Social media networks and the networks of meanings as imaginings of the Cyprus problem: A study on the use of images on Twitter in the Cyprus peace efforts

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The article investigates images in communication processes as manifestations of social representations. Focusing on the conflict-affected society of Cyprus, it studies the images used in 76250 tweets related to the Cyprus problem during the intensification of the negotiations in the period between September 2016 – July 2017. Through social network visualisation we identify the most prominent images used to construct meaning about the Cyprus problem as well as the clusters created through the image tweeting. The results show that most of the images tweeted about the Cyprus problem are institutionalised manifestations of social representations that contribute to meanings that are not conducive to the peace process in Cyprus. They instead enhance the social imaginary of Cyprus being determined by a loop of unsuccessful peace efforts that are always distant from the grassroot of society and by the concept that a solution will arrive to Cyprus as an external force sourced from the political elites.

Keywords: Cyprus problem; images; social representations; social media; social network analysis

INTRODUCTION

The digitisation and the technological development have undoubtedly caused many changes in the communication landscape. Among these changes is the easiness with which information can be transferred from one device to the other, from one side of the world to the other in seconds. At the same time, the excessive use of social media has contributed further to the development of a communication landscape which is saturated with information. Thus, in the attempt to attract attention, images become central in communicative processes and their role in the construction of meaning crucial. The images' role appears to be even more interesting to study and understand when used in communicative contexts that are characterised by social, cultural and geographical barriers. Looking at the role of images in these contexts, through the lens of Moscovici's theory of social representations we can better grasp how "a minimum of semantic material is enough to transmit a number of representations, emotions and poetry which overflows its borders" (1994, p. 163).

There is increased literature focusing mainly on the use of social media as discursive tools and by extend the impact of these communication processes on the political attitudes of the users (Bjola et al., 2019; Bjola & Cassidy, 2015; Chadwick, 2017; Gainous and Wagner, 2014; Jungherr & Jürgens 2014; Jürgens, Jungherr & Schoen, 2011; Karayianni & Psaltis, 2022; Klinger, 2013; Rauchfleisch & Metag, 2016). At the same time, while the role of images in the construction of meaning has received some attention (Arruda, 2016; Cohen & Moliner, 2022; Moloney, 2007; Moscovici, 1961/2008; Ullan, 1995) the ones that are embedded within social media posts on the construction of meaning, remain relatively unexplored as scholars focus mainly on the technical features of the images in tweets rather than as discursive tools (Stefanone et al., 2015; Vempala & Preoţiuc-Pietro, 2019).

This article aims to address this gap in the scholarship by studying the use of images to tweet about issues related to the Cyprus problem during the intensification of the peace efforts in Cyprus in September 2016 until their collapse at the Swiss resort Crans Montana in July 2017.

Images as an objectification of social representations

Although statements similar to "a picture is worth a thousand words" constitute affirmations in different cultures of the world for decades, it is the bloom of social media that made images central, if not dominant, in the construction of meaning. This is because, communication through social media is both a process that allows and demands the exchange of information to be speedy and condensed. Therefore, images are the ideal tools to undertake this role since, as symbolic and semantic materials, are less demanding to decode both in terms of time and effort "[t]hey focus a large region of experience in tiny compass" (McLuhan1994, p. 246). Images although, despite their "close resemblance to the things they refer to, are still signs" (Hall, 1997, p. 19), i.e., are representational systems that construct and carry meaning that needs to be interpreted. In other words, for their decoding and their interpretation to be possible, images need to be based on (and part of) "systems of shared of values, ideas and practices" (Howarth, 2011, p. 6), i.e., a social sharing of meaning. Thus, when images are used in tweets not only they double their engagement but they also add to their semantics (Vempala & Preoţiuc-Pietro, 2019). In the theory of SR, we could say that an image is the tip of an iceberg whilst values, attitudes, fears, threats, anxieties, stereotypes attributions that emerge as a result of participation in social life form the invisible submerged part of an iceberg (Duveen & Lloyd, 2013a: 175); this invisible part contains structures (often non-conscious) that enable the subject to construct meaningful praxis and give sense to his own action in relation to the object of representation and others in the triadic subject-object-other configuration. This submerged part of the iceberg has been described by different terms. In the work of Lucien Goldmann (1980) it was called a significant structure, in the work of Castoriades (1991) as the magma or the radical imaginary when it takes the form of a transformative expectation for the future.

According to Moscovici, "we should consider social representations as presuppositions buried under the layers of words and images floating in people's minds" (1994, p. 168). That is, understanding social representations as the semantic material based on which linguistic and visual signs make sense. Moscovici's theory of social representations offers an analytical framework that allows looking at images as something beyond what they visually resemble, to consider them communicative assets of constructing and establishing meaning based on presuppositions "the force [of which] remains invariant whether the proposition in which it is rendered manifest is true or false" (Moscovici, 1994, p. 167).

A social representation is a web of socially and collectively constructed meanings entangled with mental images some of which will be objectified (Arruda, 2016). Images in other

words are the manifestations of social representations as they provide the network of signification, by combining contextual information together with common knowledge and shared beliefs. They are the iconic version of the 'social imaginary', the way in which a society make sense of itself and others as Castoriadis (1987/ 2005) puts it. That is, images are imaginary significations as their meaning does not consist of real elements but rather of elements that are mentally constructed, and this imaginary is social because they are collectively produced and institutionalised (Arruda, 2016). This creative process of constructing meaning consists of anchoring and objectifying the unknown, unfamiliar or abstract to make sense of it. Giving the unknown a signification and an objectified, figurative form is a process of actually producing a social image as Arruda (2016) explains. The action begins when the social image is produced and objectified. This objectification, the final product of the social representation, mobilizes the viewer to recall similar experiences and knowledge to interpret the unfamiliar.   As soon, as the unknown obtains meaning then social practice can take place. Thus, the importance of the images does not lie on what they resemble but on the action that follows their figuration. Social practice is what follows interpretation. Put differently, images as networks of signification produce the necessary cultural meaning in order to "organise and regulate social practices, influence our conduct and consequently have real, practical effects" (Hall, 1997/2009, p. 2). And to expand this argument further, it is through the signification and objectification of social representations that we develop the social practices that define the relational identities that we develop within a society and upon the basis of which we decide about differences and similarities (Howarth, 2011). These representations not only structure our current understanding of the world but extend both in the past and the future canalising the past-present-future transition. In this they not only contribute to the formation of historical consciousness of the social psychological subject but orient towards varied imaginaries of the future contributing to the making of history, as suggested in the theoretical framework of Genetic Social Psychology (Psaltis, 2015; Power et al., 2023; Wagoner & Psaltis, 2024) and its study of the interplay of microgenetic and sociogenetic processes.

Images and the Cyprus problem

In conflict-affected societies there are many unclear, unfamiliar, unknown and abstract issues related to the conflict and social representations are developed in the attempt to interpret them. There is no difference in Cyprus. The conflict might be ceased but it is yet unsettled, with people

of the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot communities living apart in complete geographical separation under different administrations, educational systems and public spheres since 1974 as, what it is known today as, the Cyprus problem which remains unresolved. Hence, issues related to historical events, the identity of the other, the past as well as the negotiations taking place in numerous peace efforts are situated in the grey zone of the unknown and often the contested both between and within each community (Psaltis, 2012a; 2012b). Generations born after 1974 have grown without any physical contact with the other relying almost exclusively on images and other visual signs of the unknown *other* and of the abstract notion of *the Cyprus problem* that are products of the social imaginary of the deeply divided society of Cyprus. These images have developed meaning, a system of shared values, ideas, beliefs and knowledge, based on which social practice is organised and regulated (separately for each community) in Cyprus. A quick scan through the Cypriot society is enough to reveal a plethora of visual manifestations through which the social representations developed around the Cyprus problem are being objectified: lost place on textbooks' covers, maps of the divided island, countless shots of meetings and handshakes of the community leaders around negotiating tables, flags on buildings and mountains, photos of historical landmarks, post stamps with illustrations representing the displaced or missing people, postcards of ghost cities and lost properties, photos of conflict atrocities, monuments of war veterans and activists are only a few examples. The list of visual signs around the Cyprus problem can literally fill pages. However, all of these visual signs share two similar characteristics: (a) they are institutionalised and (b) aim in contributing to the social imaginary of the Cypriot society which has almost since its birth in 1960, determined by the Cyprus problem.

The visual signs of the Cyprus problem constitute a relatively unexplored area of research. When studied they are usually part of a research of a broader focus. The study on history education in Cyprus for example (Papadakis, 2008) which analysed the schoolbooks on the "History of Cyprus" (use of inverted commas in the original) refers among others to the way the images included in the schoolbooks of the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot community contribute to the development of the social representation of the suffering collective *self*. Similarly, an earlier study of Papadakis (1994) on the national struggle museums situated in either side of the divided capital of Cyprus, focuses on the way the nationalist imagery is enacted to the historical representation of the past as a narrative of national struggle. A more recent study, in which memorials in the Republic of Cyprus (RoC) have been codified concluded that they offer a semiotic vista which aim to build an imaginary of "idealistic

perceptions of the past that are projected into the future" (Karaiskou, 2014, p. 19). Likewise, in 'a spin-off project' on the visual sociology of statues and commemoration sites in the RoC, Carpentier (2015) notes that Cyprus is an environment where valuable lessons about the way communication and conflict function can be taken since statues in Cyprus have a very strong emphasis on the political component, linked to the military and the heroic rather than the artistic.

Furthermore, images that develop social representations of the Cyprus problem seem to be used even more intensively in times that new political subjectivities challenge the historical temporality of the island. The opening of the crossing points in 2003, that allowed free movement across the divided line in Cyprus was such a case. As Karayianni's study (2013) on the use of photographs in the Greek-Cypriot press revealed, the initial attempt of the newspapers was to resist the new subjectivity of free movement across the island, by selectively publishing photographs and edited photomontages that supported the usual Greek-Cypriot social imaginary of victimisation and suffering, instead of photographs that showed the excitement and emotional ambience that characterised the first days of the Cypriots' crossings as well as the rejoining of old friends that were kept separated from each other for more than 30 years then since 1974.

However, studies which centre on the images used to construct the meaning of the Cyprus problem as an issue under constant efforts and negotiations for solution are absent from the research landscape. To this end, this article follows the theoretical approach suggested by Howarth which "draws on both SRT and Hall [to] propose [...] a more political psychological version of [studying] communication" (2011, p. 6) to examine the images published on twitter in posts related to the Cyprus problem during the intensification of the peace efforts in 2016-2017.

METHODS
Data collection

The data used in this article are all public tweets posted on September 1st 2016 to July 31st 2017. This timeframe covers the intensification of the negotiations for the Cyprus problem including the three important conferences on Cyprus that took place in: 1) November 2016 in Mont Pelerin, Switzerland; 2) January 2017 in Geneva, Switzerland; and 3) July 2017 in Crans

Montana, Switzerland. The tweets have been downloaded using an Academic research license for twitter API through RStudio with the use of the *rtweet* library and 39 hashtags (Table 1) in English, Greek and Turkish that are related to the Cyprus problem. Then the libraries *readxl* and *dplyr* have been used to clean duplicates in the data which resulted to a corpus with a total number of 76 250 tweets. This article uses only the tweets that contained at least one image, i.e., 9815 tweets (12% of the posts).

Table 1.

Hashtags related to the Cyprus Problem

	Hashtag
1	#Cyprob
2	#kupriako
3	#kipriako
4	#Crans #Montana
5	#federation #Cyprus
6	#diapragmateuseis
7	#επανένωση
8	#UnitedCyprus
9	#CyprusNegotiations
10	#Çözüm
11	#KıbrısKonferansı
12	#BirleşikKıbrıs
13	#KıbrısGörüşmeleri
14	#KıbrısMüzakereleri
15	#KibrisKonferansi
16	#BirlesikKibris
17	#KibrisMuzakereleri
18	#sinomilies
19	#συνομιλίες
20	#CyprusTalks
21	#kypriako
22	#CyprusProblem
23	#UniteCyprusNow
24	#κυπριακό
25	#κυπριακού
26	#CransMontana
27	#ΔΔΟ
28	#διαπραγματεύσεις
29	#negotiations #Cyprus (searched together)
30	#CyTalks
31	#λύση
32	#ειρήνη
33	#reunification #Cyprus (searched together)
34	#ConferenceonCyprus
35	#Unitedbyhope
36	#Cyprusprob
37	#montpelerin
38	#CyprusTalk

39	#cozum

Data analysis

This article follows a multimethodological model of analysis which combines methods of *distant viewing* and *close reading*. Such a model of analysis has the advantage of allowing the researchers to zoom in and out their visual corpus (Skarpelos & Messini, forthcoming).

For *distant viewing* we followed two ways, we developed a visualisation (Figure 1) of the social network created by the tweeting of images related to the Cyprus problem hashtags on September 1st 2016 – July 31st 2017. This allows us to see the big picture of image tweeting during the timeframe examined, to understand the way images flow in the network and to identify patterns and relationships between the users. We can see the patterns in the image tweeting, i.e., in the way social representations are enacted to construct meaning for the Cyprus problem.

Social network visualisation

The visualisations of the users-images network (Figure 1 & 2) that have been developed in Gephi show the way the images have been tweeted during the period under study. The network consists of nodes that represent the users and the images posted in their tweets. The nodes that represent the users are connected to the nodes of the images they have posted by edges, the curvy lines that are visible in the network visualisation. Clusters, that are marked with different colour in the visualisation, have been automatically formed in Gephi based on those connections. The clusters indicate the way the users and the images are grouped together based on their modularity, i.e. on the level of density these connections between the users and images have in the network. That is, nodes of users and images that have similar level of connections, i.e. appear a similar kind of tweeting activity, are grouped together in a cluster.

Close Reading

We then zoomed in for a closer reading of images. We did this in a few ways. First, we identified the 20 most tweeted images based on their In Degree as calculated by Gephi and we did a visual analysis that aimed in identifying the social representation that they enact. Second, we took a closer look at the most active users of each cluster of the aforementioned most popular images. This allows us to understand more about the relationship between the users and the images they tweeted. It gives us insights about the way clusters with different dominant users, manifest different social representations around the Cyprus problem through their image tweeting.

RESULTS

Today there are 556 million users on Twitter in (Kepios data report, early January 2023) in 2016 there have been 318 million users and in 2017 330 million users. In Cyprus even though Twitter was not the most popular social media tool during the period September 2016 – July 2017 according to statcounter (GlobalStats), Twitter's use seems to have been particularly high in July 2017, September 2016, November 2016, April 2017 and January 2017 when milestone meetings for the Cyprus problem negotiations took place.

The social network of the images posted on Twitter

Figure 1 shows the visualisation of the Users-Images social network that has been formed by the users' image tweeting. The visualisation displays only the labels of the nodes that represent the users with the highest image tweeting activity who have been filtered out using a Degree Range of higher than 24 as a parameter. A total number of forty-six (46) users have been identified as the most active users the majority of whom belong to people or organisations that have a position of power in the Cypriot public sphere. Specifically, these twitter accounts belong to 13 Cypriot and international media, 13 journalists, 9 citizens, 3 international actors (UN and EU representatives in Cyprus), 2 peace organisations, 2 politicians, 2 political parties, 1 parody and 1 retweeting account.

5046 unique clusters have been detected in the network that have been marked with different colour in the network. The clusters have been formed based on the modularity[1]

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[1] Resolution 1.0 has been used as a parameter to measure modularity.

measurement which groups the nodes (users and images) together based on the density in their connection.

Figure 1.

Visualisation of social network created based on Image - User (only labels of users showing)

The ten largest in size clusters have been filtered out in Figure 2 to better grasp the communities that have dominated the images flow in the Cyprus problem related tweeting activity during the timeframe examined. As appears in Figure 2, these ten clusters constitute the core of the network.

Figure 2.

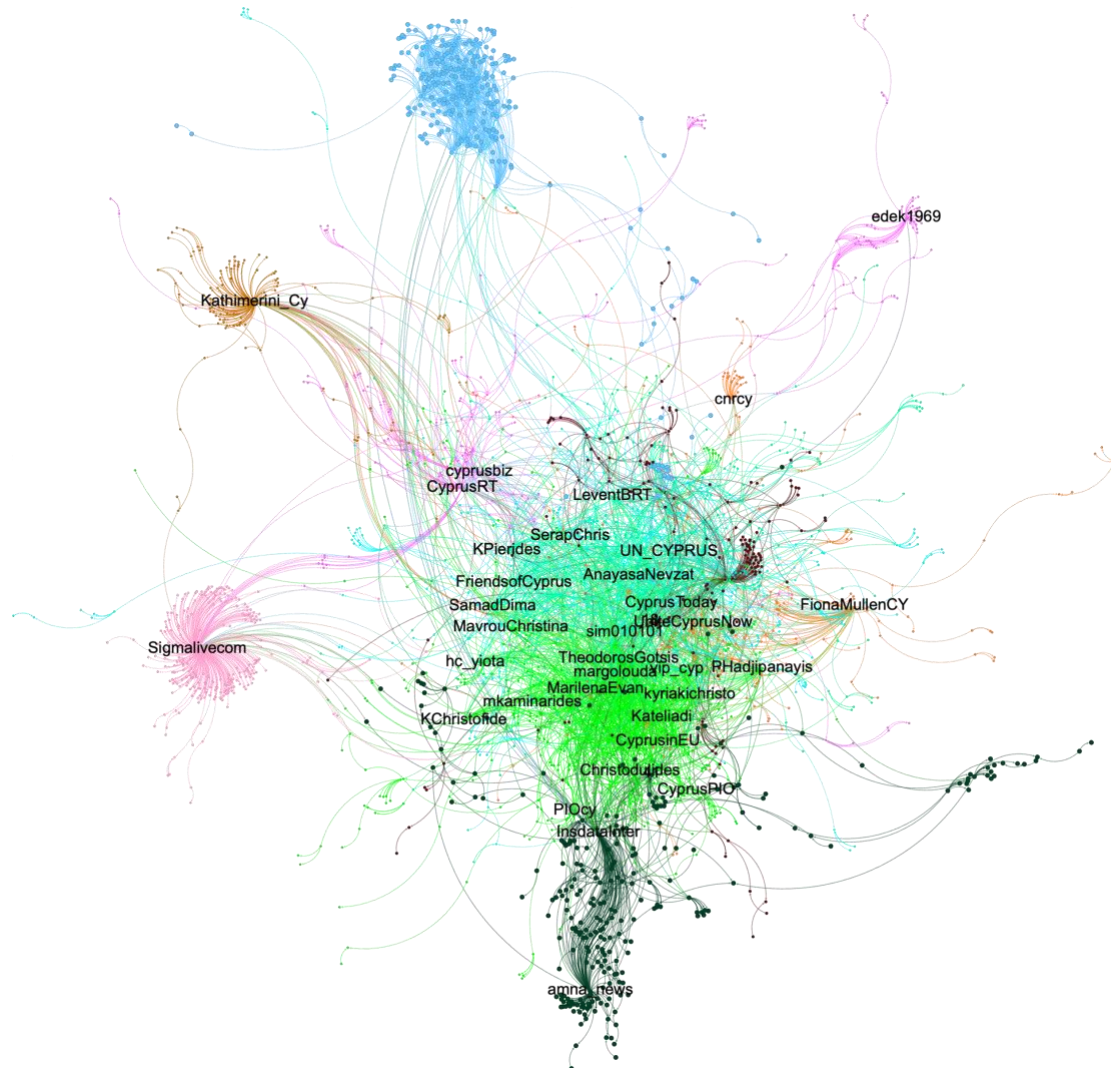*Visualisation of the Users-Images social network with the 10 largest clusters*

Table 2 (please see Appendix) displays these 10 clusters in detail. The largest cluster (Cluster 131) of the network has a right wing and nationalist Greek-Cypriot media conglomerate as the central node followed by Cluster 121 in which journalists and people close to the government in power have a dominant role. Even though Cluster 131 is the largest community it appears to have only a few edges connecting it to the rest of the network. This means that although there has been a lot of images tweeting in this cluster, the images do not seem to reach the rest of the network because there are not enough bridges, i.e., nodes that connect with the rest of the network, to enhance these images' flow. Most of the images tweeted in Cluster 131 include photos of protagonists of the Cyprus problem negotiations that are used to accompany a news

story that has been published on Sigmalive's news portal. The images construct the social representation of the Cyprus problem and the discussion about it as an issue distant from the grassroot of society as it takes place on the political sphere as the media organisations in both communities usually do. It is noteworthy however, that in the tweets that follow (Figure 3) the images of the Turkish-Cypriot leader and the UNSG have been used to accompany news stories that describe the failures in the negotiation process. Instead, the Greek-Cypriot leader is absent from these images constructing in this way the social representation of the *other* being responsible for the unsuccessful result of the negotiations contributing to an official blame game that was going one between Turkey and Cyprus.

Figure 3.

Examples of tweets with images in Cluster 131

Clusters 126 and 4856[2] even though are communities with lower density they are of similar structure to Cluster 131 in that they are somewhat marginalised from the main mass of the network. Cluster 126 has again a Greek-Cypriot media, *Kathimerini_Cy* as the dominant node and that is why most of the images tweeted include as in the case of Cluster 131 the protagonists of the negotiations. The examples shown in Figure 4 include photos of Greek-Cypriot politicians during meetings held in the context of negotiations and links that direct the users to the news stories published in *Kathimerini Cyprus'* portal. A noticeable observation in relation to the photos selected is that they include Greek-Cypriot politicians too, even though the tweets describe difficulties or obstacles in the negotiating process.

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[2] Examples of the images tweeted in Cluster 4856 are included in Table 3.

Figure 4.

Examples of tweets with images in Cluster 126

Cluster 121[3], seems to be the most influential community in the network as it has: (a) high modularity score which means it is strong in terms of connections, (b) many nodes with high degree, i.e., images have been shared a lot in their tweets and (c) central position in the network which translates as being central to the flowing of images across the network showing journalists and official representatives managed to make their tweets widely read and shared. Clusters 101 and 123[4] appear to have similar characteristics with Cluster 121 however they have a slightly weaker density. It is worth mentioning that most of the dominant nodes in Cluster 101 are twitter accounts that belong to citizens while in Cluster 123 the twitter account of the UN in Cyprus is central which probably means that many people during this time turn to the UN as a more impartial communicator on the progress of negotiations.

It is also noteworthy that in Cluster 101 many of the images that have been tweeted are quite different both as an image and as of the social representations they objectify. As the examples of Figure 4 show, the images consist of photos of places in the northern and southern parts of the island, of people of the two communities hanging out together and holding pro reunification placards or illustrations with pro peace messages. These images construct a social representation for the Cyprus problem and its efforts for solution, as a concern of the grassroots of the Cypriot society, the everydayness of its people and the lost paradise of places that all Cypriots should be able to enjoy and they are often depictions of intergroup contact and

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[3] Examples of the images tweeted in Cluster 121 are included in Table 3.
[4] Examples of the images tweeted in Cluster 123 are included in Table 3.

friendships thus bringing into the surface the praxis of crossing to the other side of the existing divide as an act of challenging partitioning of the island (Karayianni & Psaltis, 2022).

Figure 5.

Examples of images tweeted in Cluster 101

Based on the In Degree measurement we are also able to understand which are the most popular images in the network. The images' popularity is determined by the number of connections they have, i.e., by the number of times each image has been posted on twitter and that is what the In Degree measurement counts. Table 3 includes the top twenty of the most shared images and a quick glimpse on these images is enough to reveal that the vast majority are snapshots of the negotiating teams participating in the peace process meetings. Specifically, they constitute long shots of groups of people from the Cypriot the political sphere as well as UN representatives

sitting around negotiating tables. Only five of the images (1, 3, 7, 8, 17) that include people are close-up or medium shots and include only a few people. These people are usually the main protagonists of the Cyprus peace process, the Cypriot leaders and the UN adviser. Images of people around negotiating tables, in meetings, in quarters or in handshakes are the most commonly found photos, used to represent meaning related to the Cyprus problem. Although the Cyprus problem is being treated as a media event and attracts a lot of publicity (Avraamidou & Kyriakides, 2015) is for most of the Cypriots solely a mediated constructed concept as negotiations take place on the political level behind closed doors and its meaning is developed by the media. In the twenty most tweeted images in the timeframe examined however there are four images that do not capture any people. Image 2, with the second highest In Degree measurement is a night shot of the presidential palace in the RoC. The photo has been shared initially by the official twitter account (@AnastasiadesCY) of that period's Greek-Cypriot community leader Nicos Anastasiades on October 30, 2016 together with the text "Μας χωρίζει ο χρόνος, μας ενώνει η ελπίδα - Zamanla Bölündük, Umutla Birleştik #UnitedByHope". The text, written in Greek and Turkish, means "Time separates us, hope unites us". The tweet was posted after the decision of the Turkish-Cypriot community not to follow the winter time shift as it usually does which meant that the 9.251 square-meter island of Cyprus would operate in two different times one for each community. This image is an exemption as it constructs a different meaning to the usual social representation of the Cyprus problem coming from official sources where the official stance is promoted without and recognition of grassroots efforts to reunite Cyprus. It instead contributes towards a social representation that develops around the meaning of hope for reunification despite any decisions and norms that force the two communities to function as two different entities and the message #UnitedByHope was distributed widely those days from bicommunal groups and pro peace activists.

Also, Images 14 and 18 even though are photos taken at the two conferences on Cyprus, in Mont Pelerin and Crans Montana accordingly, are not using the usual visual social representation of the Cyprus problem, i.e., people around the negotiating table. Instead, Image 14, tweeted by that time's Greek-Cypriot spokesperson (@Christodulides) on November 6th 2016 along with the text: "The view from #MontPelerin...", is a landscape photo of the view in Mont Pelerin. Likewise, Image 18, is a photo of a helicopter landing in Crans Montana. The photo has been tweeted on June 30th 2017 by that period's UN Special Adviser on Cyprus (@EspenBarthEide) accompanied with the text: "A beautiful sunny day in #CransMontana as @antonioguterres arrives at the #ConferenceOnCyprus". These two images develop social

representations of the efforts of solution for the Cyprus problem based on the beautiful ambience of the negotiations. Based on the symbolic calmness of the views of Mont Pelerin and the sunshine offered both by the weather conditions as well as by the arrival of the UNSG to Crans Montana, the negotiations are objictified as good omens for reaching an agreement.

Lastly, a completely different image (16) has been tweeted in a photo by @Christodulides on June 5, 2017, with the following hashtags "#UNSG, #CyprusProblem, #PressStatement, @AnastasiadesCY". This image is a photo of a document, the press statement in particular which was released after the meeting of the UN Secretary General with the Cypriot community leaders. The press statement underlined the need to reconvene the negotiation meetings between the two leaders in June 2017 and serves as evidence of the Cyprus peace process being an initiative and under the auspices of the UNSG.

Table 3.

The Clusters and the most prominent users created based on the modularity class metric. Also showing the images in degree measurement

	Modularity class	Image	In Degree of image	Number of Users	10 most active users	
					Nationality	**Affiliation**
1	1379		119	180	MY	citizen
					UK	embassy
					EU	EU at the UN
					GE	politician
					GC	citizen
					BE	EU diplomat
					DK	diplomat
					GC	expert on peacebuilding
					AT	embassy
					EU	EU's Foreign & Security Policy Service
2	204		117	102	GC	parody
					GC	parody
					GC	citizen
					GC	academic
					GC	academic
					GC	citizen
					GC	citizen
					TC	citizen
					GR	citizen
					TC	citizen
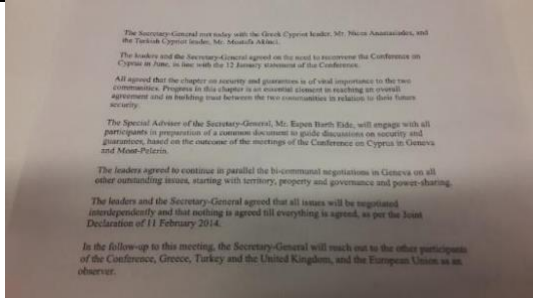
3	4856		101	337	TR	politician
					TR	politician
					TR	politician
					TR	citizen
					TR	embassy
					TR	embassy
					TC	citizen
					TR	citizen
					TR	politician
					TR	citizen
4	4856		84	337	TR	politician
					TR	politician
					TR	politician
					TR	citizen
					TR	embassy
					TR	embassy
					TC	citizen
					TR	citizen
					TR	politician
					TR	citizen
5	123		79	202	UK	peace organisation
					GC	journalist

					UN	UN
					UN	UN
					GC	journalist
					GC	journalist
					TC	journalist
					TC	citizen
					GC	media
					UN	UN
6	4856		75	337	TR	politician
					TR	politician
					TR	politician
					TR	citizen
					TR	embassy
					TR	embassy
					TC	citizen
					TR	citizen
					TR	politician
					TR	citizen
7	10		73	109	GC	parody
					GC	citizen
					GC	citizen
					GC	citizen
					GC	alternative media
					GC	citizen
					UN	UN
					GC	parody
					GR	researcher

We are **now in the final moment**. We are now **really** at the **moment of truth**.

#						
					GC	politician
8	4856		73	337	TR	politician
					TR	politician
					TR	politician
					TR	citizen
					TR	embassy
					TR	embassy
					TC	citizen
					TR	citizen
					TR	politician
					TR	citizen
9	4856		69	337	TR	politician
					TR	politician
					TR	politician
					TR	citizen
					TR	embassy
					TR	embassy
					TC	citizen
					TR	citizen
					TR	politician
					TR	citizen
10	4856		67	337	TR	politician
					TR	politician
					TR	politician
					TR	citizen
					TR	embassy
					TR	embassy
					TC	citizen

						TR	citizen
						TR	politician
						TR	citizen
11	4856			60	337	TR	politician
						TR	politician
						TR	politician
						TR	citizen
						TR	embassy
						TR	embassy
						TC	citizen
						TR	Citizen
						TR	Politician
						TR	Citizen
12	4856			59	337	TR	Politician
						TR	Politician
						TR	Politician
						TR	Citizen
						TR	Embassy
						TR	Embassy
						TC	Citizen
						TR	Citizen
						TR	Politician

					TR	Citizen
13	121		58	354	GC	Diplomat
					GC	Journalist
					GC	Journalist
					GC	Journalist
					GC	Politician
					GC	Journalist
					GC	Media
					GC	EU organisation
					GC	journalist
					GC	media
14	121		57	354	GC	diplomat
					GC	journalist
					GC	journalist
					GC	journalist
					GC	politician
					GC	journalist
					GC	media
					GC	EU organisation
					GC	journalist

#						
					GC	media
15	121		55	354	GC	diplomat
					GC	journalist
					GC	journalist
					GC	journalist
					GC	politician
					GC	journalist
					GC	media
					GC	EU organisation
					GC	journalist
					GC	media
16	121			354	GC	diplomat
			53		GC	journalist
					GC	journalist
					GC	journalist
					GC	politician
					GC	journalist
					GC	media
					GC	EU organisation
					GC	journalist
					GC	media
17	4856		53	337	TR	politician
					TR	politician
					TR	politician
					TR	citizen
					TR	embassy
					TR	embassy

						TC	citizen
						TR	citizen
						TR	politician
						TR	citizen
18	123			52	202	UK	peace organisation
						GC	journalist
						UN	UN
						UN	UN
						GC	Journalist
						GC	journalist
						TC	journalist
						TC	citizen
						GC	media
						UN	UN
19	4856			51	337	TR	politician
						TR	politician
						TR	politician
						TR	citizen
						TR	embassy
						TR	embassy

						TC	citizen
						TR	citizen
						TR	politician
						TR	citizen
20	4856			50	337	TR	politician
						TR	politician
						TR	politician
						TR	citizen
						TR	embassy
						TR	embassy
						TC	citizen
						TR	citizen
						TR	Politician
						TR	Citizen

A closer look at the clusters in which the top twenty images belong to, offers insights about the characteristics of the clusters and about the most active users, i.e., the ones responsible for flowing these images in the social media network of the Cyprus problem. Table 3 displays the total number of users and of the nationality and affiliation of the ten most active ones.

The majority (11) of the most popular images belong to Cluster 4856 a community that appears to be dominated by twitter accounts of Turkish origin. The cluster has 337 users in total and except for one, the most active ten users are politicians or institutions from Turkey. All the images of Cluster 4856 (3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 17, 19, 20) are showing Turkish MFA Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu participating in the Conference on Cyprus in Crans Montana. Cluster 121 with 354 users on the other hand, which contains four of the images (13,14,15,16) included in Table 3 has Greek-Cypriot journalists, media, politicians and diplomats as the most active participants. It is noteworthy that the images of this cluster, except for the view from Mont Peleran (Image 14) are similar to the ones shared by the Turkish politicians in Cluster 4856 i.e., the Greek-Cypriot negotiating team participating in different meetings held during the conferences on Cyprus. Also, two images included in Table 3 are coming from Cluster 123 which has 202 users in total. An interesting observation about this cluster is that its ten most active users come from both communities plus the UN and they constitute a mixed group of journalists, politicians, media, citizen and peace organisation. Another interesting remark of Cluster 123 are the two images (5 and 18) that reached the top twenty of the networks. These images although they have been tweeted during the Mont Pelerin and Crans Montana conferences on Cyprus, they do not follow the norm of capturing one community's negotiating team around a discussion table. Instead, Image 5 shows that period's negotiators of the two communities, the Greek-Cypriot Andreas Mavroyiannis and the Turkish-Cypriot Özdil Nami, having dinner together with the two community leaders and their wives, the UN special adviser and the EU representative Federica Mogherini which is form of vicarious intergroup contact with representatives of each community in an amicable spirit that probably aims at creating feelings of trust and optimism for the outcome of the negotiations. The photo has originally tweeted by UN special representative Espen Barth Eide on November 6th, 2016, together with the hashtags "#UnitedByHope #MontPelerin" and the mentions "@AnastasiadesCY @MustafaAkinci_1". Also, Image 18[5] is a photo capturing the arrival of the UN Secretary General to the Crans Montana conference. Cluster 1379 on the other hand, with 180 users appears to have a different constituency as its ten most active users with the exception of two Greek-Cypriots are mainly

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[5] See previous section for details on the photo.

international diplomats. Lastly, Cluster 204 is a community of 102 users the ten most active of whom are citizens and parody accounts mainly (with the exception of two Turkish-Cypriots) of the Greek-Cypriot community.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Social representations are the presuppositions floating in people's mind manifested and objectified in words and images (Moscovici, 1994). Their development is always a relational, collaborative and deeply political process (Howarth, 2011). This study shows that in conflict-affected societies in which many issues are unclear, social representations are part of communication processes for the unknown to become the familiar social imaginary. In Cyprus, where the two communities live for decades apart, social representations about meanings related to the Cyprus problem are well embedded in every semantic material used in the communication process. By looking at the saturated from images context of social media, we see that they mostly manifest a core social representation for the Cyprus problem and its efforts of solution as a matter of endless meetings and discussions behind closed doors by men in suits in the political sphere and that the agreement cannot be reached because of the uncompromising *other politician*. Despite the different clusters identified in the social network developed by the tweeting of images, the dominant images in most of the clusters enact the same social representation except for pro-reconciliation posts that give emphasis to intercommunal contact (Psaltis, 2012), friendship and messages of hope. On the topic of hope for the future it is worth noting that there were only a few relevant posts by the leaders. The vast majority of posts refer to politicians involved in the negotiations in numerous meetings, discussions and handshakes that end with no result. Long-shot photos contribute to the establishment of this social representation as the emphasise on the location of the negotiations: snowy mountains, green scenery of lakes or high-tech conference buildings; features very distant from the Mediterranean scenery of Cyprus. Thus, the Cyprus problem obtains a solid meaning of endless unsuccessful efforts of the local and international political elites but at the same time it becomes distant, far from the grassroot of society and the social imaginary of reunification an unrealistic subjectivity. This aligns with Moscovici's argument that "people belonging to the same group believe that they have the same representations or attitudes" (1994, p. 172).

The close reading revealed that the most active users of the network are people of the two communities' political elite and the media. This shows the way the social representations

are being institutionalised and get diffused in the culture to become "the social norms and the consensual beliefs" (Howarth, 2011, p. 9), the social imaginary (Castoriadis, 1987/2005) based on which social practice will get organised and regulated (Hall, 1997/ 2009). On the contrary, images that objectify representations of hope for Cyprus' reunification, i.e., alternative representations (Gillespie, 2008) are part of a smaller and limited number of clusters where the most active users do not represent institutions but citizens or parody accounts.

Most of the images shared despite their small differences are manifestations of the same social representation which constructs a very specific and dominant meaning for the Cyprus problem: it is something that concerns the political elite, discussed behind closed doors and its solution is the responsibility of the local and international politicians and mediators (UN, EU and other international powers). Furthermore, images of press releases are contributing to the construction of the same meaning as they manifest the solution of the Cyprus problem as an official process, part of the political sphere away from the grassroot of society.

The article mainly highlighted the way images are tweeted in a specific period of negotiations to enact dominant social representations for the Cyprus problem. This analysis however offers a broader understanding of the relationship between images and social representations and sheds light to the sociogenetic process of how social representations change in historical time through mass communicated processes It contributes to the communication studies and to the theoretical debate of the role of social representations in intergroup conflict adding theoretical depth and methodological insights to the developing framework of Genetic Social Psychology (Wagoner & Psaltis, 2023) and its study of the articulation of processes of microgenesis, ontogenesis and sociogenesis. Specifically, this study offered new methodological analysis of a large corpus of images tweeted during the most important in the recent history of Cyprus negotiations period for the Cyprus problem and showed the way social representations are objectified through images. It is important however to extend and test the results and ideas discussed in this article in new research in other conflict-affected societies.

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Table 2.

The 10 largest clusters of the Users-Images social network

Cluster 131 (7,87%)	**Cluster 121 (5,5%)**	**Cluster 101 (3,45%)**	**Cluster 4976 (3,26%)**
Cluster 126 (3,24%)	**Cluster 4856 (3,24%)**	**Cluster 123 (3,17%)**	**Cluster 51 (2,21%)**

Cluster 119 (2,11%)

Cluster 1379 (1,93%)