

The Invisibility of Regional Politics on Television: The Case of Greece's Public Broadcaster ERT3

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Abstract: Regional media play a crucial role in democratic journalism by fostering local accountability and promoting public debate. Yet inequalities between central and peripheral areas may shape the visibility of regional political issues. This study analyzes political news coverage in the main evening bulletins of ERT3, a Greek public television station. Drawing on content analysis, it examines airtime allocation, thematic focus (local, national, and international politics), and story placement within the news agenda. The findings indicate limited visibility of local political affairs and a clear imbalance in favor of central political actors. These results shed light on the structural constraints facing regional broadcasters and contribute to broader debates on media centralization and the democratic role of regional journalism.

Keywords: Journalism; Political communication; Regional politics; Public media; Newscast.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, regional media worldwide have undergone sweeping, rapid changes in structure, operations, and organization (Scholz, 2014). At the same time, the international literature reveals significant disparities in regional development, characterized by pervasive heterogeneity in economic conditions between urban centers and rural areas.

Since September 2023, ERT3, one of the regional channels of the Hellenic public broadcaster ERT, has officially been designated as a „regional medium”. This change has influenced both programming and news production routines, particularly the editorial focus on local versus national political issues. While

news bulletins primarily cover culture, sports, agriculture, and social and economic topics specific to the region, political news remains focused on both national and sub-national (regional and local) political developments.

Regional media play a crucial role in democratic societies by documenting local events, raising awareness of community concerns, and providing a channel to communicate with central authorities (Mitka & Gioltzidou, 2023). Habermas' (1974) theory of the public sphere emphasizes the importance of inclusive public discourse, while Mills (2002) highlights the media's influence on shaping individual behavior and public opinion. In this context, regional media contribute to the public sphere by enabling diverse viewpoints and fostering civic engagement.

The primary research question guiding this study is: How is political news represented in ERT3's regional television bulletins, in terms of airtime, topics, and placement within the news agenda, and what does this reveal about the visibility of local politics? To address this, a content analysis was conducted on 29 evening news bulletins broadcast in May 2024, systematically coding political news by topic (central government, local government, and international news), duration, and placement within the bulletin.

Regional journalism also strengthens local communities by providing relevant information, ensuring accountability, and promoting civic participation (Barnett, 2009; Jenkins & Nielsen, 2018). Research by Cooper et al. (2017) further shows that regional media can foster community understanding by employing positive, humanizing narratives, even on topics that are often negatively framed at the national level, such as the representation of refugees and asylum seekers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

THE CHALLENGES OF REGIONAL MEDIA IN DEMOCRATIC SOCIETIES

The ongoing decline of local journalism, particularly in professional reporting, jeopardizes the functions and, by extension, the health of democracy itself. In the last decade, regional media have experienced rapid transformations in their structure, organization, and operations. These transformations occur alongside pronounced disparities in regional development, particularly between urban and rural areas (Barnett, 2009; Jenkins & Nielsen, 2018). While some regions, particularly those surrounding urban centers, have benefitted from these transformations, others, especially in rural areas, face challenges that lead to disparities in media coverage and regional development (Bennett & Strange, 2008). If regional media disproportionately focus on national issues, they risk neglecting their communities' information needs, thereby potentially reducing civic engagement. (Wright, 2018)

At the same time as these changes, Mullainathan and Shleifer (2005) assert that audience preferences for political information are shifting, which contributes to the long-term decline in local political coverage. This reduction, in turn, leads to a growing emphasis on national politics, leaving critical gaps in coverage of local political issues. This trend can negatively impact local communities by depriving them of essential information regarding the political issues that directly affect their lives. Understanding how specific 'publics' seek and process information is vital, as citizens are more likely to engage with media that address issues of high personal and local relevance (Grunig, 1983).

Independent news media serve as the cornerstone of a democratic society. To cultivate a democratic culture, media organizations must enhance their representation of citizens and foster stronger connections within their communities (Meijer, 2010). This aligns with the principles of public journalism, which emphasize the media's responsibility to encourage civic participation and improve the quality of public life (Voakes, 2004). A critical strategy is detailed coverage of local political news, highlighting public television's role in shaping the regional agenda.

Flint (2002) posits that citizens develop a sense of attachment to their city only when they see their experiences reflected in the media. Without such representation, individuals are less likely to view themselves as active participants in their communities (Meijer, 2010). Through local media, viewers and readers can either embrace local democratic customs or distance themselves from them if they feel unrepresented (Meijer, 2010). Meijer (2010) identifies seven social roles that residents expect from local television stations: delivering trustworthy information, promoting social integration, inspiring citizens, ensuring representation, enhancing local awareness, building civic memory, and fostering social cohesion.

Building on these challenges, local television broadcasters must not only represent the city to its residents but also adopt democratic practices in their news production, providing nuanced and diverse stories reflecting local experiences (Meijer, 2010; Biltereyst, 2001). As noted by Gioltzidou et al. (2023), overemphasizing "local" elements can artificially skew narratives, highlighting the need for balance in regional reporting.

JOURNALISTIC INVISIBILITY

The concept of journalistic invisibility refers to the underrepresentation or limited coverage of specific regions, topics, or local issues by the media, often resulting in the marginalization of local voices and concerns (González-Bailón, 2017). This phenomenon can stem from editorial prioritization of national over regional stories, resource limitations, and production constraints in public television, often favoring national narratives over local concerns (González-Bailón, 2017).

In addition, structural and organizational factors of regional public broadcasters, such as ERT3, influence the editorial decisions and the visibility of local political issues. Examining journalistic invisibility in regional contexts is critical to understand how local political voices are sidelined and how democratic engagement may be affected. The literature suggests that the independence and visibility of regional media are essential factors for subnational democratization and political accountability (Obydenkova, 2008).

Similarly, agenda-setting theory (McCombs, 1997) provides insight into how the media prioritize certain topics over others, shaping public perception of issue importance. In regional media, agenda-setting interacts with journalistic invisibility, shaping which local issues gain visibility. As national news gains precedence, political discourse becomes more centralized, often sidelining crucial local matters (Martin & McCrain, 2019). This shift not only diminishes the public's awareness of regional political issues but also limits citizens' capacity to participate in local governance, thereby threatening their democratic empowerment (Harte et al., 2018).

Public television, as a state-funded broadcaster, has specific responsibilities to represent local communities and ensure democratic accountability. Structural limitations, newsroom staffing, and prioritization rules collectively determine how local politics is framed and how local voices are included in the news agenda (Barnett, 2009; González-Bailón, 2017). Addressing these gaps is essential to promote a more informed and engaged citizenry (Franklin, 2006).

AGENDA SETTING AND REGIONAL NEWS

As McCombs (1997) points out, agenda-setting research demonstrates how news media shape the public agenda and influence perceptions of issue significance. Agenda setting highlights which issues are emphasized or neglected, affecting the perceived importance of local versus national topics (Coleman et al., 2009). The placement and duration of news items within a broadcast affect the perceived importance of local versus national topics. Stories appearing early in the bulletin are deemed more significant; later items may be considered minor. To a certain extent, the media's political stances shape how news is portrayed (Gioltzidou & Gioltzidou, 2023).

In regional news, agenda-setting interacts with structural constraints and local audience expectations. Regional political issues may receive less coverage or be positioned later in the bulletin, contributing to their invisibility (McCombs & Funk, 2011). Local events of high relevance may be prioritized, reflecting the interplay between newsroom decisions, audience needs, and production routines.

The agenda of regional media is deeply connected to the local society it serves. McCombs and Funk (2011) emphasize that regional newspapers mirror the

unique characteristics, interests, and concerns of their communities. Their agenda is not merely influenced by national narratives but is also shaped by local events, issues, and community needs, making them essential reflections of local identity and priorities.

METHODOLOGY

The primary research question of this study is: What is the role of political news in regional media, as revealed by the duration, content, and placement of political stories in the bulletin? To explore this, a content analysis was conducted on 29 evening news bulletins from ERT3 over one month (May 2024). While this short period does not allow for long-term trends, it provides a preliminary assessment of regional political coverage patterns. Future studies should expand the sample to include a longer time frame and a larger number of bulletins in order to capture more consistent patterns and strengthen the robustness of the findings. Content analysis was chosen as the most appropriate method to systematically evaluate the presence and significance of political news in a regional media context. The analysis involved categorizing political news items into three groups: international news focusing on the Balkans, central political news, and local government news. This categorization reflects both the external political context and domestic priorities while clarifying that ERT3 emphasizes Balkan news as part of its regional remit.

Several aspects were considered during the analysis to explore how political news is prioritized. First, the duration of political news segments was recorded. This involved timing each political news item to determine how much airtime was dedicated to political content in each bulletin. This measurement enabled a quantitative evaluation of the visibility and importance assigned to political news, either related to the central political scene, local government, or international developments in the Balkans.

Second, the total number of political news items per bulletin was tallied. By counting the frequency of political stories in each news program, the study could assess how often political issues appeared in relation to other news topics. This helped highlight the overall prominence of political news in the regional media's agenda.

Third, the study focused on the position of political news within the bulletin. Each political news item was coded based on its placement in the newscast (e.g., first, second, or later positions). This aspect was crucial for understanding editorial priorities, as stories placed at the beginning of the bulletin are typically regarded as more significant. The position of political news in the lineup

revealed whether political content was considered a priority for the regional audience or was relegated to less prominent slots.

Finally, the subject of each political news item was classified into one of the three predefined categories (International news, central political scene, or local government). This allowed for a comparative analysis of how different political topics were treated in terms of airtime and placement within the bulletin. It also helped assess the extent to which local political issues were represented compared to national and international ones. ERT3, as Greece's regional public television channel based in Thessaloniki, has a specific institutional role that frames its news output. As part of the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation (ERT), it combines its remit as a public service broadcaster with a regional focus, emphasizing Northern Greece and Balkan affairs. Its structure and operation provide the context for editorial decisions, and this institutional role was taken into account when interpreting the content analysis findings.

The data collected from this content analysis was used to identify preliminary patterns in the representation of political news on ERT3. Specifically, the study aimed to answer key questions such as: (1) What proportion of airtime is devoted to political news? (2) How often are different political topics (international, central, and local) featured? (3) Where in the bulletin are political stories placed? By addressing these questions, the study sought to evaluate the visibility and prioritization of political news in a regional television setting, while acknowledging that the limited time frame precludes robust conclusions about long-term trends.

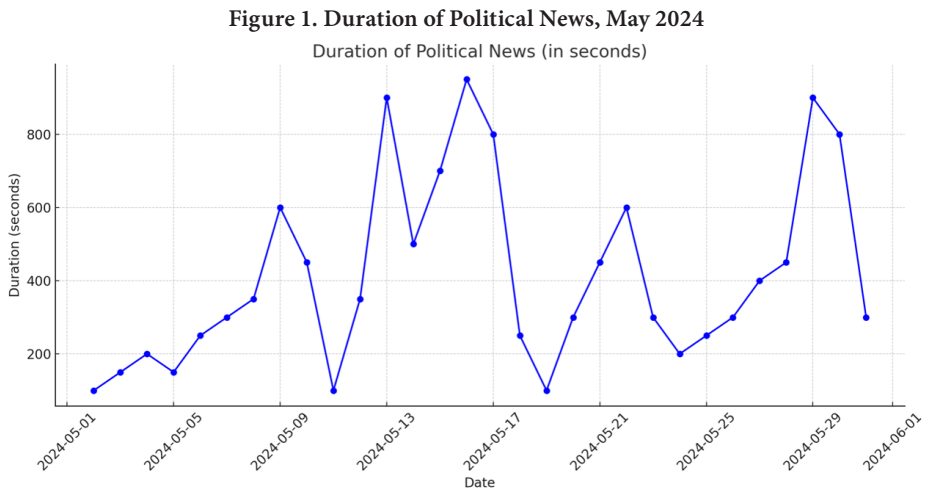
RESULTS

DURATION OF POLITICAL NEWS

Figure 1 presents the duration of political news coverage (in seconds) over a one-month period, offering insight into ERT3's political news focus during May 2024. Given that each news bulletin lasts 45 minutes (2,700 seconds), this context is essential for understanding the proportion of time devoted to political content in each broadcast.

The average daily coverage of political news is 415 seconds (6.9 minutes), which is about 15.4% of the total broadcast. The duration varies significantly, from as low as 100 seconds (1.6 minutes) to nearly 950 seconds (15.8 minutes), depending on the importance of specific political events, particularly those at the local level. On days with minimal political coverage, such as in mid-May, political news accounts for less than 4% of the total airtime. Conversely, during peak coverage days, particularly

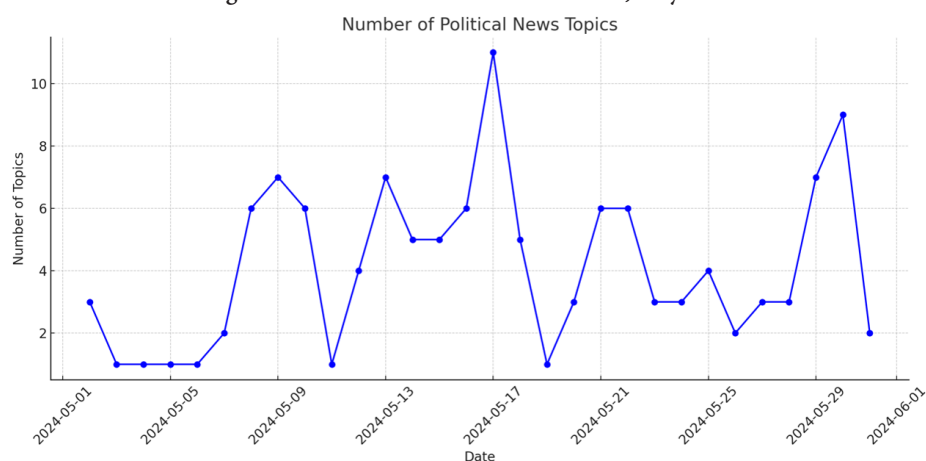
around May 13 and May 29, political content takes up to 35% of the broadcast, likely reflecting key local or regional political developments.



The data suggest that political news on ERT3 is influenced by the local and national political landscape and specific events. However, to determine the sufficiency of coverage, further comparison with other regional broadcasters would be needed. ERT3 prioritizes political news during major regional developments but generally covers a broader range of topics. The duration of political news provides a preliminary assessment of visibility, but it should be interpreted with caution given the limited sample period. These patterns are consistent with studies showing that agenda-setting in regional media often prioritizes national over local political issues (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Harte et al., 2019).

NUMBER OF POLITICAL NEWS ITEMS

Figure 2 illustrates the daily variation in the number of political news items broadcast by ERT3 between May 1 and June 1, 2024, with an average of 4.13 topics per day. The number of political stories ranges from 1 to 11. Notable peaks are evident on May 17 and May 30, when coverage rose sharply, likely due to major political developments. On some days, local political events also contributed to the increase in reporting. In contrast, periods with fewer political items can be attributed either to limited political activity or to editorial choices that favored other areas, such as cultural or economic news.

Figure 2. Number of Political News Items, May 2024

From the perspective of agenda-setting theory, the frequency of political reporting reflects editorial prioritization of certain issues and the balance between local and national politics (Coleman et al., 2009). Considering that a typical news bulletin includes 20–25 stories, political news accounts for a smaller yet steady and important share of the content. Although the number of political stories fluctuates, the overall pattern points to consistent coverage. In this context, “sufficient” coverage refers not only to the regular presence of political news but also to the stable airtime it receives and the inclusion of significant local developments.

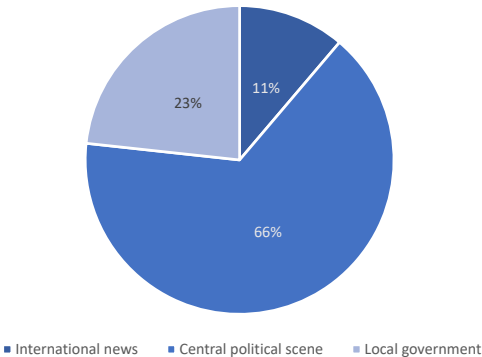
SUBJECT OF POLITICAL NEWS

Figure 3 illustrates the distribution of political news on ERT3 across three categories: central political scene, local government, and international news. The majority, 66%, focuses on the central political scene, reflecting ERT3’s significant emphasis on national government and political developments. Local political events, despite occasional coverage peaks, account for only 23% of the content, indicating that local politics is generally underrepresented. International news accounts for the remaining 11%, providing context beyond Greece while further emphasizing the domestic political focus.

Given the station’s regional focus, the relatively lower coverage of local political matters supports the concept of journalistic invisibility of regional issues (González-Bailón, 2017). For a regional medium like ERT3, the underrepresentation of local government topics points to a missed opportunity to enhance local democratic engagement and foster closer connections between the audience and local political processes. The distribution of political topics reflects a clear imbalance in coverage, with a substantial portion of airtime devoted to the central

political scene at the expense of local and regional politics. This pattern shows how regional politics can remain invisible, even on a channel meant to serve local communities, and points to opportunities for regional media to better support local democracy.

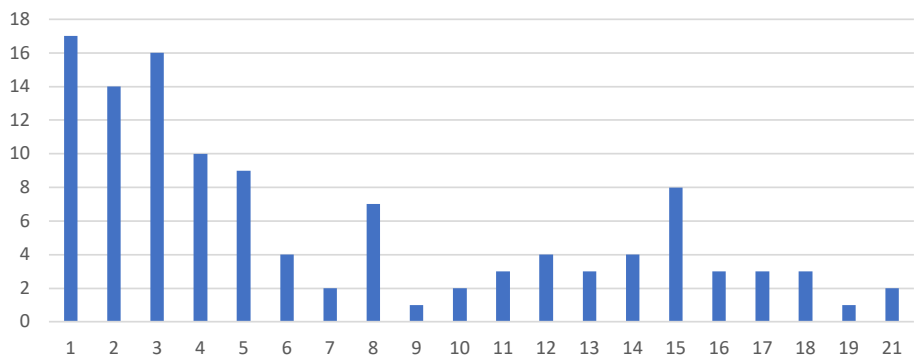
Figure 3. Subject of Political News, May 2024



PLACEMENT OF POLITICAL NEWS

Figure 4 indicates the agenda of political news in ERT3 bulletins. Political news issues generally appeared in the first three positions of the bulletin, with the first containing the most political items (16), followed by the second and third, which contained 14 and 16 issues, respectively. The early allocation suggests editorial judgment of importance, as hypothesized by agenda-setting theory (McCombs, 1997).

Figure 4. Placement of Political News



Interestingly, there is a significant drop in the prevalence of political topics after the fifth position. From the sixth position onward, political reporting

occurs sporadically and with notably lower frequency. Analysis of the ordering of local and central political stories indicates that while local political items are few in number, they are, in general, found earlier in the bulletin, indicating a conscious editorial emphasis and not a total decline. Political coverage briefly returns to the 14th and 15th positions, though at much lower frequency, with fewer than 4 topics in both cases. After the 15th position, political content practically disappears from the bulletin.

This allocation also highlights the study's key argument about the „invisibility” of territorial political issues in broadcast media. While political news remains the focus in the early parts of the bulletin, much of the content focuses on national or central political issues, while territorial and city-based issues are downplayed or left out altogether. The significant drop after the fifth spot could mean that only significant or sensational political stories are covered, possibly excluding territorial political issues from proper representation or leading to their omission in the latter part of the program.

While initial political bulletins emphasize early news, the overwhelming focus is on national politics, reducing attention to local issues. Contextual factors, such as notable national events and parliamentary amendments in May 2024, contributed to these editorial choices. The asymmetric distribution of political topics in the bulletin highlights media editorial choices that, as studies show, favor centralizing political debate and excluding local political views.

DISCUSSION

The empirical evidence presented in this article confirms the problematic coverage of regional or local political news by regional media outlets. More specifically, the findings suggest a structural tendency to prioritize national political narratives, even within a regional public broadcaster such as ERT3. Although these media appear to adequately cover regional news across a variety of topics, they provide comparatively less coverage of local political issues, both qualitatively and quantitatively. Initially, the label for political news is insufficiently specified to include news that genuinely concerns local communities, while national political news is extensively promoted. This imbalance suggests that local political realities are often subsumed by a broader national agenda, limiting their visibility in the public sphere. Such a practice clearly marginalizes the specific needs of local communities, which are left under the umbrella of a generalized national interest, without due attention being paid to their specialized needs, as well as to the particular problems faced by smaller and more remote communities—problems that the central political scene may not even be aware of.

The findings further indicate a clear imbalance in the regions covered, thereby fostering a sense of injustice and a lack of transparency in local news coverage. This uneven distribution of coverage can be interpreted through the lens of journalistic invisibility, as certain regions and local political issues remain systematically underrepresented. Ultimately, the Greek periphery does not appear to constitute a unified area with distinct characteristics; rather, it is fragmented, resulting in the formation of multiple smaller “peripheries” with strikingly heterogeneous coverage of local political news. This leads to an inevitable, potentially detrimental reduction in the informational role of local news, as well as a growing gap in local media’s ability to fulfill their watchdog function. In conclusion, the findings of this study confirm Franklin’s (2006) observation that local news tends to focus more on entertainment and human-interest stories and less on local political news.

For instance, one of the key findings of the study is that “sufficient” coverage of political news is found in ERT3’s regional television, whether it concerns central national news or news related to significant local developments. However, this “sufficiency” should be interpreted with caution, as it primarily reflects the volume of political content rather than its balance or representativeness. These findings gain further significance when compared to the findings of Moy et al. (2004, pp. 538-539) as they reinforce the argument that exposure to local news is associated with democratic engagement, while at the same time highlighting the limitations of this relationship when local political content is restricted. Furthermore, the results of the study as regards the sufficient coverage of political news from a local television part, may influence citizens’ attitudes toward political participation, including their likelihood of voting in national elections, as Filla and Johnson (2010, p. 688) found a relationship between the availability of daily local newspapers and voting while “survey respondents with access to a daily newspaper are more likely to vote than those without daily print news access”. In the case of ERT3, however, this potential democratic impact appears constrained by the dominance of national political narratives.

Another important finding of this study is that the majority of political news on ERT3’s local television (66%) concerns the national government, while only a small proportion (23%) focuses on genuinely local political issues. This pattern strongly aligns with agenda-setting theory, as it demonstrates how editorial prioritization shapes the audience’s perceived importance of political issues. Thus, although political bulletins emphasize political news, they primarily focus on national politics, thereby reducing attention to local political matters. In this respect, it becomes evident that local news and local media are not necessarily synonymous. These findings are consistent with Ekström et al. (2009, p. 257), who note that, for example, in Sweden, when local newspapers first emerged, they often contained limited local news. Local news, particularly local political news,

was not considered sufficiently interesting or valuable compared to national and international news (Jacobsson, 2008).

However, these results do not align with the arguments of Tichenor et al. (1980) and Donohue et al. (1995), who suggested that the local press functions as a “voice of the community”. The present findings, therefore, challenge this normative expectation, suggesting that regional media may not always fulfill their democratic role as effectively as theoretical models propose. Given that the present findings demonstrate insufficient coverage of local political news, the role of local media cannot remain beyond criticism. On the other hand, Hayes and Lawless (2018) addressed a similar issue and appear to support this conclusion, demonstrating that local newspapers now publish less political news in both quantity and substance, raising concerns about political engagement within local communities. As a result, the local news environment continues to deteriorate.

Acknowledging this phenomenon, Wahl-Jorgensen (2019) goes a step further, attempting to explain it, arguing that journalists’ tendency to relocate to urban centers makes it particularly difficult to cover routine local political events. This structural explanation is particularly relevant in the case of ERT3, where institutional constraints and newsroom practices may further reinforce the prioritization of centrally produced political content.

Another finding of this research is that different regions in Greece are covered to varying degrees, thus revealing unequal coverage of local news across regions. More specifically, there is a noticeable neglect of local political issues in areas that are geographically distant from major urban centers, while greater coverage is observed in regions that are more economically developed or more closely connected to large urban hubs. At the same time, a significant lack of geopolitical news is identified in news bulletins, including even those stories that could, in some way, concern the periphery. The „invisibility” of territorial or geopolitical issues in the broadcast media stands in stark contrast to the persistence of national political issues.

These findings of this study are consistent with Eshbaugh-Soha (2010:124), who explains that such inequality in political coverage by the regional press is often due to limited financial resources. In an effort to maximize profit, local media outlets tend to prioritize stories that require fewer resources, as well as topics that journalists can cover without traveling to other areas, or simply rely on political news reproduced from news agencies (Eshbaugh-Soha, 2010). The unfortunate consequence, however, is that local media fail to develop “independent positions” on foreign policy issues and instead rely on national sources for superficial coverage of geopolitical or political events, framed from a generalized national perspective rather than from the viewpoint of the local or regional journalist.

Overall, the findings of this study contribute to international discussions on regional journalism by demonstrating how regional public broadcasters may reproduce centralized political agendas, thereby limiting the visibility of local political

life. While the Greek case reflects specific institutional and cultural conditions, similar patterns have been identified in other media systems, indicating a broader transformation in the role of regional media within contemporary democracies.

In conclusion, the findings discussed in this section highlight the persistent structural limitations of regional media in adequately addressing local political issues, revealing both quantitative and qualitative deficiencies, as well as significant geographical disparities in coverage. While the present study partially aligns with existing literature in acknowledging the declining prominence and effectiveness of local political news, it does not fully corroborate prior research, as notable divergences emerge regarding the extent, focus, and implications of such coverage. These inconsistencies suggest that the relationship between local media performance and democratic engagement remains complex and context-dependent. Therefore, a more comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon necessitates further comparative analysis and additional empirical studies to establish more robust and generalizable interpretations of the role and function of local media within contemporary democratic societies.

CONCLUSIONS

The current study explores the role of political news in regional media by examining the time devoted to it, the topics covered, and their position in the news agenda. The study is guided by the main research question: How is political news represented in ERT3's regional television bulletins, in terms of airtime, topics, and placement within the news agenda, and what does this reveal about the visibility of local politics? In a critical analysis of primary news bulletins transmitted by the public television broadcaster of Greece (ERT3), this work identifies significant changes occurring in regional media and underlines disparities in the representation of political news that directly affect local communities. In response to rapid structural and operational changes in regional media, the findings reveal consistent differences in political coverage that reflect both local–national inequalities and editorial priorities.

The analysis of ERT3's lead news bulletins underscores the limited duration and exposure of local political news in the general news agenda. On days of heightened political attention, significant local political events—such as municipal council decisions or policy announcements—tended to precipitate a surge in local political coverage. While political content averaged 415 seconds daily—around 15.4% of total airtime—this study clearly indicates a preference for national political events over local issues. However, despite such surges in coverage, news about local governance invariably accounted for a smaller share of coverage than central political events. The fluctuations in coverage indicate that while local media might respond to major

political events, there is a significant gap in coverage of local governance issues compared with country-level politics. The pattern reflects a broader trend toward the national orientation of political bulletins (Martin & McCrain, 2019), while also highlighting the selective attention to local political issues in local bulletins (Barnett, 2009; Jenkins & Nielsen, 2018). This centralization of the agenda reinforces González-Bailón's (2017) theory on journalistic invisibility, as the structural prioritization of national narratives effectively sidelines the local political sphere, leading to a 'de-territorialization' of public discourse.

These results are of serious consequence, as there is evidence of journalism's neglect of local political matters, which could open the door to the concentration of political power and discourage public involvement in local politics. The lopsided representation also reflects deeper regional inequality: regions that are least developed, economically and in terms of infrastructure, tend to receive even smaller proportions of attention in political journalism, further entrenching status-quo differences in civic participation. The low level of representation of regional political matters results in a loss of opportunity to stimulate local democratic initiative and improve understanding of community concerns. Although local political stories tend to appear early in the bulletin, their overall limited airtime constrains the visibility of local issues.

It should also be recognized that this research has limitations. The analysis spans a limited time frame (one month) and is narrowly centered upon ERT3, which limits the immediate generalizability of the findings. Nevertheless, the patterns identified point to both universal and context-specific dynamics: the preference for central political events over local ones may reflect a widespread trend in regional media globally, but the scale, intensity, and editorial framing of these patterns are shaped by the Greek media system, public broadcasting norms, and regional socio-political conditions. Other media outlets in the region were not included, and a number of contextual factors, such as editorial rationales, audience preferences, and resource availability, may also influence political news storytelling. These limitations provide context for interpreting the results and suggest clear directions for future research, including comparative studies across regions and countries to explore how regional media coverage of local politics may vary and what lessons can be drawn for enhancing democratic engagement.

Overall, this study underscores the critical role that local media play in fostering an informed and engaged citizenry. By drawing attention to persistent disparities in coverage and the relative marginalization of distinctly local perspectives, it highlights the capacity of local outlets to enhance civic awareness and promote more balanced and context-sensitive political discourse. At the same time, the study identifies significant gaps in understanding the role of local media in relation to what constitutes local political news and what falls outside

its scope, while also highlighting both thematic omissions and recurrent thematic fixations within regional media coverage.

The findings further point to important avenues for future research. In particular, the literature review conducted for this study revealed a notable gap concerning the relationship between local journalism and local political news. There is a clear lack of systematic conceptualization regarding what differentiates national political news from genuinely regional or local political reporting.

Moreover, evidence suggests that many local media organizations tend to reproduce national political news, presenting it as broadly relevant to local audiences without adequately adapting it to the specific needs and conditions of local communities. Concurrently, they often underreport smaller-scale political developments, such as those involving municipalities, local authorities, and rural areas. This dual tendency raises concerns that local media risk functioning as subordinate extensions of national outlets, thereby diminishing their distinctiveness and potentially weakening public trust. Addressing these issues requires future research that more precisely defines local political news and systematically examines its impact on local publics, democratic participation, and community-level political engagement. At the same time, the findings raise broader questions about the capacity of regional public broadcasters to effectively support local democracy within increasingly centralized media environments—an issue that is gaining growing attention in international research on journalism and political communication.

Future research should address several critical gaps identified in the present literature review, particularly regarding the relationship between local journalism and the production and dissemination of local political news. Notably, there remains a lack of systematic and in-depth scholarly inquiry into the criteria that distinguish national political news from genuinely regional or local political reporting. This conceptual ambiguity is further compounded by the observable tendency of many local media outlets to reproduce centrally produced national political news, framing it merely as content presumed to interest local audiences, rather than contextualizing it within the specific socio-political realities of the communities they serve.

At the same time, such outlets frequently neglect the coverage of “smaller-scale” political developments, including issues related to municipal governance, local authorities, and rural communities. This imbalance raises concerns regarding the functional role of local media, as they risk becoming derivative extensions of national outlets—effectively minor channels unable to compete with larger organizations—thereby undermining their credibility and eroding public trust. Consequently, further empirical and theoretical research is required to develop a robust definition of local political news and to assess the extent to which such

content influences local publics, democratic engagement, and community-level political awareness.

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