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### **Refugees without a harbour. Analysis of strategies and discourses above Open Arms in broadcast news**

### **Refugiados sin puerto. Análisis de estrategias y discursos en la información televisiva del caso Open Arms**

**Dates** | Received: 10/04/2020 - Reviewed: 03/06/2020 - In press: 09/06/2020 - Publicación final: 01/01/2021

#### **Abstract**

The study provides an analysis of media strategies and political discourses in news coverage by the Spanish broadcasters of the Open Arms case. This was the vessel of a Spanish NGO which rescued 124 people on the first of August 2019, and a further 39 ten days later. It remained at sea for almost three weeks, seeking a safe harbour. Employing a methodology based on quantitative and qualitative analysis, 175 news items of the generalist television channels in the evening edition of the daily news broadcast: TVE 1, Antena 3, Tele 5 and La Sexta, from 1 to 31 August 2019 were analysed. The categories examined were the format of each news item, its duration, the actors involved, their testimonies, style of presentation, the sources employed, the ranking as well as the most representative news-values, and the use of social networks. The main results and conclusions are as follows: extension of the news coverage of public television when compared with private media, conflicts between the Open Arms' spokesmen and the politicians, use of messages on social networks and visibility provided by the presence of a famous actor on this case.

#### **Keywords**

News broadcast; television; migration; refugees.

#### **Resumen**

*La investigación se centra en analizar las estrategias mediáticas y los discursos políticos en el tratamiento informativo en las cadenas de televisión en España del caso Open Arms, el barco de la ONG española que tras rescatar a 124 personas el 1 de agosto de 2019 y a otras 39, diez días después, permaneció durante casi tres semanas en el mar, reclamando un puerto seguro. La metodología consiste en un análisis cuantitativo y cualitativo de 175 noticias de las cadenas de televisión generalistas en su segunda edición de la noche: TVE 1, Antena 3, Tele 5 y La Sexta, en el período del 1 al 31 de agosto de 2019. Los parámetros examinados son: el formato de cada información, la duración, los actores que intervienen, sus declaraciones, el estilo de presentación, las fuentes utilizadas, la jerarquización así como los valores-noticia predominantes, y la utilización de redes sociales. Entre los resultados y las conclusiones destaca: la amplitud del tratamiento informativo de la televisión pública en comparación con los medios privados, los conflictos entre los portavoces del Open Arms y la clase política, el uso de los mensajes en redes sociales y la visibilidad que le confiere al caso la presencia de un actor famoso.*

#### **Palabras clave**

Informativos; televisión; migraciones; refugiados

## 1. Introduction

This research focuses on analysing news portrayals given by the Spanish television channels on the Open Arms, the Spanish NGO, which, on 1st August 2019 rescued 124 people and another 39 ten days later, highlighting for almost three weeks a high risk situation and calling for the need for it to dock in a safe port, after having been rejected by Italy and Malta. The aim of this was to reveal from a news perspective both the media strategies and political discourses in the news on the general-interest television channels in the evening news from TVE 1, Antena 3, Tele 5 and La Sexta in the period from 1<sup>st</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> of August 2019.

Both the fate of the Open Arms, and its predecessor the Aquarius, which docked a year previously in the port of Valencia, have placed the political management of migrant flows in the Mediterranean in the public arena, some movements “that highlight the difficulty or the incapability of the EU to take the human rights of immigrants seriously” (Arcos and Díez, 2018:18) as well as the rescue of migrants on the high seas, especially, in terms of identifying clear and precise rules about the responsibilities the states have, not just in terms of rescuing and providing humanitarian aid on the ships, but also regarding their duty of helping ships with refugees aboard disembark in their ports.

Here, these concern people adrift. Europe has become an unreachable land and this research concerns the agonizing crossing of a vessel in search of a safe port. According to the report from the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), a total of 18,990 migrants died or disappeared in the Mediterranean, out of which 15,570 died in the central Mediterranean between 2014 and 2019. Here we are talking about a flow of migrants which includes both those arriving in a country (immigrants) and those departing for another country (emigrants), in a determined period, according to how these terms are defined by the United Nations.

The media narrative is to construct the reality of these migrants and the tragedies in the Mediterranean are a big topic for them. Most research has dealt with how migrants and refugees have been portrayed in the media and printed press, as studied by Lorite in 2006 and more recently Fajardo and Soriano in 2016; Buraschi, and Fumero de León in 2019 or Castillo and Vallés also in 2019; but there are other works in the audiovisual field and radiophonics such as the narrative of hatred from Niñosles and Ortega in 2020.

On television, we can find research by (Igartua and Muñiz, 2004, 2006) and (Gifreu, 2006) both of which use quantitative and qualitative methodologies, the latter from a critical analysis of the narratives and the discursive mechanisms of migration policies as reflected by Van Dijk in 1997, Wodak and Meyer in 2003 and Casero in 2004, as well as the social discourses in which Bañón worked in 2019 or on the construction of otherness, including the gender perspective, according to Nash in 2005. Also, studies on migration on the social networks have proliferated with works such as those by Roncallo, Córdoba-Hernández and Durán Camero in 2019 on Aylan Kurdi in Twitter; the emergence of the populist political narrative by Alonso-Muñoz and Casero-Ripollés in 2018 or on the presence of the proactive NGO Open Arms in the Instagram of Martorell and Serra also in 2018.

Also, Peio M. Aierbe argues that most of the media plays tough in the field of politics, and immigration includes all the ingredients of a conflict. Hence the need for the different social agents to establish “a specific long-lasting policy, which minimises the negative effects of this reality” (Aierbe, 2006: 295).

Television makes its own characters, figures and myths; it creates stereotypes which narrows down, essentializes, naturalizes and marks differences as established by Hall in 1997. When unravelling their presence on the television, in registering current news, we can find studies linked with the theories of framing and agenda setting. In the comparative analysis, we discover that news on television presents immigration with greater spectacularisation and uses human interest in a particularly significant way (Igartua and Muñiz, 2004).

The comparative analysis of the same event on different television channels provides important research, especially in frontier conflicts and in the field of immigration and minority groups. In this comparative line in order to know the international effects of television news in 11 countries, Aalberg et al. in 2013 concluded that public channels provide greater international coverage while private ones focus on news termed as “soft”. They also state that this information is selected on the basis of national interests, as well as political and geographical relationships. In this contrasting research, works are included such as those by Jacobs, Meeusen and d’Haenens in 2016 or by Mistiaen in 2019. The latter compares the coverage given to immigrants by French-speaking television channels in Belgium.

Also, Daniel Dayan (2004) refers to the emotional dimension of the construction of news. These are not merely cognitive processes. Television images also have an essential dimension: they beckon us to look, by showing scenes of what is going on. This portrayal Brandle and Reilly (2019) considers to be conditioned

both by the country of origin of the migrants and by the nature of the event that may be considered from the point of view of legal restrictions or described as human interest or a humanitarian disaster.

When informing about frontiers, reports and maritime migrations, Dirk Godenau and Daniel Buraschi (2018) indicated two approaches: "security" and the "humanitarian". The former stresses the danger entailed in irregular flows of migrants. These people are portrayed as being a threat and they focus on the need for protecting oneself against the arrival of immigrants. The humanitarian approach however presents migrants as victims that must be rescued, or, for whom, one must at least show compassion. These positions may have an important impact on public opinion: the former could lead to panic and the general public could put pressure on the government to reinforce national frontiers and harden policies at the borders. Secondly, public opinion may demand a change in migrant policy, government intervention in rescue operations and their involvement in solidarity activity.

Proactiva Open Arms is one of the most committed non-governmental organizations to the cause of rescue in the Mediterranean. The organisation was founded by Óscar Camps in September 2015 to save refugees from the sea who had arrived in Europe, fleeing war, persecution or poverty, according to sources within the organisation itself. For practical purposes, this means the vigilance and rescue of vessels of people who need aid in the Aegean Sea and central Mediterranean.

This NGO is a member of the International Maritime Rescue Federation, supporting entity of Human Rights at Sea -an independent international platform for the preservation of human rights at sea - and is linked to the Department of Public Information of the United Nations.

As for funding, they state that since it was founded and until September 2017, the NGO received 3.6 million euros, as well as small donations from the private sector (96% comes from donations made by over 50,000 people and the remaining 4% comes from aid from official institutions or local authorities) "which allows it to have financial freedom. 94% of its budget went to direct action to make rescues and direct intervention at sea, while the remaining 6% went to covering general structural and communication expenses (Martorell and Serra, 2018: 85).

As for the audiovisual treatment of the migration phenomenon in the news, an all too typical picture is painted: the horror, desperation and plight of the migrant. Images of open boats, civil guards rerouting those who have survived, the lifeless bodies on the beaches, the proliferation of these poignant situations digs deep into the upsetting, dramatic and tragic reality of the migrant (López, 2012).

Ariet Castillo and Alba Vallés believe that in almost all the articles dedicated to the migration phenomenon, there is primarily a quantitative outlook, in which the reader is overwhelmed with figures on immigrant and/or refugee arrivals. This quantitative information prevails over that of a more qualitative nature in which the vital conditions, experiences, aspirations and motivations of the migrants are examined and which there is a distinct lack of in most publications (Castillo and Vallés, 2019: 83-84).

Moreover, they consider that one of the most significant points in terms of immigration and the refugee is the polarization of social discourse, which ranges from those who support giving them shelter and endorse a humanitarian outlook in defence of human rights as opposed to those who reject them on the basis of a supposed pull effect which would lead to an avalanche of immigrants and who label them as criminals.

Castillo and Vallés argue that this polarization affects the narrative on the rescue agents themselves and on humanitarian aid "which oscillates between the positions of saviours and traitors in which the interests of the migrants take precedence over 'national interest', when they are not seen as conspiring with human trafficking mafias" (Castillo and Vallés, 2019: 84).

The debate transcends the national arena and is within the policies of EU countries as regards the arrival of NGO rescue ships. "Although its stance does not necessarily assume taking them in, it does imply helping to fund this mechanism within a European context. Moreover, the categories of economic migrant and refugee are clearly delimited" (Castillo and Vallés, 2019: 84).

In fact, Bañón argues that there has been a displacement in the narratives linked to migrants since:

*"when emotion is the only basis for the social discourse on refugees, the immediate reaction may be more intense, but medium and long term knowledge of the reality becomes notably lacking. In any event, it is true that the appearance of emotive images of families crossing frontiers and even of children who have died in the crossing has made the public take a more in-depth outlook on the complexity of the migration reality. The frontier and crossing have really come to the forefront, as opposed to the arrival, the phase that the media typically prefer". (Bañón, 2019: 357-358).*

## 1.1. Media cases of tragedies in the Mediterranean

On the 3rd of October 2013, Lampedusa became news. That day, 500 immigrants at last spotted the island from the ship in which they had crossed the Mediterranean from Libya. They set light to a blanket to ask for help but the fire engulfed the whole ship. 368 people were drowned at the doorstep of the old continent. The tragedy shocked Europe but its "shame" did not start or finish then.

Another case we faced was the drama in the Mediterranean which focused on the image of little Aylan Kurdi, when, on the 3rd of September 2015, a phenomenon occurred which we called "global front pages" an event which became highly important, whose presentation was, overall, in keeping with its significance. This was the image captured by the photographer, Nilufer Demir, from the Dogan News Agency and distributed by the AFP agency. In the image, a three-year-old child, identified as Aylan Kurdi, wearing a red shirt and blue shorts, is seen lying lifelessly on the Turkish beach of Ali Hoca Burnu.

With him, his five-year-old brother Galib, his 35-year-old mother, Rihan and an 18-year-old also died. Their inflatable dinghy had left the night of the 1st of September from the Bodrun peninsular in the south-east of Turkey heading for the Greek island of Kos. It was the third time his family had tried to flee from the Syrian war and to seek asylum in Canada, where other relations of theirs resided.

In 2017 Estrella Israel and Ricardo Pomares analysed the impact of television on this case and the excessive use of the image of the child and in 2019 Sergio Roncallo, Ana María Córdoba-Hernández, and Marcela Durán Camero examined its transcendence on Twitter and felt that this was most often framed as "humanitarian" with 982 tweets which focused on the displacement conditions of the refugees and how their basic needs were being met. A second group was made up of 902 tweets in the category "social framework", which drew together solidarity campaigns with the refugees and their standards of living in Europe. Finally, we found 502 tweets under the category "political framework" which referred to the treatment of the immigration crisis both on a diplomatic level and in terms of domestic policies" (Roncallo et al, 2019: 136).

For (Godenau and Buraschi, 2018) this case highlighted the capacity the social networks have for creating alternative narratives to the institutional discourses on migrations and frontiers. The image of Aylan has been reused, given a new meaning and interpreted creatively in hundreds of campaigns, initiatives, performances and cartoon strips and decried the European inability to tackle the refugee crisis.

We also see the transforming power of the image which "has acquired a political dimension, transcending mere news, and as an element for making personal and group statements" (Andrés, Nos-Aldás and García Matilla, 2016: 35). In this narrative, one should be aware of other research, also on social networks, such as that by Valdez, Arcila and Jiménez in 2019, an analysis of 1469 tweets in which the negative view of immigrants prevailed and in which they were portrayed as being a threat. Other authors such as Dekker and Engbersen (2014) provided a supplementary view on the general use of social networks and these new communication channels in their capacity to help migration.

The three analytical dimensions: humanitarian, social-solidarity and political have been set out both for the Aquarius and the Open Arms although they come to different conclusions. In both cases, the concepts of migrant and refugee are used indistinctly. In this respect, the confusion in terminology may be taken advantage of in political narrative, since by making generalizations, for example, the expression migrant can "diffuse national and international political responsibility when taking in refugees. It is also true that one must be wary as the term "refugee" has been overused, since this may detract from the seriousness of requests for asylum and the status of the refugees themselves" (Bañón, 2019: 358).

The precedent of the case we are concerned with is the fate of the ship Aquarius from the French NGO SOS Méditerranée, accompanied by the Italian ships Nave Dattilo and Orione after the Italian and Maltese authorities refused to let them dock in their ports. 629 migrants were on the ships who came from 31 countries, mainly in Africa (although there were others such as Afghanistan and Pakistan) and who had largely been rescued at sea and off the Mediterranean coast to be transferred later on to the ships.

On 17th of June 2018, they arrived in Valencia, after the Spanish government decided to take them in when Italy and Malta had barred their ports to them. They were 629 people from 25 countries, 73 of which were (unaccompanied minors) and another 10 were minors with their families. The vast majority, 545, were men, and 84 were women. Unprecedented human and logistical resources were deployed to receive them; one year later, out of the 629 migrants onboard the Aquarius, 480 of them, (61 of whom were unaccompanied minors) were trying to make a living in 14 Spanish regions and another 80 were in France. Meanwhile, the other 69 either gave up or left the national protection programme for shelter and integration, according to data from the Ministry of Work, Migrations and Social Security.

The differences in migration policies is patent as seen in the fate of the Aquarius in Valencia when the Spanish president, Pedro Sánchez wrote a tweet on 11th of June 2018: "I've given instructions for Spain to take in the ship # Aquarius in the port of Valencia. It is our duty to provide a safe port to these 600 people. We will comply with our international commitments to helping ease the humanitarian crisis". Also, the Italian Minister of the Interior, Matteo Salvini, answered on Twitter: "Victory. 629 migrants aboard the ship Aquarius heading for Spain. First Objective achieved".

## 2. Methodology

The main objective of this project was to determine the features of the coverage of the Open Arms in televised news in Spain and to set some guidelines for analysis which would enable the coverage of the news, political presence, discourse strategies and the humanitarian dimension to be valued and compared. Later on came a study of: who was involved as stakeholders; how narratives and communication strategies were expressed, to what extent did they experience confrontation; how was the news organised into a hierarchy and in what format; the use of social networks in the news; the sources used and the total times and percentages dedicated by each channel to this event.

To determine the different coverage on television we set out the following hypothesis:

H1- The public channel gave greater coverage to the case of the Open Arms than did the private ones

H2 -The political narrative prevailed over the humanitarian one in this case

H3 -News on this migration drama included messages from the social networks

In this research, a quantitative and qualitative analysis was made in accordance with Casetti and Di Chio (1999), of audiovisual information concerning the Open Arms broadcast from 1<sup>st</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> August, the period in which the crossing occurred. The methodological research on the contents and the assessment value of the data took into account studies by De Haro (2014), Díaz Arias and González Conde (2015) and Igartua and Muñoz (2004 and 2005).

This study includes the 175 news reports provided by the four television channels with most ratings in Spain: Telecinco, La Sexta, Antena 3 and TVE 1, according to the Estudio General de Medios/General Study on Media (EGM). This was mainly done to check whether there were any differences in coverage from the public and private television channels. The project focused on analysing the second edition of the news, evening-night, which is that which is most watched, bearing in mind the ratings data from the EGM and to seek coherence in coverage in the same edition for all news. In total, 22 reports were examined from Monday to Friday over four weeks of the month, because at the weekend the format of the news is different with less time-specific topics and reduced times according to scheduling.

When this study was drawn up, all news were watched with a sheet for each report, identifying them with the channel on which they appeared, date, format and duration. Moreover, we set out a range of analysis areas in more detail:

- Indicators related to how each story was reported according to genre, format and how they were organised into a hierarchy within each news programme. This enabled us to check how each story was presented, whether it was a news piece, voice-over (a picture with the speaker off-camera), a report, statements or live news. Meanwhile, we observed whether they appeared as highlighted in summaries, or in the opening stories of the news to determine the importance given to each piece of news.
- Indicators related to the stakeholders who appeared in each report. These analysed the characters and where they came from, whether they were politicians, from the NGO the Open Arms and their milieu, or media stars like famous actors or sports personalities. The aim of this was to determine their presence and status, such as, for example, whether they belonged to the Spanish or Italian governments, from the opposition parties or the European Union and in what proportion they appeared, who the most outstanding stakeholders were and how they built their discourse strategies.
- Indicators on the use of the social networks in news, especially in Twitter messages which became a declaratory source and were placed on par with appearances on camera. In this study we made a real transcription of each of these tweets which were used as a first order news item. All of this enabled us to discover the main arguments in each narrative and the language used to depict a conflict by means of the most used words.

- Indicators linked to the sources used to find out where the images came from, whether they were their own ones or taken from television agencies or from the NGO itself, and the media used for presentations, as well as how they were staged with the help of graphs and computer graphics. Also, we looked at the noticeability criteria for the information as a whole, observing the prevalence of the value of the image with all its emotional and dramatic components.
- Indicators on duration and time measurements. The time dedicated to each statement and presence was consigned in order to establish a comparative proportion between the stakeholders and the television channels and the total and proportional time dedicated to covering this event by each of the media analysed.

### 3. Results

The use of a format in audiovisual media marks the style in which information is provided. It also helps us understand how news is presented to an audience and how it is organised into a hierarchy within the broader perspective of “television news”, a term which has popularized news from the first channel, TVE 1.

#### 3.1. Formats and hierarchy

Public television news opened with the Open Arms story on four occasions and it was the media which gave this event most importance in its news space. Afterwards came Antena 3, in two days, followed by Telecinco and La Sexta, in just one opportunity.

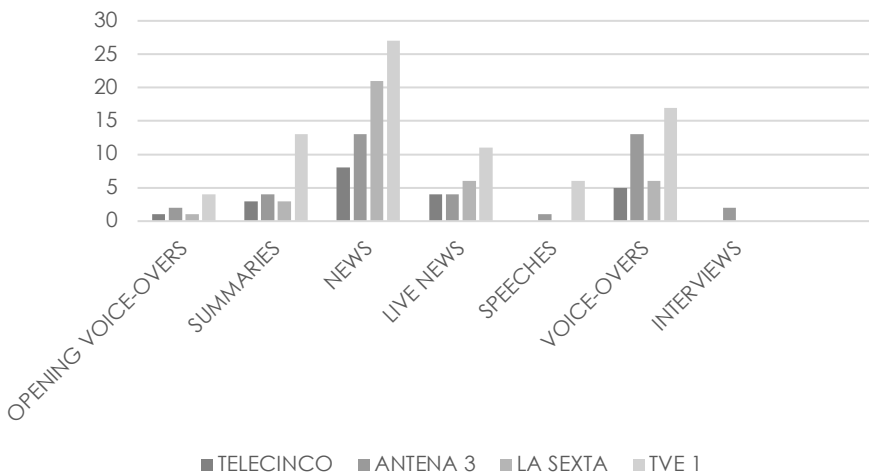
Also, this was not just in the voice-overs of the openings. That is, in the images which opened the news, but also in the use of summaries at the top of the basic outlines. TVE 1 had 13 summaries, well ahead of Antena 3, with 4; and Telecinco and La Sexta, with just 3 throughout the whole period analysed.

As for the development of the investigation, we saw that the news format was the most used one in all television channels and TVE1 was ahead of La Sexta, Antena 3 and Telecinco, just like in the live news and the voice-overs.

One striking point is Antena 3 used a format that no other channel used. This was an interview on the television set. Also, it did this twice, once with an external connection with the director of the NGO Open Arms, Óscar Camps; and the other time with the leader of Unidas Podemos, Pablo Iglesias, at the studio itself, although this point was the last one considered by the presenter after focusing the interview on the possibilities back then of creating a new coalition government in Spain.

In Figure 1, we can see both the hierarchy of the news on the Open Arms and the different formats used by each television channel.

**Figure 1. Comparison of formats on each television channel**



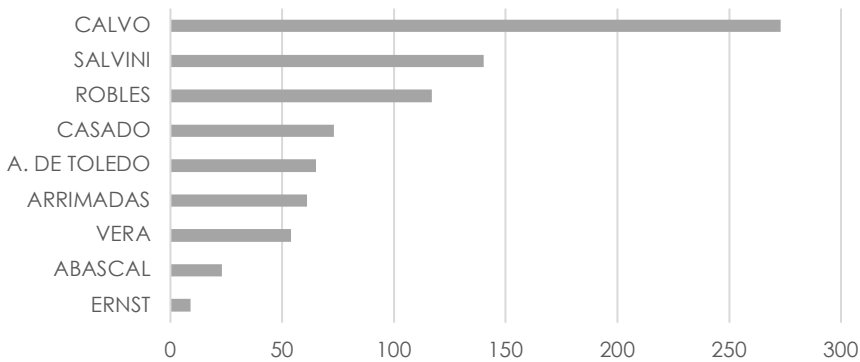
Source: prepared by the author

### 3.2. Analysis of stakeholders

A fundamental part of this research was an analysis of the politicians involved in the news and how they built their narratives and discourse strategies when focusing on the Open Arms case. Firstly, we looked at the number of times they appeared in the news.

In this way, we can see in Figure 2 that the Vice-President of the government in the period under observation, Carmen Calvo, was who appeared most often in the news, with a great difference in relation to other speakers such as the Italian Minister of the Interior, Matteo Salvini; and well ahead of other members of the Spanish government such as the Minister of Defence, Margarita Robles. The study reflects the marked presence of the leader of the PP, Pablo Casado, and the Spokesperson of his party in congress, Cayetana Álvarez de Toledo. Below, there appears the leader of Ciudadanos, Inés Arrimadas, and afterwards the spokeswoman of Unidas Podemos, Noelia Vera, and, to a lesser extent, the leader of VOX, Santiago Abascal. The silence from the European Union such as from its Spokesman, Tove Ernst, is highly significant.

Figure 2. Presence of the most outstanding politicians



Time in seconds. Source: prepared by the author

In Table 1, we can see in detail, all the politicians who appeared in the period under analysis, the month of August 2019. The politicians who appeared as representatives of the Spanish government were: the Vice President, Carmen Calvo; the Italian Minister of the Interior, Matteo Salvini; the Minister of Defence, Margarita Robles; the Government Spokeswoman, Isabel Celaá; the Minister of Development, José Luis Ábalos; the Treasury Minister, María Jesús Montero; the Minister of Work, Magdalena Valerio and the Minister of the Economy, Nadia Calviño.

The representatives of the political parties from Partido Popular were its Chairman and leader, Pablo Casado; the Spokeswoman in congress, Cayetana Álvarez de Toledo; the Vice-Secretary for Communication, Pablo Montesinos; the President of the Regional Government of Andalucía, Juanma Moreno and the Mayor of Algeciras, José Ignacio Landaluze.

Table 1. Appearances by politicians from the Spanish and Italian governments

	TELECINCO	ANTENA 3	LA SEXTA	TVE 1	TOTAL
CALVO	3 times 21"	7 times 52"	18 times 164"	5 times 36"	33 times 273"
SALVINI	3 times 16"	8 times 52"	4 times 37"	5 times 35"	20 times 140"
ROBLES	3 times 21"	6 times 35"	5 times 40"	3 times 21"	17 times 117"
CELAA	0	1 time 3"	1 time 10"	0	2 times 13"
ÁBALOS	1 time 4"	2 times 19"	1 time 3"	1 time 11"	5 times 37"
MONTERO	0	0	0	1 time 7"	1 time 7"
VALERIO	1 time 6"	0	0	0	1 time 6"
CALVIÑO	0	0	0	1 time 9"	1 time 9"

Source: prepared by the author

Regarding the political parties, in Ciudadanos there was the Deputy Mayor of Madrid, Begoña Villacís; the Spokesman for the Madrid Assembly, Ignacio Aguado; the Deputy Spokesperson, César Zafra; the National Representative, Marcos de Quinto and the Catalan Parliament Representative, Nacho Marfín.

Representing Unidas Podemos was the leader, Pablo Iglesias, albeit this was in a general interview on the formation of a new coalition government, which was not taken into account in the charts; the Secretary and Representative of the party, Pablo Echenique; the representatives, Irene Montero, Ione Belarra and Noelia Vera and the member of the Lower Chamber, Antón Gómez-Reino.

Also as, can be seen in Table 2, there were voices from other political parties such as the Representative of Compromís, Joan Baldoví, and the Coordinator of Izquierda Unida, Alberto Garzón; and representing VOX, their leader, Santiago Abascal and their Spokesman in congress, Iván Espinosa de los Monteros.

	TELECINCO	ANTENA 3	LA SEXTA	TVE 1	TOTAL
CASADO	2 times 11"	2 times 13"	3 times 28"	2 times 21"	9 times 73"
A. DE TOLEDO	0	3 times 14"	4 times 30"	3 times 21"	10 times 65"
MONTESINOS	0	1 time 9"	0	1 time 8"	2 times 17"
MORENO	0	2 times 5"	1 time 10"	0	3 times 15"
LANDALUCE	0	0	1 time 7"	0	1 time 7"
ARRIMADAS	0	3 times 17"	3 times 35"	1 time 9"	7 times 61"
VILLACÍS	0	1 time 6"	1 time 9"	1 time 10"	3 times 25"
AGUADO	1 time 4"	1 time 6"	1 time 7"	1 time 12"	4 times 29"
DE QUINTO	0	0	0	0	0
MARTÍN	0	2 times 5"	0	0	2 times 5"
ZAFRA	0	1 time 7"	0	1 time 9"	2 times 16"
IGLESIAS	0	Interview 57"	0	0	Interview 57"
ECHENIQUE	0	1 time 7"	0	1 time 8"	2 times 15"
IRE.MONTERO	0	0	0	0	0
VERA	0	1 time 5"	2 times 25"	2 times 24"	5 times 54"
BELARRA	0	1 time 6"	3 times 21"	1 time 3"	5 times 30"
GOMEZ REINO	0	0	0	0	0
BALDOVÍ	0	0	1 time 3"	0	1 time 3"
GARZÓN	0	0	0	0	0
ABASCAL	0	1 time 4"	1 time 9"	1 time 10"	3 times 23"
MONTEROS	1 time 4"	0	0	0	1 time 4"

Source: prepared by the author

In Table 3, we can see that the representatives of the European Union are those who appear the least, they have very limited visibility and those who do appear are the President of the European Parliament, David Sassoli; and the Spokeswoman of the Commission, Annika Breidthart and the EU Spokesman Tove Ernst.

**Table 3. Appearances by representatives of the European Union**

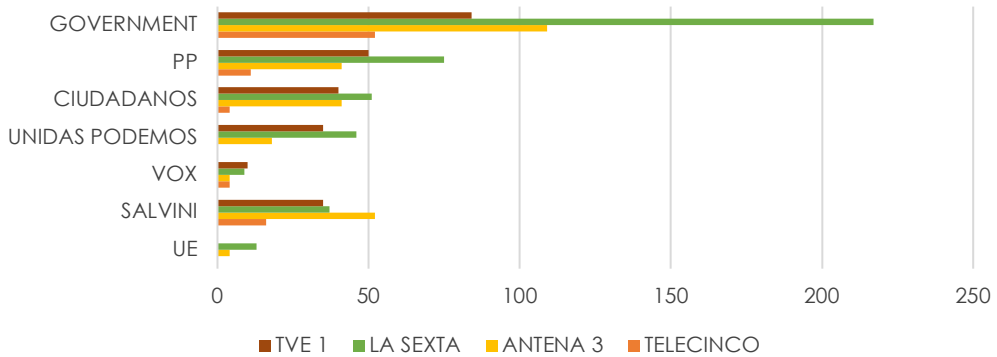
	TELECINCO	ANTENA 3	LA SEXTA	TVE 1	TOTAL
SASSOLI	0	0	0	0	0
ERNST	0	1 time 4"	1 time 5"	0	2 times 9"
BREIDTHART	0	0	1 time 8"	0	1 time 8"

Source: prepared by the author

In the analysis of the figure 3, we have compared the politicians by blocks in order to determine the importance of their appearances within the whole from the four television channels.



**Figure 3. Comparison between Government politicians and the opposition**



Source: prepared by the author

Also, apart from the politicians, the visibility of other parties involved in the news must be analysed: these were the stakeholders of the Open Arms and their milieu. That is, the representatives of other NGOs. The aim of this was to determine which voices were heard most.

In Table 4 we can see that the most outstanding person was the Director of the NGO Open Arms, Óscar Camps, who almost appeared five times more than other members of the organisation. After him came the head of the mission, Anabel Montes, and the captain of the ship, Marc Reig. Moreover, the same channel used a statement from a member of the crew of the Ocean Viking, Marc Carbonell, from another rescue ship.

Telecinco was the channel which dedicates least time to appearances of members of the crew of the ship, and in its news reports also appear Camps and Montes, the representative of the press team of the NGO, Mar Sabé, and the Director of the Open Arms in Italy, Ricardo Gatti. Meanwhile, La Sexta used statements from the psychologist of the NGO, Emergency, Alessandro di Benedetto.

TVE 1 was the channel which used most voices from the migrants themselves and in a very diversified environment with statements given by a range of humanitarian groups. So, there were stakeholders such as that from the ship doctor, Iñaki Urrusolo; the President of Médicos Sin Fronteras (MSF), David Noguera, or its Spokesperson for External Relations, Raquel González, and the Spokesperson for the Spanish Commission for Aid to Refugees (CEAR), Jaume Durà.

**Table 4. Appearances by stakeholders from the Open Arms and its milieu**

	TELECINCO	ANTENA 3	LA SEXTA	TVE 1	TOTAL
CAMPS	4 times 24"	7 times 42" + 218" interview	20 times 234"	6 times 69"	37 times 587"
MONTES	1 time 3"	7 times 42"	6 times 29"	1 time 19"	15 times 93"
REIG	0	0	0	4 times 62"	4 times 62"
URRUSOLO	0	0	0	1 time 14"	1 time 14"
SABÉ	1 time 4"	0	0	0	1 time 4"
GATTI	1 time 8"	0	1 time 8"	0	2 times 16"
NOGUERA	0	1 time 10"	0	2 times 10"	3 times 20"
BENEDETTO	0	0	4 times 22"	0	4 times 22"
GONZÁLEZ	0	0	0	1 time 8"	1 time 8"
DURÀ	0	0	0	1 time 7"	1 time 7"
MIGRANTES	0	0	0	11 times 88"	11 times 88"
CARBONELL	0	1 time 7"	0	0	1 time 7"

Source: prepared by the author

Finally, we believed that in this study it is interesting to see in Table 5, the analysis of the media stakeholders or celebrities who, with their solidarity, helped to highlight the situation of the migrants aboard. The most striking case was the visit made to the ship by the actor Richard Gere, who flew from Rome with the founder of the Open Arms, Óscar Camps, according to the report on TVE 1. The actor gave out supplies, ate and lived with the migrants, showed photos of his little child on his mobile phone, made selfies and was the most heard voice calling for solidarity to seek a safe port. In fact, his visit to the Open Arms opened the news that day, the 9th of August 2019, and put this news at the forefront.

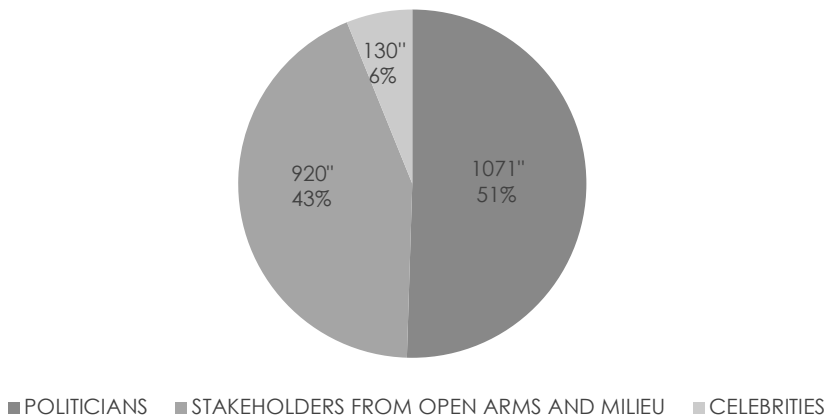
**Table 5. Appearances by celebrities**

	TELECINCO	ANTENA 3	LA SEXTA	TVE 1	TOTAL
GERE	2 stats 20"	4 stats 29"	4 stats 27"	1 stat 17"	11 times 93"
BARDEM	1 stat 4"	1 stat 3"	2 stats 20"	1 stat 8"	5 times 35"
BANDERAS	0	1 stat 2"	0	0	1 time 2"

Source: prepared by the autor

Other actors such as Javier Bardem and Antonio Banderas also collaborated to highlight this migrancy problem, and also the image of the basketball player, Marc Gasol, was used, although he didn't speak. All this coverage by the media occupied very little space compared with that for the politicians and the representatives of the Open Arms, just as can be seen in Figure 4, but their image was a determining factor in focusing and shedding light on the phenomenon of people languishing in the Mediterranean crossing.

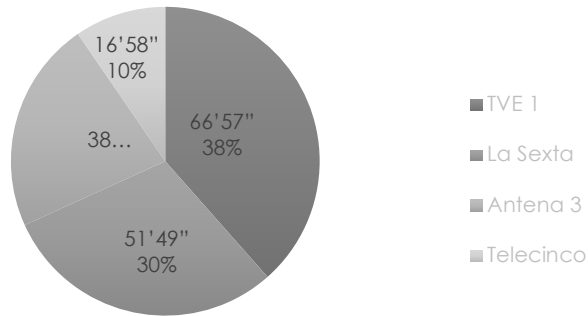
**Figure 4. Total times and percentage of politicians, from Open Arms and celebrities**



Times in seconds and total percentages. Source: prepared by the author

Also, in Figure 5 the distribution of total time can be seen and the percentage dedicated by each channel analysed in the coverage of this rescue.

**Figure 5. Total times and percentage of coverage in the Open Arms case on television channels**



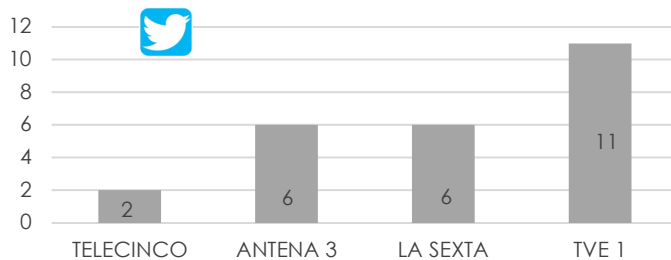
Times in seconds and total percentages. Source: prepared by the author

### 3.3. Use of social networks

Messages on the social networks has become a source for televised news. It has become ever more typical to see opinions given by all kinds of stakeholders, especially on Twitter. The media include these points of view and incorporate them into stories as if they were statements. They appear in text, and sometimes they are marked or translated such as in the case of the Minister of the Interior, Matteo Salvini.

Above all, the channels used the tweets by the Italian minister, Salvini, the Director of the Open Arms, Óscar Camps, and different leaders from Unidas Podemos, such as the representatives, Irene Montero, Ione Belarra, Antón Gómez-Reino and Pablo Echenique; and the Coordinator of Izquierda Unida, Alberto Garzón also appeared as well as the Representative for Ciudadanos Marcos de Quinto. TVE 1 used a tweet from the Maltese Prime Minister, Joseph Muscat. The public channel, as can be seen in Figure 6, was the one which most used this formula of social networks, Antena 3 and La Sexta used it to an equal extent and Telecinco was the channel which least used it.

**Figure 6. Number of tweets used by TV channels**



Source: prepared by the author

Apart from quantifying the number of tweets, it would be interesting to describe their contents, as will be seen below:

#### TVE 1

- Salvini "The instructions I gave them were they were forbidden to enter our waters and they were encouraged to sail towards Spain".

- "Timidity? calls to false notions about humanity" Open ports? Land for thousands of people?

Not over my dead body, Italy, stand strong!"

- "Do you know why everyone is against Salvini? Because he closed the migration fishing ground"
- Camps (about Calvo) "I often don't know if it's really her talking or a ventriloquist".
- Echenique "The next government cannot threaten the NGOs".
- Irene Montero "If Carmen Calvo does not take back what she said, the government at least should".
- Gómez-Reino "We agreed with Sánchez a year ago, now we hope the Sánchez of 2019 also does". Also, there was the tweet from Sánchez stating "The government of Rajoy must attend to the ship @openarms\_fund and commit themselves to a policy of dignified cooperation and humanitarian aid in the European Union".
- Garzón "The government cannot remain as an accomplice in the deaths in the Mediterranean. We demand they help @openarms\_fund and cease acting like the far right party of Salvini on this matter".
- De Quinto "The merciful left theocracy burns at the stake anyone who dares utter the slightest criticism of the Open Arms or any of its well-fed passengers (who paid the mafia to transport them). But woe betide anyone who dare mention the famine from the exodus in Venezuela.
- Muscat "Malta will transfer these people to the navy outside Maltese waters, which will take them to land. All migrants will be relocated in other member states: France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, Portugal and Romania. None will remain in Malta".

### ANTENA 3

- Salvini "Italian territorial waters will be barred to the Open Arms and we are prepared to seize the ship". "Working at the ministry to prevent over 500 migrants aboard the two NGOs, one French and the other Spanish, from disembarking". "Reopening of ports and dining rooms?, Over my dead body!" The only "inhumanity" is those who, stuttering and backing away, promote the filthy business of illegal immigration".
- NGO OA "We have spent 18 days caring for and sheltering 107 people who were rescued from certain death # while Europe sat on the fence. And today too, it is our priority to protect their rights, because they are people not chess pieces and they need immediate care".
- Camps (about Calvo) "I often don't know if it's really her talking or a ventriloquist".
- Sassoli "If Europe cannot protect those in dire straits in the Mediterranean, people who have come searching for a better life, it has become soulless and heartless".

### TELECINCO

- Camps (about Calvo) "I often don't know if it's really her talking or a ventriloquist".
- Belarra "I wish Carmen Calvo had been half as hard with Salvini as she is being with the Open Arms and the migrants aboard. It is very dangerous to mistake your enemy".

### LA SEXTA

- Salvini "The security decree, more police powers, more border controls, more people to arrest members of the mafia and rackets, that is the law. I thank the Italians and the Holy Virgin Mary".
- "In the next few hours I will sign (my decree to forbid the landing) because I do not want to be an accomplice to trafficking".
- "The head of the outpatients ward in Lampedusa said that out of the 13 shipwrecked people disembarked "for medical reasons" from the Open Arms, one had otitis and the others were well".
- "Thanks to the bakers of La Spezia who gave me this wonderful cake... the Italians come first".
- NGO OA "At last a bit of good news. Supplies have arrived at the #OpenArms and we have an exceptional member of crew (an allusion to Richard Gere).
- Camps (about Calvo) "I often don't know if it's really her talking or a ventriloquist".

As can be seen, the television uses above all the tweets from the Italian Minister of the Interior, Matteo Salvini. It is a way of expressing his point of view without needing to make statements taken from other sources. Also, in all messages, he expresses his refusal to allow the ship to disembark in any nearby port. He puts all responsibility on the Spanish government, uses highly populist language and claims to defend security for the Italians. In contrast to this, are all the opinions in the other messages in which the need is expressed to seek a safe port for those aboard the ship.

The media also reproduce the tweets on this social network from the founder and Director of the Open Arms, Óscar Camps, especially as regards his confrontation with the narrative of the Vice-President of the Spanish government, Carmen Calvo. Both become entrenched in a battle of accusations about whether the ship is authorized for rescuing work and about the supposed relinquishment of powers of the Executive of Pedro Sánchez in managing the crisis. Moreover, in general terms, remarkable are phrases from the politicians from Unidas Podemos, who showed their support for the migrants and their disappointment in the attitude of the Spanish government they see as being a contemplative one.

Particularly noteworthy, on TVE 1 it can be seen that there is a greater range of tweets between different political parties, seeking greater plurality although not all appear, and also one is used from the Maltese Prime Minister, Joseph Muscat, on the distribution of migrants in different countries. The clash in the different points of view in the tweets is also reflected on public television.

Antena 3 highlights a message from David Sassoli, President of the European Parliament, the only one that appears from the EU institutions in this analysis and shows a position that is highly favourable to finding a solution for the people aboard the ship. La Sexta focuses on the arguments between Salvini and the members of the NGO and Telecinco is the channel which uses the least tweets and, strangely, none from the Italian Prime Minister.

One of the ways migrancy is framed is the political narrative. From their positions and controversy different stances, even antagonistic ones, can be seen in terms of migrants. In this study and in order to understand the politicians involved with the media, it would be advisable, with Figure 7, to review and compare the narratives made in the manifestos of the five main Spanish political parties for the elections on the 28th April 2019, which makes patent the polarisation there was.

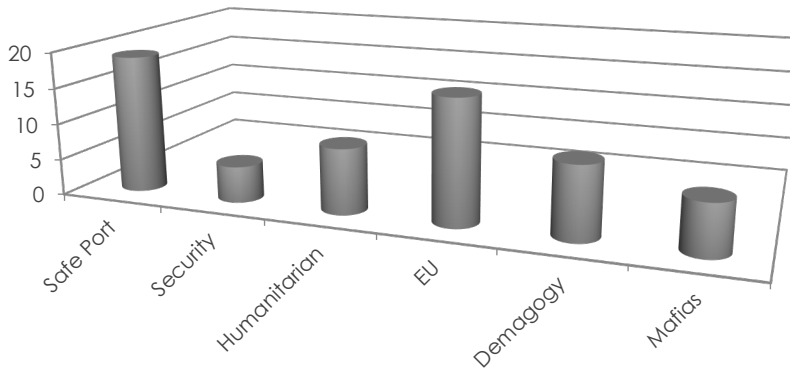
**Figure 7. Messages from the manifestos of the political parties in Spain**



Source: prepared by the author

In the language of the representatives, we have traced in Figure 8 the words most used in the news, from transcriptions of all the statements from the stakeholders appearing in each report, and, as a result, we saw that the expression "safe port" was the most used one. This was followed by "European Union" to which there was an attempt to transfer the entire burden of migration policy, and the expression "demagoguery" inherent to the policy debate created and the fit-for-tat accusations between the government and the opposition for the drifting ship in the Mediterranean. Other words such as "humanitarian", "mafias" and "security" also had certain protagonism, albeit they were secondary.

Figure 8. The words most used in the news



Source: prepared by the author

### 3.4. Analysis of the sources

Another issue this research delves into is the use of sources. We asked where the pictures came from and whether their origin had been identified. TVE 1 was the only channel which sent a team of its own, with reporter, graphics reporter and sound specialist aboard the ship. The reporter, Yolanda Álvarez, was the one who made most coverage with Joaquín Relañó and Nacho Cañizares in charge of pictures and sound. Afterwards, at the end, the reporter Raquel Navarro appeared, in substitution of Yolanda Álvarez.

In any event, while the public channel used its own resources, the remaining channels mainly used pictures from unidentified agencies. They only appeared sporadically, with SKY 24 TG, from Telecinco; the Giorgio Ruta service, in Antena 3; and GEDI Visual and NOI TV, for La Sexta. The latter channel was the one which most used self-references for declarations taken from its programme "Al Rojo Vivo".

What stands out is the use of Skype broadcasts in all the channels analysed. This was the most direct way of obtaining connections from the ship and statements. Also, the use of sound taken from radio stations was very common, especially from SER, to reproduce the opinions of politicians. Antena 3 was the media which used this source most often. Secondly, and more sporadically, the channel COPE or radio RAI 1 appeared. The news did not state whether images from the NGO Open Arms were used and only TVE 1 cited the use of material from another NGO, Sea Eye.

The media analysed illustrated their news with graphs and computer graphics. All did so except Telecinco, and Antena 3 who did so only once. La Sexta used them three times and TVE1 was the channel which most used them, in up to eleven reports in order to provide a clearer account of the situation of the ships in the Mediterranean, both for the Open Arms and the Ocean Viking, the latter for rescue operations too. Public television also showed the path the ship from the "Audaz" armada took, which was sent to the area to transfer 14 migrants to Spain.

Furthermore, it would also be useful to include the use of photography in the reports in this analysis. In them, tourists appear, watching the ship, the Italian prosecutor who inspected the ship, or the Italian minister Salvini in bathing costume. Also, the use of pictures of minors is noteworthy, many of whom were recognisable and in some occasions without pixelating them (without revealing their identity). TVE 1 was the channel that most used these types of photos. However, greater care was taken with the use of detailed pictures such as hands and profiles, and in some presentations, faces in the foreground were distorted.

### 3.5. Style and presentation

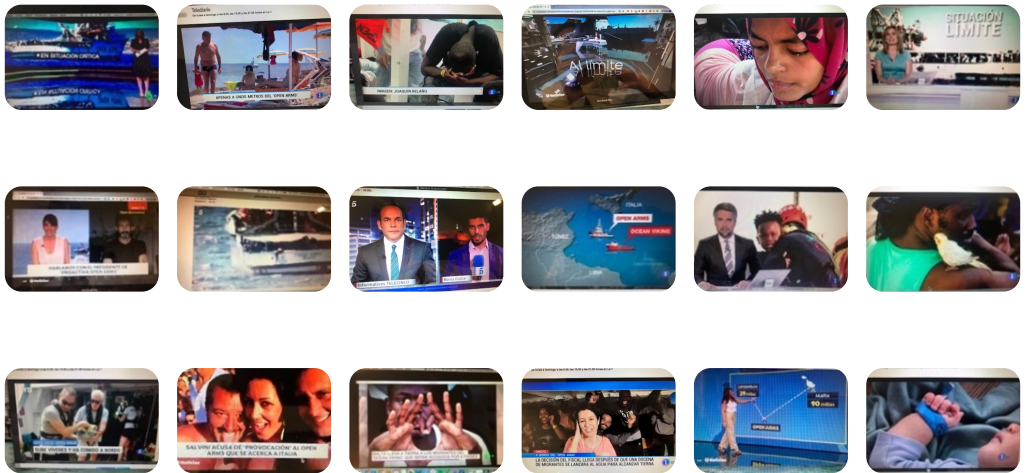
All we have seen up until this point makes up a presentation style for each of the channels which oscillated between describing the images and interpreting the texts. La Sexta was the media which went for a largely interpretative style, followed by Antena 3, Telecinco and TVE 1. The story-telling formats helped design a

style in which the reporters became more involved in the subjective treatment of the event. The presence of a reporter from in the public eye aboard the ship gave them a certain special protagonism when conveying the sensations and in situ experiences, and in some way imbued the rest of the information provided in the report, although the presentations by the speakers tended to be more descriptive.

As for the presentations given in the studio, as can be seen in Figure 9, the most outstanding ones were those done standing up with post-production backgrounds showing an image of the ship. This was true for La Sexta, the channel which most used this method of staging. Also, regardless of whether they were standing up or sitting down, the presenters tended to appear with headlines behind them with expressions like: "to the limit" or "critical situation". In Antena 3, they used graphs to show the location of the Open Arms in order to move on to different news.

Noticeability focused on values such as the political conflict, together with other items such as drama, the spectacularity of the images, emotion and constant uncertainty. The images of the suffering faces of the migrants are noticeable as is the fatigue or desperation in their eyes, such as when they jump into the water in search of dry land or the details of their hands and looks, and the most repeated position of them lying on the deck. However, there are also moments of tension such as when they take food or when the actor Richard Gere pays them a visit. It is this television personality in particular who is given special importance in the event, who multiplied his presence on the news. Indeed, you might say he became the star attraction which the news focused on.

**Figure 9. Scenes from the presentation styles of the TV channels**



Source: prepared by the author

#### 4. Discussion and conclusions

The limitations of this work keep some other elements from the audiovisual presentation at the margin. It is difficult to make an interpretation of all aspects of the images presented. For example, in the use of minors this is needed to prevent them from being identified and thereby protecting them and their right to privacy. This matter and others linked to the television narrative is something that may be carried out in future research. In this study, there has been an attempt to make a measurable and quantifiable project and a desire (that is also qualitative) to assess the data obtained. Absences are difficult to measure, although the few appearances by the European Union when making a statement on this conflict are revealing in themselves as stated above.

The treatment of migrants has a dramatic and spectacular component which prevails over contextualised information which helps us to understand this problem and provide possible solutions. The dogma of the picture prevails over any true understanding about what is going on. Other research may show different points of view to tackle such sensitive situations in a setting of continuous conflict. However, without doubt,

the quality of the reporting became a transcendental and objective aim, in the search for more rigorous and thus more committed journalism.

The case of the Open Arms is highly organised into a hierarchy in the reports analysed and the news of the crossing opened television news and was part of the outlines in an outstanding way. TVE 1 was the television channel which most customised the news and provided the most information both in total time and in percentages in respect to the private channels, which validates the first hypothesis.

News was the most used format in all channels, although another salient point was the use of voice-overs read by presenters and covered with images; and live news, above all on the public channel which sent a team of reporters, camera operator and sound technician to cover the event aboard the ship. The other channels, Telecinco, La Sexta and Antena 3 provided live points from other supplementary places, but not from the ship itself.

The criteria of noticeability contains conflict, drama, how spectacular the images are and uncertainty as the main ingredients, but other important factors are how popular and famous certain stakeholders are and the value solidarity has concerning the agonising one month crossing.

All channels provided news with a variety of ingredients which helped enhance the importance of the event. Post-production images in the background behind the presenters constantly referred to political confrontation and the dramatic situation lived by the migrants. Also, the use of computer graphics and charts to illustrate the situation of the ship on the Mediterranean was frequent in the media analysed.

However, one fundamental piece of missing information was reports on the context. They appear very sporadically and are practically irrelevant. The information about the Open Arms tends to be accompanied by voice-overs of the situations of the other ship with almost 500 migrants aboard, that of the Ocean Viking. Indeed, it is strange that this vessel rescued more people, but received less coverage than the other one. The media put the spotlight on the Open Arms when there were other NGOs who also performed humanitarian activity, but nevertheless remained in the background.

As regards the second hypothesis, the prevalence of the political narrative over the humanitarian aspect, we can see that in the televised news analysed, there were three categories of stakeholder: the political class, humanitarian activity with members of the NGO Open Arms and their milieu, and, to a lesser extent, celebrities. Therefore, we confirmed that the humanitarian issue, rescue on the high seas, became a political debate in which representatives of the Spanish government clashed with the opposition, and especially with the Italian Minister of the Interior Matteo Salvini, while the European Union was noticeably invisible.

The political management of the crisis makes the tardiness of the response patent, with internal conflicts in terms of management, the responsibility Europe has and, at the same time, the emergence of a narrative of hatred with marked protagonism: Mateo Salvini and his continuous refusal to take in migrants.

A second conflict was created with respect to the stakeholders of the NGO which had a similar presence to that of the politicians. The director of the Open Arms, Oscar Camps, was the greatest protagonist, but he was accompanied by others in his milieu, such as the team of the crew itself and other representatives from different non-governmental organisations. All of them depicted the humanitarian side of the conflict and stressed the critical and precarious situation the migrants were living. There was confrontation between Camps and Carmen Calvo, the Vice President of the government, which typified the distance between the political narrative and the humanitarian emergency.

In the midst of this debate, appear media personalities, especially, the visit by the actor Richard Gere who gave the crossing unexpected publicity which was reflected on the television channels in the opening stories of the news. The calls for solidarity and cooperation in seeking a safe port were largely echoed on the channels and Gere was portrayed as endorsing the demands of the Open Arms while at the same time trivializing political management.

Paradoxically, the authentic protagonists of the case, the migrants, only had a voice, on TVE 1. Public television was the only one which provided statements from these people. The main source and which had greatest journalistic importance was the images from the TVE crew aboard the ship. It was their own material which provided quality information and what other channels did not and which they had to obtain from other television agencies and media. The use of Skype as a communication system became essential for most news.

Finally, this study validated the third hypothesis. That is, the growing presence of messages on the social networks, especially on Twitter, incorporated into the news from the channels analysed, especially on TVE 1. The Italian Minister of the Interior, Matteo Salvini, and the Director of the Open Arms, Oscar Camps were



once more the greatest protagonists in this respect. Their messages contrasted with the urgent need to find a safe port, demanded by Camps and those in his milieu, as opposed to the more radical stance of refusing them any chance of disembarking, due to a rejection of immigrants, a view held by Salvini. Moreover, there was a triangular confrontation between the governments of Spain and Italy, the political parties and the NGOs on the rescue priorities, against a backdrop of clashing opinions in respect to the legality and urgency of reaching a safe port. The celebrities call for international solidarity and the migrants talk about the torture and rape they suffered in their countries of origin.

The narratives of the political formations were in keeping with their manifestos. PSOE, PP and Ciudadanos believed European regulations on migration were required in an orderly manner and were committed to fighting the mafias. VOX went a step further and called for all illegal immigrants to be deported, while Unidos Podemos called for humanitarian visas and protection for NGOs which work to rescue and save refugees.

In short, television depictions of the Open Arms showed a permanent struggle to build a political narrative marked by the strategies of confrontation, amid a debate on the need for the European Union to take clear and defined action so that this humanitarian issue does not become a mere ideological debate. The demand for a safe port was intertwined with national discourses, which were occasionally demagogic, with the lack of European voices asking to make room for and integrate refugees.

## 5. Acknowledgement

Translator: Toby Wakely.

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