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6 The Indignados in the European Press

Beyond the Protest Paradigm?

*Maria Kyriakidou, José Javier Olivas Osuna
and Max Hänska*

Introduction

“Indignez-vous!” was the title of the 2010 essay of the French diplomat Stéphane Hessel, who placed the emotion of indignation at the centre of political engagement and called for a non-violent uprising against the failures of finance capitalism (Hessel 2011). It was this call that the disgruntled Spanish citizens responded to when they took to the streets in the spring of 2011 and occupied squares all over Spain in the wake of the global financial crisis in what has been named the 15-M or Indignados movement. Indignados has been the most organized and vocal form of civic resistance to the ways European governments responded to the euro crisis and the austerity measures they implemented (Hyman 2015). Linked to the Arab revolutions of 2011, 15-M has been celebrated as the predecessor of the Occupy movement (Oikonomakis and Roos 2013). More immediately, the Spanish Indignados inspired similar movements across other Southern European countries affected by the Eurozone crisis, such as Portugal, Italy and especially Greece, where the respective *Aganaktismenoi* occupied the squares of Greek cities over the summer of 2011.

Adopting peaceful means of demonstration and largely coordinated through social media, the Indignados has been a movement unique both in its expressions and in its organisation. It was also unique, we argue here, in the treatment it received from the mainstream European press. Drawing upon a comparative content analysis of the Spanish, Greek and German press, this chapter argues that, in contrast to the dominant paradigm of protest coverage, the protests of the Indignados were not dealt with in a negative way by the European press. Indeed, the reporting of the movement often resembled the celebratory character of a media event, where the citizens were at the forefront of the nation – especially in the cases of the Spanish and Greek coverage. At the same time, however, this focus on the spectacle hardly constructed the movement as an effective political force or presented its voice as a valid alternative to austerity politics.

We understand the protest movement of the Indignados here to be one of the most vociferous examples of political participation and citizen

engagement beyond institutional politics within the context of the euro crisis. A movement of mass and international character, the Indignados directly confronted and challenged the malfunctions of domestic and European political institutions and ultimately of liberal democracy (Prentoulis and Thomassen 2013). Enabled by social media, these alternative forms of political participation are still, however, subjected to the media logic of the mainstream press for its public representation and reach. Our aim in this chapter is to explore these mainstream media representations of the protests of the Indignados and the type of (mis) understandings of the movement to which mass media have contributed.

Indignant Citizens against Austerity

Caused by the financial crisis that hit global markets in the second half of 2007 and the beginning of 2008, the crisis of the Eurozone has had an unprecedented and largely unexpected impact on European governments and populations since 2009. After it became apparent that a number of European countries would not be able to repay their public debt, financial and lending agreements took place between national governments, the International Monetary Fund, the European Central Bank and the European Commission. As a first step towards the reduction of public debt, these agreements included a series of austerity policies, such as salary cuts, pension reforms and reduction of the public sector and welfare. The European South, the context of most of these policies, was hit the hardest by the crisis and its concomitant measures. Unemployment rates have been the highest in Greece at 27.0% and Spain at 24.4% – as of June 2014 (Eurostat 2014). With welfare provisions becoming scarcer, Greek and Spanish citizens have been faced with increasing hardship.

Public disappointment and disenchantment with Europe and rage against national governments found its most vocal and organised expression in the protest movement of the Indignados, or 15-M movement, which 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. Ten days later, on 25 May 2011, and as it was becoming evident that the Spanish protesters were here to stay, demonstrators took over Syntagma square in Athens as well as other central squares in Greek cities. Borrowing their name from their Spanish predecessors, the Greek protesters self-described themselves as ‘Aganaktismenoi’ (the Greek translation of *indignados*). The occupation of the squares lasted for months until it came to an end towards the end of the summer 2011. In both countries, the movement of the Indignados/Aganaktismenoi has given rise to solidarity networks that continue to operate as networks of support for the people mostly hit by the crisis (Taibo 2013; Arampatzi 2016).

There are two remarkable characteristics of the movement addressed by the relevant literature. First, its nature as a pluralistic, horizontal movement has been the basis of its unprecedented mass character (Taibo 2013). 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 mid-stream and to a lesser degree working class (Casero-Ripollés and Feenstra 2012; Taibo 2013). It became an expression of the crisis of political representation, with its demands mostly focusing on four main issues: (a) rejection of the political establishment and political parties, (b) denouncement of the financial markets, (c) rejection of austerity policies and concomitant welfare cuts and (d) implementation of mechanisms for citizen participation (Casero-Ripollés and Feenstra 2012). At the same time, the movement, both in Spain and Greece, was illustrative of new forms of political mobilisation through online and social media (Gerbaudo, 2012; Anduiza et al. 2014). Facebook, Twitter and mobile phones have been identified as central to processes of mobilisation and organisation of the protests, and one of the reasons of the expansive nature of the group of protesters.

In that respect, the Indignados can be approached not as a social movement as such but as an example of ‘personalized politics’, an ‘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 social networks, itself enabled through the use of social media (Bennett 2012, 22). Such networked action, examples of which include the Occupy movement and the Arab Spring(s), as well as smaller-scale mobilisations, such as campaigns against corporations, are conducted across personal action frames, as opposed to the 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, 22f.).

Protest Movements and the Mainstream Media

In contrast to its preoccupation with digital media as a platform for the mobilisation and realisation of the movement, current literature has largely ignored the way the Indignados have been covered in the European press. 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 (see McCurdy 2012 for a comprehensive review). Chan and Lee (1984) have described this template mode of reporting the ‘protest paradigm’. They found that the coverage of protests differs in terms of whether they are (a) supported, (b) politicised and (c) moralised within

cultural boundaries. These frames differed according to the newspapers' ideological leanings, with right-wing newspapers focusing on social order and safeguarding the status quo, and left-leaning papers privileging the perspective of the protesters (Chan and Lee 1984).

One of the main characteristics of the protest paradigm is the focus on the spectacle, especially formulaic, 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 on 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 demonization (McLeod and Hertog 1999). These media 'frames' are not restricted to the news coverage of protests but also media representations of social movements and radical political voices (Gitlin 1980; McCurdy 2012).

The relevant literature draws its assumptions from framing theory, studying the ways media choose to discuss political phenomena. 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). Mainstream media can serve social movements by (a) mobilising political support, (b) legitimising and validating the protesters claims in mainstream discourse and (c) broadening the scope of conflicts (Gamson and Wolfsfeld 1993).

The case of the Indignados movement provides an interesting case for exploring the 'protest paradigm'. On the one hand, the Indignados have explicitly defined themselves as being 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 other protests, the participants did not seem to include a distinct minority of the population (Harris and Gillion 2010), but largely, if not mostly, included lay citizens; namely people that did not actively identify themselves as members of a political movement and, in many cases, had never been mobilised politically before (Taibo 2013). Such wider appeal and obvious public acceptance of the movement poses questions as to how the media might deal with demonstrations that "do not easily fit within the traditional left-right political

continuum” (Cottle 2008, 857). Given the Indignados’ idiosyncrasies, it is interesting to explore how such a movement with mass appeal was represented in Europe’s mainstream media.

Content Analysis of Six Newspapers

We focus here on the press coverage of the Indignados in three countries, namely Spain and Greece, where the protests of the Indignados and Aganaktismenoi took place, and Germany. There are two interrelated reasons for adopting this comparative perspective. First, the Indignados and Aganaktismenoi are 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 of these two movements 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 comprises six newspapers: *El Pais* and *El Mundo* were the choices of the Spanish press; *Eleftherotypia* and *Kathimerini* were chosen for Greece; and *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* for Germany. This choice was based on the assumption that the ideological leanings of a newspaper influence the way political phenomena are covered (Chan and Lee 1984), and thus allows to explore diverging representations of the protests. Therefore, three centre-right (*El Mundo*, *Kathimerini* and *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*) and three centre-left (*El Pais*, *Eleftherotypia* and *Süddeutsche Zeitung*) newspapers were chosen.

Our study covers the period from 15 May 2011, when the first Indignados made their appearance in the squares of major Spanish cities, until the end of June, therefore covering the first 45 days of the movement. We employed systematic sampling to gather relevant material. We did not differentiate 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 Factiva, Nexis and the online archives of the newspapers, using the following search terms: ‘Indignados’ and ‘Aganaktismenoi’ (‘Αγανακτισμένοι’ adding (Spanien & Protest*), (Griechenland & Protest*)) to the search for German articles. The Greek and Spanish search returned a large population of relevant articles, from which we sampled by coding every eighth article, yielding a total of 105 articles from the Spanish press (55 articles from *El Pais* and 50 articles

from *El Mundo*) and 107 articles from the Greek press (77 articles from *Eleftherotypia* and 30 articles from *Kathimerini*). As the population of relevant German articles (after initial retrieval) was much smaller (28 articles from *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and 39 from *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*), the entire population of German articles was coded. A pilot study of 10 articles per newspaper allowed us to identify the main frames and consolidate the coding guide. 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, ignoring the different sources.

We identified the frames employed here largely deductively, adapting existing analytical categories that have been highlighted in previous research. One of the ways the protest paradigm marginalises protesters is, according to McLeod and Hertog (1999), through the *type of sources* and voices included in the media reports, which tend to be officials and, therefore, reproduce official definitions of the events. Another prominent marginalisation frame is the *focus on violence*, especially between protesters and the police or non-protesting citizens, which constructs protesters as socially deviant (McLeod and Detenber 1999). We also took into account explicit criticisms or praise of the protests, thus coding for the *overall tone of coverage* (Cammaerts 2013). Further marginalisation frames acknowledged in the literature and explored here include the lack of acknowledgement of the *causes* of the protests and motives of the protesters (Weaver and Scacco 2012), as well as the focus on the *spectacle* of the protests (Gitlin 1980; McLeod and Hertog 1999; Dardis 2006). Regarding the latter, we coded for references to the performative acts of the protesters, their banners and slogans, the diversity of the crowd and the numbers of protesters. We were also interested in the coverage of the tactics of the protesters and their organisation practices and internal conflicts (Cammaerts 2013), in what we named the *organisational frame*. We explored three further frames that were deemed important following the initial thematic analysis. Regarding the *media technology* frame, as a factor instrumental to the movement we explored whether newspaper coverage explicitly engaged with social media. We also coded for the *international frame* of the protest coverage, making connections between protests in different countries. Finally, we 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. 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.

The Focus on the Spectacle

At the first level of analysis, the coverage of the Indignados movement was predominantly neutral across the different newspapers in the three countries (see Figure 6.1). The exception to this was the left-leaning Greek *Eleftherotypia*, which mostly covered the protests in a positive light. The largest amount of negative coverage was found, unsurprisingly, in the centre-right *El Mundo* and *Kathimerini*. The German press adopted an overwhelmingly neutral tone in its coverage of the protest movement.

Part of this overall neutral tone of reporting the protest movement was the limited adoption of the violence frame, unlike the usual coverage of protests as described by the protest paradigm. Incidents of violence between protesters and the police were reported by 15% of the stories in all newspapers. Similar proportions of stories in Spanish and Greek newspapers noted violent reactions of the crowds against specific politicians. The paper with the most stories addressing this issue was the German *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, with 23% of its stories mentioning confrontations between the police and protesters.

As in other cases of protests, issues pertaining to the spectacle aspects of the protests were discussed in the majority of the news stories in all countries (see Table 6.1). The number of stories adopting the spectacle frame ranged from 62% in the conservative *El Mundo* to a whopping 89% in the left-leaning *El Pais*. What distinguishes the coverage of the Indignados, though, in comparison to the dominant protest frame is the construction of this spectacle as virtually celebratory, rather than as controversial or dramatic. The images reported were not of aggression or

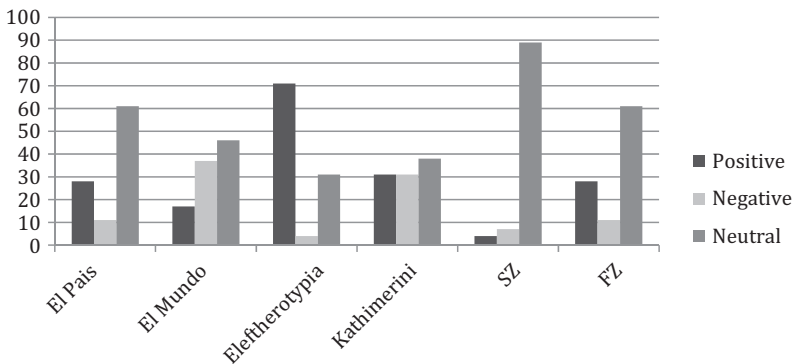


Figure 6.1 Tone of coverage.

Table 6.1 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%)
Germany	<i>Süddeutsche Zeitung</i> (n = 27)	19 (70%)
	<i>Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung</i> (n = 39)	30 (77%)

violence but focused on the theatricality of the protests, the diversity of the gathered crowd, the numbers of the protesters and the days of protests, which highlighted the continuity and mass character of the movement.

The Spanish and Greek coverage in particular focused on the heterogeneity of the protesting crowd, inclusive of people from 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 the negative images of them as destructors observed in other demonstrations (McLeod and Detenber 1999). This focus on the carnivalesque element of the protests (Tsaliki 2012) has been pointed out by previous research on the protest paradigm as one of the frequently employed journalistic tools for the marginalisation of protests (Gitlin 1980; McLeod and Hertog 1999; Dardis 2006). However, in the case of the Indignados, the spectacle of the protests was reported in positive terms rather than as a means of trivialising the movement’s claims. Daily references to the increasing number of protesters during the first days of the movements in different cities further strengthened the construction of the protests as nationwide events and legitimate democratic expressions of unrest.

Combined with the positive tone of coverage in part of the Greek and Spanish press, this spectacle composed of a diverse pastiche of citizens was often accompanied by an emotional and celebratory mode of reporting. Expressions such as ‘magical’, ‘a miracle’, ‘something new’ and ‘something that cannot be defined’ were used by the Spanish and Greek 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*:

The whistles and the pots and pans are there again, amidst a colorful crowd expanding on the surrounding streets, where you can find from babies to priests.

(Ξεχείλισε αγανάκτηση το Σύνταγμα 2011)

In stark contrast to the established protest paradigm, the protests of the Indignados were covered as national celebrations or even media events, namely ceremonial events that interrupted the routines of daily media flow and brought together national audiences, triggering a sense of media-induced solidarity (Dayan and Katz 1992).

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 highlighted in the press, which constructed the protests as distinct from previous ones and unique in their adoption of peaceful tools of resistance such as occupying public squares. Numerous articles, especially in the Spanish press, were devoted to the description of the organisation of the movement, the multiplicity of small assemblies and their transverse way of collaboration across different sociodemographic groups.

The Individual at Centre Stage

Another element that clearly distinguishes the coverage of the Indignados from that of other protests was the use of sources. We coded our sample for a number of different sources, such as government officials, opposition representatives, the protesters, public figures other than politicians, such as academics or artists, and citizens that did not participate in the protests. 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 (McLeod and Hertog 1999). In sharp contrast, our research shows that when sources were cited, directly and indirectly, they were more likely to be protesters (see Figure 6.2). This was particularly

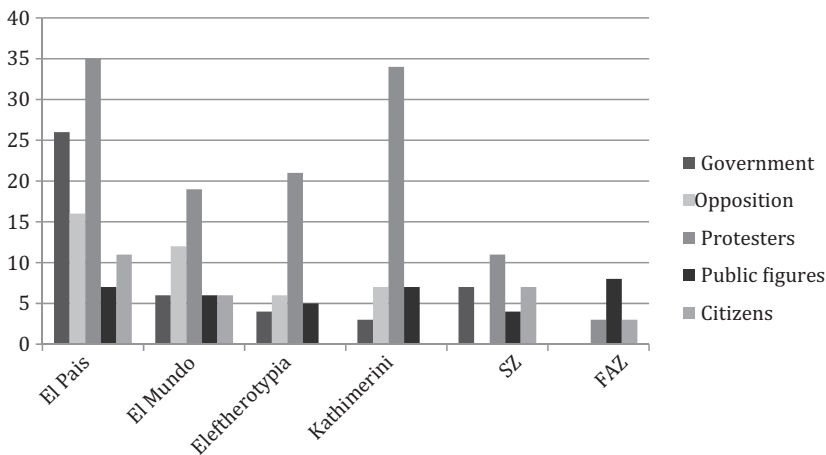


Figure 6.2 Sources mentioned in media.

evident in the first days of the coverage, and did not differ considerably across the newspapers of different ideological leanings. This was also the case for the German *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, which often relied on protesters themselves as news-sources. The only exception in the sample was the German conservative *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, which mostly resorted on comments from public figures.

These stories were reported as illustrative of the heterogeneity of the protesting crowd and the apolitical character of the movement, as they focused on the particular circumstances and motives of the participants. A common structure of these reports would be to start by naming the protesters and describing 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 of the protests. These stories humanized 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 País*:

'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 País 2011)

For Bennett (2012, 31), such favourable press coverage can be partly explained by the inclusive character of the personal action frames adopted by the Indignados, as these 'every person' 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 (ibid.). Along with their lack of explicit political or ideological affiliations and their heterogeneity of composition, the Indignados became representative of the public, the citizens, the ones hit the hardest by the economic crisis.

The Movement and Its Political Claims

What further enabled this coverage of the protesters as representative of the general public voice was the independence of the movement from official party lines and political alliances. In a reaction against the established political model and disenchantment with 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.

This independence of the movement from formal political allegiances was the aspect most mentioned when there was any reference of 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 movement to safeguard its independence. The Greek conservative *Kathimerini* also often described the movement as ‘apolitical’ (*apolitik*), a reference made in 38% of its stories. This was an aspect mentioned both in relation to the diversity of citizen participation discussed above, as press reports made a point to mention examples of individuals that had never before participated in protests, and, more rarely, in order to explicitly attack the protests as lacking any clear political vision. In both cases, however, the coverage ultimately undermined the role of the movement as a coherent alternative political force in the public space.

Further contributing to that was the coverage of the political claims made by the movement. Newspapers made frequent and explicit references to the political slogans and claims of the protesters, such as ‘No los votes’ (‘Don’t vote for them’), ‘we are not puppets of politicians and bankers’, ‘get out of here!’ (directed at politicians), especially in the first day of the protest. However, the coverage of more proactive political claims was minimal (see Figure 6.3). We observed small differences between left- and right-centred newspapers in Greece and Spain, 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 a spectacle in comparison to other themes.

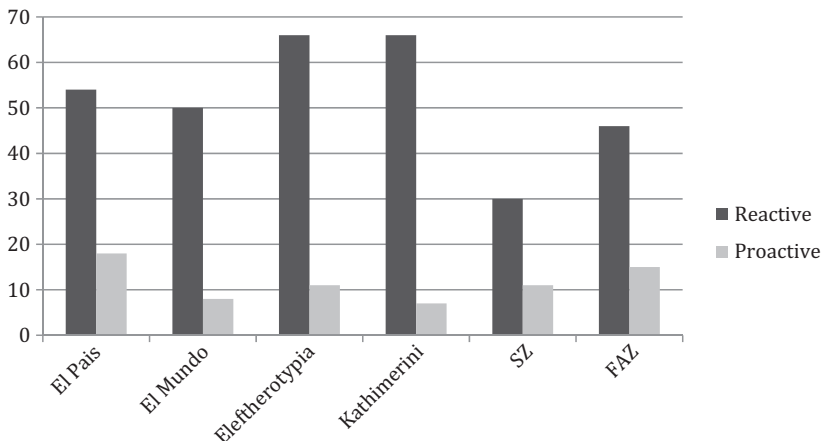


Figure 6.3 Political claims in the selected newspapers.

Networked Indignation

Regarding the media technology frame, we found that all newspapers made references to the role of social media in the organisation and conduct of the protests. The internet and social media became important tools and platforms: both for the protests themselves, and in how they were covered. What in the relevant literature has been described as the social media revolutions (Christensen 2011) 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% in 2011 (World Bank 2014)¹ 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 organisation of the protests was newsworthy in itself.

Two aspects of how the news reported on the role of media in the Indignados protests are particularly noteworthy. The news made regular references to the websites, Facebook pages and Twitter accounts protesters used to communicate with each other and to 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 definers with journalists turning to demonstrators’ websites and social networks in order to obtain further information (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 was describing. By repeating the names of blogs and Facebook groups, as well as hashtags used by the protesters, such as *#nolesvotes* and *#acampadasol*, the press effectively amplified the movement’s visibility.

National Perspectives

To be sure, there were of course differences in the ways the movement was reported in the two countries. As the occurrence and character of the protests varied, so did the coverage: not so much in terms of its content, which was overall positively predisposed to the protesters, but mostly in terms of its magnitude. The press coverage of the Indignados was much more extensive and persistent in Spain, where the movement originated. Although the initial coverage did not draw links between the different demonstrations across the country, considering them as more or less spontaneous and idiosyncratic groups, the protests quickly gained popularity among the public and attracted extensive press coverage. They began to be referred to as the ‘Indignados’ or ‘15-M’ movement (and

occasionally as the *Empörten* in the German press), positioned against the political class (*'políticos'*) and financial elites (*'banqueros'*), through slogans such as *'¡Democracia Real Ya!'* (Real Democracy Now!) and *'¡No los votes!'* (Don't vote for them!). The articles covering the movement varied, including not only correspondence from the protest sites but also extensive analyses, reflections on the causes of the demonstrations, their endorsement by public figures and the reactions of politicians. The coverage was significantly more extensive in the centre-left *El País*. Despite its initial focus on clashes, *El Mundo's* coverage also evolved to be more favourable and extensive after the first couple of days of the protests.

The Greek Aganaktismenoi, born as a direct response to the Spanish Indignados but with equally urgent claims and agenda, had admittedly a shorter lifespan: both as a protest movement and in terms of its coverage by the mainstream media. The links to the Spanish movement were prominent in the Greek newspapers, especially during the first days of the Aganaktismenoi occupying public squares across the country. According to rumours triggered in social media and reported by the mainstream media as a fact, Greeks took to the streets after Spanish protesters were seen holding a banner with the phrase *'¡Silencio, que los griegosestán-durmiendo!'* (Silence, because the Greeks are sleeping!) (Oikonomakis and Roos 2013). This added a further dimension to the Greek movement and its coverage, as proving to the Spanish Indignados that the Greeks were not asleep became an issue of national pride. In the protests, this was illustrated through a banner that responded to those the Spanish protestors had allegedly held, saying in Spanish, *'Estamosdespiertos! Quehora es? Ya es hora de que se vayan!'* (We are awake! What time is it? Time for them to leave!). This banner figured in the media reports, along with comparisons to the Spanish movement and constant references to the increased numbers of Greek protesters. The political status quo, encapsulated in the concept of 'the Parliament', and the austerity policies imposed by the Troika and the Greek government were identified by the press as the targets of the rage and indignation being shown by the Greek protesters. Another prevalent theme in the Greek press was the politics of the protest space. After the first days of peaceful demonstrations, divisions among the protesters became apparent. While the upper part of Syntagma Square, the square in front of the Greek parliament, was occupied by the diverse 'apolitical' crowd, a large part of which was participating in protests for the first time, action-driven protesters with more evident political orientation, the hardcore part of the movement, congregated in the lower part of the Square (Tsaliki 2012).

The German press coverage was not considerably different from that in Greece and Spain. It adopted an overall neutral tone in presenting the protests in both countries. The focus of the coverage was mostly on Spain, and in particular on the prolonged occupation of Puerta del

Sol in Madrid and other central squares in the country. There was a greater tendency to discuss the causes of the protests in Spain, rather than Greece. The violence frame was mostly discussed in relation to the Greek *Aganaktismenoi*. The protest movement was often discussed within the context of high youth unemployment and the Greek and Spanish governments' implementation of austerity measures and political reforms. Despite the justification of the Indignados and their actions that such a coverage provided, the German newspapers often noted that the protests were critical of the system but without a concrete alternative plan to articulate. A few reports discussed the protests in Spain along with the *E. coli* outbreak in Germany, caused by cucumbers allegedly imported from Spain, something that was denied by Spanish officials and generated tension among the two countries.

Discussion: Overthrowing the Protest Paradigm?

We have so far argued that the coverage of the Indignados challenged in a variety of ways the dominant 'protest paradigm' on the basis of which mainstream media tend to report social movements and demonstrations. An explanation of this mostly positive media coverage should be approached within the context of the euro crisis. A European problem with international dimensions, the crisis has complicated questions of national sovereignty in Europe. The austerity measures, unemployment, lack of regulation in the banking sector and many of the other targets of the Indignados' demonstrations have generally been approached as problems caused by invisible international forces. Similarly, the framing of the movement as a reaction against the overall political system, as an impersonal and general force, arguably makes for a representation of the Indignados in public discourse as an expression of citizens' generalised discontent and frustration, rather than an acute threat to the existing establishment. This representation was further reified by the coverage of the protest movement as consciously and determinately detached from political parties, including those on the left that have hitherto been at the forefront of social movements. At the same time, the press rarely placed the movement in direct dialogue with mainstream political processes and decision-making. In this context, the reporting of the Indignados movement acknowledged the presence of a new political subject in the arena of European politics, that of the 'ordinary citizens', the 'people'; but the way this voice was framed it was ultimately rendered unthreatening to the political establishment. The reductionist way in which the movement was portrayed ultimately detracted from its potential as a constructive political interlocutor that the establishment would need to engage with.

Furthermore, the international character of the movement played a significant role in the way Indignados was reported in the mainstream

press. Emerging almost simultaneously in different European countries that faced similar economic and social problems, the movement was seen as a powerful expression of citizens' voices from across Europe, defying attempts to frame the protests as a purely domestic matter or by falling-back onto traditional media templates, such as the protest paradigm. Furthermore, press coverage in Greece and Spain was also underlined by a sense of civic or national pride; pride in the way citizens were pioneers in establishing new political formations in the case of the Spanish press, and the way the Greek people responded to the Spanish jibes in the Greek press. The German press made frequent reference to the orderly and amicable nature of the Indignados, and discussed the plight of young people in Spain and Greece at length so that it would be hard for German audiences to be unaware of how disproportionately the crisis had affected young people. This sense of intra-national and international competition (between cities and countries), attention and sympathy contributed to the celebratory and emotional coverage of the protests by mainstream newspapers.

At the same time, the positive media reporting of the Indignados should not be overestimated. Despite the early enthusiasm, coverage of the protests and the movement had faded away by the end of summer 2011. In the Greek case, this change was also illustrated by the declining visibility of voices of individual protesters that had dominated the coverage in its initial stages. Furthermore, clashes between the protesters and the police on 28 and 29 June, while new austerity measures were being voted in the Parliament, were seen as an all too familiar scenery and marked the end of the peaceful protests of *Aganaktismenoi*. In Spain, despite a resurgence of interest in the last week of July, when the Indignados once more occupied the Plaza de El Sol in Madrid, the coverage diminished gradually. This was not necessarily reflective of the movement itself. Although the protesters did gradually leave the squares they had occupied in May–June 2011, the Indignados remained active in many cities and towns in Spain. Even before the dismantling of the camps, the Spanish Indignados in particular had taken strategic actions to strengthen the grassroots movement through neighbourhood assemblies and alternative political platforms (Dhaliwal 2012). These practices and projects, some of which remain strong in the present, have not attracted equal attention from the press. An inherent preference of news media to focus on newsworthy events, rather than processes, means that continuous alternative political engagement and civil resilience are bound to go unnoticed. If the Indignados in the squares made for a great spectacle, their follow-up actions have not and are therefore hardly reported. In this context, the coverage of the Indignados can even be seen as disempowering the movement, in so far as it fails to illustrate citizen action as capable of producing alternative political solutions.

Despite the protest paradigm's breakdown in the reporting of the Indignados, as observed by our study, this is not to be seen as a complete defenestration of established conventions of reporting protests and civil unrest. Though the pro-establishment media bias observed in protest reporting by foregoing research was not as apparent 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. An expression of 'personalised politics' (Bennett 2012), the Indignados is an illustration of the more complex face of modern protest movements, with a wider base and public support (Cottle 2008). To this complexity, the mainstream media seem to respond with equally diverse ways, without, however, utterly abandoning established ways of reporting.

Note

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

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