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SOCIAL PROTESTS THROUGH THE TV SCREEN: THE CASE OF GREEK “INDIGNADOS”

Contents:

- ◉ Introduction
- ◉ Framing Theory
- ◉ Media Framing of Social Movements
- ◉ Research method & outline
- ◉ Research Question & Hypotheses
- ◉ Results
- ◉ Conclusions

Social movements and social protests: an introduction

- Social movements are certainly perceived as phenomena of modernity and the industrialized society
- Sociological definitions of movements stress:
 - their qualities of collective and innovative behaviour,
 - their network character and multi-centrality,
 - their extra-institutional activity,
 - the shifting and fluid boundaries of movement membership, and
 - the willingness of members to disrupt order a little or a lot (Gerlach & Hine 1970)
- Sociologists argue for a much broader “contention” model of movements, which sees struggle as endemic to both institutional and extra-institutional settings

Social movements and social protests: the case of the Greek 'indignados'

- Social movements are better defined as: collective challenges, based on common purposes and social solidarities
- As a collectivity a movement is a group with indefinite and shifting membership
- Our concept identifies with a macroscopic social change fermented with the constituents of the modern society
- The case of Greek 'indignados' protests contain a great deal of political, ideological, ethical and emotional qualities
- The stake now is not merely the fatal last five years, nor the post-war culture developed in Greece. The stake refers to the fundamental and long social arrangement emerged from the various conflicts and clashes during the 20th century and the rest is nothing but their products and local adaptations.

Framing Theory - Definitions

- *Frames stand as the mechanism for perceiving complexity of the surrounding world in a simplified way.*
- Framing by this approach *signifies a natural process in man's decodification of the reality*
- According to Gamson and Modigliani, Media frames are “*a central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events. The frame suggests what the controversy is about, the essence of the issue*”
- Critical Paradigm : framing inevitably encapsulates power relations.

Media Framing of Social Movements

- Media can serve social movements in three possible ways:
 - a) mobilization of political support,
 - b) legitimization (or validation) in the mainstream discourse, and
 - c) to broaden the scope of conflicts
- The way typical social movements' actions (sit-ins, rallies, mass demonstrations) are reported in the Media is crucially important
- The mass communication literature surveys studies focus on the **marginalization** or even **delegitimization** of many social movements, especially the ones that challenge the status quo

Media Framing of Social Movements

- ◉ **Protest Paradigm:** according to it, Media generally support the status quo and marginalize groups that challenge it in any possible way
- ◉ McLeod and Hertdog (1992) discerned the following categories that characterize social movements activities' Media coverage:
 - ✓ narrative structure
 - ✓ use of official sources and official definitions
 - ✓ the invocation to public opinion
 - ✓ the tendency to delegitimize, marginalize and demonize the protesters

Research method- Research outline

- Research focus: the ways and modes the Greek “indignados” movement **was framed** by the Greek TV news bulletins
- Method: Media monitoring as part of the content analysis research methodology
- Media selected: 3 Greek TV channels based on their character [1 public (NET) and 2 private ones (MEGA CHANNEL, ANT1)] and their spectatorship at the time of the research.
- Unit of analysis: the news item, the part of the news bulletin between two introductions of the anchor(wo)man.
- Sample: 213 news items presented in the forementioned channels
- From 25th of May 2011 (the day of the first “indignados” protest) to the end of July, when “indignados” made their last before-summer gathering

Research Question-Research Hypotheses

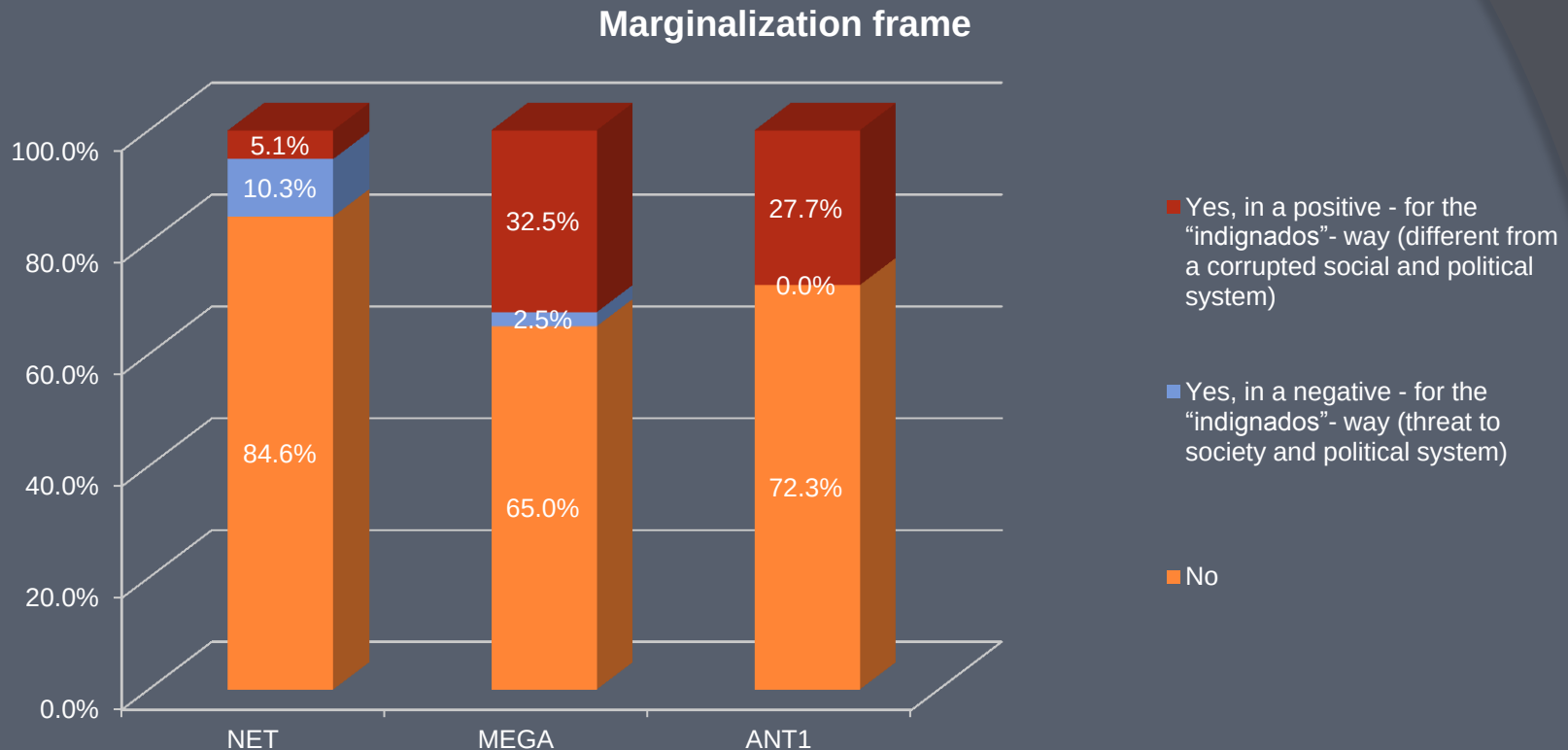
- Main research question:

How- in terms of framing- is the Greek “indignados” movement presented by the Greek prime-time TV news bulletins?

- Research hypotheses:

1. According to our theory mainstream media tend to marginalize social movements, in terms of presenting them as core of overt and deviant behaviour. We expect a similar stance towards the “indignados” from the Greek TV news bulletins and especially from the public channel (NET), which mainly reflects the governmental point of view on the issues presented
2. In addition, the “indignados” are expected to be presented as delegitimized and demonized by the TV news bulletins
3. The conflict frame is expected to have a protagonist role in the presentation of the “indignados”, especially when combined to the presence of the police in the places, where demonstrations are taking place
4. Finally, we expect a rather rare coverage of the protests of the indignados (less than 1 news item per day), even though demonstrations were taking place on a daily basis in the streets of Athens and other cities among Greece

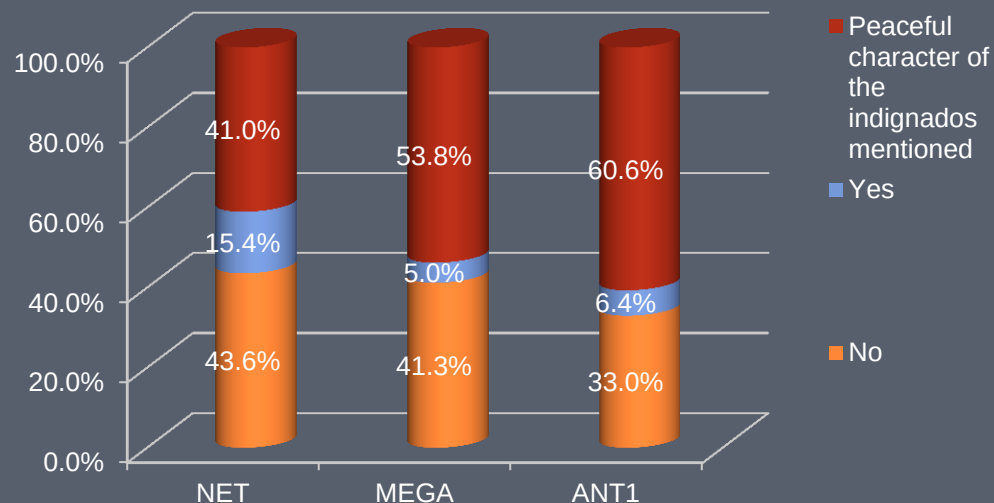
First hypothesis/rejected



- Lack of negative marginalization (notable percentage only on public TV)
- Significant existence (in private channels) of “positive” marginalization

Hypothesis 2.1/rejected

Violent acts in discourse

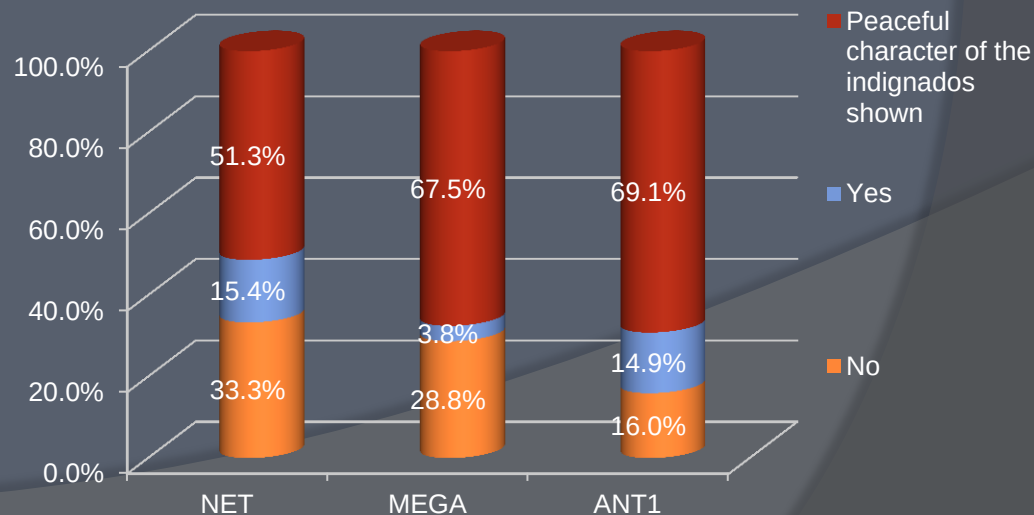


Peaceful character stressed out mainly by private channels (both discourse and video)

No significant statistical correlation between the three channels (discourse chi square 0.127)

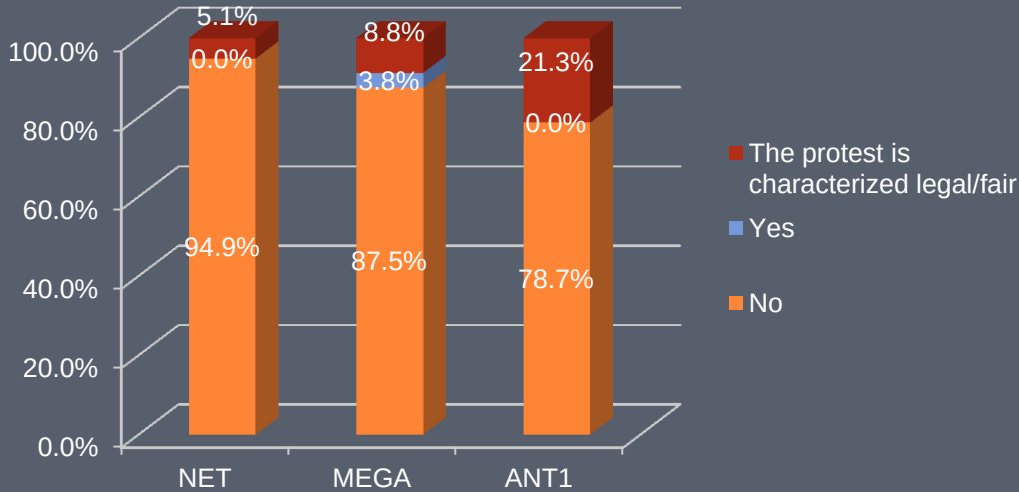
Statistically significant difference in video (chi square 0.017)

Violent acts in video



Hypothesis 2.2/rejected

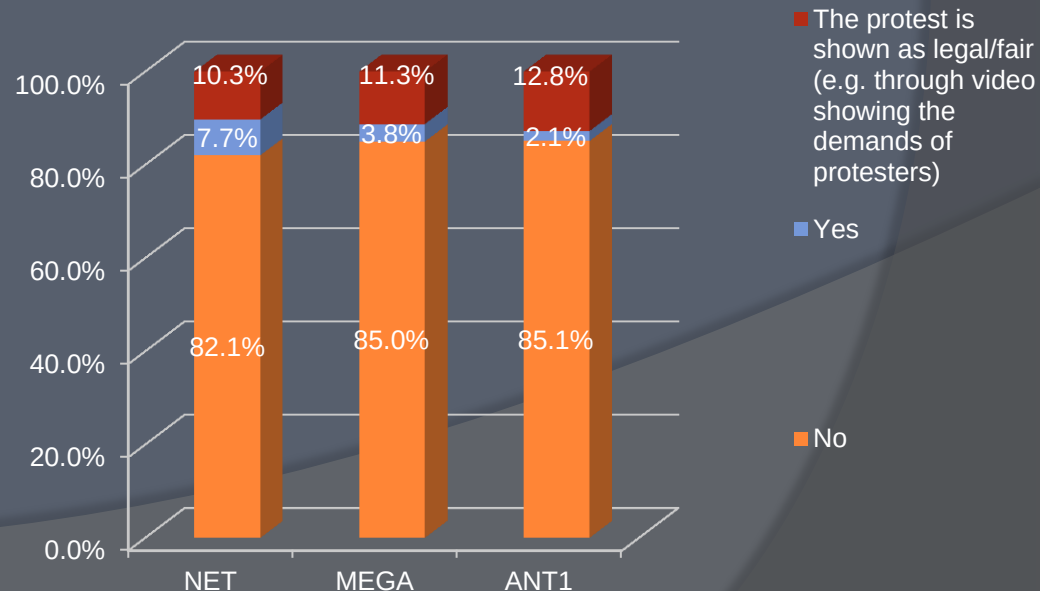
Illegal character of protest (in discourse)



In vast majority of cases there is no reference to illegal character of the protests (both in discourse and in video)

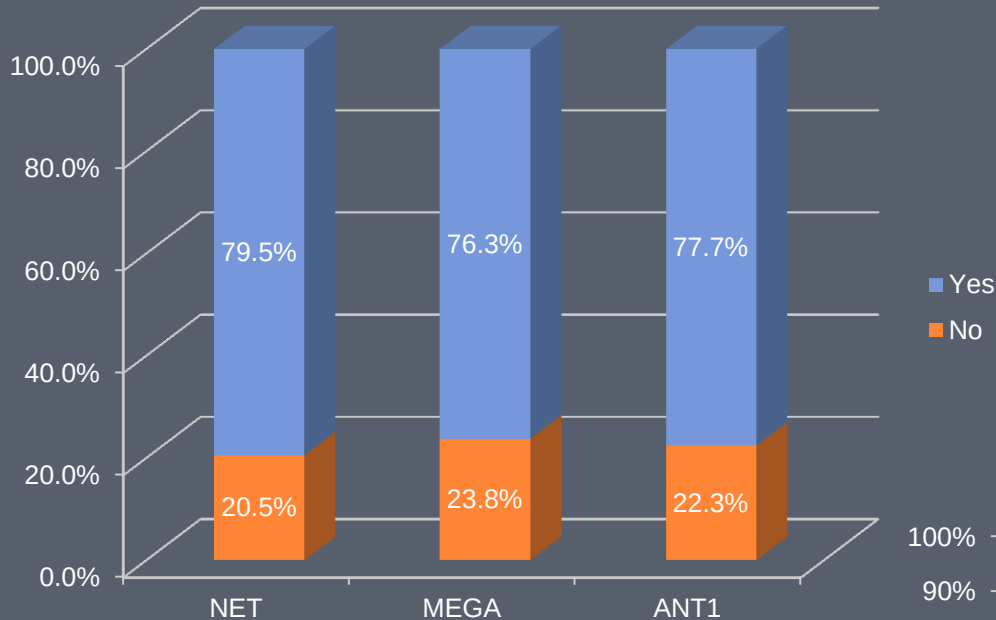
Only some minor references in MEGA (discourse and video) and NET (video- by showing Violent acts during protests)

Illegal character of protest (in video)



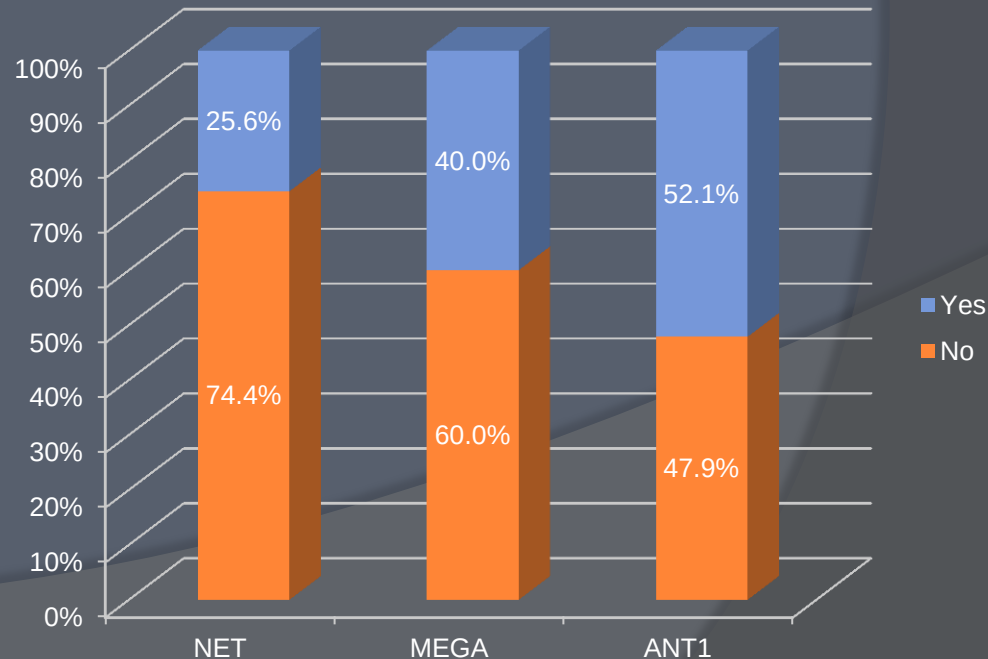
Hypothesis 3/ partly accepted

Conflict frame in discourse



Conflict frame prevails with no statistically significant difference in journalists' discourse (chi square 0.923)

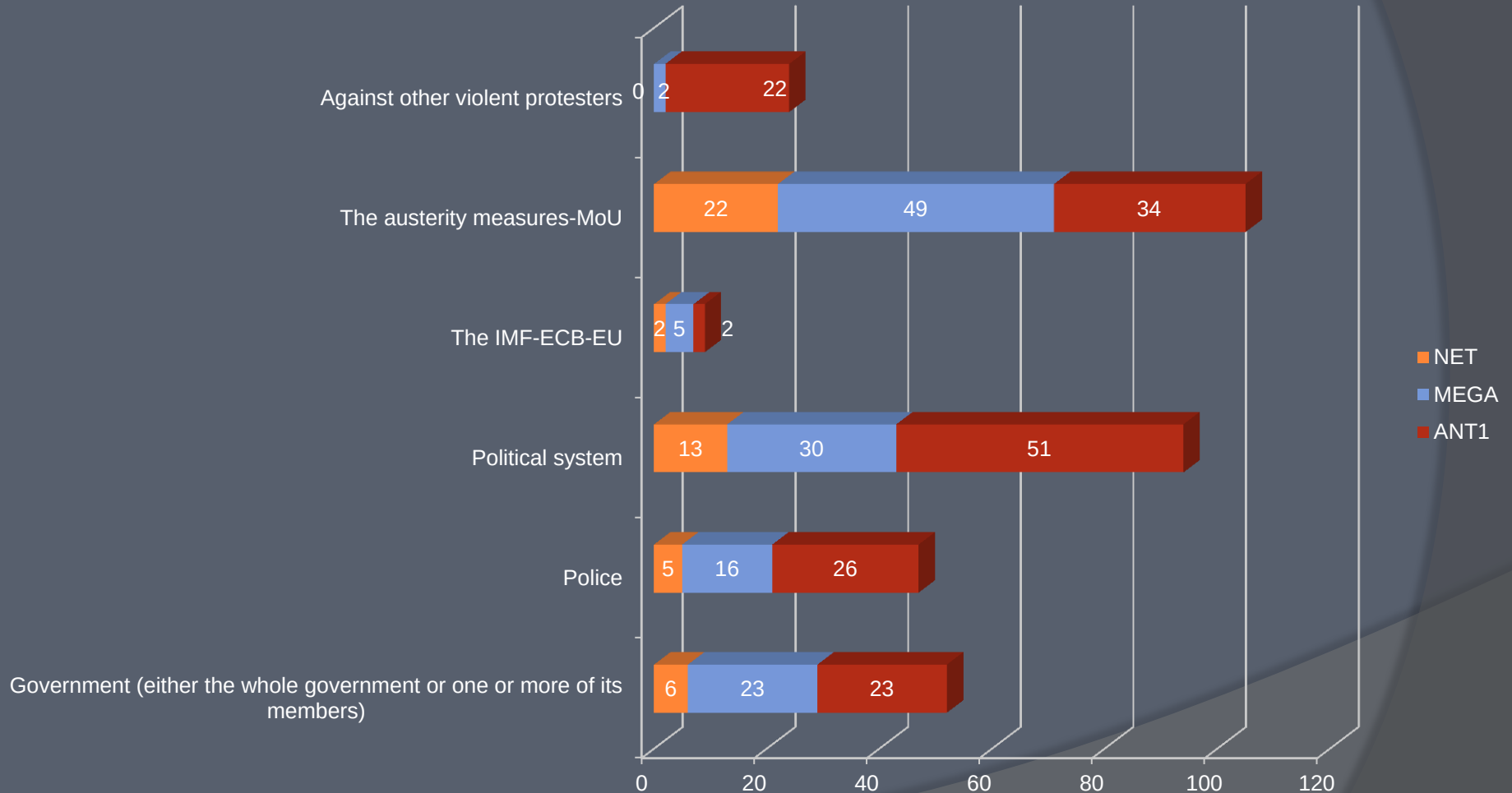
Conflict frame in video



Significant differences in video (chi Square 0.016), where NET- mainly- and MEGA do not show protesters' statements and demands implying conflict

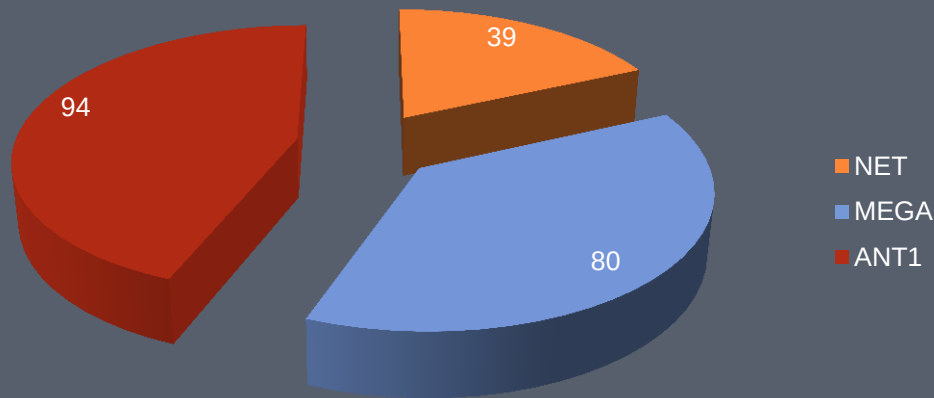
Conflict against who? “Populism” vs. “Conservatism”

Conflict against who? (discourse & video)



Coverage: High but not equally divided

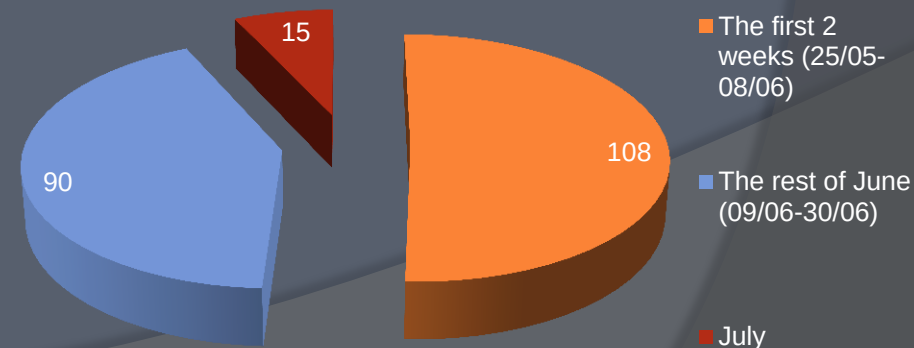
News items per channel



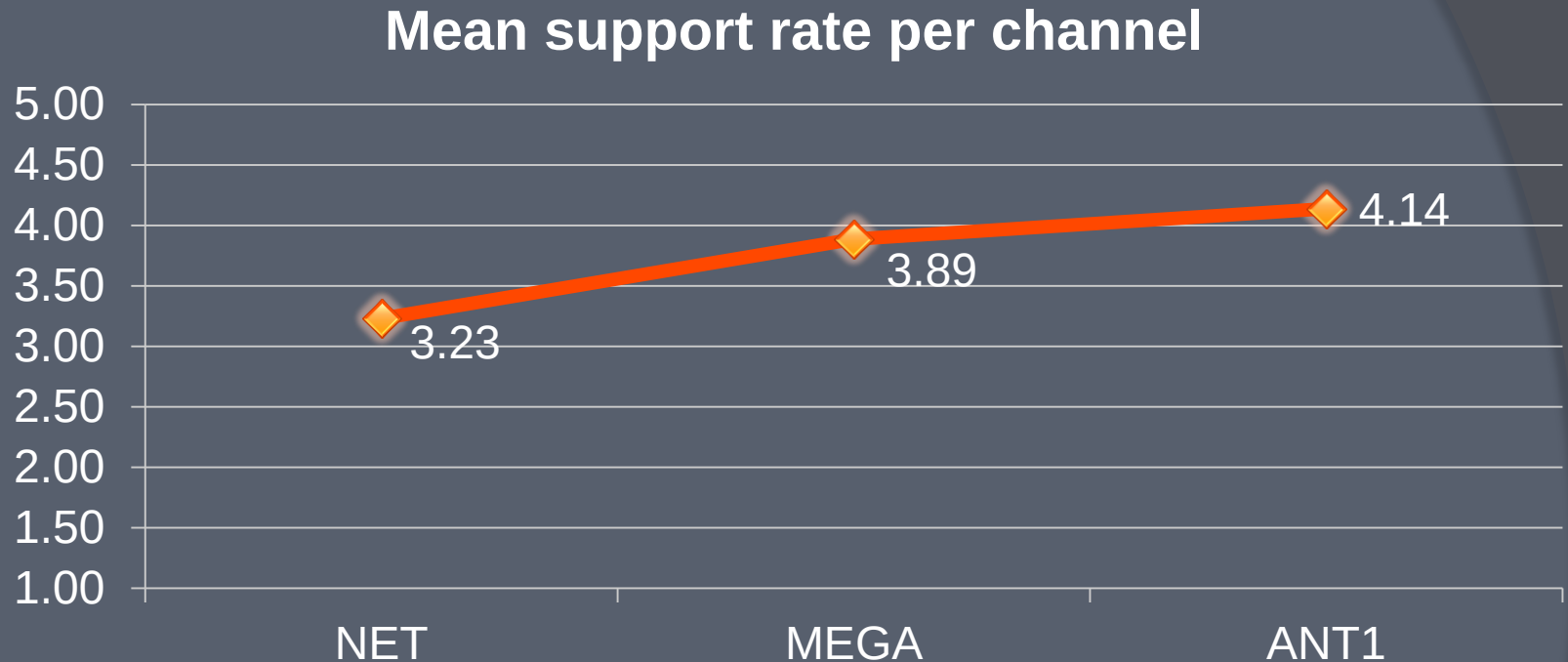
Rather high coverage with more than 3 news items per day (213 items/68 days)

Unequally divided by channel and period
Private channels interested far more in the “indignados”
Coverage declining over time, even though
The indignados were protesting almost
Every day until the end of July

News items per period



Support rate



- Within a range from 1 (totally against) to 5 (totally supportive), no channel scored below 3 (neutral) → **No negative values**
- Mostly supported by private channels (first and foremost ANT1)

Conclusions 1

- Critical theory on media framing of social movements heavily challenged (most hypotheses rejected)

Why?

- The “indignados”  New movement, with international dimension and impetus, “de-partified”, combining a sense of national identity (channels love patriotic acts) with citizenship, away from ideological streams of modernity, against a commonly accepted corrupted and insufficient political system

Conclusions 2

- The media  conservative organizations, part of the established status quo (yes, the corrupted and incapable one)

BUT ALSO:

- organizations depending financially on their viewers (through advertisement) having to adopt a “people-friendly” profile, especially in times of deep economic crisis

Further research proposal

- Inclusion of «indignados» media framing from other countries, where the movement was active (comparative study)
- Study of different social movements within the same country

Thank you for your attention

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