



Contesting Political Decisions Involving Environmental Issues: A Case Study in Portugal Based on the Press About Offshore Oil and Gas Drilling

Bruno Pinto^{1*} and Paula Castro^{2,3}

¹ MARE-Marine and Environmental Sciences Centre, Faculdade de Ciências, Universidade de Lisboa, Lisbon, Portugal,

² Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (ISCTE-IUL), Lisbon, Portugal, ³ Centro de Investigação e de Intervenção Social (CIS-IUL), Instituto Universitário de Lisboa, Lisbon, Portugal

OPEN ACCESS

Edited by:

Raquel Lorenz Costa,
Directorate-General for Maritime
Policy, Portugal

Reviewed by:

Christian T. K.-H. Stadlander,
Independent Researcher, St. Paul,
MN, United States
Guanqiu Qi,
Chung-Ang University, South Korea

*Correspondence:

Bruno Pinto
bmpinto@fc.ul.pt

Specialty section:

This article was submitted to
Marine Affairs and Policy,
a section of the journal
Frontiers in Marine Science

Received: 24 March 2021

Accepted: 18 May 2021

Published: 30 June 2021

Citation:

Pinto B and Castro P (2021)
Contesting Political Decisions
Involving Environmental Issues:
A Case Study in Portugal Based on
the Press About Offshore Oil and Gas
Drilling. *Front. Mar. Sci.* 8:684753.
doi: 10.3389/fmars.2021.684753

This paper presents a case study about the drilling of offshore oil and gas in mainland Portugal, a process that ended with the cancelation of all contracts. It aimed to better understand the argumentative and value dynamics involved in how municipalities, populations, civic organizations, and others successfully contested the central government decision of prospection. Since the press was one of the main stages for this conflict, it was important to analyze how it presented the respective arguments to society. Articles on this topic were collected from the two widely read national newspapers “Correio da Manhã” and “Público” in the culmination period of this confrontation, which occurred between June 2016 and December 2018. In total, 155 articles were found, 61.3% ($n = 95$) from “Público” and 38.7% ($n = 60$) from “Correio da Manhã.” The quantitative analysis focused on the number of news per month and the frequency of themes, as well as the frequency of actors and arguments used against and in favor of exploitation on the news. Thematic analysis was used to qualitatively assess the articulation of arguments in the two opposing views. Results show that, in both newspapers, the majority of articles focused on the positions and actions of those opposing prospection, as the Government and other actors in favor of drilling were much less active in presenting its arguments. Overall, the analysis suggests two different strategies: (a) a strong argumentative synergy between a wide range of actors against offshore prospection. Their concerted arguments defended multiple values, including public participation in political decisions, protecting local communities and places from environmental risks, countering climate change, and protecting local economic activities. (b) The Government was usually isolated in its arguments with the occasional exception of oil companies or representatives of the national industry. The scarce arguments used by these actors evoked mostly national economic values, with little engagement with other societal goals. This study suggests that the large mobilization of different sectors of society, their use of a convergent and wide range of arguments, and the lack of engagement of the Government in a dialogical argumentation were crucial to delegitimize the latter’s political decision.

Keywords: local impacts, climate change, public protests, fossil fuels, collective action

INTRODUCTION

Political decisions such as laws, regulations, or governmental authorizations express options among different values and goals for a society, privileging some over others. These choices sometimes meet with open protest and resistance from the public. In some cases, the contestation is sustained in time, involving different groups coming together for opening “battles of ideas” (Moscovici and Markova, 2000) against the government, fought through discourse—often one of the few aspects where such heterogeneous and loose coalitions have agency (Pellizzoni, 2011). Such battles seeking to alter governmental decisions, and the values, representations, and goals they privilege, are thus collective actions for social change (Batel and Castro, 2015). Sometimes, these loose coalitions are successful in their goal of leading to legal alterations. Although many factors are involved in their success, two are paramount: the deployment of the “battle of ideas” (the discourses and arguments from each side and the values and representations they sustain) and its dynamics (how actors and arguments respond to each other) (Elcherath et al., 2011; Pellizzoni, 2011; Castro et al., 2018). Studies about how collective actions help sustain social change, and what direction they are taking (Batel and Castro, 2015), are particularly important when they are successful.

In this context, this paper presents a case study—analyzed through the press—about the public resistance to the governmental concessions for drilling of offshore oil and gas in Portugal, a process that ended in 2018 with the cancellation of all contracts (i.e., with success for those involved in collective action). The study focuses on the press, as the media can play a crucial role in making these confrontations more or less visible to society and potentially affecting its outcome (Carvalho, 2007; Carrus et al., 2009; Castro et al., 2018). Indeed, the media play a central role in producing, re-enforcing, and disseminating environmental values and representations, and have been one of the main focus of research in environmental communication: a recent review of articles published between 1973 and 2017 showed that journalism was the most frequent object of study in environmental communication (Comfort and Park, 2018).

This interest has spanned media communication regarding climate change (Carvalho, 2007; Boykoff, 2009; Sampei and Aoyagi-Usui, 2009; Schmidt et al., 2013; Comfort and Park, 2018), biodiversity conservation (Carrus et al., 2009; Castro et al., 2012; Hovardas, 2017; Carranza et al., 2020), energy infrastructures (Devine-Wright, 2011), and mining/extraction conflicts (Usher, 2013; Jaspal and Nerlich, 2014; Hovardas, 2017; Carranza et al., 2020). Such media studies show persistent tensions between the global/national and local levels, which assume several forms.

First, there is a clear pattern of local/national media placing global problems in national agendas, sometimes neglecting national and/or local/regional ones. This is apparent in the Portuguese press. For instance, the national press coverage of climate change until 2014 was found to be linked to summits (e.g., UN Climate Change Conferences), with less importance attributed to national or local issues (Horta and Carvalho, 2017), and the peaks in the number of marine and coastal news in the Portuguese quality newspaper “Público” (between October 2002

and December 2010) were shown to correspond to the oil spills in Spain and in the United States (Pinto et al., 2020). Second, local/regional media often argue that whereas environmental problems and goals are global or national, the burden of costs and difficulties brought about by environmental measures are local, but local communities are not consulted (Carrus et al., 2009; Devine-Wright, 2011; Castro et al., 2012; Hovardas, 2017; Bowden et al., 2021). Such tensions were apparent in the designation of protected areas, and in the definition of Natura sites and laws (Hovardas and Korfiatis, 2008; Carrus et al., 2009; Castro et al., 2012; Bowden et al., 2021). For instance, the analysis of a regional newspaper coverage of the local contestation of a new national park in Italy showed how its designation by the Government without prior local consultation was contested as a violation of democratic principles (Carrus et al., 2009). The lack of involvement of local communities was also found in the Portuguese press regarding the implementation of Natura 2000 (Castro et al., 2012) and is a recurrent complaint in the management of Natura 2000 sites in other regions (see Blicharska et al., 2016).

Third, local/global tensions are also visible in the media when they oppose local communities and other actors to plans (by governments or companies) for new activities such as mining (Usher, 2013; Hovardas, 2017), fracking (Jaspal and Nerlich, 2014), dredge spoil disposal (Lankester et al., 2015), or the construction of big energy infrastructures (Devine-Wright, 2011). Such protests can express environmental discourses and worldviews—as shown in an analysis the United Kingdom press about the social representations of “fracking,” where a more critical stance of the activity was associated with support for environmental causes of two of the four newspapers analyzed (Jaspal and Nerlich, 2014). Also, a media study about dredge spoil disposal in the Great Barrier Reef (Australia) showed that news coverage changed over time from local environmental and socio-economic risks to national risks for its status as World Heritage Site and associated activities such as tourism (Lankester et al., 2015).

In many of the local/national conflicts so far discussed from the past decades, central governments, experts, or private companies attempted to delegitimize local communities through arguments defending that they were assuming “Not In My Back Yard” (NIMBY) positions. NIMBY allegations accuse local communities of self-interest and unwillingness to contribute to the “global common good,” dismissing their protests as irrational and emotional (Devine-Wright, 2009; Barnett et al., 2012). Yet many analyses of such conflicts concur that local contestation are frequently associated with lack of local involvement, as well as a disregard for all the dimensions of local people–place relations, such as place identity, knowledge, and attachment (Jentoft, 2000; Devine-Wright, 2009; Adger et al., 2013; Blicharska et al., 2016; Castro, 2021). Jentoft (2000), for instance, argues that in fisheries management “the mismatch between what users see as reasonable and imperative within the local context in which they operate, and what governments regard as rational and efficient from a global perspective” result in legitimacy problems. The author suggests that the articulation between the local and global scales is relevant to promote legitimacy, preventing regulatory failure, a

conclusion also supported by studies highlighting the relevance of the local knowledge of fishers and farmers (Castro, 2021). In this context, some authors propose that local opposition is better understood not as NIMBY, but as place-protective action powered by people–place relations (Devine-Wright, 2009), as a relevant cultural dimension (Adger et al., 2013). In the context of these criticisms, new discourses emerged around local opposition, from both sides. For instance, in a dispute concerning a new coalmine in England proposed by a private company (Usher, 2013)—and successfully blocked by the local community and environmental NGOs—the three dominant discourses were as follows: “custodial communitarism,” a form of resistance by the local community framed as protective place action; “global survivalism” usually promoted by NGOs to enhance the connection between the local and the global; and “responsible resourcism” used by the private company to depict a view of a sustainable use of nature that does not neglect environmental and social concerns.

In the coverage of these local conflicts, the media can enhance a certain position by offering it comparatively more attention. This may even mean amplifying minority positions, for instance, through the norm of balance, as happened in the climate change case in the United States of America (Boykoff, 2009). Or it may mean giving those involved in collective protest against governmental decisions higher visibility, more support, and more direct voice in articles than the government—as happened in the press coverage of the contestation by local communities of restrictive recreational fishing laws in Portugal (Castro et al., 2018), which were in the sequence of this visible local contestation made less restrictive. Therefore, the media, and the press in particular, need to be objects of study to enable understanding of the deployment and dynamics of the “battle of ideas” and how discourse and communication help sustain the direction of social change, as mentioned.

To achieve this, approaches from social sciences that theorize discourse and communication as social and relational practices and look at how they are pragmatically used for negotiating diverging goals, values, and representations can help in exploring the deployment and dynamics of these conflicts. In this regard, approaches focusing on meaning and discourse, such as the Theory of Social representations (see Batel and Castro, 2018), guide attention to the analysis of the values and meanings (i.e., representations) mobilized by protagonists, the arguments adopted and the communicative formats they use, and how they respond to each other. The approach theorizes the functionality of an argument or a discourse as dependent upon the context of the debate, arguing that they cannot be understood outside of the wider tradition of locally and nationally or globally relevant debates about that topic. This is so since some arguments have been proven weak in certain times and contexts (Batel and Castro, 2015)—e.g., the aforementioned examples regarding the NIMBY discussion. Moreover, the arguments chosen also carry social value, either positive in a certain time and place—for example, the category of those people who defend our common, clean, and sustainable future—or negative—e.g., those who want profit at all costs (Elcheroth et al., 2011; Castro et al., 2018). This was also shown by the way historically environmental arguments gained

legitimacy and entered the discourse of all (see Usher, 2013, above). The theory also highlights how these opposing views can be fought in (a) monological ways resorting to simplified argumentations that do not indicate awareness of the points of view of the opponents and/or of the debate concerning the topic and do not seek to find some common ground with them, or (b) dialogical ways using more complex arguments showing awareness of the variety of positions and dilemmas that characterize a field of decisions (Moscovici and Markova, 2000; Gillespie, 2008; Castro and Santos, 2020).

The Present Study

As indicated above, to understand how collective actions of protest may impact the direction of social change (Batel and Castro, 2015), it is particularly important to study actions that were well succeeded. However, there are still very few media studies of successful public contestation seeking to prevent future extraction projects. The current research aims to address this gap, with a case study in which there was a local and national contestation that mobilized against the Government regarding the offshore oil and gas concessions it had granted, and was successful, as it had the unusual outcome of the cancellation of all contracts with the oil companies. Therefore, the main objective of this study was to assess the deployment and the dynamic of this conflict: how the offshore oil and gas in Portugal drilling was contested in the national print media, and how it was defended.

The specific goals on this study were thus to analyze: (1) the level of press attention to this issue during the studied period; (2) the main themes and categories the articles contained; (3) the different voices/actors of both sides, how heterogeneous they were, and the space they were given in the articles; and (4) the main arguments used for defending and opposing the future extraction, and their range and inter-articulation.

Considering that mixed-method approaches can provide more complete perspectives over complex issues (Bryman, 2012), quantitative and qualitative analysis were both applied in this study and will be sequentially reported. The quantitative content analysis explored the structure of how the conflict was represented in the national press, i.e., goals 1, 2, and 3 above. The qualitative analysis was conducted through a thematic analysis, a method enabling “recognizing and organizing patterns in content and meaning in qualitative data” (Willig, 2013). This aimed to add detail to the arguments used to support each of the two opposing views (Braun and Clarke, 2012; Bryman, 2012), and to address goal 4, to unveil their dynamic by reconstructing the dialogical orientation of the conflict between two positions (Jaspal and Nerlich, 2014; Castro et al., 2018). In the next section, we present an overview of the historical development of the conflict, then proceed to the analyses.

Historical Background

Between 2011 and 2015, 11 concessions for offshore drilling were attributed by the Portuguese government to oil companies (Gomes and Batista, 2017; Diário de Notícias/Lusa, 2018; Entidade Nacional para o Mercado de Combustíveis, 2018): three concessions for Eni/Galp, four for Repsol/Kosmos/Galp/Partex, and four for Repsol/Partex. At that point, the activities of

prospection, development, and production of fossil fuels in Portugal were regulated by the law-decree 109/94 from 26 April 1994 and did not contemplate the consultation of actors or any other form of public participation in this process (Gomes and Batista, 2017; Entidade Nacional para o Mercado de Combustíveis, 2018).

In 2015, social mobilization against these concessions gained strength, with collective action initiatives, such as public demonstrations and petitions, becoming visible in the media. A coalition of groups formed, joining actors such as environmental NGOs, municipalities, or political parties, to different civic organizations created with the specific objective of contesting these contracts. Examples of these organizations are the PALP platform, created in 2015 by a group of citizens and 17 NGOs, which had the main objective of “proposing a Sustainable Algarve and against the oil exploitation in this region” (Plataforma Algarve Livre de Petróleo, 2021), and the movement “Futuro Limpo,” established in 2016 by a group of citizens including prominent national names of the arts, media, and academia with the main purpose of expressing “the disagreement and opposition of many Portuguese citizens to the concession rights of prospection, research, exploitation and production of oil and gas in national territory” (Futuro Limpo, 2021). The main focus of protests was the coastal regions of Alentejo and Algarve, where large beach areas and the Southwest Alentejo and Vicentine Coast Natural Park, also a Natura 2000 protected site, are located.

In July 2016, the Intermunicipal Community of Algarve—encompassing 16 Algarve municipalities—presented two precautionary measures against the Portuguese Government, to stop fossil fuel drilling. The case was discussed at the Portuguese Parliament, which recommended that the Government suspended such activities. A month later, the Government legally contested these precautionary measures. However, at the end of the year, four concessions to the consortium Repsol/Partex were ceased by the Government alleging breaches of contract.

In the first semester of 2017, new precautionary measures against fossil fuel drilling were presented by the municipality of Odemira and the above-mentioned civic organization PALP. A new discussion in the Portuguese Parliament resulted in the recommendation for more transparency in this process; the Parliament (in 14 June 2017) required the Government to prepare a technical and scientific document as the basis of support to its decisions. Also, the concessions of Repsol/Kosmos/Galp/Partex were ceased by the consortium. Moreover, a new law-decree 82/2017 from 18 August 2017 replaced the above-mentioned 1994 law-decree and established that municipalities affected by offshore or onshore drilling had to be consulted, although such consultations were not legally binding.

In early 2018, the Government approved the postponing for 1 year of the beginning of the oil drilling in Alentejo. In May, the Portuguese Environment Agency (Ministry of Environment) established that drillings were exempted from environmental impact assessment, which caused strong protests from different sectors of society. Later that year, the official document previously required by the Parliament about the drilling of fossil fuels was published by the National Authority for Fuel Market (Entidade

Nacional para o Mercado de Combustíveis, 2018). In this document, one of the main arguments for fossil fuel exploitation in Portugal was that the country would still need them in the near future, despite the expected growth of renewable energies (Gomes and Batista, 2017; Entidade Nacional para o Mercado de Combustíveis, 2018). Also in 2018, a new precautionary measure against drilling was presented by PALP, which was later accepted by the court. Again, the Government legally contested this decision. In October 2018, the consortium Galp/Eni decided to abandon fossil fuel prospection in Portugal because the “existing conditions made it objectively impossible to continue these exploration activities.” This marked the end of the concessions for offshore drilling (Pinto, 2020).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The Corpus

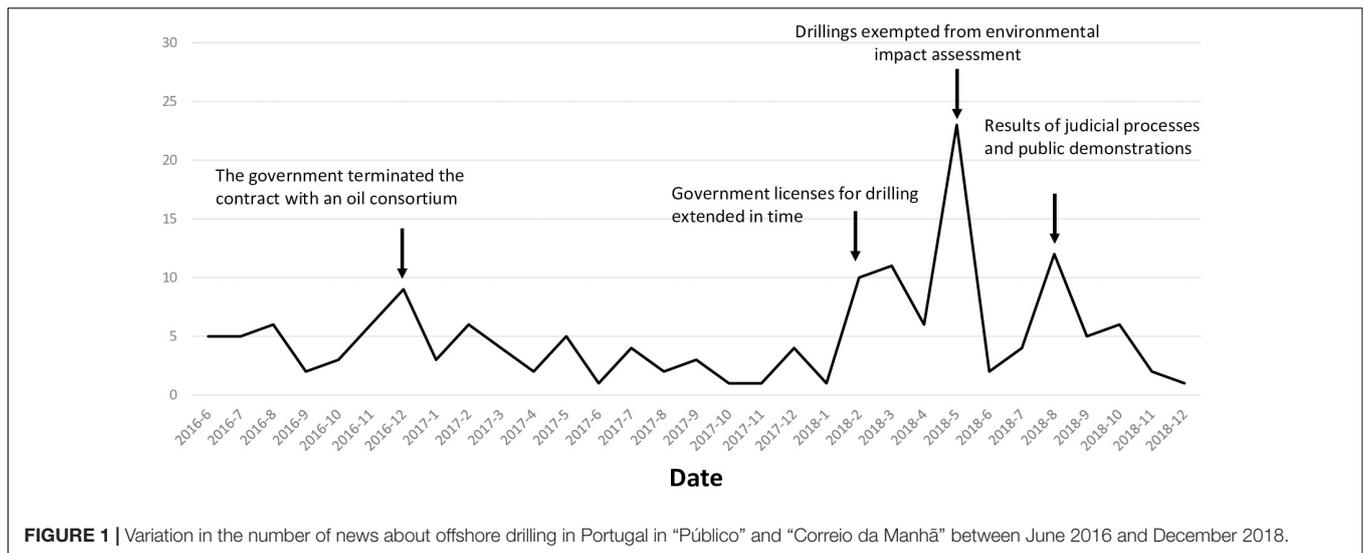
News pieces were collected from the print and online news of two widely read daily Portuguese newspapers, both the usual focus of Portuguese press studies, and with two different types of news and readerships—the reference/quality newspaper “Público” and the popular/tabloid newspaper “Correio da Manhã.” The quality newspaper “Público” is the third most read at the national level, the one with the largest online readership, and the most influential publication in the domains of science and environment in Portugal (Granado and Malheiros, 2015; Associação Portuguesa para o Controlo de Tiragem e Circulação, 2021). “Correio da Manhã,” with its focus on sensationalism, is the only newspaper in Portugal that can be considered a tabloid and the most read newspaper at the national level (Associação Portuguesa para o Controlo de Tiragem e Circulação, 2021).

The news were collected for the period between June 2016 and December 2018—i.e., from 1 month before the first precautionary measure was submitted in court until 2 months after the last consortium of oil companies ceased their plans—the highest point of the conflict (Diário de Notícias/Lusa, 2018). News were selected by searching in the electronic archiver of the two newspapers with the keywords (originally in Portuguese): “exploitation,” “hydrocarbons,” “Portugal,” “oil,” “natural gas.” Then, only the news items directly related to the offshore exploration of oil and gas in the coastal area of Portugal were retained, and identical news published in the print and online editions were counted as one. In total, 155 news articles were considered for analysis, in which 95 (61.3%) were from “Público” and 60 (38.7%) were from “Correio da Manhã.”

Analytic Procedures

The news article was the unit of analysis. The methods used according to the specific goals of research are described below:

- (1) Press attention to oil and gas drilling: we measured the number of news per month, relating it with the main historical events during the studied period.
- (2) Main themes: after reading all the news, a list of categories was inductively prepared by the first author for coding each article. Then, the articles were read a



second time and classified according to its two main themes, as defined in the following list : (A) Judicial processes (precautionary measures and their outcomes); (B) Oil and gas drilling (preparations for the drilling process); (C) Local environmental impact and risks (resulting from drilling); (D) Global environmental impact and risks (for climate change resulting from drilling); (E) Renewable energies vs. drilling; (F) Public protests (demonstrations and reactions to them); (G) Consultation (of different protagonists on drilling and its results); (H) Local economic impact (in activities such as tourism and fishing); (I) National interest (economic benefits of fossil fuels for Portugal). These themes were also afterward grouped into four overarching, second order, categories: Processual (A, B); Environmental (C–E); Participation (F, G); Economical (H, I).

- (3) Actors/voices and arguments: in each article, the main actor against and the main actor in favor of the exploitation of fossil fuels were identified and then grouped in two categories: “Against” and “In favor.” In each article, the arguments supporting these two positions were identified and counted. After this, the relative frequency of actors and arguments used were calculated.
- (4) Articulation between arguments: the arguments used against and in favor of drilling were organized in order to reflect the patterns observed in the news. In practice, this implied acquiring a high level of familiarity with each of the used arguments and the emerging patterns in the way they were usually articulated together.

RESULTS

Press Attention to Oil and Gas Drilling

During the period studied, there was an average of five news per month ($SD = 4.9$) about this issue in the two newspapers, with only one clear peak of news in May 2018 ($n = 23$; see

Figure 1). The trigger event for this high number of news was the announcement by the Portuguese Environment Agency that consortiums of oil companies planning their offshore prospecting activities in Portugal were not obliged to present environmental impact assessment studies. There were also news about future public demonstrations, and the popular movement “Futuro Limpo” demanded the resignation of the Ministry of Environment. The Government briefly replied (as reported in the news) that this was a purely technical decision, and the president of the Portuguese Chamber of Commerce and Industry argued that the country should exploit its fossil fuels.

The higher number of news in February and March 2018 was spurred by the decision of the Government to extend for one more year the licenses of offshore prospectation to consortiums of oil companies and the opposition of a range of actors to this option. There was also an increase of news in August 2018 concerning judicial processes in court, as well as in December 2016 in the sequence of the Governmental decision to terminate a contract with an oil consortium for the non-compliance of conditions for drilling. So, in this case, and unlike most environmental and marine news (see Pinto et al., 2020), the national agenda was the one shaping the frequency of news.

Second-Order Categories and Main Themes

The second-order category “Processual” had the highest percentage on the news (see **Table 1**). In this category, the theme “Judicial processes” accounting for about 31% of the themes was the most frequent, reporting legal actions against offshore drillings by municipalities and popular movements, and by the Government in favor of the continuation of operations. In some cases, these news moved the conflict forward, serving as a starting point for other events and news. Also, the theme “Oil and gas drilling” about the preparations for the drilling process was fairly common in the analyzed news representing about 14% of the themes.

TABLE 1 | Relative frequency of second-order categories and themes in “Público” and “Correio da Manhã,” June 2016 to December 2018.

Second-order categories	Percentage and frequency	Themes	Percentage and frequency
Processual	45.48% (<i>n</i> = 141)	A–Judicial processes	31.29% (<i>n</i> = 97)
		B–Oil and gas drilling	14.19% (<i>n</i> = 44)
Environmental	23.22% (<i>n</i> = 72)	C–Local environmental impact and risks	15.48% (<i>n</i> = 48)
		D–Global environmental impact and risks	6.45% (<i>n</i> = 20)
		E–Renewable energies vs. drilling	1.29% (<i>n</i> = 4)
Participatory	22.26% (<i>n</i> = 69)	F–Public protests	21.29% (<i>n</i> = 66)
		G–Consultation	0.97% (<i>n</i> = 3)
Economical	9.04% (<i>n</i> = 28)	H–Local economic impact	5.81% (<i>n</i> = 18)
		I–National interest	3.23% (<i>n</i> = 10)
Total	<i>n</i> = 310		

The second-order category “Environmental” had the second highest percentage, and its most common and recurrent discussions between the different actors were about the “Local environmental impact and risks”–grouped in this theme, they account for about 15% of the themes. Discussions about “Global environmental impact and risks” and “renewable energies vs. drilling” and their relationship with climate change accounted, respectively, for about 6% and about 1% of the main themes of the news.

The second-order category “Participatory” was less frequent. It included the theme “Public protests” accounting for 21% of the themes, with news about a wide range of collective actions, such as demonstrations in several locations–sometimes as a reaction to Governmental decisions or the development of judicial processes in court–petitions, opinion articles, a class about climate change at the entrance of the headquarter of an oil company, meetings between protestors and ministers, or the President of the Republic, etc. There were also some articles on the public “consultation” of municipalities, populations, and popular movements about drilling, accounting for nearly 1% of the themes.

The second-order category “Economical” was the one with least importance. It included news with the main theme “local economic impact” argued by detractors of the option for drilling, which accounted for nearly 6% of the themes, and news with the theme “national level” pointing to the economic advantages argued by its supporters with about 3% of the themes.

In sum, there was generally a higher visibility of the issues that were happening in a particular moment in time such as legal processes, public demonstrations, and the process of drilling. The

TABLE 2 | Frequency of actors in the studied news.

Category	Percentage and frequency	Stakeholder	Percentage and frequency
Actors against drilling			
Citizens groups	70.97% (<i>n</i> = 110)	Popular movements	20.65% (<i>n</i> = 32)
		Civic society	29.03% (<i>n</i> = 45)
		Environmental associations	16.77% (<i>n</i> = 26)
		Tourism associations	2.58% (<i>n</i> = 4)
		Sports associations	1.94% (<i>n</i> = 3)
		National political actors	12.26% (<i>n</i> = 19)
Municipalities	8.39% (<i>n</i> = 13)	Assembly of the Republic	1.29% (<i>n</i> = 2)
		President of Republic	0.65% (<i>n</i> = 1)
		Member of Parliament Marisa Matias	0.65% (<i>n</i> = 1)
		Intermunicipal community of Algarve	3.87% (<i>n</i> = 6)
Non identified	8.39% (<i>n</i> = 13)	Municipalities	3.23% (<i>n</i> = 5)
		Mayors	1.29% (<i>n</i> = 2)
Total	<i>n</i> = 155	Not identified	8.39% (<i>n</i> = 13)
Actors in favor of drilling			
Government	88.39% (<i>n</i> = 137)	Government	88.39% (<i>n</i> = 137)
Private organizations	11.62% (<i>n</i> = 18)	Oil companies	10.97% (<i>n</i> = 17)
		President of the Portuguese Chamber of Commerce and Industry	0.65% (<i>n</i> = 1)
Total	<i>n</i> = 155		

agenda was thus very marked by processual aspects, as well as by environmental concerns.

Actors Involved

Table 2 clearly shows the diversity of actors against oil and gas drilling in the news, demonstrating the involvement of several sectors of the Portuguese society in this conflict forming what the literature calls a heterogeneous coalition (Pellizzoni, 2011) (see **Table 2**). More specifically, the category “Citizens groups” was the most frequent, with the mobilization of citizens to create

TABLE 3 | Frequency of arguments against and in favor of drilling.

Category	Percentage and frequency	Argument	Percentage and frequency
Arguments against drilling			
Processual	26.06% (<i>n</i> = 92 hits)	Illegal	26.06% (<i>n</i> = 92)
Environmental	35.7% (<i>n</i> = 126 hits)	Local environmental risks	17.85% (<i>n</i> = 63)
		Dismisses climate change	11.90% (<i>n</i> = 42)
		Investment should be on renewable energies	5.95% (<i>n</i> = 21)
Participatory	13.88% (<i>n</i> = 49 hits)	Municipalities, populations and civic society not considered in decisions	13.88% (<i>n</i> = 49)
Economical	24.36% (<i>n</i> = 86 hits)	Local economic risks	15.01% (<i>n</i> = 53)
		Oil and gas industries are decreasing	3.12% (<i>n</i> = 11)
		Small economic benefits for the country	2.55% (<i>n</i> = 9)
		Negative image for the region and/or country	1.98% (<i>n</i> = 7)
		Economic benefits for private companies	1.7% (<i>n</i> = 6)
Total	<i>n</i> = 353 hits		
Arguments in favor of drilling			
Processual	28.57% (<i>n</i> = 18 hits)	Oil and gas exploration will respect the law	28.57% (<i>n</i> = 18)
Environmental	28.57% (<i>n</i> = 18 hits)	Risks of environmental damage will be minimized	25.4% (<i>n</i> = 16)
		Oil and gas exploration can finance the transition to renewable energies	3.17% (<i>n</i> = 2)
Participatory	–	No arguments presented	
Economical	42.86% (<i>n</i> = 27 hits)	Potential for economic benefits	15.87% (<i>n</i> = 10)
		The country should know its marine resources	12.3% (<i>n</i> = 8)
		Potential for technical and scientific developments	3.17% (<i>n</i> = 2)
		Need for oil and gas in the future	4.76% (<i>n</i> = 3)
		Reduction of national energy dependence	6.35% (<i>n</i> = 4)
Total	<i>n</i> = 63 hits		

popular movements, as well as existing environmental, tourism, and sports associations joining forces for a common goal. It should also be noted the presence of prominent figures at the national level such as a writer and a film director involved in one of these popular movements, which increased the visibility of their arguments. “National political actors” were usually political parties expressing their views, in some cases demanding changes and/or clarifications to this process. In two other news, the President of the Republic and a member of the parliament also expressed their opposition to this governmental decision. In the case of municipalities, they were the main protagonists in news about their judicial actions against drilling.

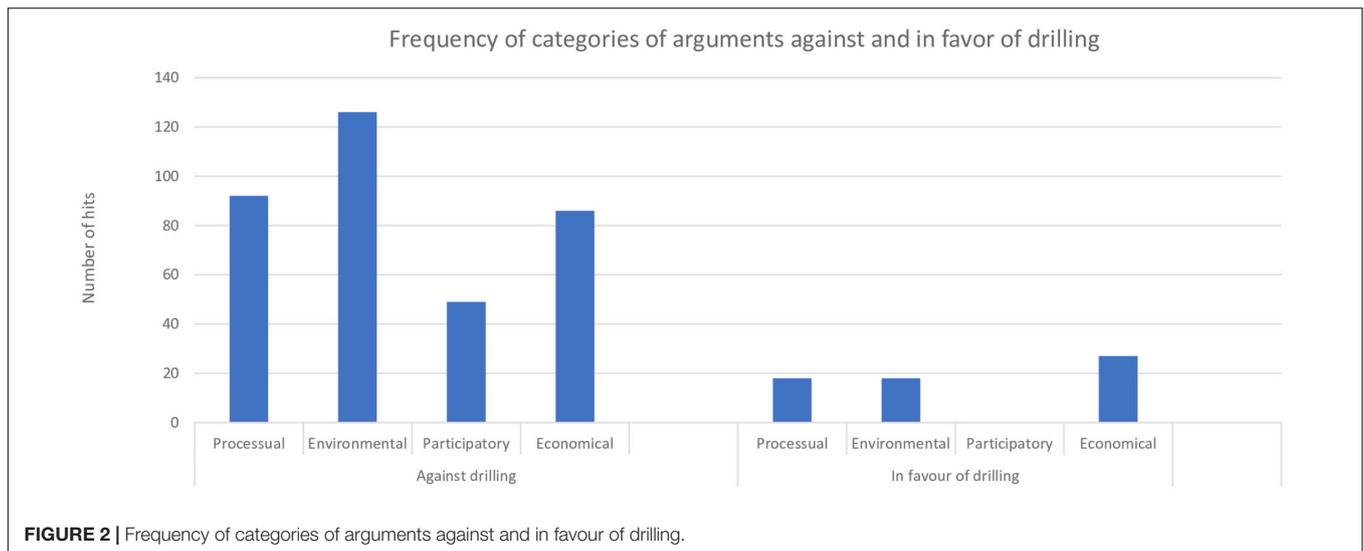
Looking at the frequency of actors in favor of drilling, there is a much lower diversity of protagonists. More specifically, the Government was the usual actor in favor, with a limited number of news in which oil companies took over that main role. On one occasion, the president of the Portuguese Chamber of Commerce and Industry was the author of a newspaper article about the importance of oil and gas drilling at the national level.

In sum, the news showed different sectors of the Portuguese society against drilling including citizens groups, national political actors, and municipalities, fighting the political positions of the Government and, to a much lesser extent, private organizations.

Arguments in the News

In the 155 news analyzed, the total number of arguments found against oil and gas exploitation was 353, as it is clear in **Table 3** and **Figure 2**. The most common arguments were that this process was illegal (category “Processual”), as well as future local environmental impacts and climate change, and local economic impacts (respectively, the highest of the category “Environmental” and “Economical,” see **Table 3**). This shows how the heterogeneous coalition evidenced in **Table 3** used directly Environmental arguments to a large extent (35.7%), together with Economical ones to dismiss the economical relevance of oil and gas and highlight their risk. Hence, the base of the discursive coalition was mostly around environmental matters, affecting the local as well as the country and the world. Also, the argument that municipalities, populations, and civic society should be considered in public decisions was invoked in some of this news (category “Participatory”). Finally, 37 news (23.87% of the total) did not have arguments against this governmental option.

By contrast, the total number of arguments found in the news in favor of oil and gas exploitation was only 63 (see **Table 3**). The defense arguments that these operations would respect the law (category “Processual”) and that the risks of environmental damage would be minimized (category “Environmental”) were the most common. There were also different arguments invoking the economic benefits for exploitation at national level. When added, the category “Economical” had the highest percentage of all the four analyzed. Also, the issue of public participation in the decision of exploiting oil and gas was never approached by these actors. Additionally, the number of news that did not have arguments in favor of drilling was 116 (74.84% of the total), which points to a lack of engagement of these actors in arguing for this option.



In sum, this analysis shows that the coalition of actors against drilling presented about 5.6 times more arguments than actors in favor of drilling, and also used a much wider and complex variety of arguments in the four categories considered. Arguments against drilling were predominantly questioning the legitimacy of this process and the local environmental and economic impacts involved, whereas arguments in favor enhanced the national economic benefits and minimized risks.

Articulation Between Arguments: Establishing the Rationale for the Two Opposing Views

To give a better perspective on the dynamic of these arguments against and pro-drilling, i.e., how they are formulated to legitimize their positions, and respond to the positions of the others, as well as how they are articulated with the debates of the field, we now present some illustrative examples. In this section, we first present the arguments against drilling and then the arguments in favor of drilling. The issues of scale are particularly enhanced, establishing relations between local, national, and global perspectives.

Arguments Against Drilling for Fossil Fuels: Aligning the Local and the Global

In the news analyzed, opposition to drilling came from several sectors of the Portuguese society, forming a loose but broad discourse coalition (Pellizzoni, 2011), involving local communities, NGOs, and local and national authorities, which aligned positions using frequent and varied arguments that were attuned to the trends of the broad debate: relevance of environmental protection and importance of linking local and global to avoid NIMBY accusations.

Connection of Local Perspectives to Global Environmental Trends

Previous studies have shown tension between local and national perspectives of extractive plans and activities (Jaspal and Nerlich,

2014; Hovardas, 2017) and also how the articulation between local and global scales is relevant to promote the legitimacy of arguments (Jentoft, 2000; Usher, 2013; Castro et al., 2018). This articulation is found in the present debate, in which those opposing drilling do not focus exclusively on local impacts. Instead, they link these with arguments concerning climate change, the respect for international agreements, and the need for investment in renewables. This combination of arguments enabled to shift the focus from the local scale to the articulation between local and global concerns, thus helping to legitimize the protests. The negative impacts for the country and the world of the drilling plans to happen in the local are emphasized; also highlighted are the contradictions of the national policies for fighting climate change with the drilling plans. Several examples of this focus on the national and global climate policies and impacts, not just the local impacts, can be presented:

“(.. .) prospecting and exploiting fossil fuels will be a serious setback in policies **to fight climate change** (.. .)” (P, November 2016, Member of civic association)

“There is a great contradiction in Portugal, between the objective of being ambitious, and limiting the use of fossil fuels (.. .) and the beginning of a new cycle of exploration of hydrocarbons, which is meaningless from the point of view of our commitments, namely through **the Paris agreement**.” (CM, September 2018, Member of NGO)

“(.. .) it’s an outrage that the Government (.. .) denies the existence of negative impacts not only for **the environment but also for the inhabitants** of the Algarve territory.” (CM, May 2018, President of tourism organization)

Also, instead of rejecting environmental laws and regulations at the local level, as happened in past protests (Carrus et al., 2009; Castro et al., 2012), these legal climate measures and the importance of preserving natural resources were mobilized as valued arguments to stop fossil fuel drilling. For example:

“(.. .) the impacts of the implementation and development of the oil industry are not compatible with the continuity and success of fishing, agriculture, tourism, hotels and many territorial activities dependent on the **preservation of our natural resources** (.. .)” (P, September 2016, Member of civic movement)

In the classification adopted by Usher (2013), these types of arguments can be identified as composing the discourse of “Custodian communitarism” in which local communities take the central stage in the protection of place (Devine-Wright, 2009) and nature, and the Government is viewed as an intruder that threatens their lifestyles in equilibrium with natural values. Moreover, this discourse enhances the threat of climate change, which is posed by an outdated industrial extraction activity (Usher, 2013), as shown in the following excerpt:

“The country can choose the **energies of the past, which are the fossil fuels**. Or it chooses to focus on the energies of the future, which are the renewables.” (P, August 2018, Columnist)

Delegitimizing the Political Decisions

Moreover, the legality of the Governmental decision and process to drill for fossil fuels was also questioned in several ways, another way of delegitimizing the drilling plans. This is visible in the following excerpts:

“[Our movement] classifies APA’s [Portuguese Environment Agency] decision [of exemption of environmental impact studies] as an attitude of **arrogance, tyranny, impudence and serious violation of the rules of democracy** (public consultations grossly violated).” (CM, May 2018, Member of civic movement)

“To date, there is still no judicial decision regarding these precautionary procedures, but whatever that decision is and if the Government persists in maintaining these contracts [with oil companies], [we] will always **use all available legal means** to defend our position and the people of Algarve.” (P, November 2016, Association of municipalities)

Risks of Fossil Fuel Drilling Do Not Compensate Benefits

This is an additional point in the arguments presented against drilling. The rationale was that environmental and economic risks at both local and national levels are high, and that economic benefits for the country are very small. This illustrates how they directly engage with the arguments of the opposers, in order to delegitimize them. For example, this is shown in the two excerpts:

“(.. .) the exploitation of oil in Costa Vicentina [Algarve] would bring a **profit close to zero** for the country, which would take all the risks.” (CM, April 2018, Member of civic movement)

“It is more than evident that the State **did not defend the public interest**, but only the interest of some.” (P, November 2016, Member of civic movement)

Therefore, besides perceived costs associated to drilling, protestors also consider that the exploitation of fossil fuels would not bring significant benefits to the country.

Arguments in Favor of Drilling for Fossil Fuels: Breaking the Silence to Talk About Benefits

As shown before, these arguments were much less frequent and diverse, and usually presented in reply to some criticisms and/or in critical moments in which there was a major drawback for these actions (e.g., cancellation of contracts by the Government with an oil consortium).

Responsible Drilling

Seeking common ground with the protestors, these arguments try to reassure that it is possible to follow up on the contracts with oil companies and exploit fossil fuels and simultaneously minimizing the risks of local environmental impacts. For example:

“The Government is well aware of the great values that the Algarve has and will never do anything that could at any time disturb these **environmental values**.” (P, August 2016, Member of Government)

“(.. .) it will be APA [Portuguese Environment Agency] who will decide which rules must be complied, with the certainty that **the law and environmental conditions will be respected**.” (P, February 2018, Member of Government)

Other authors have mentioned similar arguments by private companies aiming to explore mining resources that faced opposition of local communities (Usher, 2013; Hovardas, 2017). This discourse presents fossil fuels as instruments for the development and economic profits (Usher, 2013). This is an optimistic perspective in which the exploitation of these resources is seen as an opportunity that Portugal should seize:

“(.. .) a country that **does not know its resources** cannot develop them.” (P, February 2017, President of Oil Company)

“Failure to carry out this survey [offshore in Algarve] would mean that the country can afford to remain ignorant of a resource still so **important for our lives and with immense economic value**.” (P, May 2018, Member of Portuguese Chamber of Commerce and Industry)

Connecting Local Drilling of Fossil Fuels to Global Issues

Actors in favor of drilling also seek a different connection to the global environmental issue of climate change. In this case, the main argument is that economic benefits for the country from the inevitable use of fossil fuels in the near future could be invested in a swifter national energy transition to renewables. For example:

“Even though the world is moving more and more toward the decarbonization of the economy and renewable energies, we will still be for many, many years **dependent on oil.**” (CM, June 2018, Member of Government)

“Fossil fuels have played a key role, in financing the energy transition (. . .) I strongly believe that our country should study, evaluate and explore the possibility of the existence of oil, which could bring us the ability to make the **transition to a cleaner economy.**” (P, May 2018, Member of Portuguese Chamber of Commerce and Industry)

There is an additional argument, which is the application of technological developments from the offshore oil industry to other areas related to renewable energies. For example:

“This resource would be the **first wave of development** of marine resources in the country. Don’t think that offshore wind energy will be developed without the technologies of the oil and gas industry, which started all this development.” (CM, November 2018, President of Oil Company)

Therefore, while acknowledging the need for an energy transition due to climate change, the rationale is to move forward with the national exploitation of fossil fuels in order to have the economic resources and technical knowledge for a quicker transition to renewable energies.

DISCUSSION

The main objective of this study was to understand through the eyes of the press the success of a collective action that was capable of contesting the central government decision of prospection of fossil fuels in Portugal. Overall, the press analysis showed that there were two different strategies in this confrontation. On the one hand, a strong argumentative synergy between a loose and heterogeneous coalition of groups (Pellizzoni, 2011) against offshore prospection. Different protagonists from the public sphere were involved, also creating new popular movements with the specific goal of opposing to this decision. They joined forces with elements of the political sphere such as municipalities, mayors, political parties, and members of the Parliament. Their concerted arguments defended multiple values, although conceding high relevance to pro-environmental ones, highlighting the illegitimacy of the decision to drill for fossil fuels, the protection of local communities and places from environmental risk, the importance of public participation in political decisions, the safeguard of local economic activities, and the global efforts for countering climate change. Moreover, the legal actions taken by municipalities and popular movements and the vast array of public demonstrations against prospection received high visibility on the news and were very important in the unfolding of the story.

On the other hand, the Government was isolated in its arguments with the occasional exception of oil companies or representatives of the national industry. Moreover, in the

majority of the studied news, it was found that there were no arguments in favor of the prospection of fossil fuels. This indicates that they were reluctant in engaging in a dialogue with the opponents and preferred a more reactive than proactive positioning in the exchanges of arguments. A similar approach was taken in the contestations of legal actions presented in court. In the cases where communication in the news took place, the justifications used for prospection evoked mostly economic values such as the potential for economic profits and technical development, also reassuring that risks of environmental damage would be minimized and that the law would be respected. However, in other societal concerns such as the demand for effective public participation in this process or the impact of the exploitation of fossil fuels on global climate change, these actors seldom provided answers or seek a common ground for dialogue.

Other studies concerning extractive plans and activities mentioned that opposing sides of a conflict had diverging views of risk (Jaspal and Nerlich, 2014; Lankester et al., 2015; Hovardas, 2017). In the current case study, protestors highlighted environmental and economic risks associated to the exploitation of fossil fuels, and that these high risks were not compensated by the benefits for the country. However, actors in favor of exploitation considered that risks were controlled and that an exploitation that respects the laws and regulations would prevent them. This also relates to the concept of legality, which largely shaped this story. Indeed, the judicial dispute was the most common theme in the studied news and a key element in the delegitimization of the governmental decisions. Based on the existing legislation and the contracts of concessions to oil companies, actors favorable to drilling argued for the right to exploit the country’s natural resources while acknowledging that legal obligations of environmental and social protection would be assumed. As stated above, this discourse of “responsible resourcism” in which the value of nature is mostly instrumental was identified by other authors in studies concerning mining plans and activities (Usher, 2013; Hovardas, 2017). Protestors contested the law and the political decisions which were taken during the studied period, sometimes using adjectives such as illegal, immoral, and anti-democratic. Moreover, in what concerns the public consultation, the fact that local actors and others were initially not consulted, and that later their opinions were merely consultive fueled the arguments of the anti-democratic character of political decisions. The resistance of local communities and other actors to governmental decisions and need to involve them is a recurrent issue in the literature (Jentoft, 2000; Carrus et al., 2009; Blicharska et al., 2016) and also extends to other case studies in Portugal (Castro et al., 2018).

Another important dimension in this debate concerns the local/national and global scales. As stated above, some arguments against drilling were based on the environmental and economic risks that this represented at the local level—an adoption of the discourse of “custodian communitarism,” in which the perspectives of local communities are highlighted (Usher, 2013; Hovardas, 2017). On the other hand, the Government and private companies argued for economic values of fossil fuel exploitation at the national scale. Therefore, one of the sources of conflict was the use of different scales in the arguments (Jentoft, 2000).

Other authors have noticed the relevance of people–place bonds, which help to explain the focus of some opposing arguments at the local scale (Carrus et al., 2009; Di Masso et al., 2011; Castro et al., 2018). Moreover, another argument presented by the Government and other actors for the exploitation of fossil fuels were related to the notion of public interest (a national perspective). Although the term itself was not found in the analyzed news, the idea that the country should know and exploit its resources and that it cannot miss this opportunity suggests it. Also, in emphasizing the arguments on the national perspective and as a priority of the country, the local perspective seems to be relegated to a second plan (Carrus et al., 2009).

The connection between the local level of drilling and the global impact of fossil fuels on climate change, the commitment of Portugal to the Paris Agreement, and the need to invest on renewable energies was also found on the news. This discourse of “Global survivalism” is typically used by environmental NGOs (Usher, 2013; Hovardas, 2017), but in this case study, it was found that many other actors against drilling also adopted it. Previous studies have shown that the national press coverage about environmental issues such as climate change tend to attribute higher relevance to the international agenda rather than to local/national news (Horta and Carvalho, 2017; Horta et al., 2017). In this case, and unlike most studies concerning environmental and marine news (see Pinto et al., 2020), the national agenda was the one shaping the news. Also, rather than approaching the issue of climate change directly, actors in favor of drilling argued that profits and technical knowledge from the exploitation of fossil fuels could help the country to reach a clean economy more quickly. Hence, both opposing sides acknowledge the connection of the local/national scales to the global scale and the need for a transition from fossil fuels to renewable energies in the future, but the envisioned paths to reach it are different.

To conclude, this case study illustrates how the Governmental decision of moving forward with the prospection and exploitation of oil and gas drilling in Portugal found a loose and heterogeneous coalition that was nevertheless an organized opposition. This eventually contributed to the success

of this contestation, with the consequent abandonment of national plans for the exploitation of fossil fuels. Results also showed that, in both newspapers, the majority of articles focused on the positions and actions of those opposing prospection. On the other hand, the Government was usually isolated in its arguments with the occasional exception of oil companies or representatives of the national industry. The scarce arguments used by these actors evoked mostly national economic values, with little engagement with other societal goals. This study proposes that the large mobilization of different sectors of society, their use of a convergent and wide range of arguments, and the lack of engagement of the Government in a dialogical argumentation were crucial to delegitimize the latter’s political decision. It also suggests a social change toward the support of more pro-environmentalist positions.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

BP collected and analyzed the data. Both authors contributed to conception and design of the study, and wrote the manuscript, and also contributed to the manuscript revision, read and approved the submitted version.

FUNDING

This study had the support of the Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia (FCT) through the strategic project (UIDB/04292/2020) granted to MARE and the Scientific Employment Stimulus that was given to the first author (CEECIND/03059/2017).

REFERENCES

- Adger, W., Barnett, J., Brown, K., Marshall, N., and O’Brien, K. (2013). Cultural dimensions of climate change impacts and adaptation. *Nat. Clim. Chang.* 3, 112–117. doi: 10.1038/nclimate1666
- Associação Portuguesa para o Controlo de Tiragem e Circulação (2021). *Análise Simples*. Available online at: http://www.apct.pt/Analise_simples.php (accessed January 12, 2021)
- Barnett, J., Burningham, K., Walker, G., and Cass, N. (2012). Imagined publics and engagement around renewable energy technologies in the UK. *Public Underst. Sci.* 21, 36–50. doi: 10.1177/0963662510365663
- Batel, S., and Castro, P. (2015). Collective action and social change: examining the role of representation in the communication between protesters and third-party members. *J. Community Appl. Soc. Psychol.* 25, 249–263. doi: 10.1002/casp.2214
- Batel, S., and Castro, P. (2018). Reopening the dialogue between the theory of social representations and discursive psychology for examining the construction and transformation of meaning in discourse and communication. *Br. J. Soc. Psychol.* 57, 732–753. doi: 10.1111/bjso.12259
- Blicharska, M., Orlikowska, E. H., Roberge, J., and Grodzinska-Jurczak, M. (2016). Contribution of social science to large scale biodiversity conservation: a review of research about the Natura 2000 network. *Biol. Conserv.* 199, 110–122. doi: 10.1016/j.biocon.2016.05.007
- Bowden, V., Nyberg, D., and Wright, C. (2021). We’re going under”: the role of local news media in dislocating climate change adaptation. *Environ. Commun.* doi: 10.1080/17524032.2021.1877762 [Epub ahead of print].
- Boykoff, M. T. (2009). We speak for the trees: media reporting on the environment. *Annu. Rev. Environ. Resour.* 34, 431–457. doi: 10.1146/annurev.enviro.051308.084254
- Braun, V., and Clarke, V. (2012). “Thematic analysis,” in *APA Handbooks in Psychology. APA Handbook Of Research Methods in Psychology, Research Designs: Quantitative, Qualitative, Neuropsychological, and Biological*, Vol. Vol. 2, eds H. Cooper, P. M. Camic, D. L. Long, A. T. Panter, D. Rindskopf, and K. J. Sher (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association), 57–71.
- Bryman, A. (2012). *Social Research Methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Carranza, D. M., Varas-Belemmi, K., De Veer, D., Iglesias-Müller, C., Coral-Santacruz, D., Méndez, F. A., et al. (2020). Socio-environmental conflicts: an

- underestimated threat to biodiversity conservation in Chile. *Environ. Sci. Policy* 110, 46–59. doi: 10.1016/j.envsci.2020.04.006
- Carrus, G., Cini, F., Bonaiuto, M., and Mauro, A. (2009). Local mass media communication and environmental disputes: An analysis of press communication on the designation of the Tuscan archipelago National Park in Italy. *Soc. Nat. Resour.* 22, 607–624. doi: 10.1080/08941920802112734
- Carvalho, A. (2007). Ideological cultures and media discourses on scientific knowledge: re-reading news on climate change. *Public Underst. Sci.* 16, 223–224. doi: 10.1177/0963662506066775
- Castro, P. (2021). “A Dynamic view of local knowledge and epistemic bonds to place: implications for senses of place and the governance of biodiversity conservation,” in *Changing Sense of Place*, eds C. M. Raymond, L. C. Manzo, D. R. Williams, A. Di Masso, and T. von Wirth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Castro, P., Mouro, C., and Gouveia, R. (2012). A decade of debates about the conservation of biodiversity: comparing the national and regional press. *Soc. Nat. Resour.* 25, 539–555. doi: 10.1080/08941920.2011.606459
- Castro, P., and Santos, T. (2020). Dialogues with the absent other: using reported speech and the vocabulary of citizenship for contesting ecological laws and institutions. *Discourse Soc.* 31, 249–267. doi: 10.1177/0957926519889126
- Castro, P., Seixas, E., Neca, P., and Bettencourt, L. (2018). Successfully contesting the policy sphere: examining through the press a case of local protests changing new ecological laws. *Political Psychol.* 39, 107–123. doi: 10.1111/pops.12388
- Comfort, S. E., and Park, Y. E. (2018). On the field of environmental communication: a systematic review of the peer-reviewed literature. *Environ. Commun.* 12, 862–875. doi: 10.1080/17524032.2018.1514315
- Devine-Wright, H. (2011). “Envisioning public engagement with renewable energy: an empirical analysis of images within the UK national press 2006/2007,” in *Renewable Energy and the Public. From NIMBY to Participation*, ed. P. Devine-Wright (Milton Park: Taylor & Francis), 101–113.
- Devine-Wright, P. (2009). Rethinking NIMBYism: the role of place attachment and place identity in explaining place-protective action. *J. Commun. Appl. Soc. Psychol.* 19, 426–441. doi: 10.1002/casp.1004
- Di Masso, A., Dixon, J., and Pol, E. (2011). On the contested nature of place: “Figueras’s well,” “the hole of shame” and the ideological struggle over public space in Barcelona. *J. Environ. Psychol.* 31, 231–244. doi: 10.1016/j.jenvp.2011.05.002
- Diário de Notícias/Lusa. (2018). *Cronologia: Consórcio Eni/Galp Desiste de Pesquisar Petróleo ao Largo de Aljezur*. Available online at: <https://www.dn.pt/lusa/cronologia-consorcio-enigalp-desiste-de-pesquisar-petroleo-ao-largo-de-aljezur-10105098.html>. (accessed December 15, 2020)
- Elchereth, G., Doise, W., and Reicher, S. (2011). On the knowledge of politics and on the politics of knowledge. How a social representations approach helps us rethink the subject of political psychology. *Political Psychol.* 32, 729–758. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9221.2011.00834.x
- Entidade Nacional para o Mercado de Combustíveis (2018). *Livro Verde Sobre a Prospecção, Pesquisa, Desenvolvimento e Produção de Hidrocarbonetos em Território Nacional*. Available online at: <https://www.sgeconomia.gov.pt/noticias/ivro-verde-sobre-a-prospecao-pesquisa-desenvolvimento-e-producao-de-hidrocarbonetos-em-territorio-nacional.aspx>. (accessed December 15, 2020)
- Futuro Limpo (2021). *Quem Somos*. Available online at: <http://yesweb.pt/futurolimpo/> (accessed January 13, 2021)
- Gillespie, A. (2008). Social representations, alternative representations and semantic barriers. *J. Theory Soc. Behav.* 38, 375–391. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-5914.2008.00376.x
- Gomes, C. A., and Batista, L. (2017). Aspectos jurídico-ambientais do regime da prospecção e exploração de petróleo offshore em Portugal. *E-Pública* 4, 198–237.
- Granado, A., and Malheiros, J. V. (2015). *Cultura Científica em Portugal*. Lisbon: FFMS.
- Horta, A., and Carvalho, A. (2017). “Climate change communication in Portugal,” in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Climate Science*, ed. H. von Storch (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Horta, A., Carvalho, A., and Schmidt, L. (2017). The hegemony of global politics: news coverage of climate change in a small country. *Soc. Nat. Resour.* 30, 1246–1260. doi: 10.1080/08941920.2017.1295497
- Hovardas, T. (2017). Gold mining in the greek “Village of Gaul”: newspaper coverage of conflict and discursive positioning of opposing coalitions. *Environ. Commun.* 11, 667–681. doi: 10.1080/17524032.2017.1292938
- Hovardas, T., and Korfiatis, K. (2008). Framing environmental policy by the local press: case study from the dadia forest reserve. *Greece. For. Policy Econ.* 10, 316–325. doi: 10.1016/j.forpol.2007.12.001
- Jaspal, R., and Nerlich, B. (2014). Fracking in the UK press: threat dynamics in an unfolding debate. *Public Underst. Sci.* 23, 348–363. doi: 10.1177/0963662513498835
- Jentoft, S. (2000). Legitimacy and disappointment in fisheries management. *Mar. Policy* 24, 141–148. doi: 10.1016/S0308-597X(99)00025-1
- Lankster, A., Bohensky, E., and Newlands, M. (2015). Media representations of risk: the reporting of dredge spoil disposal in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park at Abbot Point. *Mar. Policy* 60, 149–161. doi: 10.1016/j.marpol.2015.06.009
- Moscovici, S., and Markova, I. (2000). “Ideas and their development, a dialogue between Serge Moscovici and Ivana Markova,” in *Social Representations, Explorations in Social Psychology*, ed. G. Duveen (Cambridge: Polity Press), 224–286.
- Pellizzoni, L. (2011). The politics of facts: local environmental conflicts and expertise. *Environ. Politics* 20, 765–785. doi: 10.1080/09644016.2011.617164
- Pinto, B., Costa, J. L., and Cabral, H. (2020). What news from the sea? Assessing the presence of marine issues in the Portuguese quality press. *Ocean Coast. Manag.* 185:105068. doi: 10.1016/j.ocecoaman.2019.105068
- Pinto, L. (2020). *Australis Renuncia às Concessões de gás na Batalha e Pombal Público*, 4/09/2020. Available online at: <https://www.publico.pt/2020/09/04/economia/noticia/australis-renuncia-concessoes-gas-batalha-pombal-1930318>. (accessed December 13, 2020)
- Plataforma Algarve Livre de Petróleo (2021). *Quem somos*. Available online at: <https://www.palp.pt/> (accessed January 15, 2021)
- Sampei, Y., and Aoyagi-Usui, M. (2009). Mass-Media coverage, its influence on public awareness of climate-change issues, and implications for Japan’s national campaign to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. *Glob. Environ. Chang.* 19, 203–212. doi: 10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2008.10.005
- Schmidt, A., Ivanova, A., and Schäfer, M. (2013). Media attention for climate change around the world: a comparative analysis of newspaper coverage in 27 countries. *Glob. Environ. Chang.* 23, 1233–1248. doi: 10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2013.07.020
- Usher, M. (2013). Defending and transcending local identity through environmental discourse. *Environ. Polit.* 22, 811–831. doi: 10.1080/09644016.2013.765685
- Willig, C. (2013). *Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology*. London: Open University Press.

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Copyright © 2021 Pinto and Castro. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY). The use, distribution or reproduction in other forums is permitted, provided the original author(s) and the copyright owner(s) are credited and that the original publication in this journal is cited, in accordance with accepted academic practice. No use, distribution or reproduction is permitted which does not comply with these terms.