News production on the arrival of migrants by sea to Spanish coasts: the case of the Balearic Islands

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ENG Abstract. This article explores the communicative strategies of journalists and institutional offices on the arrival of migrants by sea to Spanish coasts through a case study: the Balearic Islands. For this purpose, media studies and critical approaches to the performativity of borders are taken as a starting point. The results indicate the emission of numerical, serialized and single source information in the case of the institutions, reactive in the case of the managing organizations and conditioned by institutional processes of securitization of migrations in the case of journalists, who focus their work on the reproduction of the number of arrivals and on the procedural deployment associated with the immigration law, generating a redundant informative effect on the procedures of "immigration management". The study shows the need to analyze the media representation of migration in terms of its governance.
Keywords: Migration, representation in the media, critical border studies, migration governanceial media, necropolitics.

ES Producción de noticias sobre la llegada de personas migrantes por mar a costas españolas: el caso de las Islas Baleares

Resumen. Este artículo explora las estrategias comunicativas de los periodistas y los gabinetes institucionales ante la llegada de migrantes por mar a costas españolas a través de un estudio de caso: las Islas Baleares. Para ello se toman como punto de partida los estudios sobre medios y las aproximaciones críticas a la *performatividad* de las fronteras. Los resultados indican que se publica información numérica, seriada y de fuente única en el caso de las instituciones, reactiva en el caso de las organizaciones gestoras y condicionada por procesos institucionales de *securitización* de las migraciones en el caso de los periodistas. Estos últimos centran su labor en la reproducción del número de llegadas y en el despliegue procedimental asociado a la ley de extranjería, por lo que se genera un efecto informativo redundante sobre los procedimientos de «gestión de la inmigración». El estudio muestra la necesidad de analizar la representación mediática de las migraciones atendiendo a su gobernanza.
Palabras clave: Migración, representación en medios de comunicación, estudios críticos de la frontera, gobernanza de las migraciones, necropolítica.

1. Introduction

Academic research on the media coverage of immigration to Europe has focused predominantly on the analysis of content distributed by those media outlets with the largest audience within a small group of countries and, to a lesser extent, on the effects that such content produces. It has shown very diverse results depending on the spaces studied, the samples chosen and the political climate at the time. Nevertheless, some common elements have been observed, such as the underrepresentation of migrants (Gemi *et al*., 2013; Arévalo Salinas *et al*., 2019), who are often portrayed as "delinquent" or "illegal" (Sibrian Díaz, *et al*., 2023), "criminal" and conflictive (Eberl *et al*., 2018).

Although media framing differs depending on which specific groups the discourse is focused, the image projected of migrant people is often negative, and frequent exposure to these negative messages has subsequent effects on audience perceptions (Eberl *et al*., 2018) and voting behaviour (Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart, 2007). An empirical analysis of media coverage and people´s attitudes towards immigration in 19 countries finds that, for individuals with no trust in the media, news about immigration strengthens the effects of previous political orientations, "further eroding pro-immigration attitudes for individuals with negative prior preferences" (Agovino *et al*., 2022). Likewise, author Milena Djourelova (2023) shows a relationship between the Associated Press (AP) ban on the use of terms such as "illegal immigrant" and a lower support for restrictive immigration policies, mainly among news consumers with less ideological attachment and less direct exposure to immigration.

In recent years, academic studies have indicated a hardening in the representation of migrant people by the mainstream media and the predominance of a narrative based on security and dehumanisation, always arising from the dominant perspective of the global North (Mazzara *et al*., 2020). When the COVID-19 crisis took hold, migrants were soon portrayed as "enemies at the gates" of Europe and as carriers of the virus (Kalfeli *et al*., 2023). Furthermore, critical discourse analysis has also pointed to the dissemination of false narratives by conservative parties in Greece, who have taken on the rhetoric of the extreme right by associating immigration with a threat to national security and public health (Boukala, 2021). The results of such studies point to a resurgence of the process of securitisation of migration, i.e. a mode of governance implemented by different official institutions that, through certain "speech acts", assert their role as providers of protection and security (Bigo, 2002).

Likewise, researchers focused on the study of media coverage in Spain have shown the predominance of official sources over those of civic society, and that the role of the press is one of a "transmission belt for official messages" and public policy (Arteta Esnal *et al*., 2021; Prieto Andrés and Fernández Romero, 2020), thus highlighting the need to generate more research into the current anti-immigration discourse in the media and political sphere (Stuardo Concha *et al*., 2021). In their research, authors such as Cea D'Ancona and Vallés Martínez (2018) point out that

regarding perceptions of immigration in Spain, "xenophobia" coexists with xenophilia, through "contradictory and multifaceted" discourses. Another group of studies, which is very much in the minority, has focused on the representation of women, children and adolescents, and has found that there is a view of children and adolescents who travel alone which is "welfare-oriented, criminalising and moralistic" (Guerrero Martín and Igartua, 2021; Gómez Quintero *et al*, 2020), and further, that there are stereotypical representations of women (Seijas, 2014) who are often shown as a single collective, as passive beings and as victims (Suárez Villegas, 2013; Martínez Lirola and Olmos Alcaraz, 2015).

Similarly, authors of critical studies about borders such as Brändle have investigated the role played by media communications as a tool of soft power when it comes to shaping the border symbolically and adapting its meaning according to the political climate of the day (Brändle *et al*., 2023). As such, they have found that the European Union has promoted at least 104 information campaigns between 2015 and 2019 regarding the externalisation of borders, "warning potential migrants about the dangers of migrating to Europe" (Brändle and Tolochko, 2023) and "contributing to the normalisation of a militarised border scenario of violence and death in the imagination of transnationals" (Musaro, 2019).

From a Spanish perspective, scholars such as Gabrielli and Ferrer Gallardo (2018) have shown that a rhetoric "of emergency, crisis and exceptionality" accompanies migration management with the result of obscuring other fundamental and structural components of border procedures, in a process of the securitisation of immigration by which legitimate authorities designate migrant people as a threat, against whom emergency action must be taken in response.

Similarly, some scholars have focused on analysing the obligation to rescue under international law (the SOLAS and SAR Conventions, 1974 and 1979 respectively) which, in the case of Spain, comes under the responsibility of the civilian organisation, the Maritime Rescue Service (Salvamento Marítimo). Since 2018, this service has been operating under the auspices of the Guardia Civil (Málaga Hoy, 2019; Castellano, 2018), in line with the rest of the mostly militarised European rescue services (Basaran, 2015; Bellido Lora, 2023; Centre Delàs, 2023; Rodier, 2013; PorCausa, 2017; Vives Luna, 2021).

Conversely, there are also some notable ethnographic works, which are based on the experiences of migrant people (Kobelinsky, 2020), testimonies in judicial archives (Massari, 2022), political analyses (Mendiola, 2022) and cartographic searches (Gatti, 2023) in an attempt to represent the effects of a necropolitical logic (Mbembe, 2011) that permeates, among other things, the management of borders and their symbolic representation. So far, there has been very little analysis in academic research of the communicative management of these processes, or of the media coverage in the countries of origin of migrants to Europe (Flenger S. *et al*., 2020).

This study joins a current of work studying the concept of "news production" (Tuchman, 1978), a perspective suggesting that many of the biases detected in the news are related to production criteria (Gemi *et al*., 2013; Hanitzsch, 2017; Solves and

Arcos Urrutia, 2020; Preston, 2008; Ruiz Aranguren and Cantalapiedra, 2018, 2020). For some time in this field, theorists have been pointing out the importance of studying professional practice, in order to better understand the boundaries that separate journalism from other forms of communication, especially in the face of the proliferation of other information generating actors (Carlson and Lewis, 2015). Recent research based on interviews with specialised journalists in Italy, Greece and Spain shows that journalistic practices are being affected by the profusion of hate speech by far-right parties, and the following debate on how to deal with the content they promote (Calderón *et al.*, 2023). Thus, some studies indicate the insecurity of working conditions in journalism, and a general lack of specialisation and time as very influential factors in the subsequent journalistic treatment of migration (Solves and Arcos Urrutia, 2020).

2. Objetives

The aim of this paper is to carry out an X-ray of the institutional information (including that from non-governmental management organisations) and the journalistic practices around the arrival of migrant people by sea to the Spanish coast, by means of a case study centred on the Balearic Islands. The study is based on the following hypothesis:

> H1: Journalistic reporting on the arrival of migrant people by sea is affected by securitarian institutional governance that is expressed through the routine reporting practices of institutional and organisational communication offices.

To this end, three objectives have been set:

> O1. To briefly contextualise the arrival of migrant people by sea to the Balearic Islands based on official data.
> 02. To study the planning of narratives and the communication strategies used by institutional sources and organisations managing migration law to report on the reality of migration by sea and the type of official, public and regular information they offer to the media.
> O3. To find out which are the main resources available to journalists for reporting on this reality, the usual sources of information they use, and their work routines.
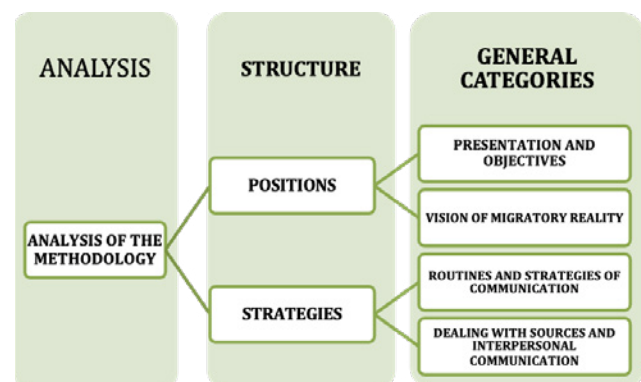
3. Methodology

The research is based on a compilation of documentary archives and semi-structured interviews. Firstly, the institutional and organisational bodies, which intervene when makeshift, unsafe migrant vessels arrive by sea on Spanish coasts, were identified, these being: The Government Delegation, the Maritime Rescue Service, the Red Cross, the National Police and the Civil Guard. In addition, contact was made with journalists who cover the issue in the mainstream media in Mallorca. The existence of migrants'

organisations which could have acted as sources for the journalists was also sought, but none were located and none were quoted by any of the interviewees. In total, 16 people were interviewed, 13 of them in person, and three by telephone. The following people were interviewed: two members of the Maritime Rescue Service, one of whom who was the head of the service in the Balearic Islands, and the other a member of the union with the highest representation within the organisation; the head of the Communications Office of the Government Delegation in the Balearic Islands, the head of Branding, Communications and Fundraising of the Red Cross in the Balearic Islands, and the Press Officer of the National Police in Palma de Mallorca. In addition, a formal request was made to the Civil Guard to enquire into the press releases issued by this institution. A university professor was also contacted and interviewed as an expert in the field. A total of 10 journalists were also interviewed, two of whom work as freelancers in this field. In total, coverage was given to journalists working in the following media outlets: IB3 (regional public television of the Balearic Islands), the RTVE (Spanish National Radio and Television) delegation in the Balearic Islands, in both radio and television broadcasting, the Diario de Mallorca, Radio Mallorca (Cadena Ser), La Directa, eldiario.es, and the newspapers Última Hora and L'aguait. The field interviews were conducted from 13 to 19 February 2023, although contact was maintained with some of the sources throughout 2024.

The following table reflects the analytical structure used both for the fieldwork and for the analysis and categorisation of the information collected. The general categories are part of the methodology validated in previous research (by Ruiz Aranguren and Cantalapiedra, 2018, 2020) and are presented in the following diagram:

Figure 1. General categories used for content coding.

Source: own production.

The specifics are differentiated by two fields of knowledge: on the one hand, studies of media and journalistic method and, on the other, studies on migration and the performativity of borders. The specific categories are shown in the following scheme:

Figure 2. Specific categories used for the coding of content

Media	Institutions	Organisations
Presentation and objetives		
• **Introduction of the journalist. Professional specialisation.**	• Presentation of the communication office, mission and objectives.	• Presentation of the communication office, mission and objectives.
• **Areas or sections in which their work is placed, channels and formats they use.**	• Inclusion of the topic of immigration in the office's work routines.	• Inclusion of the topic of immigration in the offices's work routines.
Vision of the reality of migration		
• **Guiding principles for reporting.**	• Principles guiding the work of institutional communication.	• Perception of the migrants´ arrival and legislation on foreigners; principles guiding organisational communication work.
Routines and strategies of communication		
• **Use of newsworthiness criteria.**	• Criteria for issuing information.	• Criteria for issuing information.
• **Typical personal and documentary sources and the type of information they provide.**	• Time spent and channels used to broadcast information to the media.	• Time spent and channels used to broadcast information to the media.
•**Description of the work entailed in coverage.**	• Nature of the data and information issued by the office.	• Nature of the data and information issued by the office.
• **Journalistic search for the causes of the news event.**	• Regular requests for information from the media and the communicative reaction of the office.	• Regular requests for information from the media and the communicative reaction of the office.
• **Journalistic search for geographical contextualisation.**	• Information issued by the office on procedures carried out by the administration in the field of immigration.	• Information issued by the office on procedures carried out by the administration in the field of immigration.
• **Tracking of migration routes and deportations.**	• Contextualisation of the arrival of migrants as a transnational phenomenon.	• Contextualisation of the arrival of migrants as a transnational phenomenon.
• **Dissemination of information on migratory routes, deportations and deaths of migrants.**	• Dissemination of information on migratory routes, deportations and deaths of migrants.	• Dissemination of information on migratory routes, deportations and deaths of migrants.
Dealing with sources and interpersonal communication		
• **Dialogue with institutions and organisations.**	• Dialogue with institutions and organisations.	• Dialogue with institutions and organisations.

Source: own production.

4. Results

4.1. The Balearic Islands and the Algerian route in the context of migratory movements
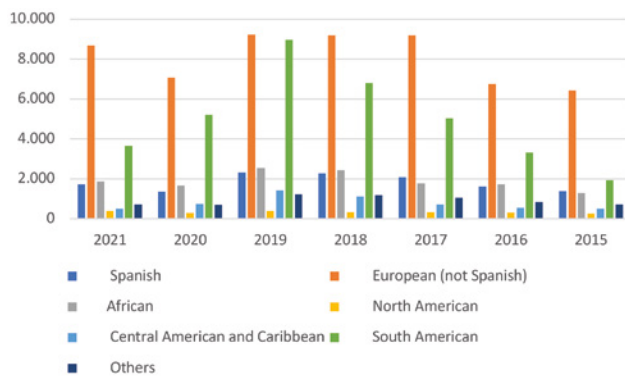
With regard to the case under study here, the Balearic Islands have become a way station in the migratory routes from the Global South. Onofre Rullan Salamanca, Professor of Regional Geography at the University of the Balearic Islands and expert in territorial policies and their impacts (Ives Miró *et al*., 2023; Rullán, 2010), explains that those who reach the Spanish coast in makeshift and unsafe vessels are "the poorest", who are expelled from their countries of origin and forced to relocate to the large urban centres of European cities. If the data provided by the National Statistics Institute (INE) - based on figures obtained from the Municipal Register - are considered, it can be seen that the settlement of people from the African continent in the Balearic Islands is very small in comparison with that of people from Europe or Latin America.

However, the route commonly known as the Algerian route (which also includes the arrival of migrants to the coasts of Almeria, Murcia and Valencia) is, after the Canary Islands route, the second most significant in terms of the number of arrivals of unauthorised migrant people by sea to the Spanish coast. According to figures from the Ministry of the Interior, in 2022, a total of 15,682 people arrived in the Canary Islands, and 12,955 on the mainland and the Balearic Islands.
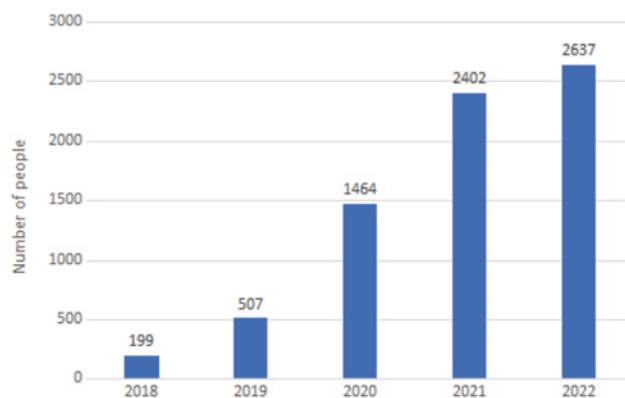
Based on the figures released by the Government Delegation in the Balearic Islands, it can be seen that the islands as a whole represent only a small part of the total arrivals on the Algerian route, far behind the coast of Almeria. However, there has been a significant increase in the proportion of arrivals detected by the Civil Guard over the last five years, as can be seen in the following graph:

Figure 3. External migration in the Balearic Islands.

Source: Author´s formulation based on INE[1] data.

Figure 4. Arrival of non-authorised migrant people by sea.

Source: Prepared by the authors based on data provided by the Government Delegation in the Balearic Islands. The figure for 2023 corresponds to the EFE agency.

Among the many factors that explain this increase, we focus on two: first, the border closures that took place in 2020 and 2021 during the Covid-19 pandemic; and secondly, the change in the Spanish government's position on Western Sahara and the suspension by Algeria of the readmission agreement signed in 2002 and ratified in 2004, on the Treaty of Friendship, Good Neighbourliness and Cooperation (TABVC) which has been in force since 2003, and on the 2007 Search and Rescue at Sea (SAR) agreement, under which Algeria stopped accepting the return of non-authorised Algerian immigrants from Spain (González Enríquez, 2022).

Although the Ministry of the Interior does not break down the nationalities of the migrants it intercepts, all the sources consulted during the fieldwork

indicate that the majority of migrant people migrating by sea to the Balearic Islands are Algerian. As for people who die at sea, according to figures provided by the organisation Caminando Fronteras (2023), "in the last five years, six people a day have died crossing the border into Spain". In the case of the Algerian route, the data published by this organisation indicate that 64 people died in 2018, 89 in 2019, 463 in 2020, 504 in 2021 and 464 in 2022.

4.2. Single source institutional information

Information related to the arrival of migrants in the Balearic Islands is centralised through the Government Delegation. According to the head of the Maritime Rescue Service in the Balearic Islands, when the Civil Guard detects through SIVE the Integrated System of Exterior Vigilance (SIVE) that a migrant boat has been located, they request information from the Maritime Rescue service "in order to transfer them to the port of Palma" and the Maritime Rescue service decides "what resources to mobilise". Sometimes instead, if the Maritime Rescue Service receives a report of an unsafe, makeshift migrant vessel from "a fishing boat, a merchant ship or another vessel that has found it", it is this body which mobilises the resources for the rescue and informs the Civil Guard of the operation. Further, although the skipper of the maritime service vessel "Salvamar" counts the migrants "when they are on board (his) vessel", once they have arrived in port, the National Police or the Guardia Civil are the ones in charge of making the official count, and subsequently it is the Government Delegation who informs the media:

> "Here in the Balearic Islands, information (given) to the media is channelled through the Government Delegation. Initially, when immigration began to take place, the transmission mechanism was not very clear, but it has become clearer (...) The journalists, as they already know this, call the Government Delegation directly". Head of Maritime Rescue in the Balearic Islands.

The CGT (General Confederation of Labour) union, the majority trade union in the Maritime Rescue service, explains that the creation of a single command has had an effect on the dissemination of information to the media, as before 2018 the Maritime Rescue service (SASEMAR) "was the only public and official body that, almost instantaneously, gave information on rescues", according to its spokesperson.

> "So that communication, which was very positive, has ended. If a boat leaves and arrives with so many people, the relatives are somehow left with... well, (previously) they have the information that their living beings, their loved ones have reached land, right? Suddenly SASEMAR, under directives, we understand, from the Ministry of the Interior, decides to stop providing information about migrants. Zero. And well, the towing of a sailing boat or the towing of a fishing boat they do (report), but (nothing) about migrants. We... well, anyway, apart from that, a guideline (regarding this) was sent, an internal note to the fleet". CGT Maritime Rescue spokesperson.

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1   This institution counts residence for over twelve months and does not discriminate between forms of access (land, sea or air) to the country.

4.3. "Reactive" communication in the case of the managing agencies

Once they have been found, the migrant people are transferred to port, where access to journalists is not allowed. According to the Government Delegation head of communications, this decision was made in order to respect "the migrants´ privacy". As well as the State Security Forces in the receiving port, there are also Red Cross personnel, who offer basic health care, according to the Red Cross´s Head of Branding, Communication and Fundraising in the Balearic Islands. The location of this assistance is sometimes transferred to "police facilities", depending on the number of people who have arrived. With regard to the dissemination of information, he explains that the organisation maintains a "reactive" communication with the media, as it reacts "to requests" for information at a regional level, although at a national level the Red Cross does release an annual total of the number of people assisted in the different Spanish regions:

> "Well, our role as a humanitarian entity is to explain and provide information about our intervention to the migrants when they arrive. Rather than offering data, we focus on informing them about the humanitarian work that we carry out with them after they arrive. The Government Delegation is more responsible for security and is in charge of referring the migrants to us after their interception, and activating us when they arrive." Head of Branding, Communication and Fundraising for the Red Cross in the Balearic Islands.

As such, communications from the Red Cross are framed as "humanitarian diplomacy" following the guidelines of the Ministry "which establish how this humanitarian intervention should be carried out" while at the same time, "pressuring or demanding that this first attention should be carried out because it is a question of basic human rights". The organisation's aim, he says, is to protect the privacy of migrant people. Sometimes the Red Cross do provide images of migrants in the port, but at the same time "try to respect the privacy" of the people who arrive. Once first aid and medical attention has been administered to the arrivals, the State Security Forces transfer them from the ports to police facilities or, when these fill up in the summer period with the arrival of tourists, to the former Son Tous headquarters, which was converted into a Temporary Migrant Attention Centre (Centro de Atención Temporal de Extranjeros —CATE— Ministry of the Interior, Government of Spain, 2022) following allegations of overcrowded conditions in the police facilities. According to the press office of the National Police in Palma de Mallorca, who are in charge of the CATE, the information they release "on immigration" focuses on three topics: "issues related to the promotion of illegal immigration", "human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation" and "people detained under Immigration Law". They further state that they do not offer data on transfers to Migrant Internment Centres (CIEs), as the regional media "do not request it". In the case of the Civil Guard, there are three press releases issued on this subject which refer to the inauguration of a new Integrated External Surveillance System (SIVE) unit in the islands, the arrest of people for "belonging to criminal organisations" involved in human trafficking, and for "facilitating illegal immigration". Thus, the dissemination of non-criminal information falls mainly to the Government Delegation, whose communication policy is based on a specific and reiterative procedure. The communication channel used by the Government Delegation to release information is a well-known and popular instant messaging App:

> "When we have received the internal communiqué in which the State Security Forces inform us that there has been an intervention and have given us these four pieces of information - event, location, number of people and the state of these people - we then communicate it". Government Delegation press officer.

According to the interviewee, the Government Delegation Communication Office's responsibility is limited to institutional procedure:

> "We represent an institution and we report on institutional procedure, but the human side is not for us to report. It is part of the private sphere of these people, it belongs to them, and it is uniquely theirs". Head of the Government Delegation's Communications Office

As well as providing data through their mobile App messages about the number of people arriving and the state of their health, the Government Delegation say they have carried out educational work to "familiarise" journalists with the "terms" and the "procedure", as they see the arrival of migrant vessels as a recent reality in the Balearic Islands, and feel it is necessary to emphasise that the migrants have not committed "a crime", but "an offence":

> "For example, there are many journalists who are unaware that unauthorised entry into our country is an administrative offence and not a crime (…). The Government Delegation Representative suggested making an illustrative infographic, and we organised an informative breakfast in order to share it with those interested media who wanted to come". Head of the Government Delegation's Communications Office.

Finally, the press officer indicates that they do not provide information on transfers to Migrant Internment Centres (CIEs) or on subsequent releases:

> "It is not my job to communicate this information, it´s the responsibility of the National Police, as they have custody and a press office. You have to get in touch with them, if you have the telephone number, I'll pass it on to you… we try to facilitate this work". Head of the Government Delegation's Communications Department.

4.4. Intermediation in the access to migrants as a primary source

All of the journalists interviewed, except for those working as freelancers, state that the source they use to report on the reality of migration by sea is the Government Delegation:

"(We use) a WhatsApp group of which all the media in the Balearic Islands are members, and this is our means of communication. If from there we want (more) information, we call (the head of the communication office of the Government Delegation) for further details, and if we don´t call her, it depends on who the primary source is: we either call the Civil Guard or the Maritime Rescue Service (to see) if they can offer us more information. In most cases we are referred back to the official channel, which is the Government Delegation". RTVE (Spanish National Television and Radio).

According to the interviews, journalists only contact the Maritime Rescue Service when they need technical details of the rescues, although they are often obliged to ask for permission from the service´s Madrid headquarters before being allowed to speak to the local service in Mallorca:

"Right now, it is more difficult to get access to them (the Maritime Rescue Service) (...). Furthermore, they act more like intermediaries. It is either because they have sighted a (migrant) boat and have notified the Government Delegation, or because the intervention of their boat, which is larger, is necessary to be able to take on board the people from these makeshift boats in deplorable conditions, perhaps on the verge of sinking, and take them to port. But they do more of a secondary transport service than a...". RTVE (Spanish National Television and Radio).

The messages provided by the Government Delegation are numbered, and share concise information about the arrivals: time, place and units mobilised - information released by the Communication Department. Additionally, all of the journalists interviewed agreed that they had often asked institutions for further data regarding the arrival of women and minors on the islands, as well as the nationality of the migrants. According to two freelance journalists, not having data on migrant people´s nationalities limits the possibility of understanding the changes that may be taking place in migratory routes, and of offering in-depth information on what is happening. As far as minors are concerned, the journalists consider that collecting data about them is important in order to monitor institutional work. For the rest of the journalists, it is a more a matter of monitoring events at a local level:

"If there are unaccompanied minors, they stay in the centre for their care and so on, and if there are adults accompanying the minors, they also stay here. The Red Cross and other social institutions take care of them. This interests us, there is a traceable route. If they are transferred to a Migrant Internment Centre on the mainland, we lose track of them at that point". IB3.

For most of the journalists interviewed, and bearing in mind the kind of data provided by the Delegation, the arrival of migrants becomes more newsworthy the higher their influx:

"Although (they are) routine event(s), and we know that immigrants arrive on a regular,

periodic basis, it has not yet stopped being news (...). If (only) one or two boats have arrived, we dedicate less time to it in the news and perhaps do only a brief segment. If it is one of those days when there is a full moon, when the sea is good and it is not cold and so on, and on that same day 200 people arrive on twenty boats, then we do devote more space to it". RTVE (Spanish National Television and Radio).

In the case of the daily newspaper, *Última Hora*, they state that the arrival of migrants by sea is practically no longer news in their publication:

"(We reported about) the first migrant boats arriving in the Balearic Islands because it was a shock, because these wooden boats were a thing for Andalusia, the Strait of Gibraltar, the Canary Islands... Algeria isn´t thought to be exactly close to here! I think that initially these issues were dealt with as news stories, but now of course, it is so common for the migrant boats to come (...) that their arrival is hardly ever featured in the paper". *Ultima Hora.*

Additionally, journalists point to difficulties in accessing primary sources. They cite lack of time and means, and a lack of knowledge about when migrants will arrive. In any case, they point out that admission to the port is prohibited for journalists, and that they depend on official institutions for information, or try to speak to the migrants through intermediaries. With regard to the Red Cross, all the journalists interviewed indicate that they are a useful source when it comes to obtaining information about the activities which they carry out:

"When the Afghan crisis started, some Afghan refugees came here, about 30, not many. That's when I called the Red Cross. A Red Cross worker who is from there, and who had supervised this programme to take in Afghans, explained to me in detail their profiles, who they were, spoke about some girls who had learnt Spanish in record time and so on. But if, for example, I asked her... can´t I just talk to one of them? The answer was "No!". *Diario de Mallorca*.
"We have tried to at times, but there is no way to get them (the migrants) to talk, and only very, very occasionally have the organisations that work with them ever told us anything". Radio Mallorca (Cadena SER).

As far as the State Security Forces are concerned, they sometimes make it easier for journalists to obtain images by letting them know when the rescue boat is expected to arrive or when the transfer to police custody will take place. During the time the migrant people are in their custody, however, it is not possible to obtain images or statements. In some ports of the Balearics, though, journalists occasionally manage to climb up nearby buildings to take video and photographs "of how the arrival is executed". However, media professionals are usually redirected to the Government Delegation as the official source when reporting on this issue:

"... the police are under the authority of the Government Delegation. The police do have a

press officer, but when dealing with the issue of immigration, if the press officer does tell you something, he tells you off the record, and you are mainly redirected to the Government Delegation". RTVE (Spanish National Television and Radio).

"We call the Civil Guard because they are the ones handling the migrant boats. Once (they have arrived) here, the Civil Guard transfers the passengers to the National Police, who then take custody of them (...). Then if they go to the Temporary Centre for Migrant Attention (CATE) we go there, and we film the vehicles going in so as to have an image for the day. If they are here (the National Police facilities), we come here, we record the façade, or sometimes we observe how the Civil Guard vehicles arrive, the migrants get out and the change of custody takes place... This is information that both the Civil Guard and the National Police provide us with". IB3.

"You can't go in there. You can get a little bit closer with your car, but then straight away they tell you, ´Get out of here!´. In other areas, some colleagues have told us that they have a relationship with the CATE people, but not here. And the place is kind of secluded. And far away...". Freelance journalist 1.

After 72 hours in police custody, migrants are either released with an open administrative file or transferred to a Migrant Internment Centre on the mainland (CIE). In general, journalists lose track of people who are transferred to a CIE, as no information is issued about this, and neither are the airlines used to carry out this task known. In the case of migrants who cannot be returned (to their country of origin), most go back to the port to leave the Balearic Islands. However, according to the journalists we spoke to, the short period of stay of these people in the Balearics means that they pass through unnoticed:

"It's also very complicated because there are no daily arrivals here. So, what are you going to do - be on call, every day?". IB3.

"It is not common to see groups of Algerians or Moroccans in the street, in the centre (of Palma). In fact, you don't usually see them anywhere. It's easier for them to get a boat to Barcelona, or to Valencia and that's it". *Diario de Mallorca*.

Thus, taking into account the sources to which they have access, on the one hand some media distinguish between official data on migration, provided by police sources and the Government Delegation, and, on the other, social issues, which they examine in depth based on the testimonies of migrants who remain under social assistance in Mallorca.

Only the freelance journalists interviewed here have used social media to try to understand migrants' stories and contextualise news pieces:

"And the comments from groups were quite useful for us to understand a bit about how... because the theory is that they experienced it as something initiatory, epic, of social ascent... that interested us a lot. And many comments...

I remember one: ´I'd rather be sent back in a plastic bag than have my mother watch me starve to death´. Very harsh things. Very determined comments. And of course, we had no way of talking to them. It was our only way of knowing what they thought". *Freelance journalist 2.*

Contacting a migrant in the event that he or she is transferred to a CIE is impossible. Journalists claim not to get any information from the administration, although most do not follow up on the issue:

"Yes, well, maybe if you ask the Government Delegation they´ll tell you: ok, they have now been transferred... or in the next 72 hours or 48 hours they will be transferred to a CIE, because there isn't one here, or that they are waiting to see if one will be built here, or if one is being built, or not, and... well, anyway, we don't... we don't go into this issue very much. That´s the truth". Spanish National Radio.

Finally, several of the journalists interviewed here have pointed out that there is no public or official information from any state institution that reports on shipwrecks and deceased people, or bodies detected and identified on land:

"Now (the organisation Caminando Fronteras) has published a report, I don't know if there were 9 or 10 boats of this type that have disappeared on this route, I don't remember the number now ... But there was one that... Because it sank a few miles from Cabrera, and the Guardia Civil along with the Maritime Rescue service rescued the passengers, but of course, the people on board said that two of the crew members, when they saw land, when they saw Cabrera, had jumped off to try to swim to shore. They disappeared. Never seen again (...) And we had no knowledge of this". IB3.

"In the case of disappearances, we are not informed about these by the Government Delegation, I don't know why, as we are informed of arrivals. Any records that we do find out about are leaked by the Civil Guard (...) and then there is no further follow-up beyond the leaks that are made, and in the end it´s up to the families of the migrants to make their cases public or not". Freelance journalist 1.

5. Discussion and conclusions

The study shows that the governance and securitisation of migration is having an impact on the production of journalistic information, as journalists' access to civilian sources is reduced. On the one hand, there has been a limitation in the communicative activity of the members of the Maritime Rescue Service; and on the other, migrants, in addition to being subject to the physical and psychological effects of travelling along migratory routes, spend most of their time in police custody, as the results of this case study indicate. Thus, this research joins a trend which indicates the need to identify biases in news production (Gemi *et al*, 2013; Hoxha and Hanitzsch, 2017; Solves and Arcos Urrutia, 2020; Ruiz Aranguren and Cantalapiedra; 2018; Preston, 2008; Carlson and Lewis, 2015;

Calderón et. al, 2023) and offers a contextualisation of the Spanish case within the framework of critical border studies, stressing the importance of the role of institutional communication offices as precursors to the performativity of borders, that is, of their symbolic production.

Secondly, in this way this current empirical research indicates that the dichotomy in the representation of migrants as either a threat or as victims —a view traditionally seen in academic studies (Eberl *et al*., 2018; Gemi *et al*., 2013)— and their marginal presence as sources of information (Arévalo *et al*..., 2019) is being affected by the very procedural practices associated with migration governance and by the structure and compartmentalisation of the dissemination of official information. This information is fundamentally twofold: on the one hand it consists of the release of criminal information regarding the arrests of migrants accused of piloting boats, and, on the other, purely numerical information on the amount of people who manage to reach Spanish ports. According to the fieldwork, this compartmentalisation has repercussions on the journalistic distribution of content, as the media often establish two perspectives in their production of information based on the type of sources to which they have access: on one side there is the securitarian perspective, associated with the arrivals of migrant people in their makeshift, unsafe vessels, and on the other, a more socially-oriented perspective in the case of those people who enter the system of social care in the autonomous community of the Balearic Islands.

Thirdly, the predominantly self-referential reporting of the Red Cross' first aid work in the ports, and the institutional pedagogical work focused on explaining the sequence of procedures after arrivals, leads to an over-representation of the legislative framework and its provisions. As such, migrants remain within a closed detention circuit under police custody for most of their stay in the Balearic Islands, and visual representations are thus produced by journalists at a distance, taken from outside the spaces where migrants are found, in a journalistic race for visibility spurred on by the media's need to capture images. Institutional preventative measures around migrant people´s privacy necessarily makes the production of their images a process mediated by these institutional procedures, severely limiting the possibility of journalists freely doing their work, or of offering diverse and close representations. Thus, while some authors warn of the dehumanisation of migrant representation (Mazzara *et al*., 2020), and their characterisation as "enemies at the gates of Europe" (Kalfeli *et al*., 2023), this study qualifies that the production of journalistic representations of migrant people is mediated by the governmental migration management, and by the securitarian nature of institutional communication. This creates a redundancy effect that overrepresents administrative procedures —that is, the currently applicable legislation— while reducing the possibility for journalists to create alternative narratives, and considerably limiting the symbolic agency of migrants, who, being subject to multiple constraints, are prevented from acting as sources of information in this context.

Fourthly, in the specific case studied here, with the markedly regional character of the media market, the scarcity of resources available to journalists in providing coverage, and the criterion of journalistic proximity are some of the variables that affect the accurate monitoring of a transnational reality. In any case, as these results show, journalistic attempts that have been made to delve deeper and monitor what is happening beyond the islands´ shores are being severely limited by the management of institutional communications.

Finally, it should be pointed out that this work focuses on the dissemination of public, official and routine information, and as such does not cover all informal exchanges of information or possible leaks. Furthermore, as this is an exploratory research project, in which the variables have emerged from the communicative actions studied and the accounts of journalists and other actors, many issues that affect the nature of media discourse have been left out, such as the impact of the regional economy on the journalistic representation of migratory movements, among others. Future research should delve deeper into the production of media discourse from an interdisciplinary perspective, with special emphasis on the different manifestations of both the transnational governance of migration, and of journalistic work in the region.

6. Funding and Support

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