayal of the coverage of European protests against Eurozone policies can shed light onto broader questions about the framing, definitions, and interpretations of the Euro crisis by the national press. Relevant research has shown that despite discrepancies in the ways the crisis has been covered in the press of different countries (Mazzoni and

Barbieri, 2014; Picard, 2015), anti-austerity voices are generally silenced in mainstream newspapers (Doudaki, 2015; Picard, 2015).

Our sample consists of four newspapers: 'El Pais' and 'El Mundo' were the choices of the Spanish press; 'Eleftherotypia' and 'Kathimerini' were chosen from Greece. This choice was based on the assumption that the ideological leanings of a newspaper influence the way political phenomena are being covered (Chan and Lee, 1984), and in an attempt to explore diverging representations of the protests. Therefore, two centre-right ('El Mundo' and 'Kathimerini') and centre-left ('El Pais' and 'Eleftherotypia') newspapers were chosen.

Our study period spans from May 15 2011, when the first protesters made their appearance in the squares of major Spanish cities, until the end of June 2011, therefore covering the first forty-five days of the movement. We employed systematic sampling to gather the articles, without differentiating between news reports and opinion articles, as the framing of news is important not only in opinion pieces but also in allegedly neutral accounts of events (Doudaki, 2015). Newspaper articles were retrieved from LexisNexis in the case of Spain and, given the exclusion of Greek press from that database, the online archives of the newspapers in the case of Greece, using the following search-terms: 'Indignados' and 'Aganaktismeni' ('Αγανακτισμένοι'). The search returned a large population of relevant articles, from which we sampled by coding every 8th article, yielding a total of 105 articles from the Spanish press (55 articles for 'El Pais' and 50 articles for 'El Mundo'), and 107 articles from the Greek press (77 articles from 'Eleftherotypia' and 30 articles from 'Kathimerini'). A pilot study of 10 articles per newspaper allowed us to identify the main frames and consolidate the coding guide.

The content analysis was conducted on the basis of coding categories derived largely from relevant research on the protest paradigm. The frames employed here were mostly identified deductively, adapting existing analytical categories that have been highlighted in previous research. We coded the material for overall 'tone of coverage' (Cammaerts, 2013), whereby we identified and coded for three ways of describing the protesters: (a) neutral, when they were described merely as 'protesters', or in relation to their age or profession; (b) positive, when they were described as 'passionate', 'spirited' and in similar affective terms; and (c) negative when protesters were described in the way of agitators, mobs or unruly crowds. In the case of multiple voices or perspectives within the article, we only coded for the dominant frame adopted by the journalist(s) writing the article. We coded for the 'type of sources' mentioned in the articles, as, according to McLeod and Hertog (1999), one of the ways the protest paradigm marginalises protesters is through the employment of official sources, which tend to reproduce official definitions of the events. Further marginalisation frames identified in the literature are the focus on 'violence', especially between protesters and the police or non-protesting citizens, which constructs protesters as socially deviant (Hall et al., 1978; McLeod and Hertog, 1999), as well as the lack of acknowledgement of the 'causes' of the protests and motives of the protesters (Weaver and Scacco, 2012). Furthermore, we explored whether the articles highlight aspects of the 'spectacle' of protests (Dardis, 2006; Gitlin, 1980; McLeod and Hertog, 1999), such as the performative acts of the protesters, their banners and slogans, the diversity of the crowd, and the numbers of protesters.

Some codes were chosen inductively through an initial thematic analysis, and in accordance with the peculiarities of the protests of the Indignados. We therefore explored

whether newspaper coverage explicitly engaged with 'media technology', in the form of social media, as a factor instrumental to the movement, as well as the 'international frame' of the protests, making connections between protests in different countries. We also looked into what we call here the 'political frame'. Our interest in this was twofold: we investigated whether the movement was explicitly described as political, apolitical or independent from political parties; we also explored whether its political claims were constructed as propositional or merely oppositional, which we name here 'proactive' and 'reactive'. We take claims to mean acts of political communication in the public sphere, consisting of the 'expression of political opinion through some form of physical or verbal action' (Koopmans and Erbe, 2004: 98). We coded for all political statements made by protesters as a reaction to the status quo and those providing alternatives, such as policy suggestions, or plans for the development of solidarity networks. Our intention in employing this last frame was to investigate whether the protest movement of the Indignados was reported exclusively in terms of citizen opposition to the political status quo and reaction to given political decisions, or whether it was also represented as a political actor that offered constructive proposals for political change.

Findings

A first observation when looking at the overall tone of the articles studied was that the coverage of the Indignados movement was predominantly neutral across the different newspapers in the two countries (see fig. 1). The exception to that was the left-leaning Greek 'Eleftherotypia', which mostly covered the protests in a positive light. As was to be

expected, the greatest amount of negative coverage was found in the centre-right 'El Mundo' and 'Kathimerini'.

(INSERT FIG. 1 HERE)

In accordance with this overall neutral tone of reporting, and unlike the usual coverage of protests as described by the protest paradigm, there was only very limited focus on instances of violence occurring during the protests, which were reported by about 15% of the stories in all newspapers. These were mostly reports of violent incidents between the police and the protesters or the protesters and politicians.

At the same time, and again unlike patterns of usual coverage, the majority of the journal articles discussed the causes of protests, with the exception of 'Kathimerini' (see table 1). It was mostly the decisions of domestic politicians and Eurozone policies that were mentioned as being at the root of protesters' anger.

(INSERT TABLE 1 HERE)

'The Indignados protests as spectacle'

The spectacle frame was the most dominant in the way the protests of the Indignados were covered. The majority of the stories analysed highlighted the performative acts of the protesters, as well as their diversity as a crowd and their means of demonstration (see table 2). The amount of stories adopting the spectacle frame ranged from 62% in the conservative 'El Mundo' to a whopping 89% in the left-leaning 'El Pais'. However, although studies of the protest paradigm have highlighted that a focus on the spectacle aspects of protests tend to marginalise them as controversial and dramatic, in the case of the

reporting of the Indignados their spectacle was constructed as virtually celebratory. The images reported were not of aggression or violence but focused on the theatricality of the protests, the diversity of the crowd gathered, the protester volume, as well as the duration of protest action. Such an emphasis highlighted the persistence and inclusive, mass character of the movement.

(INSERT TABLE 2 HERE)

Both the Spanish and Greek coverage focused on the heterogeneity of protesting crowds, inclusive of people of different social strata, and age groups, ranging from unemployed youth to pensioners and disenchanted professionals. Constant press references to this heterogeneity, describing the crowd as 'couples', 'groups of friends', 'small children with their parents', 'disabled on wheel chairs', or 'old people and pensioners', constructed a colourful pastiche of protesters in stark contrast to negative images of them as destructors observed in other demonstrations (McLeod and Detenber, 1999). News stories would make references to the banging of pots and pans by the protesters, their slogans and chants, and even the organisation of dance competitions (Eleftherotypia, 2011a).

The adoption of performance and carnivalesque tactics has a long history in protest movements (Cottle, 2008; Scott & Street, 2000). The reporting of such tactics has been pointed out by previous research as one of the often employed journalistic tools for the marginalisation of the protests (Dardis, 2006; Gitlin, 1980; McLeod and Hertog, 1999). However, such performative political acts are illustrative of the inherent affective and aesthetic aspects of political participation (Scott and Street, 2000; Street, 2004).

In the case of the Indignados, the spectacle of the protests was reported in positive terms. Daily references to the soaring numbers of protesters in different cities during the first days of the movements further strengthened the construction of the protests as nationwide events and legitimate expressions of unrest. Combined with the overall positive tone of coverage in part of the Greek and Spanish press, this spectacle composed by a variety of individuals was often accompanied by an emotional and celebratory mode of reporting. Expressions such as 'magical', 'a miracle', 'something new', 'something that cannot be defined' were used by the press of both ideological allegiances, especially in the first days of the protests, to describe the spectacle of the protesters coming together to occupy the squares. The following is a characteristic illustration from 'Eleftherotypia':

'Once more one can see whistles and pots and pans amidst a colorful crowd expanding on the surrounding streets, where there is a variety of people ranging from babies to priests'(Eleftherotypia, 2011b).

In contrast to the established protest paradigm, the protests of the Indignados were covered as national celebrations or even media events (Dayan and Katz, 1992), namely ceremonial events that interrupted the routines of daily media flow and brought together national audiences, triggering a sense of media-induced solidarity. Significant in the construction of this celebratory spectacle was the focus on the 'aesthetics of nonviolence'(Postill, 2013) the movement represented. The peaceful character of the demonstrations was often highlighted in the press.

'Use of sources and the voices of protesters'

Another element that clearly distinguishes the coverage of the Indignados from that of other protests, as described in the protest paradigm, was the employment of diverse sources. We found that these included government officials, opposition representatives, protest participants and public figures other than politicians, such as academics or artists. Relevant research has often highlighted the bias exhibited by mainstream media in their reliance on statements from authorities and official sources, when reporting stories of social problems and civil unrest (Hall et al., 1978; McLeod and Hertog, 1999). In contrast, our research shows that newspapers were more likely to use protesters as direct or indirect sources, rather than officials and politicians (see figure 2). This was particularly evident during the first days of press coverage regardless of the newspaper's political orientation.

(INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE)

Such stories of individual protesters were reported as illustrative of the heterogeneity of the protesting crowd and therefore unique character. A common discursive structure would be to name the protesters included in the stories and then describe their status, also highlighting the reasons for their indignation. Phrases such as 'Ana, writer and librarian[...]', 'Ramon, a civil-servant[...]', 'Maria, a secretary until last year, and currently unemployed[...]', were very common in the Greek and Spanish coverage. These stories humanised the movement participants, creating empathetic links between them and the public. At the same time, they legitimised the protestors' claims, contextualising them within an environment of high unemployment and acute economic crisis. The following is an illustration from 'El Pais':

"I have two gigs and all they offer me is 5,000 euro gross per year ," explained Ana Sierra , 26, with a degree in History and Documentation, who also came to show her anger. "It's a feeling of indignation. We grow up, we strive, and now our only chance is to emigrate . We are doomed to live precariously", she added' (El Pais, 2011) .

Bennett attributes such favourable press coverage to the inclusive character of the personal action frames adopted by the Indignados, as these 'everyperson' frames are easier to be positively reported and publicly accepted than the exclusive 'collective action frames', which define social movements more narrowly against the established order (Bennett, 2012: 31). Along with their lack of explicit party or ideological affiliations and their heterogeneity, the Indignados became an expression of the voice of the public, the citizens, the ones hit the hardest by the economic crisis.

'The technology frame'

There were small differences with regard to the adoption of the media technology frame between centre-left and centre-right newspapers, with the former being more likely to report on the role new media, and especially social media, played in the protests. The use of social media was acknowledged in the press as another element of the 'novel' character of the movement. This was especially the case in Greece, a country where Internet penetration was at 53 per cent in 2011(World Bank, 2014)ⁱ and social media were only used by a young educated minority. In this context, the use of new media for the coordination of citizens and organization of the protests was newsworthy in itself, as illustrated in the following extract by 'Kathimerini':

'I am posting "wake up Portugal!'", says Nikos absorbed in his Twitter. If you don't understand technology, you don't belong in this crowd. Wherever you look, there is someone using their mobile phone to record [what is happening]. Wherever you stand, there are at least three cameras 'recording' you. The phrase 'fantastic post!', which I hear next to me, has nothing to do with the post office, 'I'm following you' refers to Twitter and not the famous song, 'reloading' is not a political slogan but another attempt at using your data on your smart phone. Up until yesterday the closest these people had was their common friends on Facebook. Today, they are all on the streets together' (Margomenou, 2011).

Two aspects of the ways the press reported on the role of the media in the Indignados protests are particularly noteworthy. The news made references to the websites, Facebook pages and Twitter accounts protesters used to communicate with each other and mobilise the public. This is partly explained by the fact that the reporting of these protests did not appear to follow the established patterns and routines of protest reporting, and did not rely on conventional primary sources, with journalists turning to demonstrators' websites and social networks in order to obtain further information instead (Micó and Casero-Ripollés, 2014). At the same time, reports from the field would describe how protesters made use of their mobile phones and laptops to capture the protests and share them on social networks. Interestingly, by describing the role of Facebook and Twitter as tools for the coordination of the protesters, the press itself became part of this coordination process it described. By repeating the names of blogs and Facebook groups, as well as hash tags used by protesters, such as '#nolesvotes, #acampadasol, #greekrevolution, and #Aganaktismeni' the press effectively amplified the movement's visibility.

'The political frame'

The proclaimed independence of the Indignados from official party lines and political alliances seems to have further enabled the coverage of protesters as representative of a general public voice. Reacting against the established political model and disenchanted from traditional processes, the Indignados defined themselves as opposed to the political system and its established parties and claimed to offer a democratic alternative to the political status quo (Prentoulis and Thomassen, 2013).

The independence of the movement from formal political allegiances was the aspect mostly mentioned when there was any reference to the movement as a political actor. This was the case in all newspapers at a rate of about 20% of all stories. The failure of Left-wing parties (such as the IU, ERC or PSOE in Spain and KKE in Greece) to capitalise on the movement was reported as a triumph of the Indignados to safeguard their independence. At the same time, however, there was very little discussion of the protests as a political movement and as an expression of new ways of political engagement, as less than 10% of articles in all newspapers made such a claim.

Similarly limited was the discussion of proactive political claims made by the movement, such as discussions of political alternatives to established party politics, policy suggestions and development of solidarity networks. The newspapers made frequent and explicit references to the political slogans and claims of the protesters, such as 'Don't vote for them', 'we are not puppets of politicians and bankers', 'get out of here!' (directed at politicians), especially in the first days of the protests. However, the coverage of more proactive political claims was minimal (see Figure 3). We observed small differences

between left and right-centre newspapers, with the latter being more likely to ignore any proactive or constructive claims of the protesters, however, this difference was rather insignificant. This overall tendency can be explained in the broader context of the coverage, which, as mentioned above, tended to favour the protests as spectacle in comparison to other frames. This virtually exclusive focus of the press on the protests as a public celebration seems to have been ultimately detrimental to the discussion of the Indignados as a movement with an alternative political proposal.

(INSERT FIGURE 3 HERE)

'National perspectives'

Despite the overall commonalities in the ways the protests were covered, there were also some differences in the coverage between the two countries. Although similar in tone, the coverage differed in terms of volume, which was considerably greater in Spain, where the movement originated. The coverage was significantly more extensive in the centre-left press in both countries. The international frame was more prominent in the Greek press (41% in 'Eleftherotypia', and 24% in 'Kathimerini'), as Greek articles would consistently make references to the Spanish Indignados, whereas the Spanish press largely ignored the Greek Aganaktismeni, with the respective numbers being 9% for 'El Pais' and 13% for 'El Mundo'.

Conclusion: Moving beyond the 'protest paradigm'?

What we have so far explored illustrates that the press coverage of the Indignados differed considerably from the 'protest paradigm', which has traditionally described the way

mainstream media tend to report social movements and demonstrations. This can be seen as a consequence of what Cottle describes as the 'cacophonous field of contemporary protests' (Cottle, 2008: 857), whereby protest movements express a diversity of interests and identities that transcend class interests and political ideologies. Such 'large-scale individualised action' (Bennett, 2012: 20) is an indication of changing public attitudes towards protests and a recognition of them as a legitimate form of political action (Cottle, 2008: 857). Within this context of more positive attitudes and public acceptance of protests, the media coverage is likely to change too.

The Indignados and its coverage has also to be viewed within the context of the Euro crisis, an issue with international dimensions. Austerity measures, increased unemployment, lack of banking regulation and all other issues on the agenda of the Indignados have been presented as problems imposed by a network of powers, which include national politicians and Eurozone bureaucracy, making it hard to identify specific culprits. At the same time, the conscious decision of the movement to detach itself from political parties of the Left, which have traditionally been at the forefront of social movements, enabled its coverage as an expression of public frustration rather than as a radical political voice that constituted a real threat to the establishment. Furthermore, the international character of the movement played a significant role in the way the Indignados was reported in the mainstream press. Emerging almost simultaneously in different European countries that faced similar economic and social problems, the movement defied attempts to frame the protests as a purely domestic matter or to fall back onto traditional media templates.

At the same time, the positive media reporting of the Indignados should not be overestimated. Our study only focuses on the first 45 days of the protests. During the last days of this coverage we observed a decline in the visibility of voices of individual protesters that had earlier dominated the news. Clashes between the protesters and the police in Athens on the 28 and 29 of June, while new austerity measures were being voted in the Greek Parliament, were reported as an all too familiar scenery and marked the end of the peaceful protests of Aganaktismeni. In Spain, the Indignados had taken strategic actions to strengthen the grassroots movement through neighborhood assemblies and alternative political platforms(Dhaliwal, 2012). Whether such actions were reported as consistently as the May and June protests is a question open to investigation. Given the inherent preference of news media to focus on newsworthy events rather than processes, it is also a question with a likely negative answer. If the Indignados in the squares made for a great spectacle, expressions of continuous alternative political engagement hardly do.

Despite the fact that the mainstream press seemed to depart from the protest paradigm in the reporting of the Indignados, as observed in our study, this is not to be seen as a complete abandonment of established conventions of reporting protests and civic unrest. Though the pro-establishment media bias observed in protest reporting by foregoing research was not ostensible here, as it was in the media coverage of previous protests, it was the inherent preference of news media for the spectacular that contributed to the framing of the Indignados in a way that celebrated the peaceful spectacle of the protests but failed to illustrate the relevance of the movement beyond the expression of indignation and the occupation of public spaces.

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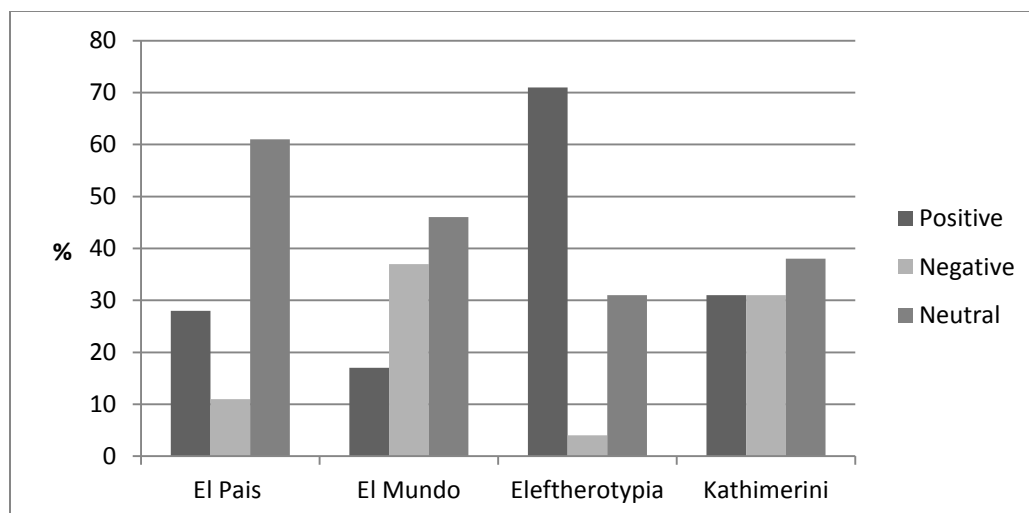


Figure 1 Tone of Coverage

TABLE 1 - Reference to the causes of the protests

Spain	<i>El Pais</i> (n = 55)	29 (53%)
	<i>El Mundo</i> (n = 50)	30 (57%)
Greece	<i>Eleftherotypia</i> (n = 77)	41 (53%)
	<i>Kathimerini</i> (n = 30)	12 (40%)

TABLE 2 - Focus on the spectacle of the protests

Spain	<i>El Pais</i> (n = 55)	48 (89%)
	<i>El Mundo</i> (n = 50)	31 (62%)
Greece	<i>Eleftherotypia</i> (n = 77)	51 (66%)
	<i>Kathimerini</i> (n = 30)	20 (66%)

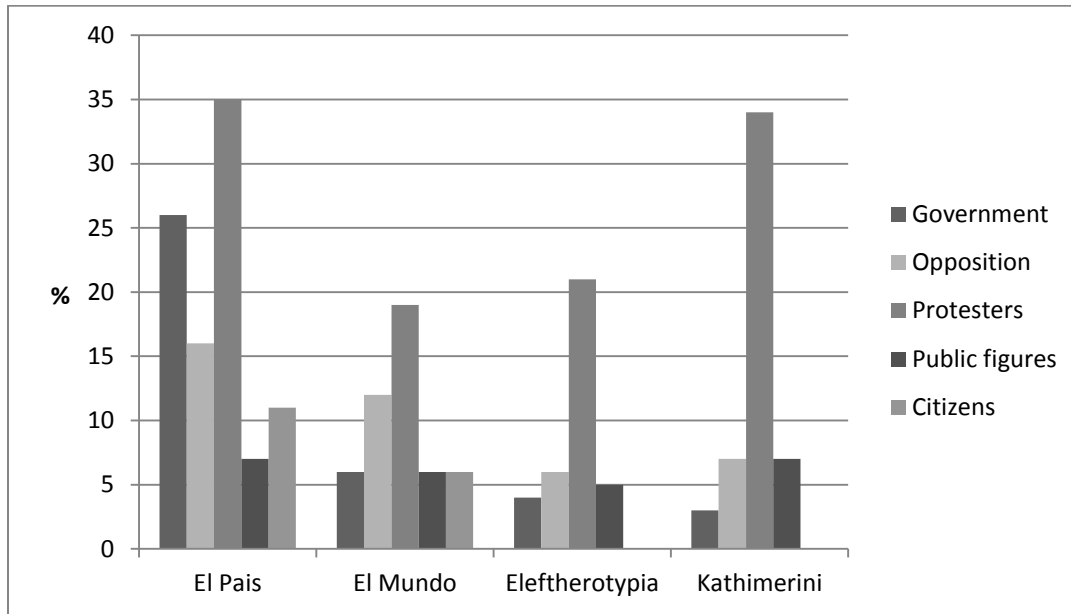


Figure 2 Sources Mentioned

TABLE 3 - The media technology frame

Spain	<i>El Pais</i> (n = 55)	13 (23%)
	<i>El Mundo</i> (n = 50)	8 (15%)
Greece	<i>Eleftherotypia</i> (n = 77)	17 (21%)
	<i>Kathimerini</i> (n = 30)	5 (14%)

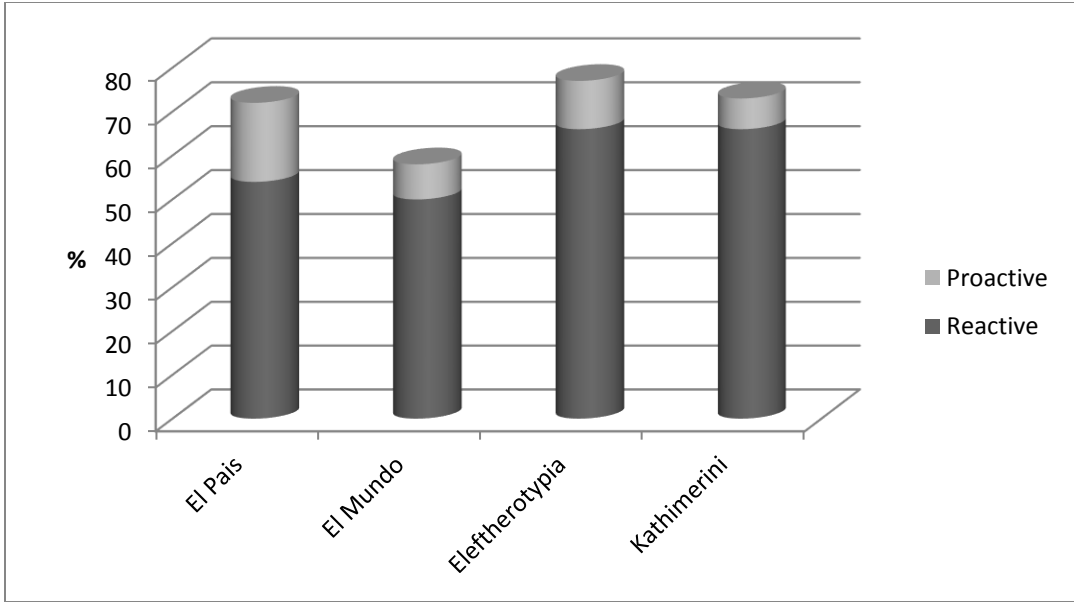


Figure 3 Political Claims

¹ In Spain internet penetration was considerably higher, at 67.7 per cent (World Bank 2014).