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Social mobilization and media framing in the journalistic coverage of oil survey permits in the Mediterranean

Abstract

The granting of hydrocarbon exploration permits in the Gulf of Valencia in 2010 brought thousands of citizens of the Valencian Community and the Balearic Islands to the streets until 2015 when the beneficiary company renounced to carry out the project. As in other cases of citizen protests, different concerns and positions were expressed in the media. Knowing the media frameworks around these projects is the main objective of this research. Specifically, the research looks to identify the presentation of positions for or against the risks and potential benefits, and to determine the presence of social mobilization as an information source in the coverage of the three reference newspapers in the affected area: *Levante-EMV* (Valencia), *Mediterráneo* (Castellón) and *Diario de Ibiza*. From the theoretical perspective of framing, the frames used in reporting are revealed in terms of the definition of the problem. The results of the analysis of 1,258 texts have made it possible to identify frames of benefit and risk, much more frequent on the latter, focusing on the economic risk for tourism and fishing, and above all, on environmental risk. The frame of benefit referred to the economic advantages that would reduce the dependence on energy, occupies a discreet place since, in this case, the main actors in the conflict –politicians and civil society– coincided in their arguments, both becoming protagonists of media discourse in their role as sources.

Keywords

Framing, social movements, oil surveys, journalistic sources, energy.

1. Introduction

The Spanish Government declared the Mediterranean Cetacean Migration Corridor a protected marine area in June of 2018. The Minister of Ecological Transition explained that this would end “any type of extractive activity of hydrocarbons” recalling the permits previously granted in this area that mobilized thousands of citizens of the Valencian Community and the Balearic Islands to the streets in the form of protest. The protest was understood as the “collective use of unconventional methods of political participation to persuade or coerce the authorities and support the objectives of a group” (Taylor & Van Dyke, 2006, p. 263).

Minister Teresa Ribera referred to the permits approved by the Government of Spain Council of Ministers on December 23, 2010. The State granted the Scottish company Capricorn Spain Limited two hydrocarbon research permits in the Gulf of Valencia, and three others to the Medoil company, although the five would end up being awarded to the first company through its subsidiary Cairn Energy. According to environmental organizations, the study area was close to protected natural areas such as the natural parks of the Columbretes Islands, the Montgó, the Albufera of Valencia and Ses Salines of Ibiza and Formentera, as well as the marine reserves Cabo de San Antonio and Freus of Ibiza and Formentera. All of them are protected and declared LIC¹ and ZEPA² areas of the Red Natura 2000³. At the same time, corridors of migration of cetaceans and turtles would have been affected, as well as the posidonia meadows that prevent erosion of the Mediterranean coast (Ecologists in Action, 2014).

These permits generated not only the opposition of existing environmental organizations, but also the surge of civil groups that tried to combine interests and become the voice of affected sectors. These social organizations bring together citizen participation in public life and represent a way to overcome administrative and political deficits (Brugé, Font & Gomà, 2003). *Petrolí No-Columbretes Netes* was born in the Valencian Community and in Ibiza, the *Alianza Mar Blava*, a collective actor result from the union of environmentalists, institutions, tourism sector representatives and civil society. During the public exposure period of the project, more than 100,000 allegations were presented and more than 20,000 people toured the streets of Ibiza and Castellón in a simultaneous demonstration against the surveys. The official protest manifesto insisted precisely on the leadership of citizens and civil society *vis-à-vis* the ruling class and institutions. At the end of 2015, the suspension and termination of research permits was declared. The company had waived the permits in October, before even publishing the mandatory environmental impact statement, which was expected to be negative. Between the approval of the permits and the records, almost five years of political and social action passed in which a social opposition movement surged. The movement was understood as the channeling of social demands to the authorities through organized groups based on solidarity and common objectives (Tarrow, 2011; Snow, Soule & Kriesi, 2007).

Public participation in decision-making is central to discussions about policies related to science and technology, especially in contexts of risk to health and the environment (Prades *et al.*, 2015, p. 495). Social stakeholders must find expression channels (Farré, 2006, p. 64) such as the media, thus becoming a form of public participation, “which raises dilemmas about who can access them,” according to Prades *et al.* (2015, p. 22). For Vliegenthart and Walgrave (2012), the media are of a “critical importance” for social movements to convey their message and turn the audience into possible participants, in the same way as Gamson and Wolfsfeld (1993, p. 116) pointed out: it is not just about getting attention, but also about the content of the coverage, which can generate sympathy from third parties. However, for Sampedro (1997), the media can help a movement during “small windows of opportunity,” but they are not favorable in the long term because government elites can bureaucratize and trivialize the movement’s challenges, thus reducing their journalistic interest. In the words of Tuchman (1981), the media have the capacity to express the lack of power by minimizing people through “symbolic annihilation,” underestimating or misrepresenting them.

¹ Defined as a Place of Community Importance, which contributes appreciably to maintain or restore a type of habitat and can thus contribute to the Red Natura 2000 (DOCE, 1992).

² Special Protection Area for Birds of singular relevance for the conservation of avian species in danger of extinction (DOCE, 2010).

³ The Habitats Directive (DOCE, 1992) led to the Red Natura 2000, a European catalog of protected natural areas formed by LIC and ZEPA.

In energy matters as presented in this paper, the media have highlighted the risks or benefits of its implementation (Jaspal & Nerlich, 2013; Mercado, Álvarez & Herranz, 2014). This risk/benefit dichotomy coincides with the approach to the theory of framing from psychology. Risk implies the use of frames in terms of 'profit' versus 'loss' (Tversky & Kahneman, 1981) or 'threat' against 'opportunity' (Jackson & Dutton, 1988). De Vreese & Boomgaarden (2003) took this duality to the study of the news frames (frames) that showed the 'advantages' or 'disadvantages' of belonging to the European Union and their impact on the support of readers to the supranational institution. Schuck & De Vreese (2006) have insisted that more studies are needed from this perspective (*balanced frames*) because these dichotomous frames, risk/benefit in our research, provide an evaluation framework for individuals that influence their thoughts (Pan & Kosicki, 1993).

Consequently, there are two issues to consider: the content of the media coverage that Gamson and Wolsfeld (1993) talked about and the social movements access to the media as sources of information. Thus, the research questions are:

RQ1: Do the media present the possible oil surveys in the Gulf of Valencia in terms of benefit/risk?

RQ2: To what extent is the social movement against oil surveys a major player in media coverage as information source?

This research plans to answer these questions considering that the different news frames, together with other factors, influence social beliefs and attitudes in relation to public affairs, and that these frameworks, in turn, are conditioned to a greater or lesser extent by the actors featured in the journalistic discourse. Therefore, the objectives of the study are:

1. Identify the news frames in terms of benefit/risk.
2. Quantify the presence of social mobilization against oil survey permits as the main source of journalistic coverage.

2. Framing and environmental risks in the media

The risk communication process, from the actors' perspective, includes the general public, the affected local communities, public officials, industry, experts, civil or environmental organizations and the media, according to Farré (2005, p. 107-108). He highlights the importance of the latter regarding how we perceive invisible threats in our environment, making them visible. The highest degree of institutional responsibility lies largely with the three issuing actors in information related to risk: the administration, the companies and the scientists or experts (Farré, 2006, p. 62), who intervene as sources in the media process. Reporters collect their messages to build journalistic stories that can amplify the perception of risk "either because of its negativity, distortion, sensationalism, dramatization or exaggeration of the themes" (Farré, 2005, p. 107-108). In addition, the stories can attenuate or mitigate the risk.

Dunwoody and Neuwirth (1991) stated that the media only highlights the risks at first but then, it is the interpersonal channels that are used to make editorial decisions. Similarly, Wakefield and Elliot (2004) concluded that although newspapers are an important source of information about risks, their impact is mitigated by distrust of residents and access to other sources, especially their own information networks. However, for Peterson and Thompson (2009), many of the variations in the impact of the media on the risk perception by the public are due to the different styles of news presentation and the frames used to build stories. Along these lines, Kosicki and McLeod (1990) demonstrated that media images were fundamental in the process of audience reception and Hornig (1992) found strong interactions between risk frames in the media and in the audience. Therefore, it seems relevant to investigate the journalistic coverage of risk from the perspective of framing.

Framing theory states that the informational contents not only set the public agenda but also implicitly expose a specific approach, a frame. It was the anthropologist Gregory Bateson

who, referring to the process of receiving messages, had coined the concept of frame in 1955 to define the context or frame of interpretation by which people stop in some aspects of reality and dismiss others (Sádaba *et al.*, 2008). The concept is developed in the field of Psychology for later, through Sociology, incorporated into the study of the media (Sádaba, 2001). Understood as a process, as a strategic action, the construction of the news frames, the framing, consists in the “selection of some aspects of the perceived reality to make them more prominent in a communicative text, so that they promote a particular definition of problem, a causal interpretation, a moral evaluation and/or a treatment recommendation” (Entman, 1993, p. 52).

Three stages are involved in the framing process: the *frame building* which generates the different news’ frames; the *frame setting* which is the interrelationship between these media frames and the knowledge and predispositions of the recipients; and, the *framing effect*, which is the effects on the audience (De Vreese, 2005, p. 52). The frame building process by which *framing* is constructed, constitutes the news frames, as Vliegenthart and Van Zoonen (2011) point out. These authors emphasize that the frames are the result of the social context and productive routines, in which journalist control is relative. In the process of building the frames, not only internal conditions (news values, editorial line) but also external factors are involved, in relation to the socio-political context and interaction with social actors. The norms and values of the community, the pressure of organizations and interest groups, journalistic routines and the ideological orientation of the media influence the way in which any story is framed (Scheufele, 1999). Similarly, Shoemaker and Reese (2014) referred to five levels of influence in the formation of the media agenda: journalists, media routines, organizational factors, social institutions and cultural and/or ideological considerations. In this constructivist process, different social actors offer their own frames, which are reproduced or contested in the media, as noted by Entman (2003, p. 419) when creating his “cascade” framing activation model. This cascade framing hierarchizes the different actors in political communication based on their power to offer complete frames that dominate the interpretation of certain events. About this, Valera (2016, p. 22) criticizes the belief that it is journalists who determine the frames exclusively, “ruling out beforehand that the discourse produced by the different social actors involved in the controversies could have influence on the media contents.”

In defining the frames in informational content, we consider the selection and relevance of the sources, a key aspect of framing. Following Nisbet (2008), who highlighted the importance of the sources in the media agenda, defined as the voices, actors or groups that provide strategically shaped information (packaged) to journalists. The exposure of interested opinions or positions integrated in a certain way in a supposedly unintended journalistic discourse defines the main actors and the points of view that reach the audience. Therefore, the analysis of sources in relationship to the display of frames in the journalistic texts is of special interest in *framing* studies.

3. Methodology

The research method used to carry out the research is quantitative and qualitative, combining the classic categorization of content analysis (Igartua, 2006). Qualitative analysis based on framing theory, as Van Gorp (2007) recommends takes into account “the strongly abstract nature of the frames.” Thus, the main actor is inferred from the intensity of the presence of the sources in the texts, and to define the framing the first framing functions is identified, as outlined by Entman (1993, p. 52). The definition of the problem (possible oil survey permits) in terms of the benefit or risk. As Van Gorp (2007, p. 72) suggests, first an inventory of frames was inductively labeled to later be placed in a matrix:

- 1a. Economic benefit: oil survey permits will involve economic benefits, such as more jobs or the reduction of energy dependence.

- 1b. Denial of economic benefit.
- 2a. Economic risk: oil survey permits will lead to losses for certain productive sectors, such as fishing and/or tourism.
- 2b. Denial of economic risk.
- 3a. Environmental risk: oil exploration endangers ecosystems, migratory routes of animals, fauna and native flora.
- 3b. Denial of environmental risk.
4. Without framing in terms of benefit/risk.

Subsequently, through the deductive analysis it is discovered in which texts these frames are present, which function as *issue-specific frames* (De Vreese, 2005) applicable to problems related to the implementation of energy technology that present a dichotomy between the supposed economic benefits and the supposed environmental risks.

Based on these approaches, the journalistic reports of the *Levante-EMV*, *Mediterráneo* and *Diario de Ibiza* newspapers are analyzed, reference headers in the three areas most directly affected by the hydrocarbon exploration permits granted to the multinational *Cairn Energy* in the provinces of Valencia and Castellón and the island of Ibiza, respectively. The analysis period is between the date of permits granting (December 2010) until the expiration of permits (October 2015). After searching for pieces that included the keywords “oil surveys” in the *MyNews* database and in the newspaper libraries of the *Levante-EMV* and *El Diario de Ibiza* newspapers, with access provided by the newspapers themselves, 1,258 units of analysis were obtained. Specifically, 212 items were published by the *Mediterráneo* newspaper, 198 pieces by *Levante-EMV* and 848 in *Diario de Ibiza*. A coding program is proposed that includes quantitative and qualitative variables of each unit collected: header, date, headline, section, journalistic genre, sources/main actor and frames. The sources can be politicians (administration and parties), industry (oil companies), fishermen, hospitality, experts, social movements, citizens (individually), celebrities and others. The main actor is the source that appears to a greater extent and in the headlines and leading paragraph, taking into account both personal and documentary sources. The equilibrium option has been considered in cases where it is not possible to identify one as the main one and the one of ‘no record’ when no sources are mentioned.

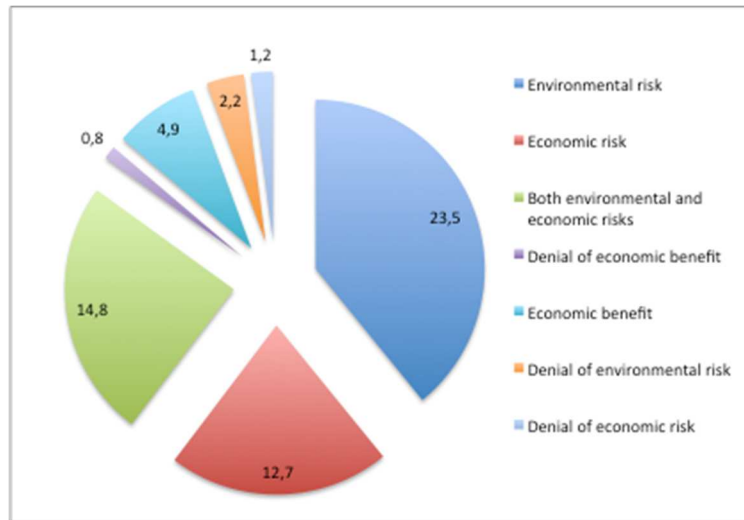
The two qualitative variables (main actor and framing) were subjected to a reliability analysis: 111 units were coded by two researchers outside the study. The values reached in the intercoder reliability agreement of Scott’s Pi formula (0.70) are considered adequate, being higher than .60, according to Igartua (2006).

4. Results and analysis

The analysis of the 1,258 texts allows identifying the benefit and risk frames in the informative follow-up of the permits to carry out oil surveys in sixty percent of the pieces. The benefit frame is present in 4.87 percent of the stories of the three newspapers, while the risk frame is linked to the economic in 12.73% of the total, and the environmental in 23.49 percent. The two risk frames appear combined on many occasions (14.80%).

In other pieces with sources contrary to survey permits, the possibility that they may carry some economic benefit is negated, although the risks are not expressed (denial of economic benefit at 0.75%). On the contrary, the voices that support the perforations deny economic hazards (denial of economic risk in 1.24%) or environmental risk on the grounds that environmental guarantees are covered (denial of environmental risk in 2.16%). In sum, the frames opposing the surveys appear in 51.8 percent of the texts analyzed compared to 8.3 percent that highlight their advantages (Graph 1).

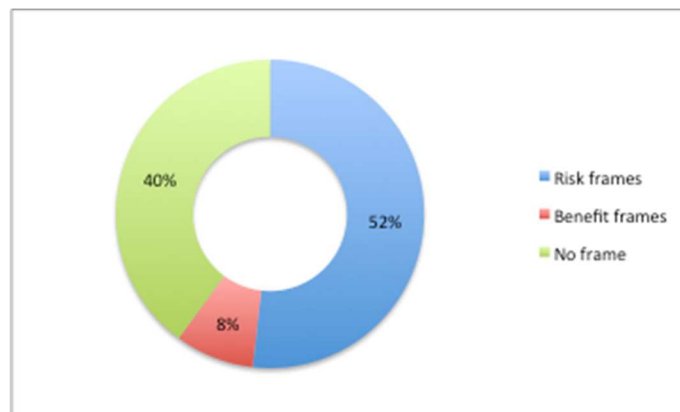
Graph 1: Environmental frames based on benefits and risks vs. economic.



Source: Authors Data.

Forty percent (39.9%) of the analyzed units do not reveal benefit/risk frames (without framing) due to the lack of parity and length of the texts (short) or the equidistant or balanced treatment of the sources establishing a debate between two positions (reports). Units not framed in terms of benefit/risk in relation to media attention were not removed from the sample since, although in a short format, they reflect the intention of the media to follow the issue and keep it on their editorial agenda. In this sense, it is the *Diario de Ibiza* that presents the largest number of texts without framing, more than half (53.6), followed by the *Mediterráneo* (38.39%) and *Levante-EMV* (27.87%). These figures are directly related to the number of pieces published in each of the newspapers on the subject: 848, 212 and 198, respectively. Therefore, sixty percent of the information coverage of the matter was treated in terms of benefit/risk, while other forty percent did not reflect this dichotomy (Graph 2).

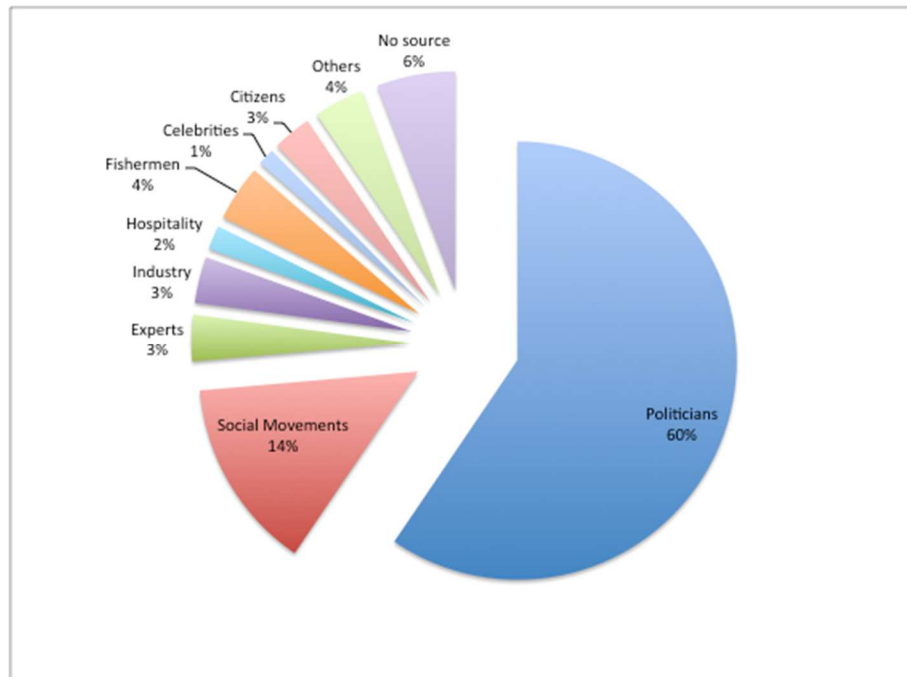
Graph 2: Total frames benefits/risks.



Source: Authors Data.

Regarding main actors-sources, politicians are the informational sources in about sixty percent of the analysis units (59.52%), well ahead of other sources. Social media and movements get second place in terms of dominant presence (14.11%). Fishermen are shown as major players at 4.13 percent, ahead of experts (3.49%), the oil industry (3.41) and the hospitality industry (1.75%). Although reduced, it is noteworthy the appearance of celebrities supporting the cause against prospecting (1.23%), especially in the *Diario de Ibiza* (Graph 3).

Graph 3: Main actors as sources.



Source: Authors Data.

Identified results by newspapers are presented below:

4.1. *Diario de Ibiza*

The projects coverage by the Ibizan newspaper is based on presenting the risks, mainly for the environment, but also those related to economic sectors such as tourism and fishing. The argument with more weight is the environmentalist, in defense of the natural space and the risks for the fauna and the flora, especially if the oil surveys will be carried out (20.78%):

An alert study of the ecological threats of oil surveys (02/17/2011, p. 17).

The survey zone coincides 75% with the Mediterranean cetacean corridor (03/07/2014, p. 10).

Serra proposes that Unesco “prevents oil surveys to protect Posidonia” (10/25/2013, p. 9).

The risk of seeing the shores of Ibiza covered with oil spills also bypassed the coverage of exploratory surveys. References appear to Don Pedro, a merchant ship that sank in the port of Ibiza in July 2007, spilling oils and fuels. The spill of British Petroleum in 2010 in the Gulf of Mexico is also recalled: “The disaster in Mexico occurred in an exploratory survey” (01/15/2014, p. 3). The consequences that the development of the oil activity would have on the tourism model specify the economic risk (7.08%).

The employers of Ibiza asked Soria to avoid oil exploration (7/27/2013, p. 5).

A large oil spill could end tourism in the Pitiüses (08/15/2011, p. 4).

Fishermen warn that catches can drop between 30 and 70% (02/15/2014, p. 3).

13.81 percent of the texts present the framework that combines economic and environmental risks, considering that any disturbance, risk or loss of quality in natural resources implies a loss of competitiveness compared to other tourism destinations in the Mediterranean:

The Consell alleges that the dumping of the ‘Prestige’ would have a greater impact on the Pitiüses (05/25/2014, p. 4).

The closure of a Menorca beach by a spill would mean € 43,250 a day (05/25/2014, p. 4).

The presence in the coverage of this newspaper of positions favorable to oil exploration projects in the Gulf of Valencia, or that marginally, present their possible benefits from the economic point of view are scarce (1.65%). The Minister of Industry of the socialist government, Miguel Sebastián said they would be an “incentive for economic activity,” while from the national point of view they would have an obvious interest in the face of security of supply. Later, the Minister of Industry with the Popular Party (PP), José Manuel Soria, in his speech maintained the argument of energy dependence to move forward with the projects. Soria did not miss the opportunity to overstate the economic advantages of “oil extraction” by the generation of port, logistics, industrial, tourism and hospitality activity:

The permits “are compatible” with the rest of activities (03/19/2011, p. 3).

Soria reveals that Bauzá” knows “that there is no going back to oil surveys” (06/02/2014, p. 3).

Sometimes, it was decided to deny the arguments of the opposite party instead of presenting the reasons that would support a particular position. Thus, in some stories analyzed the denial of environmental risk (1.53%) or economic risk (0.72%), and the denial of economic benefit (0.83%) have prevailed. As an example of denial of environmental risk, the Professor of Geophysics at the Polytechnic University of Valencia, Francisco García, minimized the impact of the seismic campaign on dolphins: “The noise may be annoying to wildlife, but it is not harmful” (02/27/2014, p. 10).

In the units of analysis with social platforms and movements as the main actor, the economic benefit and the denial of economic and environmental risks do not appear. The exposure to environmental risks clearly dominates (36.02%). Also visible in the argumentation of the movements is the combination of the risk frames (9.94%), the economic risk (4.97%) and, to a lesser extent, the denial of the economic benefit (1.86%).

The importance of the environmental risk framework drops to 13.92 percent in the case of politicians as main actors; the combination of risks is more common (16.70%). The economic risk stands out in 6% of the pieces and the denial of the economic benefits in 0.64%. Unlike the movements, politicians defended the framework of economic benefit (2.78%), as well as underlining the denial of both environmental (1.71%) and economic (0.64%) risks.

4.2. Levante-EMV

The information that warn of the risk to the environment that the surveys would entail are present in one of every four units analyzed (26.77%), throughout the entire process and from a multitude of sources. In the Valencian case, the political class advocated from the outset the cause against exploration permits, together with environmentalists, who warned of the risk of “ecological catastrophe.” The environmental issue aroused an unusual political consensus and the candidate for Valencia Mayor from the Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE), Joan Calabuig, faced his party by positioning himself with other members of similar background against oil surveys authorized by the central government Socialist, arguing that the Mediterranean is a “very fragile and tremendously pressured by human presence:”

Cotino (PP) asks the minister to cancel the oil exploration (02/16/2011, p. 18).

Alarte (PSOE) faces the Government and opposes oil survey permits” (12/28/2010, p. 7).

The possibility that the surveys had an economic impact in sectors such as fishing or tourism is the other argument present (15.55%) and, in the same way as the environmental one, arises in the texts throughout the whole process. A multitude of actors refer to this threat:

The Ministry reiterates that it will not allow oil surveys to protect the fishing grounds (04/24/2011, p. 12).

The Consell Valencià de Cultura declares a clear position against oil exploration (02/26/2013, p. 12).

Cullera rejects the oil surveys in front of its coast (4/01/2011, p. 19).

The presence of the two risk frames (13.13%) has also been consistent, in texts in which some vagueness and lightness can be appreciated. In a few pieces, an informed explanation of the environmental or economic consequences of the surveys is detected. Only the presence of directly affected actors guarantees this consistency, such as: “The fishermen, who arrived from all the brotherhoods of the Region, recalled the irreversible damage that the start-up of the surveys would entail. The emission of sounds to more than 250 decibels will kill or scare away all fishing” (“More than 5,000 people reject oil surveys on the Columbretes Islands,” 02/23/2014, p. 29).

The denial of economic risk (2.53%) and environmental risk (3.54%) comes from pro oil extraction actors who, although they reject openly cataloging the granting of work as beneficial, bet on minimizing its impact. The delegate of the socialist government in the Valencian Community, Ana Botella, was “convinced” that the surveys would not pose an environmental hazard “because each of the six phases of the investigation would have to have approved its own environmental report” (“Bottle ensures that the surveys will be done with a ship and will not affect tourism,” 01/31/2011, p. 4). Under this form of impact denial, the situation of the Gulf of Valencia was compared to the state of California in the USA “where up to six perfectly visible oil rigs are built from the busy beaches without appearing to affect in the least the public presence” (*Levante-EMV*, 08/10/2011, p. 2).

10.61 percent of the stories present the economic benefits of the oil surveys. In this sense, for the State Government –at that time of the Popular Party– “in addition to contributing to strengthening the security of energy supply,” the high potential of exploration permits served as a complement to “activities already rooted in nearby areas” (“The Government will not cancel oil exploration on the Valencian coast,” 07/14/2013, p. 21). Expert voices, such as that of the Granada geologist Aurelio Jiménez, considered the rejection unfair: “The campaigns are a benefit for Valencia. Cairn is a company coming to invest and create employment, that easy” (02/14/2011, p. 12).

In the pieces with greater presence of movements and platforms, the use of the environmental risk framework stands out; only five percent make reference to the denial of benefit. When it is the administration or the political class is the main actor, environmental risk is also the most common but to a much lesser extent (24.59%), followed by the combination of approaches (18.03%), the economic risk (13.12%) and, in a little significant way the rejection of the economic benefit (0.82%). The economic benefit appears in 9.02 percent to which the denial of economic risk (3.28%) and environmental risk (3.28%) can be added. In total, 15.58 percent of the pieces citing politicians are in favor of oil survey permits.

4.3. Mediterráneo

The environmental risk is also the dominant framework in the Castellón newspaper (22.92%), highlighting the presence of the natural space of the Columbretes Islands as an element around which the story is articulated:

They study surveys near the Columbretes Islands (02/18/2011, p. 13).

The Supreme endorses surveys in the environment of Columbretes (02/23/2013, p. 70).

Economic risks are exposed in 15.57%, with special prominence of the possible impact of oil exploration in the fishing sector. The fishermen guilds sounded the alarm from the first moment of the risk.

Orero [president of the Federation of Fishermen’s Guilds in the province of Castellón] sees the polls as “throw firecrackers in the sea” (10/02/2011, p. 14).

Fishing fears polls for its impact in the 70s (02/23/2011, p. 15).

He also warned of the possible risk on tourism.

The PP says that tourism will pay the energy error (03/14/2011, p. 17).

Peñíscola businessmen fear that the oil surveys will reduce tourism (02/09/2014, p. 35).

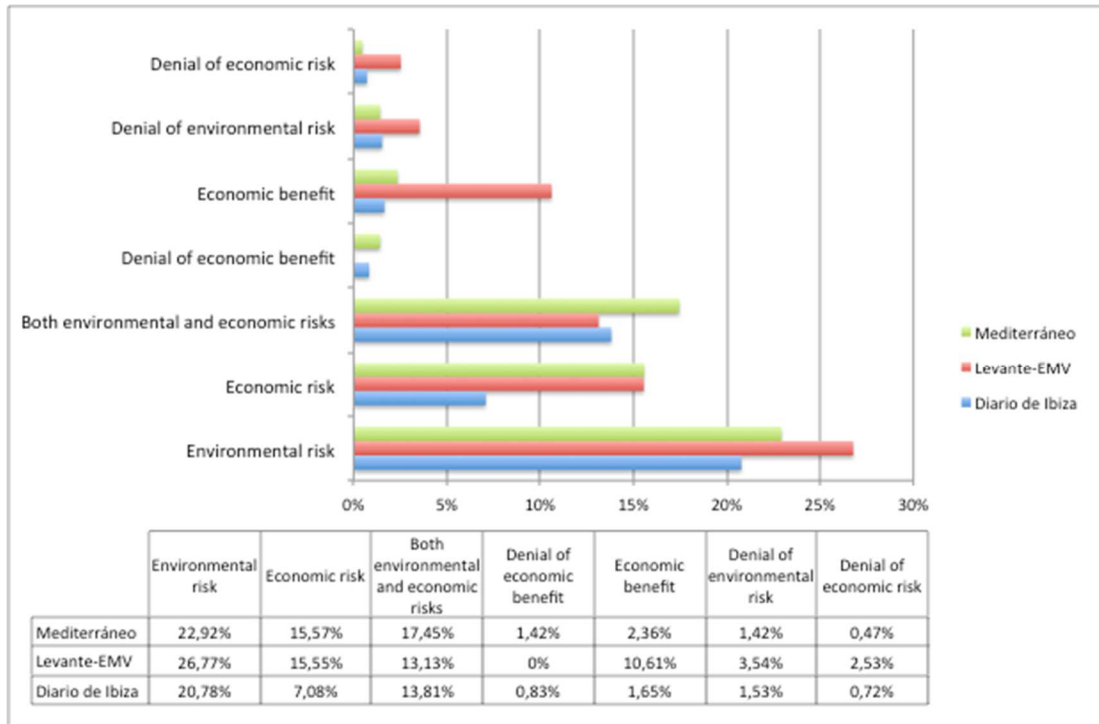
As an example of the combination of economic and environmental risk frameworks (17.45%), the Generalitat Valenciana referred, in its appeal against authorization to scientific studies prepared by “several universities” that endorsed the damage that the surveys could have on economic activities, mainly fishing and tourism, as well as the environmental impact on the “birdlife” of Columbretes: “The Consell resorts to oil surveys to avoid “the barbarity “(03/09/2011, p. 15).

To a lesser extent, the economic benefit of oil surveying (2.36%) and its denial (1.42%) are present; of environmental risk (1.42%) and economic risk (0.47%). The arguments in favor of hydrocarbon exploration surveys emphasize the reduction of energy dependence and the creation of wealth. This is how the director of a refinery said: “If there were oil in large quantities near the Community, it would be a source of wealth for Spain and the region. It would have to be removed in a way that does not contaminate. The means have to be put in place for it do it safely” (“Marín defends the search for oil,” 02/15/2012, p. 12). On the denial of impacts, some statements stand out in an interview with the then government delegate, Ana Botella, who assured that the oil surveys would not affect the marine reserve, fisheries or tourism (04/17/2014, p. 12-13).

The presentation of the possible impact on the environment dominates (28.57%) in the stories in which the movements and platforms are the main source or actor, followed by the combination of arguments (17.86%). The denial of economic benefit (3.57%) and economic risk (3.57%) also appears. Again, the most important argument in the units of analysis with politicians as an actor or preferred source is the one of risks, both environmental (26.72%) and economic (12.22%), together with the denial of economic benefit (0.76%). Equally important is the presence of the combination of arguments (14.50%). The presentation of the economic benefits of explorations (1.53%) and the denial of risk either economic (0.76%) or environmental (1.53%) is much lower.

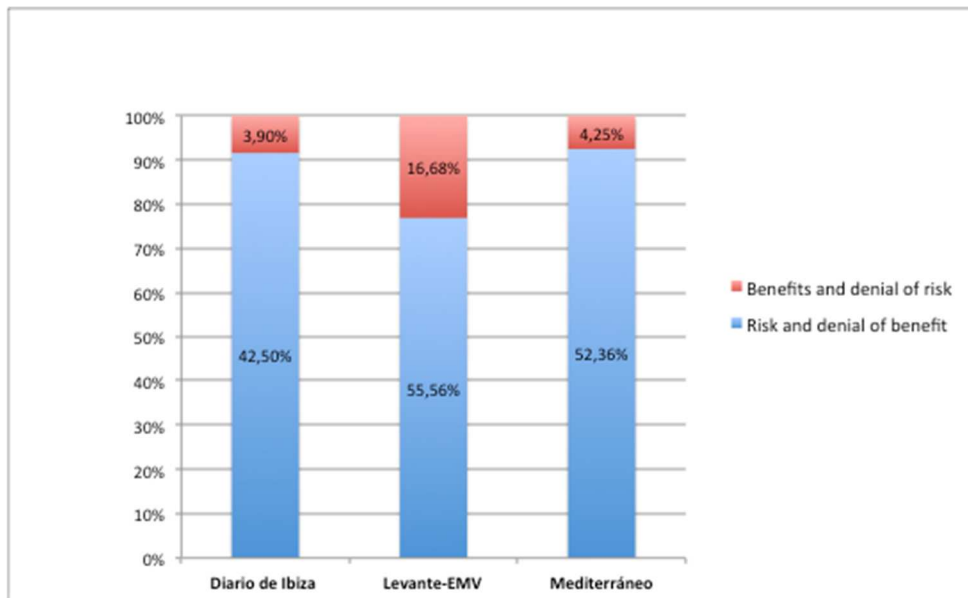
In the following graphs, the distribution of frames in the three newspapers (Graph 4) can be seen, as well as the prominent role of the risk frames versus those of benefit added with the different types found. This shows that the *Levante-EMV* newspaper dedicated the most space to pieces with the benefit frame (Graph 5).

Graph 4: Frames on economic benefits and environmental risks in *Diario de Ibiza*, *Levante-EMV* and *Mediterráneo* by percentages (%).



Source: Authors Data.

Graph 5: Total frames risks vs. benefits in *Diario de Ibiza*, *Levante-EMV* and *Mediterráneo*.



Source: Authors Data.

5. Discussion and conclusions

The possibility of carrying out an oil exploration project in the Gulf of Valencia was framed by the press of the affected areas mainly in terms of benefit/risk, especially as a risk to the environment. The three newspapers analyzed resorted mainly to political and administration sources, as well as to citizen organizations. In this sense, social mobilization was fundamental in the development of opposition to the hydrocarbon exploration project.

The social and civil opposition to the oil surveys project, although with unequal intensity, resulted in a citizen movement with the characteristics described by Taylor and Van Dyke (2006): opposition, intention and identity. The platforms arose with the firm intention of stopping, or at least slowing down, the progress of the surveys and of making known the environmental and economic consequences. As the process progressed, the groups grew and generated one of the fundamental elements in citizen mobilization: collective identity, especially in Ibiza. The Ibizan society saw its way of being attacked and sectors faced found ties of union to park traditional disagreements and fight against a common enemy (Sahuquillo & Mercado, 2018).

Both the political class and the administration and the social movements - the main sources and actors, by far - were inclined towards this argument. The speech frequently appealed to the collective imaginary of the affected societies, linked to natural places with high ecological and social value such as the Albufera in Valencia, the Columbretes islands in Castellón, or the entire island of Ibiza.

The appeal to environmental risk and the fear of a catastrophe leading to a new Prestige was more frequent than the one focused on presenting economic risks on the tourism or fishing sectors. The possible natural disaster favored a more global opposition than that of the impact on fishing, with greater difficulties to unite voices beyond those directly affected. Thus, while in the maritime neighborhood of Castellón a notable wave of visible opposition arose in the form of protest flags on the balconies, a few kilometers inland, the rejection was losing strength.

The journalistic coverage framing benefit/risk lacked depth. Rarely there are stories that exhaustively expose one or another position. On the contrary, it is more frequent to find information in which the rejection of surveys is justified in a generic way, for example, by the impact they would have on marine fauna and flora, without going into details. The low depth links with the selection of sources and the prominence of politicians in the coverage of energy policy that, as it has been proven in other studies (Mercado *et al.*, 2014, 2016, 2019; Rodríguez & Bezunartea, 2015), ends up displacing messages from agents with greater knowledge about a certain subject.

Rigorous information on the risks associated with conducting oil surveys would have required specialized sources. The message in the headings analyzed in this study, insisted on environmental risk but did not give an outstanding voice to experts, which confirms the politicization to which issues related to energy policy or the development of new energy sources are subjected. Similarly, there is a special contrast between the commitment to messages focused on the protection of the environment and natural resources and the scarce references to renewable energy or climate change. There is therefore no association between the rejection of hydrocarbon exploration and a commitment to a change in the energy model.

Since the granting of the oil survey permits, representatives of the political class and of the local administrations adopted a central role opposing the state project arguing both: environmental and economic impacts. A position that even generated confrontations within the political parties themselves, as it has happened in other energy issues such as in the use of hydraulic fracturing or fracking techniques (Mercado *et al.*, 2014). However, the fierce opposition shown by the Valencian and Balearic political class - especially the first - lacked in certain moments credibility. In the case of the Valencian Community, after the approval of

the permits by the PSOE, the regional government of the PP and the high positions of this political formation raised the flag of environmental conservation and the defense of tourism and fishing interests alerting of the possibility that the “beaches were filled with oil spills.” However, after passing the state government at the hands of the PP in 2011 and moving forward with the permits, the tone of the claims declined. The decrease in the volume of claims coincided especially with the company’s resignation from the permit called “Albufera” and which, as its name suggests, was very close to the Valencian natural park. With this desertion, the problem went a few miles offshore when the rest of the permits remained. This attitude gained special relevance in the speech of the *Levante-EMV* newspaper, sometimes focused on unmasking the lack of credibility of a regional government opposed to oil surveys with a long history of aggression against the land.

In the Balearic Islands the situation occurred in reverse. When the permits were granted to the Scottish multinational by the PSOE, it was this party that was ruling in the islands, so the opposition was not blatant. However, with the arrival of the PP to the central institutions the resistance was activated until the 2011 regional elections when the PP returned to the regional government control. But the global impact of the project on the island of Ibiza impacted even within the PP itself when the party’s guidelines at the national level –favorable to oil survey permits– came into conflict with the positions of the Ibizan PP which was allied with the opposition movements. The challenges to the orders of the party at the national level as well as some losses of militancy by the discrepancies by the surveys reflect the tremendous social impact of the question of the oil permits in Ibiza. The journalist of *Diario de Ibiza*, Joan Lluís Ferrer, has underlined the social consensus generated as: “There was a global social, political and business movement, something that never have been seen” (Sahuquillo, 2017, p. 153).

For the *Mediterráneo* journalist, Ramón Olivares, it was the social and citizen mobilization that raised the visibility of the issue (Sahuquillo, 2017) but, at the same time, this movement is not understood without the participation of the news media. These make it easier for organizations to reach beyond their closest circles, strengthen ties and achieve their goals. Even considering the use of the Internet and social networks, without the coverage of the newspapers analyzed, the opposition to the polls would not have reached the high level of presence and proven visibility. These reference newspapers in the territories were fundamental in the creation of a shared discourse and the formation of social mobilization identity against prospecting in the Gulf of Valencia.

Analyzing the origin, development and consolidation of these citizen organizations is one of the pending challenges in this study, taking into account the relationship of dependence between the micro and macro levels, as noted by Farré (2009). On the other hand, the set of external factors that affect the configuration of risk perception and the dominant opinion climate should be considered. According to Eurobarometer (European Commission, 2017), 459 of 2017, 92 percent of the citizens of the European Union (EU) consider climate change to be a serious problem and almost nine out of ten believe it is important for their national governments to set targets to increase use of renewable energies by 2030 (89%). On the other hand, at the micro level, Esplugas *et al.* (2014, p. 209) emphasize that to understand the social response to risk it is essential to take into account “the specific contexts in which people live and act, as a premise to understand their practical reasoning.”

Knowing social movements and their relations with the news media, the research could go beyond framing analysis to focus on how they were formed in the complex frame-building process (Vliegenthart & Van Zoonen, 2011; Brüggemann, 2014). In this frame building, the risk communication carried out by the administration that authorized the oil surveys should also be analyzed (Farré, 2006; Lundgren & McMakin, 2017; Heath *et al.*, 2018, 2019). As noted by Sandman *et al.* (2017), greater availability of information on environmental risks will result in

better coverage and, in the words of Dunwoody & Peters, (1992, p. 224), issues “with sufficient depth” will be addressed, avoiding superficiality or poor rigor.

To achieve this, as we have indicated previously, it is essential to have experts, who are greatly absent in the coverage of a technical issue such as energy. In the current analyzed case, both politicians and social movements managed to mark the terms of the debate on oil permit surveys and set the limits of the argument centered on the opposition to permits. This happened because some newsroom performed by their typical journalism role in the media agenda, and others by demonstrating their public opinion strength. The news media reproduced the narratives offered by politicians and social groups and, as result, both were fundamental for the promotion of the interests of these groups, one opposing the oil surveys, and the other for the construction of its identity against the common enemy. Although Sampedro (1997) highlighted how the media dilutes social protest by abiding by the journalistic rules that tend to validate the political class, in this case by aligning most politicians against oil survey permits, the message of the organizations was reinforced and amplified in the news media.

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