Producing Protest News: Representations of Contentious Collective Actions in Mainstream Print Media

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Abstract

When covering protests, evidence suggests that the media tend to resort to the 'protest paradigm', a routinized template to produce protest stories, downsizing the scope, claims and mobilisation effects of the protest movements. This article examines the representations of protests by Cypriot mainstream media on the occasion of the recent economic remedies imposed by the EU/IMF. Framing analysis has indicated that media coverage adheres to the protest paradigm as the dominant frames of 'drama' and 'inevitability' signal an explicit effort to marginalise and delegitimise their claims, and therefore discredit their significance and potential to affect policy making. And yet, the findings suggest that the political orientation of the media does affect the representation of protests as the left-wing media provide empowering representations of the protests. Overall, however, media coverage is elite-sourced, episodic, lacking in-depth analysis and alternative policy suggestions. This study contributes to the protest paradigm thesis, and argues that recent evidence claiming a repair of the paradigm are counterbalanced in the case of protests that radically question the status quo. Finally, considering the moderate protest movement that developed in Cyprus, the findings are discussed in conjunction with specific traits of the Cypriot political culture providing some preliminary interpretation on how the politics of futility and fear coupled by the 'responsible politics' discourse articulated systematically in the media, can offer a degree of insight into the development of modest protest dynamics.

Introduction

Contentious politics exemplified in terms of protests, various forms of social resistance, social movements and actions in the direction of social change, roughly defined 'as collective political struggle' (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, 2001, p. 5), is steadily on the rise since the 1960s. Since the outburst of the global financial crisis in 2007 and the remedies taken to solve it, protests have intensified in the western world (King and

Waddington, 2013). Although not explicitly clear from the onset of the crisis, few would disagree that six years later the recent financial crisis and, especially the implementation of 'urgent' austerity measures bearing extensive and in some cases unpredictable social cost (Tsoukalas, 2014), reflect and, at the same time, contribute to a crisis of representative democracy (Del Savio and Mameli, 2014) clearly disclosing a European democratic deficit (Demetriou, 2013).

Protest groups against austerity tend to be sensitive to the ideas and practices of democracy (Gitlin, 2012) bringing forward participatory and deliberative conceptions of democracy (Della Porta, 2012) that question the neoliberal turn of global capitalism. In more practical terms, organised protest activities introduce news ideas and suggest novel ways of seeing and doing things (Melucci, 1996) elevate issues onto the political agenda, provide critical feedback to policy plans and decisions, enhance the diversity of the marketplace of ideas and, ultimately, to be able to affect policy and policy reforms (McLeod and Hertog, 1999). In the case of anti-austerity protest activities, protestors largely condemn the neoliberal concept of democracy which reduces the role of citizens to that of electors (Crouch, 2004; Streeck, 2011), and claim for more justice and equality, both material and discursive (Della Porta, 2012; Body-Gendrot, 2013), hence challenging the status quo in a very broad and deep manner.

In a mediatised democratic era, institutional politics, social demands and policy change claims intersect heavily with the media (Strömback, 2008). The crucial role played by the media when covering protest news certainly is not new. Media attention proves a very important indicator of a protest's success (Gitlin, 1980). The news media has the means for channelling people's attention, constructing meaning and influencing public opinion (Gamson and Modigliani, 1989) and tends to greatly affect three core purposes of protest activities: (a) mobilisation, (b) validation and (c) scope enlargement (Gamson and Wolfsfeld, 1993). In a similar vein, the 'mediation opportunity' argument put forward by Cammaerts (2012) posits that all protest and social movements attempt to understand media practices, and partially adapt to them or appropriate them in an effort to attract and sustain (favourable) exposure.

Drawing upon the notion of ideology (Hall, 2005 [1982]) and the 'protest paradigm' thesis, this study examines the representations of protest by the Cypriot mainstream print media on the occasion of the recent economic remedies imposed on the country by the Troika (European Commission, European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund). The purpose of the research is threefold: First, to provide empirical evidence of how the mainstream media covered protest activities in Cyprus and to contribute to the broader and long-standing tradition of the protest paradigm by unfolding potential discursive schemas (both narrative and resonant) that adhere to the basic tenets of the protest paradigm. Ideological discursive mechanisms, articulated in dominant coverage frames leading to specific meaning construction and subsequent reactions (Hall, 2005

[1982]; Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007) prove to be of utmost importance in the case of anti-austerity protests, as protests' coverage is an indicator of a vital democracy. Second, the study attempts to situate the public grievances over economic remedies in a wider context of claims of failing political and financial institutions and failure of political representation in the decision-making process, thus critiquing media representation of citizen articulation of participation in social change, or rather the lack of it, as a condition within the broader political and hegemonic power structure for sustaining and enhancing democracy. Finally, considering the moderate protest movement that took place in Cyprus, the findings are discussed in conjunction with dominant traits of the Cypriot political culture.

Ideology and the Legitimisation of Economic Policy

Ideally a news media system suitable for a democracy ought to provide its audience with adequate and accurate information of the broader social forces that affect the conditions of their everyday lives as well as check up on policy decisions and government ruling (Curran, 2007). In Europe the design and implementation of bailout and fiscal adjustment programmes developed along the lines of two main strategies: '*emergencisation*' and '*technocratisation*' of politics. The former refers to a state of emergency, in which there is little time to properly consult the people. The latter claims that the situation and subsequent decisions are too complex for the people to understand. Both strategies aid the screening of political decisions from popular control (Del Savio and Mameli, 2014). Exadaktylos and Zahariadis (2012) conceptualise policy implementation as a negotiation game between the government, state agencies and citizens. However, bailout programmes involve asymmetric negotiations between the deciding unit (the government), the means that execute decisions (state agencies) and target populations. They are asymmetric because information and compliance is imposed from the top (the government in agreement with the Troika). They are 'negotiations because they involve a series of decisions based on assumptions and results' (*ibid*., p. 4). That being the case, and given the uncertainty and complexity of economic development during the crisis, it can be argued that it was particularly difficult for the public to comprehend the situation and to judge policy options based solely on first-hand experience and proper reflection. From this perspective, media coverage should have two major consequences: It should be exceptionally influential as a source of information and judgment for the public. Also, (favourable) media coverage should be a crucial precondition to the gainful legitimacy of economic policy by justifying and placing an independent stamp of approval on the actors' policy (Quiring and Weber, 2012).

In that context, Stuart Hall's (2005 [1982]) conception of ideology premised on the 'politics of signification' (p. 64) proves extremely relevant. Hall, in his influential work on

the 'Rediscovery of Ideology' (2005 [1982]) emphasises the role of the media as 'signifying agents'. The media not merely reproduce reality, but actually define it. 'But representation is a very different notion of reflection. It implies the active work of selecting and presenting, of structuring and shaping' (p. 60). In that sense, the media – as institutions operating within the general boundaries of legitimacy as set by the political system (in its broad sense) – 'become part and parcel of the dialectical process of the production of consent' (p. 83). The production and diffusion of consent develops through a process of meaning and reality construction. A set of predominant values, beliefs, rituals and institutional procedures that operate systematically and consistently to the benefit of certain groups and persons at the expense of others are sustained by the media, which both define and reflect reality. The formation of consent, according to Hall, comprises a crucial ideological mechanism, and as a result the media may become powerful agents of social control. Deviance from the consensus, or in other words to be outside of the dominant norms, renders one 'normless, therefore anomic' (p. 58). To make sense of this, the less one can assume a 'natural meaning' the more important becomes the manner in which certain events are signified. 'The power involved here is an ideological power: the power to signify events in a particular way' (p. 65).

The Protest Paradigm Thesis:
Selection and Content Bias in Mainstream Media

Often enough, social protests represent a threat to entrenched interests and values, which in turn attempt to implement policies and ideas serving those interests and values. When covering protests evidence suggests that the media tend to resort to the 'protest paradigm', a routinized template to produce protest stories (Gitlin, 1980; Chan and Lee, 1984; McLeod, 2007). The protest paradigm as an analytical framework posits three main ideas: First, the media treat the protest in a very critical way (Boyle *et al.*, 2012), often emphasising deviance and violence (McLeod, 2007). Second, the media try to obscure the protest's social and political concerns and claims in order to underplay its scope and importance (Weaver and Scacco, 2013). Third, the media tend to 'normalise' the protest by neutralising dissent and ultimately reducing the scope and disruptiveness of the protest (Oliver and Maney, 2000). The latter practice is probably the gloomiest, as this approach tends to downsize the essence of protest activities in general while at the same time sustaining hegemonic ideas and legitimising elite discourses and policies.

Scholarly contributions on the protest paradigm thesis revolve around two strands of work. Under the label 'selection bias', the first approach studies the factors triggering media coverage of protests. Empirical research (Oliver and Maney, 2000; Jennings and Saunders, 2014) concludes that contextual factors, namely protest size, together with the aggressiveness of police and protestors and the presence of a counter-demonstration, all

lead to greater media coverage. Dalton (1996) argues that as protests proliferate they are prone to become less unconventional, and subsequently less noticeable and newsworthy for the media. Regardless, even in the case of a dynamic protest, although demonstrations increase media coverage, 'this effect decays quickly over time, so that the time window for exerting pressure is short' (Jennings and Saunders, 2014, p. 2).

The second approach, under the label 'content bias', refers to the broad system of news production processes and norms influenced by organisational, professional and personal/ideological traits (Reese, 2001; Hanitzsch, Hanusch and Lauerer, 2014) which affect news coverage, and in the case of demonstrations and protests are more likely to trigger coverage that adheres more closely to the protest paradigm. Within this strand of academic work, research found that when journalists viewed the protestors' tactics as more radical (radical in terms of either being provocative or posing serious threats to the status quo), they were probably anticipated to employ negative and marginalisation narratives (Shoemaker, 1984; McLeod and Hertog, 1999; Boyle *et al.*, 2012; Lee, 2014). 'Simply put, groups that use more extreme tactics are treated more critically, indicative of the social control function of the media' (Boyle *et al.*, 2012, p. 13). McCluskey, Stein, Boyle and McLeod's (2009) work provided a structural pluralism explanation when coverage conforms to the protest paradigm. It was found that in low-pluralism communities the media deal with protests in a more critical manner compared to more pluralistic communities. Recent work by Lee (2014) provides further insight in relation to professional constraints affecting protests' coverage. It is debated that when the protest target responds to the media, news stories are more likely to mention violence or disruption. Also, the study concludes that the political orientation of the news organisation acts as a predictor for the protest paradigm narrative style. Politically conservative newspapers were discovered to engage in more critical coverage, especially in the case of political topics.

Recent literature, however, contends an emerging pattern of 'paradigm repair' (Cottle, 2008; Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2014). As a wider range of groups are protesting over a wider set of issues, a 'cacophonous field of protest' is emerging (Cottle, 2008, p. 857), against which the media exhibit less predictable coverage. Evidence suggests that media organisations can be selectively supportive over specific protest activities when the latter are consistent with their own positions and ideologies. The protest movement in Israel in 2011, which critiqued the mounting cost of living of the middle class and the implementation of neoliberal policies, received positive coverage as journalists identified with the protest 'as a result of their own demographic profile and socioeconomic status' (Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2014, p. 412). Conversely, at later stages, coverage did shift to the protest paradigm. A decline in both media visibility and positive portrayals was explained as a consequence of decreased interest in a story that was no longer new and exciting, and

also because of reduced advertising revenue caused by the unsettling effect of the social protest on major advertisers (*ibid*., p. 412). Consequently, it can be argued that although the protest paradigm thesis is still valid, 'fractures in the protest paradigm have become increasingly apparent in the contemporary media landscape' (*ibid*., p. 412). Against this background, it becomes meaningful to examine potential variations in the applicability of the protest paradigm.

Contextualising the Financial Crisis in Cyprus

A series of unfolding events starting in 2011 along with the 'silent' and extensive mismanagement of the country's banking sector (Panayiotou, 2013), led to growing economic problems, resulting in the need for financial aid. The first major shaking of the economy occurred in summer 2011 as a result of a major accidental explosion in the naval base 'Evangelos Florakis'. Although the preliminary findings of the Special Committee responsible to assess the overall damage at the naval base concluded that the final cost could not be estimated precisely until a five to six-year period had elapsed, rough estimations pointed to €700 million (amounting to 4% of the country's GDP[1]). Two months later the Cypriot economy was downgraded by the major credit rating houses as the spread of long-term bonds rose above 12%. Then, frozen out of international debt markets at the end of 2012, and following reservations regarding European financial aid, stemming primarily from the harsh austerity regime imposed on Greece, Portugal and Ireland, the Cypriot state under Christofia's governance, agreed on the main fiscal bailout terms, which included cuts in civil service salaries, social benefits, allowances and pensions plus increases in VAT, tobacco, alcohol and fuel taxes, as well as taxes on lottery winnings, property, and higher public health care charges (MoU, 2012).[2]

The EU/IMF Deal

The newly elected Government of Nicos Anastasiades (elected in February 2013) subsequently found itself in the difficult position of negotiating the final terms of the bailout agreement. In the meantime, rumours and speculations in the media referred to a prospective 'haircut' in bank deposits above €100,000 considering that deposits below €100,000 are protected. On Friday 15 March 2013, President Anastasiades embarked on

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1   See: [http://www.politis-news.com/upload/20111003/1317637265-10749.pdf] (audit findings for Mari) in Greek, accessed on 17 March 2015.

2   Memorandum of Understanding on Specific Economic Policy Conditionality, available at: [http://www.politis-news.com/upload/20121130/1354292326-07337.pdf], accessed on 17 March 2015.

an aircraft to attend the Eurogroup meeting to finalise the Agreement's terms. As he walked up the steps to the plane, he blatantly denied any scenario for a deposit 'haircut'.

On 16 March 2013, the Eurogroup, together with the European Commission, European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund agreed on a €10 billion deal with Cyprus. As part of the deal, a one-off bank deposit levy of 6.7% for deposits up to €100,000 and 9.9% for higher deposits was announced on all domestic bank accounts. Savers were due to be compensated with shares in their banks (*BBC News*, 17 March 2013). The rationale of the bail-in programme – its terms breaking the taboo of hitting bank depositors – was to minimise the loan considering the country's small economy. As such, the savers would raise almost €6bn. Furthermore, in return for the emergency loans, Cyprus agreed to increase its corporate tax rate by 2.5 percentage points to 12.5%, and the final sum of the loan would total around €4bn. This plan was aimed to boost Cypriot revenues, thus limiting the size of the loan needed from the Eurozone and keeping down public debt. A very interesting piece of information came out in the open at this point in time and was used as a strong argument to justify the proposed rescue plan. Laiki Bank had been hugely exposed to Emergency Liquidity Assistance (ELA) having received loans of €9.5 bn approximately.

The deposit 'haircut' measure was to be taken for the first time. Serious objections were raised with regard to imposing a levy on deposits below €100,000. A communication war broke out, as the Troika and the Cypriot government interchangeably used the media to blame one another for the 'haircut' below €100,000. The deal required the approval of the Cypriot parliament, which was due to debate it on 18 March 2013. According to President Nicos Anastasiades, failure to ratify the measures would lead to a 'disorderly bankruptcy' of the country (*BBC News*, 17 March 2013). Among vivid domestic reactions and discontent from Russia – as the levy would affect its numerous depositors in Cypriot banks – the Parliament rejected the deal on 19 March 2013. Cyprus turned to Russia for help, asking in vain for a further €5bn loan,[3] while Eurozone ministers were openly discussing a potential Cyprus exit from the Eurozone. On 24 March 2013, a new deal was proposed; it abandoned the raid on savings below €100,000 which had made a mockery of the European deposit-guarantee. Instead, it involved a – later finalised – 47.5% 'haircut' of all deposits above €100,000 in the *Bank of Cyprus*. In the case of *Laiki Bank*, depositors with over €100,000 credit had lost everything above that amount when the banks re-opened. The *Popular Bank* (Laiki), the second largest bank on the island was shut-down

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3   Source: 'Eurozone crisis as it happened: Cyprus scrambles to secure new bailout', *The Guardian*, 20 March 2013, available at: [http://www.theguardian.com/business/2013/mar/20/eurozone-crisis-live-cyprus-new-bailout-russia?commentpage=2#block-51498c8d95cbaf64024f63d0], accessed on 17 March 2015.

(*The Economist*, 30 March 2013). After clear warnings that that the emergency liquidity payments for the banks would be stopped on Monday if Cyprus did not agree, the Parliament voted in favour of the second plan on 25 March 2013. The banks re-opened on 28 March 2013, after being closed for 12 days. On 30 April 2013 the Cypriot Parliament ratified the agreement. The bail-in agreement shook the economy in a manner commonly encountered when austerity measures are implemented. Unemployment doubled, escalating from 8.9% in the last trimester of 2011 to 16.9% in the first trimester of 2014. Economic activity was disrupted, due to recession (5.4% in 2013[4]) and extensive liquidity problems.[5] Many small-medium enterprises closed down (Tsissios, 2013), while non-performing loans are estimated to be 46%.[6]

Methodology

Framing

Media makers apply a range of persistent frames, and as such they tend to control the interpretive patterns available to the receivers when they are constructing social reality (van Gorp, 2007). According to Entman's well-known definition '[t]o frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation' (Entman, 1993, p. 52). Frames thus stress certain aspects of reality and push others into the background; they have a selective function. In this way, certain attributes, judgments, and decisions are suggested (Lecheler and de Vreese, 2013). Frames embedded in media discourse and public communication are difficult to discern; their use seems normal and natural and the process of social construction remains invisible (Gamson *et al.*, 1992), hence more powerful. Frames may, in that respect, be regarded as a power mechanism influencing the apprehension, classification, and understanding of messages (Meraz and Papacharissi, 2013).

News framing is important to study within the context of collective social action as audiences may have no direct experience with the event and therefore, depend on media

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4   Source: Available at: [http://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf/economy_finance_11main_gr/economy_finance_11main_gr?OpenForm&sub=1&sel=2], accessed on 17 March 2015.

5   Source: The Cypriot Economy, Ministry of Finance, 17 October 2014. Παρουσίαση του Υπουργού Οικονομικών στην Κοινοβουλευτική Επιτροπή Οικονομικών, κατάθεση του Προϋπολογισμού 2015.pdf [Presentation of the Minister of Finance to the Parliamentary Finance Committee, budget lodging 2015.pdf], available online.

6   Source: See tovima.gr (1 July 2014), available at: [http://www.tovima.gr/finance/article/?aid=611206], (in Greek), accessed on 17 March 2015.

accounts to stay informed and make rational decisions (Entman, 1991), and secondly, because the media are largely relevant for protesters' politics of inclusion, aiming at raising awareness, influencing understanding and mobilising support in the wider society. As such, the significance of framing lies in the fact that it can affect both individuals and society at large. An individual-level consequence may result in altered attitudes after exposure to certain frames. On the societal level, frames can affect processes such as political socialisation and collective actions (De Vreese, 2005). According to Davies (2009), frame sponsors – namely interest groups, spin doctors, advertisers, spokespersons and so forth – are proliferating and influencing the media agenda by strategically trying to convince the media to cover a situation in accordance with 'their' frame in an attempt to manipulate and direct the perception and subsequent framing of news stories. It becomes pretty clear, therefore, that the framing building process is shaped by the complex and dynamic interactions among communicators, audiences, media content norms, and social and political actors. 'Looking for systematic bias in media framing of issues, actors and events, more thoroughly illuminates the media's political effects' (Entman, 2010, p. 333). As a consequence, frames as important determinants of how a news story is told, affect the audience's cognitive, evaluative and behavioural responses (Papacharissi and Oliveira, 2012).

Research Questions

Considering the preceding literature, the questions this research will answer are the following:

RQ1: What major frames are employed in the coverage of the protests in the national press? Does media framing change over time?

RQ2: How do frames vary among the media?

RQ3: Which other variables related to news content can be studied in the context of the protest paradigm thesis, and how were they handled by the Cypriot Press?

Method

In designing the framing analysis, the study relied on van Gorp's (2007) constructionist approach. 'Each frame that a journalist applies in a text can be represented as a "frame package", a cluster of logical organized devices that function as an identity kit for a frame' (p. 64). The frame manifests itself in media content through various framing devices, which provide the frame package with a coherent structure and point at the same core idea.

Scholarly work on protests' coverage begins with providing a toolkit containing variables which correspond to aspects of the protest paradigm template (see Harlow and

Johnson, 2011; Weaver and Scacco, 2013; Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2014). In order to identify the framing devices, the study combined variables used in the literature of protest coverage along with the variables proposed in Entman's (1993) definition of framing: problem definition, causal interpretation, policy solution, and moral evaluation. Open framing analysis was then performed to identify the framing devices that indicated the existence of a frame package. The frame matrix was considered complete when no new frames could be identified in the texts.

The study uses both qualitative and quantitative content analysis. The frame matrix resulted from seven framing devices, while another four variables corresponding to aspects of the protest paradigm template were studied.

Table 1: Variables of the Study

	The framing devices	Variables corresponding to aspects of the protest paradigm template
1.	Portrayal of the protest (how the protest is described, e.g. massive, dynamic, peaceful, violent)	Portrayal of protest tactics (scale 1-3) (Boyle *et al.*, 2012)
2.	Portrayal of the protestors (how the protesters are described (e.g. indignant citizens, the people, students)	Timing of the coverage (Mattoni, 2012)
3.	Claims/demands of the protest: what the protest is all about, what the protestors ask for?	Sources used: elite, non-elite, non-mentioned (Harlow and Johnson, 2011)
4.	Problem source/cause: how is the problem defined?	Type of coverage: episodic/thematic coverage (Iyengar, 1991)
5.	Responsibility: who is responsible for the situation?	
6.	(Alternative) policy recommendation/solution	
7.	Moral and emotional basis for the protest	

Portrayal of Protest Tactics. Following Boyle *et al.* (2012, p. 7), this variable is a measurement indicating how the protestors attempt to accomplish their goals. This measure used a scale from 1 to 3, where 1 equals 'no civil disobedience', 2 equals 'non-violent civil disobedience', and 3 equals 'violent civil disobedience'.

Timing of the Coverage. Considering the role of the media not only in channelling attention, but also in mobilising society to participate in the demonstrations, Mattoni

(2012) argues that the timing of coverage is an indication of the mobilisation effect of the media. The study uses the 'before' and 'after' scale ('during' is eliminated) as the sample comprises of print newspapers.

Sourcing. Sourcing practices are major shapers of news content. The amount and type of sources has been extensively studied in journalism studies generally (Manning, 2001, 2012; Philips, 2011) and the protest paradigm in particular (Harlow and Johnson, 2011). The study identified up to three sources mentioned in each news item. Sources were distinguished between elite (official) sources and non-elite (citizen voices) quoted simply for their 'man on the street' perspective (i.e., protesters).

Type of Coverage: Episodic/Thematic Coverage. Episodic framing depicts public issues in the form of concrete instances or specific events without locating them in a broader social context. Thematic coverage situates events in a context of general causes and outcomes. This distinction is important as it influences perceptions of attributed responsibility (Iyengar, 1991).

Time Frame of the Study

The time frame of the study is from 16 March to 31 March 2013. This 16-day period can be divided into two phases: the first phase spans from 16 March – when Eurogroup's proposal for a deposit 'haircut' below €100,000 was publicly announced – until 19 March 2013 when the Parliament rejected the deal. The second phase ran from 20 March until 31 March 2013 and includes the heavy negotiations between the Cypriot government and the Troika which resulted in the Parliament's approval of the second bail-in plan (25 March 2013) and the aftermath of the final decision.

Sampling

The sample comprises of three legacy newspapers[7] including Phileleftheros (considered as centrist-conservative), Simerini (a right-wing newspaper) and Haravghi (a left-wing newspaper). The unit of analysis was news items referring to protests taking place in Cyprus (including news reports, feature stories, editorials, analyses and commentaries). The sample comprises of 50 news items (graph 1), most of which were news reports (graph 2).

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7   In regard to sampling it ought to be mentioned that despite the tremendous diffusion of social media heralding a shift in the allocation and management of symbolic power, mainstream media still play a significant role in both framing and providing visibility at protest movements and crisis conditions. Mainstream media tend to set the 'tone', which is often reproduced and/or contested in the social media, and also mediate publicity beyond a circle of sympathisers, the like-minded and the already convinced (Cammaerts *et al.*, 2013; Zeri, 2014).

Graph 1: Total Sample – 50 News Items
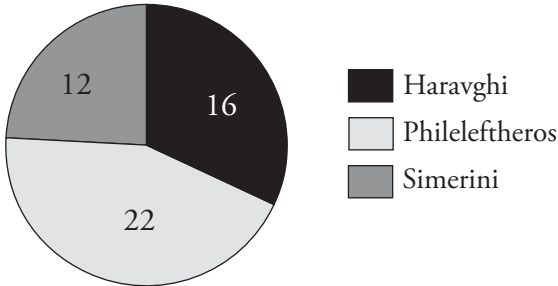
Findings

The Frame Matrix about Protest Coverage

Following the method described earlier, six main frames were identified in the press: (1) the 'proletariat' frame, (2) the 'national sovereignty' frame, (3) the 'drama' frame, (4) the 'mockery' frame, (5) the 'deviance' frame and (6) the 'inevitability' frame. As shown in the abbreviated frame matrix (see table 1), some constituent parts of the dominant frames present some variations among different newspapers. For instance, in the 'national sovereignty' frame the policy recommended is to 'hold a referendum' in the case of Phileleftheros and Simerini, while Haravghi suggested the idea 'of alternative measures, but certainly not those proposed by the Troika'. Additionally, as the crisis climaxed after the Parliament rejected the first bail-in plan, and as negotiations peaked before the final decision on 25 March 2013, the 'deviance' and 'inevitability' frame became more frequent.

Graph 2: News Genres of the Sample
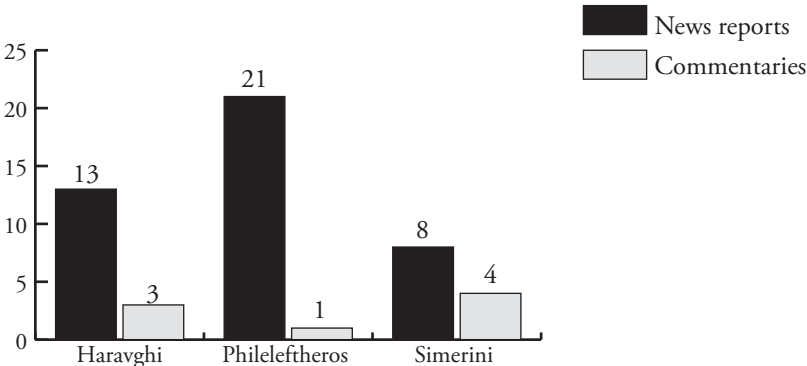
The articulation of the inevitability frame conveying a critical and delegitimising representation of the protests became more robust in the aftermath period studied. Furthermore, the development of coverage following the protest activities shows that preventive demonstrations peaked before 19 March 2013, when the Parliament rejected the first Plan, while remaining limited before the crucial voting on 25 March 2013 which reveal that reactive protesting is deemed less effective and thus society is less mobilised (Hartleb, 2011).[8] Coverage peaked on 26 and 27 March 2013 when bank employees demonstrated against the restructuring of banks and potential job losses (graph 3).

Graph 3: Amount of Coverage per Day
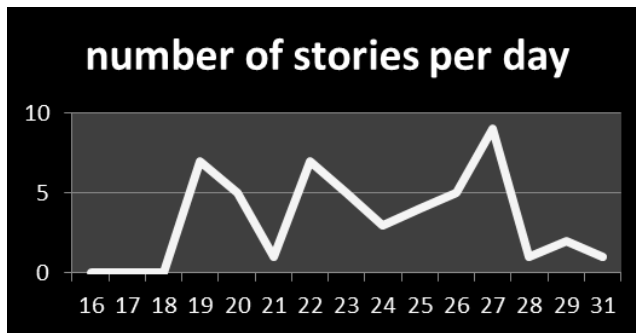
Frame Differences among the Media

Differences were found among newspapers highlighting their ideological cleavages, but mostly drawing a distinction between the left-wing newspaper and the other two. As shown in table 3, Haravghi employs a focused discourse stemming from its left-wing ideology connoting a positive representation of the protests. Phileleftheros and Simerini on the other hand, adopt a wide range of frames oscillating between a positive representation articulated in the 'national sovereignty' frame, and negative representations expressed in the 'drama' and 'inevitability' frames (Phileleftheros and Simerini) and the 'mockery' and 'deviance' frames (Simerini).

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8   On 12 December 2014, large demonstrations and a general strike took place in Italy to protest against the Jobs Act, a bill contributing to more flexible labour conditions. Apparently the Rentzi government succeeded in passing the Law using the Fast Track method. The latter diminished the protest movement of Italians. In late October as many as one million people had protested to prevent the Law, but December's reactive demonstration mobilised some forty thousand (Source: 'Italians on the Streets', 13 December 2014, available at: [http://www.kathimerini.gr/795737/article/epikairothta/kosmos/oi-italoi -stoys-dromoys], accessed on 17 March 2015.)

Table 2: Abbreviated Frame Matrix

Main frame	Portrayal of protests	Portrayal of protestors	Problem definition/source	Claims	Responsibilities (who)	Alternative solution	Moral and emotional basis
the 'proletariat' frame	massive and dynamic; peaceful demonstrations attempting to mobilise the people and to express the people's will to fight against the Troika and plutocracy	the (working) people fighting for the people	the implementation of detrimental policies and measures that will destroy the people, the economy and will enslave the Cypriot people	to reverse the haircut decision and the Memorandum	primarily the Troika which pressures the country	not mentioned	special emphasis on the idea of 'resistance' used to convey moral outrage and reinforce solidarity and support for the 'struggle' of the Cypriot people
variation of the 'proletariat' frame					as the negotiations go on both the Troika and President Anastasiades	Russian aid	
the 'national sovereignty' frame	massive, dynamic and angry; demonstrations and marches attempting to express the protestors' opposition, very light instances of civil disobedience	indignant citizens	the Troika exerts pressures to implement policies and measures that violate Cyprus' sovereignty and are detrimental for the economy	to turn down remedies and policies that jeopardise Cyprus' sovereignty and future	The Troika	changes, even sacrifices, but not the ones proposed by the Troika	anger and indignation as a result of Europe's lack of solidarity towards Cyprus. The Troika tries to enforce irrational remedies that by no means serve the interests of the country and its people

variation employed by Simerini and Phileleftheros				to secure a decent future for the young generations and not to destroy the efforts and achievements of their parents	the Troika and the political system of the country	referendum	
the 'drama' frame	massive and spontaneous	angry and disappointed students	the closing down of Laiki and the restructuring of the banking sector perceived as dangerous, unjust and bearing contagious policies	not to close down Laiki Bank, to secure job positions and decent labour conditions	Troika and Panikos Dimitriades	not mentioned	'unemployment will go up, the families of the bank employees will find themselves in a terrible situation. Cypriots should bear in mind that 'now it's us, tomorrow it will be you''
the 'mockery' frame	massive; protests, signs of civil disobedience	bank employees, students, member of associations; weird people saying and doing incomprehensible things	the irrational and cruel remedies proposed by the Troika	Troika go home	Troika, EU, Germany, Anastasiades, Merkel	not mentioned	people perceived as the 'crowd' are protesting for the sake of protest; they are not committed to their demands, not holding strong beliefs. Their claims and demands touch upon everybody and do not carry an alternative proposal/solution

the 'deviance' frame	protests engaging in deviant behaviour and activities; Evidence of violent civil disobedience actions (e.g. burn the German flag, attempt to violate the police line, throw bottles, fruit, and sheep hair in front of the Presidential Mansion, attempt to illegally and violently enter the Parliament, aggressive behaviour towards MPs and other officials averted by the police)	angry citizens prone to prospective violence	wrong policies proposed by the Troika and the government	to reverse the haircut, to reject the memorandum; to secure jobs, to save Laiki bank, to preserve the youth's future	Troika, EU, Germany, Anastasiades, Merkel	not mentioned	People are angry and ignorant and thus vulnerable to the will of the crowd; as a result violent and illegal behaviour occurs or can potentially occur. For that matter the intervention of the police is deemed necessary to stop aggressiveness and prevent even worse violent behaviour.
the 'inevitability' frame	pointless protests; protests and demonstrations	supporters and politicians of AKEL; people who do not understand the seriousness of the situation	the imminent bankruptcy of the country; the incompetence the ex-government resulted in a €17billion debt	Cypriot people must be strong and prepared, and work hard to rebuild the economy	Christofias and AKEL	there is no alternative	The measures are painful but necessary to avoid bankruptcy. Cyprus is asking for help because the country is in a very bad situation as a result of AKEL's governance. The EU is lending Cyprus money, which is a sign of solidarity, and Cyprus needs to implement harsh remedies so that the country is saved.

Although both Phileleftheros and Simerini overall promote the idea of 'responsible politics' as opposed to the idea of 'irresponsible politics' conveyed by the protests and their demands to reject the Troika's aid, Simerini adheres more closely to the protest paradigm by employing stereotyped representations based on instances of (potential) deviant behaviour and weird incidents.

Table 3: Frames Employed by Different Media

Newspaper	Frames employed		Role/function of representation
Haravghi	❖	Proletariat	empowering
	•	National sovereignty	positive
Phileleftheros	•	National sovereignty	positive
	−	Drama	marginalise
	▪	Inevitability	delegitimise
Simerini	•	National sovereignty	positive
	−	Drama	marginalise
	➢	Mockery	discredit, trivialise
	○	Deviance	delegitimise
	▪	Inevitability	delegitimise

Haravghi, the left-wing newspaper, adopts a positive and empowering representation of the protests by employing the **'proletariat'** and 'national sovereignty' frames. The former derives mainly from the rhetoric of the Communist party perceiving society as divided between the people and the 'plutocracy'.

'Greece, Cyprus, Spain: plutocracy should pay for the crisis', (*Haravghi*, 25 March 2013, p. 3).

Protestors are portrayed as the

'people fighting for Cyprus' against the 'unjust and antipopulist measures to be implemented by the EU and the IMF' (*Haravghi*, 20 March 2013, p. 11).

'Pensioners, young people, families, shouted a thundering "no" to the mandates of Merkel, the IMF and the EU, and critiqued President Anastasiades' (*Haravghi*, 20 March 2013, p. 11).

In that sense, protesters are primarily viewed as (working-class) people struggling against capitalist exploitation.

'People united, never defeated; The people do not owe, they are not paying; We are not becoming the slaves of the 21st century' (*Haravghi*, 20 March 2013, p. 11).

'People fight, they are sucking your blood' (*Haravghi*, 25 March 2013, p. 3).

According to the proletariat frame the bankers, the plutocracy, the EU and President Anastasiades are responsible for the crisis, and now they are attempting to remedy the situation by implementing unjust and catastrophic measures to the detriment of the Cypriot people. The 'proletariat' frame contains special emphasis in relation to the idea of mobilisations and 'resistance' used to convey moral outrage and reinforce solidarity and support for the 'struggle' of the Cypriot people.

> 'They [the people] shouted loudly 'Come on people, don't duck your head, with the Left, resistance again' (*Haravghi*, 20 March 2013, p. 11).

> 'The people and the working class have no option but to resist and fight against the catastrophic policies and schemes of the Troika at the detriment of Cyprus. The aim should be to liberate ourselves from the Memorandum in order to protect the interests of the working people' (*Haravghi*, 26 March 2013, p. 7).

> 'The people talked. The sea of people shouted NO to the remedies of the Troika, and invited the Cypriot people to fight for new politics, without Memorandums, to protect the semi-public organisations, to protect the working class and its conquests. [...]. There are citizens who know how to fight for their rights, to assert a better future for their children. [...]. In contrast to some others whose names are known and who possess wealth, and who were notified before the haircut and withdrew their large amounts of money out of the banks' (*Haravghi*, 29 March 2013, p. 4).

Consistent with the proletariat frame, the problem is not solely the unorthodox remedy of the deposits' 'haircut', but the bail-in arrangement in its totality including austerity measures, privatisations and labour flexibility laws. Finally, the proletariat frame uses the protests as a tool for political contestation by targeting President Anastasiades for agreeing with the Troika to implement harsh and detrimental measures.

> 'Really Mr. President, where are your "friends" that would support us? Where is the loan you had secured and frequently referred to during your pre-election campaign? For the inaccuracies and the lies, for his hypocritical stance during the pre-election period, Mr. Anastasiades owes a big sorry to the citizens' (*Haravghi*, 25 March 2013, p. 4).

The **'national sovereignty'** frame encountered in all three newspapers studied is a positive representation premised on the idea to preserve national sovereignty against the Troika's irrational demands that violate Cyprus' sovereignty and jeopardise its future. Protests are portrayed as 'massive and dynamic', while protestors are described as 'indignant and angry'.

'With the slogan "Troika go away from Cyprus" dominating, thousands of citizens demonstrated yesterday outside the Presidential Mansion' (*Haravghi*, 25 March 2013, p. 3).

The 'national sovereignty' frame contains the notions of patriotism and war.

'We expect MPs to come out and show their patriotism and stand by the people' (*Simerini*, 19 March 2013, p. 18).

'What is happening right now in Cyprus is outrageous and unacceptable. In my opinion, we are at war. Since Saturday, a war has broken out. We are not talking about a war with guns, but an economic war' (*Simerini*, 19 March 2013, p. 18).

'The people demonstrating characterized what is happening as outrageous, awful and illegal, saying that we are in an economic war, and that Cyprus can make it on its own' (*Haravghi*, 20 March 2013, p. 12).

Additionally, the 'national sovereignty' frame depicts the need of the country to let Europe know that the proposed solutions are deemed irrational and against the country's interests.

'The goal of the demonstration is to send the message inside and outside Cyprus that decisions made by some central decision-making bodies outside Cyprus won't be accepted without strong reactions by the people' (*Phileleftheros*, 19 March 2013, p. 5).

Following this line of thought, Haravghi on 25 March 2013, the day the Parliament would vote for the second plan, defines the rejection of the Plan as a national issue and presents demonstrations as a negotiating tool.

'... resistance to the Troika and support to the President at his negotiations. [...] The goal of the demonstration, according to AKEL is the expression of resistance of the Cypriot people against the detrimental policies of the Troika and the EU and the demand to reconsider their stance on today's Eurogroup. [...]. AKEL has shown that despite its objections on how the matter has been handled, the protests' aim is to reinforce the negotiating power of the President in the direction of defending our national interests' (*Haravghi*, 25 March 2013, p. 3).

Regarding the policy recommendation, the 'national sovereignty' frame is differentiated between the left-wing newspaper and the other two. In the case of Haravghi, the need for reforms is acknowledged – attaching thus more rationality to the protests – but in no case those suggested by the Troika.

'The Cypriot people has shown that [it] is ready to make sacrifices, the society is ready to make sacrifices, but under one condition: without selling out our national sovereignty, without accepting enslavement from anyone who covets Cyprus, who wants to impose remedies that are not serving the interests of the Cypriot people' (*Haravghi*, 25 March 2013, p. 3).

In the case of Simerini and Phileleftheros the idea to hold a referendum is suggested:

'Hundreds of citizens [...] demanded either to vote down the proposed measure or to hold a referendum so that the decision is made for the people by the people' (*Simerini*, 19 March 2013, p. 15).

'The citizens asked for a referendum' (*Phileleftheros*, 19 March 2013, p. 5).

Finally, this frame evokes a euro-scepticism rationale and an anti-German sentiment. The former is expressed through a 'lack of solidarity' discourse on the part of the European Union. In that sense, citizens are angry and indignant, as the Troika tries to enforce remedies and policies that by no means serve the interests of the country and its people, while at the same time violating Cyprus' sovereignty and jeopardising its future. The latter follows the idea of Germany's hegemonic position in the EU.

'It is worth mentioning that a group of the demonstrators headed to the German embassy. A demonstrator climbed up the wall of the building, took down the German flag and threw it on the street' (*Simerini*, 19 March 2013, p. 15).

'A huge banner made waves, and attracted the attention of foreign media. The banner depicted a recent photograph of President Anastasiades with Angela Merkel. Merkel was presented as Hitler and the caption said: Yes man again' (*Simerini*, 20 March 2013, p. 10).

The third frame **'drama'** is a common practice in journalism (Fenton, 2009) commonly encountered in the so-called human-interest stories (Gripsrud, 2000) which tend to decontextualise events from broader structural causes and limit coverage to emotional and case-specific narratives. Within the 'drama' frame the protestors are 'desperate bank employees', trying to secure their job positions.

'Anger and anxiety outside the Parliament [...]. Desperate bank employees, who in the last days have been living under the question of whether they will lose their jobs, burst into tears' (*Phileleftheros*, 23 March 2013, p. 1).

'We won't have food ... The pain and the anger of Laiki employees was that intense, that a woman crying and sobbing started to shout: "Let us in. Let us prevent them from voting it. Do they know we are losing our jobs? We won't have food. Stop them. Don't they feel sorry for us? Let us in", she was telling the police. [...]. A father received a call from his

son. Where are you dad, asked the child? I am at a demonstration, answered the father. Why? Because they are firing me from my job, and I have to prevent that. Who asked the son? Our MPs, my dear' (*Simerini*, 22 March 2013, p. 13).

The 'drama' frame targets the banking system as the main culprit of the crisis, and is premised on the moral basis of rising unemployment and a warning towards the society: "today it's us, tomorrow it will be you". However, the acclaimed sympathy for people who are about to lose their jobs is counterbalanced by four latent features of the drama narrative: First, bank employees were considered as particularly privileged employees in Cyprus. Second, in a way they are part of the banking system which has committed many mistakes, and third, the country has realised that it is in deep trouble, which means that the bail-in plan cannot be rejected because of the consequences on specific target groups. Finally, in times of crisis characterised by rising unemployment and disruption of the economic activity, which is prone to threaten large numbers of the population, the public sentiment can become hardened against social groups who fight for their 'privileged' rights.

The fourth frame **'mockery'** is a common pattern in the protest paradigm literature that highlights the strange appearance or theatrical incidents taking place during protests (McLeod and Hertog, 1999). In the study it was adopted by Simerini. Protestors are portrayed as 'the crowd' or as 'weird people saying and doing weird things'.

'The ... millionaire rescuer. In yesterday's protest Mr. Iraklis Thrasivoulou, being among the crowd held a placard [on] which [he] wrote: 6,634 billion dollars are immediately offered to the State, while in 6 months' time 4 more billions will be offered, plus 180 million euros on a monthly basis. Mr. Thrasivoulou mentioned that he keeps this money abroad, and if the government wants it, they should call him. Furthermore, he claimed his offer [was] to help Mr. Anastasiades, but to no avail' (*Simerini*, 23 March 2013, p. 11).

'We give you everything. The old man, carrying a tape recorder playing patriotic songs, was saying: The fighters and heroes of EOKA gave their lives for freedom. We have money at the banks, we give it to you. Leave our children and grandchildren alone. We have the power. We can make it on our own. We don't sell our country, take our money' (*Simerini,* 23 March 2013, p. 11).

'The most characteristic case of protest was that of two young people who laid down and pretended to be dead. With that move they wanted to convey the message that austerity measures kill' (*Simerini*, 20 March 2013, p. 11).

The coverage neglects any substantive issues of the protest, as the protestors' claims are summarised in the 'Troika go home' slogan, while protestors address responsibility to all possible parties involved (Troika, EU, Germany, Anastasiades and Merkel). Overall, this

frame trivialises the protests by emphasising the presence of weird people, and at the same time it downsizes its essence at a time when the country needs to find a viable solution. Instead, general claims are made accusing everybody, and without proposing any alternative solutions connote impracticable ideas which may well be considered as 'irresponsible politics'. The impractical and irresponsible aspect of the protests' demands is further reinforced by the moral and emotional basis of the frame perceiving people as the crowd protesting for the sake of protest; in reality these people are not truly committed to their demands – and that is why the crowd was easily dispersed by the rain.

> 'However, their effort [to unite all bank employees] failed as after 14:00 bad weather conditions emerged. [...]. Many demonstrators left saying they would come back after the "evil" had passed. At the end because of the chilly weather, the number of bank employees was reduced from 1,500 to some hundreds' (*Simerini*, 23 March 2013, p. 10).

The fifth frame **'deviance'** employed by Simerini is also a common discourse in the protest paradigm (Gitlin, 1980; Boykoff, 2006). Protestors are defined as angry citizens engaging in deviant behaviour and activities. Contrary to the 'proletariat' frame which portrays the demonstrations as 'peaceful', in this case the news reports provide detailed evidence of deviant acts.

> 'The demonstrators left sheep hair in front of the Parliament building' (*Simerini*, 19 March 2013, p. 15).

> 'The deputy President of DYSY was jeered by the crowd' (*Simerini*, 20 March 2013, p. 11).

> 'The negative events of yesterday's protests include the tension caused by approximately ten young people. The young people, after throwing a big stone, which could have hurt the policemen and the journalists, threw eggs' (*Simerini*, 20 March 2013, p. 11).

> 'The tranquillity of the bank employees turned into anger as soon as they were notified that the President of the Central Bank had sent bills concerning the restructuring of Laiki Bank. The crowd tried to break the police line' (*Simerini*, 22 March 2013, p. 13).

> 'Verbal attack against Koulia. The independent MP was jeered' (*Simerini*, 22 March 2013, p. 13).

The moral and emotional basis of this frame is premised on the idea of people being angry, ignorant and prone to civil disobedience and violent acts. A very interesting point to be made in this frame is that because during the 15-day period truly deviant protest tactics did not take place (as shown in graph 7), the deviance frame emphasises *potential* incidents of violence as protestors are normally inclined to engage in violent behaviour.

For this reason, the intervention of the police is deemed necessary to stop aggressiveness and prevent violent behaviour from worsening. News reports provide detailed accounts of all measures taken by the police in order to prevent potential violent behaviour and establish law and order.

> 'In [a state of] alert for criminal acts. As the police have the responsibility to watch all demonstrations taking place, the Police Body is in a state of alert due to information about potential organised criminal activities or citizens' outbreaks against party offices, banks and embassies. The police have increased measures, while setting new plans of action in order to prevent potential violent acts' (*Simerini*, 25 March 2013, p. 5).

> 'Another characteristic of yesterday was the discrete presence of the police, which was ready to intervene if deemed necessary' (*Simerini*, 19 March 2013, p. 15).

> 'According to our information, the Force recruited to preserve legality was estimated at 80 members and was further reinforced after nine o' clock at night because MPs were about to come to the Parliament' (*Simerini*, 22 March 2013, p. 13).

> 'The head of the Security Guard asked for extra backing, which he got, and the members of the Police formed a double human wall' (*Simerini*, 22 March 2013, p. 13).

Finally, the **'inevitability'** frame employed by both Phileleftheros and Simerini differentiates itself from the other frames as it provides a different definition of the problem. While in all other frames the problem is defined as the ramifications stemming from the bail-in plan (deposits' 'haircut', unemployment, austerity, violation of national sovereignty), the inevitability frame defines the problem as the imminent bankruptcy of the country:

> 'The support mechanism has many negative elements. [...]. But with it we avoided bankruptcy. [...]. We asked for the loan because we created a huge debt. And we created this debt because we had chosen an incompetent government. [...]. Back then no one did anything. Demonstrations, protests. Instead of happening then when the problem was rooted, they happen now. [...]. It is very late to protest against the memorandum, the Troika, even the euro' (*Phileleftheros*, 31 March 2013, p. 25).

At the same time it stigmatises resistance as pointless and unadvisable:

> 'Leaving the Parliament, Mr. Mappourides, was saying in strong tones, that somebody owes these people the truth in order not to keep their hopes high and be prepared' (*Simerini*, 23 March 2013, p. 11).

'Although we empathise with the students' feelings of bitterness and indignation, however it does not serve to be on the streets, reported to Philelefeuros, the Director of Secondary Education, Zina Poulli. […]. The students who left classes will get absences, according to regulations. What they can do, she went on, is to be good students, achieve a good level of education and compete with the European students' (*Phileleftheros*, 27 March 2013, p. 19).

The 'inevitability' frame designates AKEL as bearing the most responsibility for the crisis and the accumulation of debt, while claiming Europe's solidarity, which will help Cyprus recover from its own mistakes.

'The raised fists of their audacity … You saw them on TV. With their fists raised to protest against Europe, Merkel. Who? […]. The MPs and officials of AKEL have quite a nerve. They think, obviously, that citizens suffer from amnesia. Otherwise, their audacity to yell, to protest and to raise their fists for what their government and their President did, cannot be explained. […]. As soon as the nightmare they put us in is over, the matter should go to courts. Political and penal responsibilities should be laid. The country was not destroyed by … aliens' (*Simerini*, 22 March 2013, p. 8).

'Although the Pancypriot Committee of Students (PSEM) usually avoids making statements in order not to cause opinion divisions, we cannot ignore the fact that AKEL has left a 17 billion euros debt, has invited the Troika to Cyprus, has negotiated and agreed for the Memorandum with the Troika, and now invites students to demonstrate to dismiss the Troika' (*Phileleftheros*, 27 March 2013, p. 19).

'Citizens are disappointed and indignant and that is understandable. […]. The President had committed that no haircuts would be made […]. But it is necessary to give him some credit. Anastasiades inherited a crushing economy from his predecessor Christofias, […], which he had to restructure within a few days' (*Simerini*, 21 March 2013, p. 8).

'The President did the best he could to avoid bankruptcy and secure the dreams of thousands of young people. Things may be tough, but it is in our hands to work hard, stay strong and move on. Right now, sobriety and unity on all levels of the society are necessary' (*Simerini*, 27 March 2013, p. 9).

News Content Variables Related to Aspects of the Protest Paradigm Thesis

Regarding the four quantitative variables related to aspects of news coverage assessing adherence to the protest paradigm thesis, the findings demonstrate that news content was basically episodic (graph 4), elite-sourced (graph 5), it concerned events of the previous day (with a few exceptions mostly by Haravghi) (graph 6) and depicted the protests as mostly peaceful, while in some instances engaging in non-violent civil disobedience tactics (graph 7).

This set of results demonstrates that despite the framing differences documented among the newspapers, there are indeed similarities articulated in stereotyped protest coverage which has the propensity to offer episodic coverage, resort to official sources and abstain from suggesting viable solutions or critiquing aspects of the problem and its potential solutions in a constructive and truly informative manner. The findings illustrate that even in the case of Haravghi, which at the first level engages in positive representations of the protests, yet its content can hardly be effective or at least appealing on a large scale as the dominant narrative is infiltrated by traditional leftist discourses while providing no space for self-criticism. More importantly, official voices attempting to politically capitalise on the situation are featured (especially after 20 March 2013), while most coverage attempts to create impressions and mobilise the public, but does not suggest any kind of treatment on how the economic suffocation of the country can be resolved. Panayiotou (2011) shows that during the protests following the Mari events, Politis and Phileleftheros (positioned in the centre) held the opposite discourse to the one publicised during the bailout period. In an attempt to hold President Christofias personally accountable for the explosion and to isolate him, the media not only supported the demonstrations but contributed to the construction of guilt and acted as if threats against the President were 'understandable'. The findings, hence, offer a variation of the protest paradigm thesis, in cases where strong ties exist between the media and the political system. It may be argued that differences in media coverage are not necessarily linked to ideological cleavages, but are a result of 'sponsor frames', generated on occasion and aiming to serve the vested interests of political parties affiliated with the media.
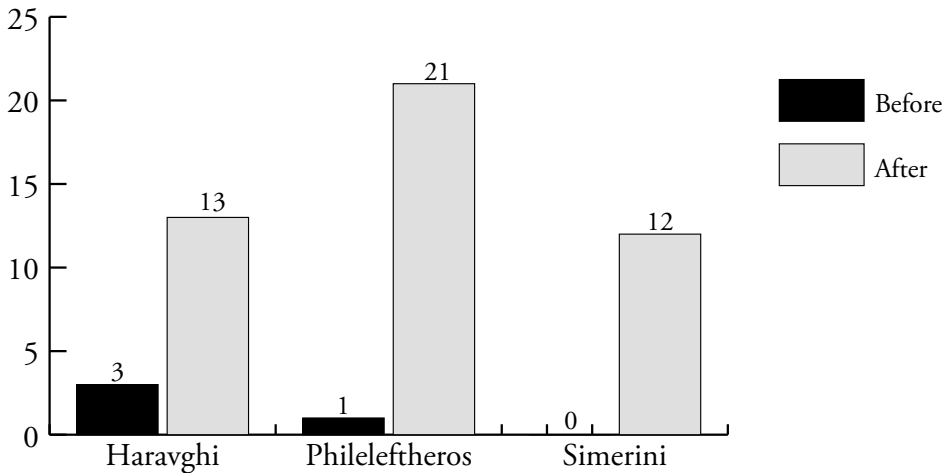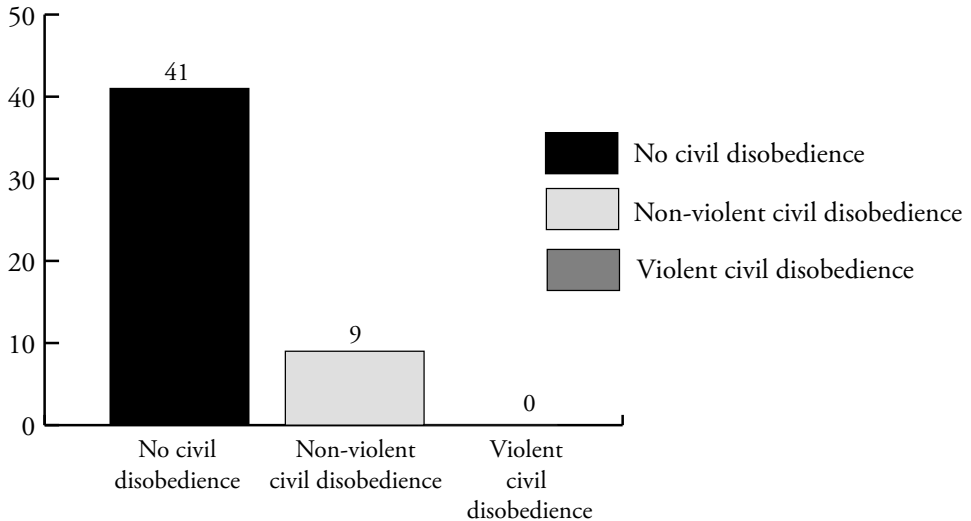
Graph 4: Type of Coverage
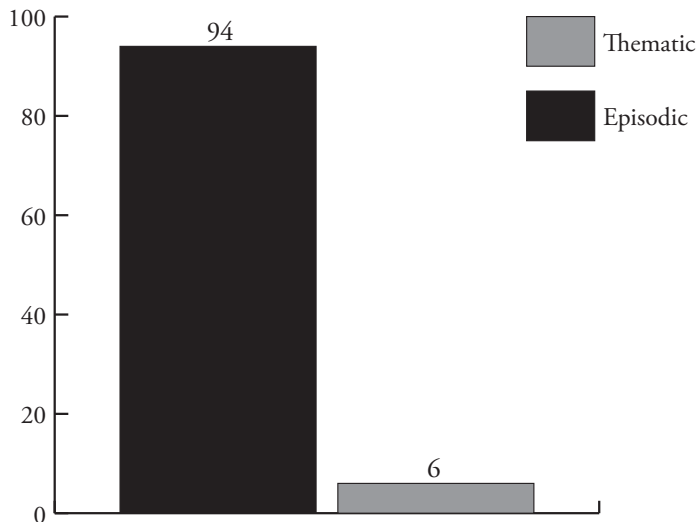
Graph 5: Sourcing Practices

Non-mentioned

Non-elite

Elite
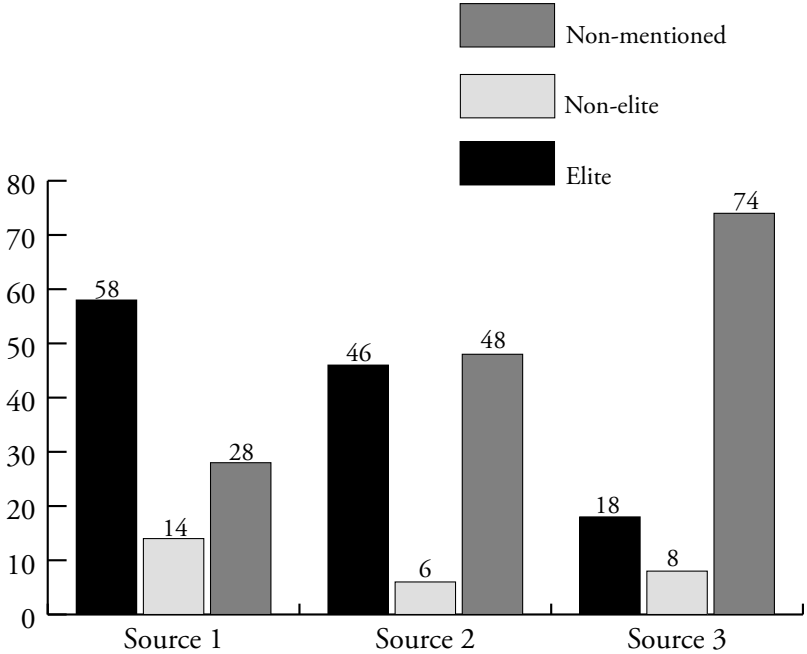
Graph 6: Timing of Coverage

Before

After

Graph 7: Portrayal of Protest Tactics

Conclusions

The present study contributes to the relevant scholarly work stemming from the protest paradigm thesis. The findings confirm that when covering protests, the political orientation of the medium does matter in terms of the use of frames as the right-wing newspaper was found to engage in more critical coverage (Lee, 2014). Furthermore, the study establishes content bias related to sources cited (Harlow and Johnson, 2011; Rafter, 2014), episodic coverage (Iyengar, 1991), as well as selection bias resulting in limited coverage because of mostly peaceful protest tactics (Oliver and Maney, 2000; Jennings and Saunders, 2014).

Haravghi, the left-wing newspaper, adopts an empowering representation of the protest and the protestors, yet is fully imbued by the Communist rhetoric. Although the coverage fully legitimises the protests, and at times contributes to a mobilising effect, it remains episodic, lacking in-depth analysis, elaborate policy solutions and self-criticism (AKEL was governing the country from 2008 until February 2013). In the case of Simerini and Phileleftheros, news coverage of protests during this two-week period is premised on a dipole of 'irresponsible' versus 'responsible' politics. The former idea is articulated through the 'national sovereignty' frame, which perceives protests as comprehensible reactions towards policies that disrupt the economic life of the country; their efficiency is not guaranteed, while being imposed from the outside. The latter idea

is conveyed mainly through the inevitability frame, and is further supported by a fixed repertoire of frames – such as the 'drama', 'deviance' and 'mockery' frames that attempt to marginalise the protests and are commonly encountered within the protest paradigm template. In that sense, the positive representation of the 'national sovereignty' frame is counterbalanced by two elements: first, a latent euro-scepticism seed which connotes fears of a potential Eurozone exit, and second by the presence of negative frames. Through the negative frames the protest is 'naturalised', being the product of 'normal reactions' of people experiencing loss and frustration. Yet, their demands cannot be met as 'there is no alternative'. The bail-in agreement comprises a painful, but necessary solution given the mistakes the country has made itself. Comparing Simerini and Phileleftheros, the findings show that Simerini adheres more closely to the protest paradigm employing a wider pattern of frames that tend to downsize the protests character and essence. Here, part of the ideological project is to stigmatise resistance by appealing to character and asking people to make painful but necessary sacrifices. The similarities documented in Simerini and Phileleftheros enhance the persuasive power of the frames, 'because the media appear to address the audience with a single voice' (van Gorp, 2007, p. 68). All three newspapers, however, privilege official sources and abstain from any kind of analysis, contextual information and, of course, any solid discussion on alternative policy solutions, confirming the notion of 'sponsored frames' which reflect carefully designed framing to shape news narration in a favourable direction (Davies, 2009). In the case of Cyprus, 'sponsored' frames traditionally originate from political parties having strong ties with the media, which in turn attempt to manipulate events and information in order to serve the vested interested affiliated to them. Overall, it can be argued that the protest paradigm thesis is confirmed 'unrepaired', being congruent with relevant evidence (McLeod and Hertog, 1999; Boyle *et al.*, 2012; Lee, 2014), which demonstrates that the greater the challenge to the status quo, the more likely media are to perform their social function of producing consent through critical coverage.

Discussion

To a certain degree the severe financial crisis that erupted in 2007 seems to be different compared to previous ones, due, among other reasons to the powerful role of mediated communication in portraying and explaining the complex economic, political, and social factors responsible for both creating and solving the crisis (Chakravartty and Schiller, 2010). The notion of social reality construction through the media by framing and promoting hegemonic values and ideas predominantly used to create society-wide resonance over specific constructions and definitions of reality is not new. Against this background this article has sought to examine media representations of protests during the critical phase of deciding upon Cyprus' bail-in agreement. Following the protest

paradigm thesis, the study has shown that news media tend to discredit protest movements and their claims and legitimise policies coming from the top.

A very interesting question to pose at this juncture relates to the moderate protest movement that developed in Cyprus and was documented in the study. Generally speaking, the issue of protest dynamics throughout Europe is an issue addressed by several scholars. According to Lapavitsas and Politaki (2014) 'the answer seems to be that the European youth has been battered by a "double whammy" of problematic access to education and rising unemployment'. As young people seek greater financial help from parents for housing and daily life their rebellious energy vanishes. Graeber (2014) provides a moral explanation premised on the idea that 'working-class people are much less self-obsessed [than the rich]. They care more about their friends, families and communities'. Roos (2014) advocates that a viable explanation is rooted in three elements stemming from financialised capitalism: (a) the precarious nature of work which inhibits the development of a sense of solidarity; (b) the pervasive sense of anxiety wrought by the neoliberal mantra of permanent productivity and constant connectivity, which keeps people perpetually preoccupied with the exigencies of the present moment and thereby hinders strategic thinking and long-term grassroots organising; and (c) the overwhelming sense of futility that people experience in the face of an invisible and seemingly untouchable enemy (finance capital). Evidence that recent mobilisations failed to produce any immediate change at the level of political outcomes or economic policy, reinforce a perceived pointlessness of street protest. Hence, a strong sentiment of futility premised on the conviction that 'there is no alternative' to capitalist control becomes a powerful ideological weapon inhibiting protest movements.

Roos' (2014) argumentation may well apply in the case of Cyprus. The sentiments of precariousness and futility may become even stronger in a small and divided country that exhibits a high level of dependence upon the EU on economic, military and identity issues. The 'inevitability' frame used by the media is very much compatible and supplementary to this line of thought. The ideological basis offered is coupled by specific traits of the Cypriot political culture and civil society that prove helpful in understanding the lack of radical or massive protest movements. Discussing the dynamics of protest, Teune (2010, p. 4) maintains that 'the carriers of protest interact with several actors in resonant fields, such as public institutions, economic players, mass media, potential allies and adversaries, but also a rather indefinite public of citizens who might support public struggle'. Cyprus conforms to the tenets of a Mediterranean or southern European political culture exhibiting elements of traditionalism and fatalism, elitism, a low degree of institutionalised societal pluralism, as well as persistent and extensive family networks (Charalambous, 2014). Political competition – traditionally stemming from the Cyprus problem – has been levelled, as materialist issues at times of crisis have become just as

important as the national issue (Ellinas and Katsourides, 2013). The political arena is overwhelmed by the bipolarisation between the left and the right (Christoforou, 2006), generating 'a socio-cultural bi-polarity that is difficult to break' (Charalambous, 2014, p. 45). The hegemonic role played by the main parties is deep-rooted in terms of the bonds between parties and civil society. Although many civil society organisations (CSOs) exist, political transformation through direct action is scarce, as most CSOs afford limited autonomous politicisation. The organisations that truly intervene between citizens and the state are few but strongly affiliated to parties. The penetration of parties into society, largely because of inclusive clientelism, are inclined to affect mobilisation activities which take place mostly at a sectorial level with very limited horizontal cooperation or collective action (Charalambous, 2014). As the study unveiled, the bail-in agreement did create an arena for political contestation, with the left accusing Anastasiades of lying to the Cypriot people. On the other hand, the inevitability discourse, shifting the problem and the actors responsible from the terms of the Troika's aid to the imminent bankruptcy as a result of AKEL's economic mismanagement, endorses the politicisation of the crisis and the role of bi-polarisation. During the period studied the mobilisation of trade unions was restricted due to strong ties with parties. Right-wing leaning trade unions and CSOs identifying with the governing party did not engage in any serious mobilisation activities (Charalambous and Ioannou, 2014). The media, generally exhibiting low levels of accountability (Milioni, Spyridou and Koumis, forthcoming), did not break this tradition, but rather reinforced it as the potential escalation of social discontent evoked the social function of the media. To conclude, the case study presented demonstrates how the media as 'signifying agents' through the *responsible politics* discourse contributed to the disempowerment of social protest. The politics of futility and fear, inherent in the notion of 'responsible politics', and the subsequent obstruction of open social conflict, not only sustain the ideological force of austerity and the implementation of urgent economic remedies, but also 'mask a fundamental re-ordering of the relationship of states to societies and markets. In that regard, the "there is no alternative" frame provides ideological cover, for the concerted politico-economic restructuring that is of critical importance' (Downey *et al.*, 2014, p. 882).

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