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Up the Cascade: Framing of the Concession of the Highway between San José and San Ramón

Marie Garnier Ortiz,
MSc in Politics and Communication

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The Author can be contacted at: mpk.cronopia@gmail.com

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Up the Cascade: Framing of the Concession of the Highway between San José and San Ramón

Marie Garnier Ortiz

ABSTRACT

This dissertation is intended as a contribution to the debate on power and media power, by focusing particularly on the power of the press relative to that of political elites. Through a conceptual framework built around the concepts of framing and the cascading activation model, the main objective of this research is to analyze how the press framed the concession of a highway in Costa Rica. Using content analysis, this dissertation identifies the main frames deployed by different political actors in order to spread their preferred interpretation of the concession. These results were then analyzed with the theoretical framework, in order to understand the most prominent frames deployed in terms both of their strength, functions and spreading activation.

The main conclusion of this dissertation is that the press had the upper hand in determining the dominant frame for the concession, by spreading the negative counter frame put forth by organized groups of citizens opposing the concession, rather than the positive frame put forth by the administration; and therefore demonstrating that it is indeed possible for frames to spread up from the lower and less powerful levels of the cascade, through the news texts and up to the political elite.

INTRODUCTION

We study the media because of the need to understand how powerful the media are in our everyday lives; in the structuring of experience; on the surface and in the depths. And we want to harness that power for good rather than ill. (Silverstone, 1999: 143)

The power of the media, as Silverstone argues, has been the subject of a cornucopia of scholarly research and debate. The present dissertation is intended as a contribution to this debate, focusing particularly on the power of the media relative to the power of political elites. Power and, specifically, media power, are the leitmotif of this dissertation. However, power is a difficult concept to define, and an even more difficult variable to measure. In order to ascertain the balance – or imbalance – of power in the press-politician relation, it is necessary to develop theoretical and analytical tools that provide indicators of which side exerted more power in a particular case.

This dissertation consists of an analysis of the framing of the concession of the highway between San José and San Ramón, in Costa Rica. The contract of this concession was first awarded to the company Autopistas del Valle, during the Pacheco administration, in October 2004 (Ministerio de Obras Públicas y Transportes (MOPT), 2004). As part of this contract, the company would expand and modernize the highway, one of the most important in the country. However, the company was unable to raise sufficient funds to undertake the project; which prompted the sale of the rights to the contract for the concession to the Brazilian company OAS. After securing the approval of the Contraloría General de la República (the Comptroller General), the Chinchilla administration announced, on March 11th, 2013, that OAS would be awarded the contract for the concession, which had been amended to account for the time elapsed and the increased costs of the project. This announcement swiftly met the opposition from citizens from San Ramón and neighbouring towns, who organized themselves in various groups in order to fight the concession contract. Opposition to the project eventually arose in political circles, and quickly spread to other sectors of the population. By mid-April, pressure against the concession was so widespread, that on April 22nd, President Laura Chinchilla announced that the Government was rescinding the contract for the concession, by mutual agreement with the company.

Using the concept of framing, this research analyzes how the mainstream printed press in Costa Rica framed this particular domestic policy issue: what were the frames used to highlight or underplay certain aspects of the concession, who were the political actors putting forth those frames, how those frames spread, and finally, what was the dominant framing

regarding the concession. The concept of framing is of particular relevance, not only as the gauge of who had the power to impose their preferred frame; but also in the sense that framing, as will be explained further on, can also be a tool for power.

In order to analyze this struggle to determine the dominant framing for the concession, this dissertation makes use of the concept of framing endorsed by Entman (Entman, 2003, 2009, 2010), and his model of cascading activation. Framing and the cascading model form the basis of the theoretical framework, which is used in the design of the research tools and strategy, as well as in the interpretation of the results of this research, along with the more general concepts of power and media power. To ascertain how the press framed this concession, a content analysis is conducted on a corpus of data composed mainly of newspaper articles about the concession. The results from this content analysis are then interpreted using the theoretical framework of framing and the cascading model, to discern the balance of power in the press-politician relationship on this particular case, and to interpret what the implications of these results are for the general debate on power and media power.

This dissertation is organized into three chapters, which deal with the theoretical, methodological and analytical sections of the project, and a final section summarizing the main conclusions reached through this analysis.

Theoretical chapter

This chapter is divided into three sections: first, the literature review highlights the relevant authors, findings and debates surrounding the key concepts used in this dissertation; this review informs the second section, which outlines the conceptual framework that will be used throughout this research. The final section outlines the research question and objectives of this dissertation.

Literature review

The literature review is organized around the key theoretical elements that are the fundamental building blocks for the conceptual framework of the present research: power and media power, framing, the press-politician relationship, and, finally, the cascading network activation model.

Power and media power

Even though power and media power are not the main analytical tools used in this research, they are the leitmotif of the present dissertation. As an overarching concept, power is used in different dimensions throughout this research: first, as the power of the media; second, as the power in the press-politician relationship; and third, the power in the definition of framing and the cascading activation model. Therefore, while an in depth discussion on the copious debates on power and media power is beyond the scope of this dissertation, it is nonetheless important to clarify the particular conceptualizations of these terms that will be used in this research project. A more detailed explanation of the choice of the conceptualization used in this dissertation is provided in Appendix A.

As a fundamental process in society (Castells, 2009: 10), power has been the subject of much debate. Pluralist conceptualizations of power, like those put forth by Dahl (1957) and Weber (1978), have been criticized by authors like Bachrach and Baratz (1962) for being too focused on behaviour. Both of these perspectives have in turn been subjected to the more radical critiques of authors like Lukes (2005), who contends that both the pluralist approach and

their critics' approach place too much emphasis on behaviour, and consider only observable conflict and subjective interests. It is argued here that Lukes' conceptualization of power, and his approach that incorporates all three dimensions of power, is the most useful and relevant for the purposes of this research. The logical structure and clarity with which this author analyzes power and how it is exercised, allows for a more straightforward, coherent and structured application to interpret and make sense of the results of the content analysis. Additionally, this view allows for the consideration of different forms of exercising power, which in turn permit a more comprehensive understanding of the power relations at play in this case of study. Therefore, this dissertation applies the underlying concept of power as defined by Lukes: "A exercises power over B when A affects B in a manner contrary to B's interests" (Lukes, 2005: 30).

Having clarified the conceptualization of power that will be used in this dissertation, it is possible now to briefly discuss the concept of media power. Following McQuail's lead (McQuail, 2010: 87-89), this dissertation distinguishes between two general approaches to media power. On one hand, authors like Adorno and Horkheimer (1972) and Herman and Chomsky (1994) view media power as subordinated to the power of the dominant political and economic elites. On the other hand, authors like Silverstone (1999, 2005, 2007), McNair (2011), Schudson (2003) and Castells (2009), offer a more nuanced view of media power that acknowledges both the limitations imposed on media power by powerful elites and the potential of the media as a powerful actor in its own right. It is argued that this nuanced approach to media power allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the complex power relations analyzed in this research.

This dissertation argues that Silverstone's (1999) conceptualization of media power is the most relevant to this research; not just because of the breadth and meticulous nature of this view, but also because it takes into account the varied and extensive forms of power that the media can wield in contemporary societies. Silverstone (1999: 143) comprehensively explains what is meant by media power; how, in what ways, and to which ends the media exert this power, as well as the limitations imposed on it by political actors, economic forces or the audience itself. He acknowledges the power that the media have in terms of agenda-setting, information and misinformation, meaning and perception, persuasion and representation, participation and exclusion, histories and memories, as mediator between politicians and citizens, and as a political actor in its own right. This view on media power is relevant because it incorporates two of the dimensions of media power that concern this research: that which relates to the power of media in relation to other political actors; and that which refers to the

power of the media in terms of perception, representation, mediation and meaning, which is particularly relevant for understanding the power of framing.

Framing

Most authors agree on the simplest definition of framing, as the highlighting of certain aspects and the underplaying of others, with regards to an actor, an event, or a policy. According to Entman,

Framing is defined as selecting and highlighting some aspects of a situation to promote a particular interpretation. The interpretation generally comes through a narrative that encompasses an interrelated definition of the policy problem, analysis of its causes, moral evaluation of those involved, and remedy (Entman, 2008: 90).

Bennet, Lawrence and Livingston (2006), though they endorse the indexing hypothesis, rather than Entman's cascading model, do agree with this definition. Also using this definition of framing are authors like Rowling, Jones and Sheets (2011), Callaghan and Schnell (2001), and Handley (2010). Another definition, consistent with that of Entman, is the one put forth by Bogdanova and Lecheler (2010: 4). Lawrence (2000: 93) agrees with this definition of framing, but also adds a dimension of power, as she states that frames constitute an exercise of intentional or unintentional journalistic power, which is particularly relevant to the present dissertation.

There is, however, less agreement on the context in which framing is used. Two broad conceptual frameworks can be identified, that use framing in different contexts. Writing within the media effects perspective, authors like Aalberg, Strömbäck and de Vreese (2012), Bogdanova and Lecheler (2010), D'Angelo, Calderone and Territola (2005), Cappella and Jamieson (1997), Scheufele (1999), and Iyengar (1991), all use the concept of framing to analyze how particular framings of politics might have different effects on the audience.

However, the present dissertation does not deal with media effects, but rather with media power. In this field, framing is used as tool to gauge the power relations between the media and other political actors, most notably, the political elite. Authors like Entman (2003, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010), Bennett (1990), Bennett, Lawrence and Livingston (2006), Groshek (2008) and Handley (2010), all use the concept of framing in their analyses of how the media framed a certain event or policy, and who – the politicians or the press, usually –

had the upper hand in determining the dominant frame. Although Entman (2009: 5-6) does distinguish procedural from substantive framing, in a similar way than the authors from the media effects approach, this distinction is used within the framework of media power. It is this second line of work that is pertinent to the case at hand. Within the media power approach, however, though there is agreement on the concept of framing, the authors fundamentally disagree on the characterization and implications of the press-politician relationship that the framing concept is intended to clarify.

The press-politician relationship

The relationship between the press and the politicians is complex, and has been studied by varied scholars and from different perspectives. Street (2005) proposes the existence of three theoretical approaches to this relation, which he identifies as pluralist, constructivist, and structuralist approaches, that stem from the emphasis on the topics of media effects, political communication and media political economy, respectively. Taking a cue from both the constructivist and the structuralist approaches, the focus of this dissertation is on power, and who has the power to impose their frame – and consequently, the basis for the interpretation of an event or policy – as the dominant one. In this sense, the distinction proposed is between those scholars that situate the politicians as the more powerful actor, and the media as more or less subordinated to the political elite; those who see the media as an autonomous political actor in its own right, and therefore independent from the political elite in the struggle to define the dominant frame; and finally, those situated between these more radical positions, who contend that there are finer gradations of power and influence in the relation between press and politicians.

A first approach between those who see the balance of power as tipped in favour of the political elite, is the propaganda model; a radical approach exemplified in the work of Herman and Chomsky (1994) and Herman (2000), who contend that money and power dominate the media so thoroughly as to be embedded in journalists' routines and professional norms, in a way that is consistent with Lukes' third dimension of power. Another approach, less radical but still focused on the power of the politicians over the media, is that advanced by Bennett (1990) and his indexing hypothesis. This author contends that due to structural conditions of the news-making process that position the politicians as a dominant source, journalists tend to index the range of voices according to the range of views of the political elite (Bennett, 1990: 106), therefore reflecting the degree of elite consent or conflict and limiting press autonomy. Espousing this model, and applying the indexing hypothesis, is

the work of Bennett, Lawrence and Livingston (2006), Groshek (2008), Lawrence (1996) and Kennis (2009), who even attempts a synthesis of the indexing and propaganda models, demonstrating the closeness between these two approaches.

A second approach, that recognizes the power of politicians, but defends a more independent press, is that exemplified by event-driven models, like the CNN effect. Bennett, Lawrence and Livingston (2006: 468) explain that dramatic events can allow the media to be more independent, critical and proactive in their coverage. However, these models are somewhat limited in its applicability, as they require, by definition, a dramatic event, rendering them useless in cases where 'normal' circumstances prevail. Additionally, as Gilboa (2005: 29) states, there is not enough evidence to support the CNN effect, and some of the works on this model have actually exaggerated this effect.

This dissertation contends that both of these approaches are essentially flawed, in that they do not fully take into account the subtleties of the power relations between press and politicians, the complexities of the structures that are involved in the news-making process, and the numerous variables that come into play in the struggle to set the dominant frame for an issue. It is argued that a more balanced and comprehensive approach is needed in order to fully grasp and reflect the complex nature of the forces at play, the conflictive but interdependent relations between press and politicians and the role that other political actors play in these processes.

This is why the present dissertation utilizes the cascading network activation model, proposed by Entman (2003). This author argues that neither the propaganda nor the indexing model manage to describe the precise mechanisms by which the administration impose their frame of a particular event or policy; first of all, because the hegemony or propaganda model neglects the fact that, with the end of the Cold War, elite conflict is more common than elite consensus (Entman, 2009: 5). Secondly, he argues that although indexing emphasizes the importance of elite opposition for the emergence of a counter frame, it does not explain why the administration's frame is sometimes contested and others accepted, or how much opposition will arise (Entman, 2003: 416-417). As Bennett, Lawrence and Livingston (2006: 469) themselves agree, the cascading activation model introduces finer gradations of political power; as well as explaining additional circumstances that might open the possibility for the press to propose alternative frames. A more detailed look at the literature of the cascading network activation model comprises the last section of this literature review.

The cascading activation model

Perhaps the greatest merit of the cascading activation model developed by Entman (2003, 2008, 2009) is the acknowledgement of finer gradations of power not only in the relationship between the press and the politicians, but also within the political elite, the media and the audience itself. This more nuanced approach to power allows the author to posit that, although it is easier and more common for frames to cascade down from more powerful political actors, it is also possible for frames and counter frames to develop in other levels of the cascade. Furthermore, the model also allows for the theoretical possibility – however difficult and unlikely – that a frame may spread up the cascade, from the citizenship, and, through the media and news texts, to the political elites (Entman, 2009: 9-13).

Entman's model uses the concept of framing and, particularly, substantive frames that usually perform at least two of four basic functions: definition of a problem, identification of the causes of said problem, conveyance of a moral judgment, and proposal of a solution (Entman, 2009: 5). Frames, as Entman (2009: 6) suggests, stand out from other news content by their capacity to stimulate support or opposition for a particular side in a conflict; this capacity is measured by the cultural resonance and magnitude of each frame. Drawing from the field of psychology and the literature on spreading activation, Entman designs the cascading activation model "to help explain how thoroughly the thoughts and feelings that support a frame extend down from the White House through the rest of the system – and who thus wins the framing contest and gains the upper hand politically" (Entman, 2009: 9). He posits four variables that influence the spreading activation of frames: on one hand, motivations and cultural congruence work internally to pull mental associations into people's thinking; on the other hand, power and strategy work externally to push the consideration of frames (Entman, 2009: 13-17). By highlighting the interactions between these variables, this model sheds light on the relations between the administration's frames and those that actually make the news (Entman, 2009: 17).

However, this model was explicitly designed for the United States, and for issues of foreign policy; both of these facts are evident in the cases that have been studied with this model. Entman studies the 9/11 case (Entman, 2003) and, more generally, what he refers to as US mediated public diplomacy (Entman, 2008). Elsewhere, he also applies this model to the Korean Airlines (1983) and Iran Air (1988) incidents, the US interventions in Grenada (1983),

Libya (1986), Panama (1989-1990), Kosovo (1999), Somalia (1992-1993) and Haiti (1994), the war against Iraq (1990-1991), the war on terrorism (2001-2003) and the US defence budget and nuclear arms control (Entman, 2009). Other authors that have applied the cascading model to cases of study within US foreign policy include Handley (2010), who applies the model to the war on terror, and Fleischer (2008), who analyzes the war against Iraq in 2003.

Only one case was found that applies the cascading model to issues of domestic policy; as Van Leuven (2006) studies the coverage of Proposition 70 in California. Furthermore, Valenzano (2009) presents a very interesting research, which applies the model in the US foreign policy over the war on terror, but using Canadian newspapers as his source. Finally, Smith, Boje and Melendrez (2010) use the model to analyze the rhetoric and storytelling in the financial crisis using both US and world media outlets; while Justus and Hess (2006) also use a mix of US and world news outlets in their analysis of the death of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in the context of the war on terror.

As for their findings, in the case analyzed by Fleischer (2008), the evidence found suggests that the media behaved with more independence from the administration, as they questioned and even posed alternative frames to that put forth by the administration. On the other hand, Van Leuven (2006) and Handley (2010) found that, in their cases of study, it was the political elite – Schwarzenegger and the Bush administration, respectively – that succeeded in setting their frame as the dominant one. Somewhere in between, Valenzano (2009) finds that journalists tended to reflect the agreement or disagreement of the foreign elite with the US administration's frame. As for Entman's (2009) application of the model, he found that the administration was successful in setting the dominant frame in the cases of the Korean Airlines and Iran Air incidents, due to cultural congruence and cultural incongruence, respectively. In cases of cultural ambiguity, like the interventions in Grenada, Libya and Panama, journalists did have more leeway to question the administration's frame; however, they could not present a proper counter frame as an alternative interpretation. The war against Iraq in 2003 provided what Entman (2009: 90) calls a best case scenario for the media to spread a counter frame; not only was the issue culturally ambiguous, but there was also sufficient elite criticism. However, Entman (2009: 90-92) finds that even under these favourable conditions, the media did not manage to transcend the critique and formulate a fully realized counter frame.

As these authors demonstrate, there is evidence both for the dominance of the administration's frame, as for cases where both other elites outside the administration and

the media themselves where able to critique and even propose alternative framing. However, even though the model allows for the possibility of frames emanating from the public and flowing up the cascade, there is not a single work where this has actually been the case.

Conceptual framework

Having reviewed the relevant literature identified some possible gaps in this body of knowledge; it is possible to delineate the conceptual framework that this research will apply to the case of study, in order to contribute to the closing of those gaps. First of all, this dissertation is set within the topics of power and media power. As has been stated, this dissertation will be based on Silverstone's (1999) conceptualization of media power, and will use Lukes' (2005) three-dimensional view of power as the framework for the relations of power between the different political actors that come into play in the case studied.

Within this background, this dissertation seeks to further the understanding of the complex press-politician relationship. In order to do this, it will utilize the concept of framing as defined by Entman (2003, 2009), as the conceptual tool to gauge the relations of power between press and politicians. The concept of framing will permit the identification of the dominant framing of the policy and what side of the press-politician relationship managed to advance their interpretation of the policy as the dominant one. Finally, Entman's (2003, 2007, 2009) cascading activation model will allow the monitoring of the spreading activation of the various frames through the different levels of the cascade, while taking into account the power, strategies, motivations and cultural congruence that might enhance or hinder the spread of those frames.

This dissertation contends that Entman's model is a useful tool in understanding the complex power relations between press and politicians, within a framework of power and media power. The use of the concept of framing is also important, as it underlines the power that the media have in terms of advancing the interpretation, perception and moral judgments of a particular policy or event, whether by communicating other political actors' frames or by advancing their own alternative frames. The link between power and framing is made explicit in the title of Entman's book, called *Projections of Power* (2009); this fact emphasizes the pivotal role that power plays both in the conceptualization of framing proposed by the author and in the model itself, as well as the fact that framing can, in itself, be a tool for exercising power, as both Entman (2007: 165) and Lawrence (2000: 93) contend.

It is argued that the cascading activation model is well-structured and comprehensive conceptual tool; and its clear, concise and logical structure allows for its adaptation to different national contexts and to issues of domestic as well as foreign policy. In this sense, this research is an effort to advance the applicability of this useful and well-designed model, by testing it in a different context from that in which it was originally designed.

However, the proposed conceptual framework by no means exhausts the complicated press-politician relationship; as any conceptual tool and theoretical model, it seeks to capture certain aspects of that relationship, in order to shed light on those particular dimensions of the relationship. Therefore, this dissertation does not seek to explain all the variables and nuances that factor in the press-politician relationship; but rather to highlight and further the understanding of a limited set of these variables.

Objectives of the research

The general objective of the present dissertation is to determine whether and how the media framed the concession of the highway between San José and San Ramón. This general objective can be broken down into smaller questions that this dissertation seeks to answer: With regards to framing, what were the frames deployed in the coverage of the concession? Which political actors deployed those frames? How did these frames spread across the different levels of the cascade? As for the press-politician relationship, who had the upper hand in setting the dominant frame? Did the press manage to put forth a fully formed counter frame as an alternative to that put forth by the administration? Finally, it is worth noting that the method of content analysis does not allow the researcher to answer other important questions, like why some frames spread while others did not, why some political actors had more success than others in spreading their frames, or what were the policy implications of the struggle to determine the dominant frame. Nonetheless, the conceptual and theoretical framework can provide some clues that might offer some insight into the factors that might enhance or hinder the spreading activation of particular frames. Therefore, even though the proposed methodology and corpus of data do not allow the formulation of conclusive answers to these last questions, the conceptual framework can help advance some potential answers to be clarified in further research.

METHODOLOGICAL CHAPTER

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section details the research strategy for this dissertation; while the second section summarizes the particular methods and procedures adopted for this research, including the selection of the data and the design of the research tools that will be used in the analysis.

Research strategy

In order to answer the research questions, the research strategy was divided in two phases. The first phase involved subjecting the corpus of data to content analysis; during a second phase, the findings from this content analysis were themselves analyzed and interpreted using the theoretical framework already outlined, in order to make sense of the quantitative data: to interpret these results, discern patterns, and interpret the relevance of these findings. According to Hansen (1998: 99), the theoretical framework not only allows the determination of what aspects of the text should be analyzed, but also how those dimensions should be interpreted.

Methods and procedures

The method of content analysis was chosen for several reasons. First, because it permits the systematic analysis of a large number of units (Krippendorff, 2004: 3); and it does so in a way that is not only replicable, but also subject to scrutiny. In the present research, it is used to systematically analyze the content of newspaper articles, in order to identify the frames deployed by different sources with regards to the concession. The choice of content analysis as the appropriate method is also supported by the fact that content analysis is the method chosen by authors using the concept of framing, like Entman (2003, 2006, 2009), Bennett, Lawrence and Livingston (2006), Handley (2010), Althaus, Edy, Entman and Phalen (1996), and Valenzano (2009), to name a few.

Alternative methods could have been applied, particularly that of discourse analysis. However, it is argued that discourse analysis, although allowing for an in depth analysis of news articles, would have implied a significant reduction in the number of texts that could be analyzed. By choosing content analysis as the research method, this dissertation avoids sacrificing depth of analysis by subjecting the findings of that content analysis to further interpretation using the solid conceptual and theoretical framework outlined earlier.

Additionally, the focus of this project is not in the discursive dimension of the texts, but rather in what frames were deployed by which sources, and how these frames flow through the levels of the cascade model.

Selection of data

The selection process began with the definition of the news article as the unit of analysis; this allows the coding of important variables like the date of publication, the source and position mentioned in the headline (which indicates the prominence awarded to a source or a frame). A second step was the definition of the time period that would be taken into account for the selection of the data. This was defined as starting on the date that the transfer of the contract was approved, on March 11th, 2013¹; and finishing on April 30th, 2013, so as to include the reactions to the decision of the Government to desist on this policy for the expansion of the highway.

This dissertation analyzes the news articles published in the two main circulation newspapers of Costa Rica, La Nación and Diario Extra. These two news outlets belong to different news organizations, and can be broadly categorized as a broadsheet and a tabloid, respectively; and consequently have very different target audiences. The decision not to include any more newspapers stems from the fact that their circulation is nowhere near that of the two main newspapers analyzed; and consequently the audience they reach is very limited. The decision not to include television newscasts, however, was made on account of more practical reasons, as they do not allow the researcher to search through their archives and select the news about the concession. The exclusion of television newscasts does limit the scope of the conclusions that can be asserted; but it was a necessary decision to make, on account of the space and time limitations inherent to this dissertation.

For the selection of the news articles, a manual search was conducted on the online editions of both newspapers²; all the editions of both newspapers published during the specified dates were reviewed, and all the articles that mentioned the concession of the highway in any way, were included in the corpus of data. Moreover, it was deemed necessary to clarify the frames advanced both by the administration and by the most active organized group against the concession, called Foro de Occidente. In order to do this, a search was conducted on the Presidency's official website³, and all the press releases and official communications

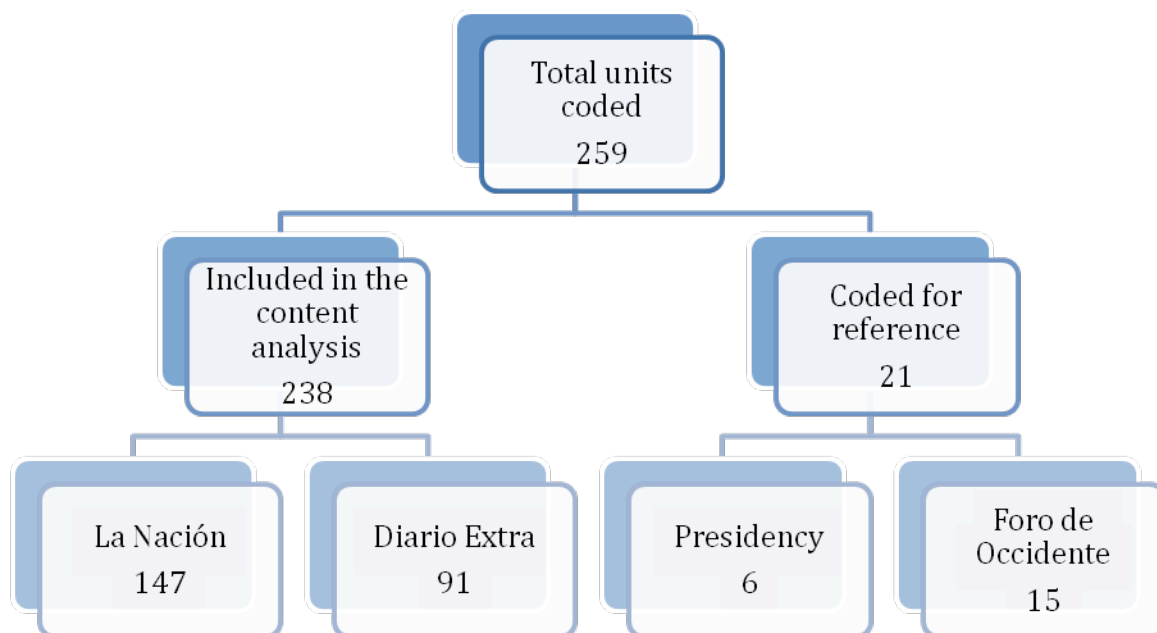
¹ Prior to this date, the concession had been entirely absent from the news for several years.

² The online editions of the newspapers can be found at www.nacion.com (La Nación) and www.diarioextra.com (Diario Extra).

³ The Presidency's official website can be found at www.presidencia.go.cr.

regarding the concession were also included as data. Additionally, in order to clarify the frames put forth by the opposition to the concession, a selection of the relevant files⁴ uploaded during the time period to the Foro de Occidente's group Facebook page⁵. Although these two additional sources of data were included in the content analysis to clarify the frames deployed by the respective actors, they were not included as part of the findings of the content analysis. This is due to the fact that they are direct communications put forth by these actors, and not mediated communications published in the newspapers; therefore, they cannot be included in the analysis of how the press framed the concession. Diagram 1 summarizes the corpus of data.

Diagram 1: Corpus of data



Note that, with these research tools and data, this dissertation cannot make any claims as to the effects that the frames deployed had on the audience, or the perception that the audience formed from the way the concession was framed on the news.

⁴ The relevant files include articles written by members of the group, summaries of the positions of group members and local authorities, and press releases. Among the files that were not included into the corpus of data are several versions of the concession contract, repeated files, meeting minutes, and documents for the collection of signatures against the concession.

⁵ The Foro de Occidente's group Facebook page can be found at www.facebook.com/groups/489821971076117/

Design of research tools

The coding frame was developed in two stages. The first stage was a deductive process, where the cascading activation model was used as a guide for the first part of the coding frame, which deals with general information and the sources present in the unit. The first step was to adapt the model to both the particularities of the Costa Rican case, and the fact that the case of study is a domestic policy issue. This adapted cascading model was then used as the theoretical guide for the variables that should be included in this first part of the coding frame. The first variables provide general information about the article (date, outlet, type, and word count).

Diagram 2 details the adapted cascading model, with the levels of the cascade, the subdivisions of those levels, the sources that put forth the frames and, finally the flow of spreading activation of the frames throughout the cascade.

Diagram 2 shows the adapted cascading model that was used as a guide in the construction of the variables that code for the sources that each article mentions. These sources are coded for in a present/absent basis. The coding frame also includes variables that code for the dominant source of the article, as well as for the first, second and third quoted sources, and the position of each source towards the concession (negative, positive, ambivalent or neutral). These variables are included as clues to the prominence awarded to each source in the article.

The only element of the cascading model that is not included in this first part of the coding frame is the news texts, which are the object of the second stage of the content analysis. This second stage was of inductive nature, as the literature does not provide clues to what frames are used in framing a particular issue. Therefore, it was necessary to review the corpus of data, and extract the relevant frames used. These frames were then included as variables in the coding frame, and again were coded for in an absent/present basis. Diagram 3 and 4 detail the positive and negative frames used in the analysis.

Diagram 2: Adaptation of the cascading activation model

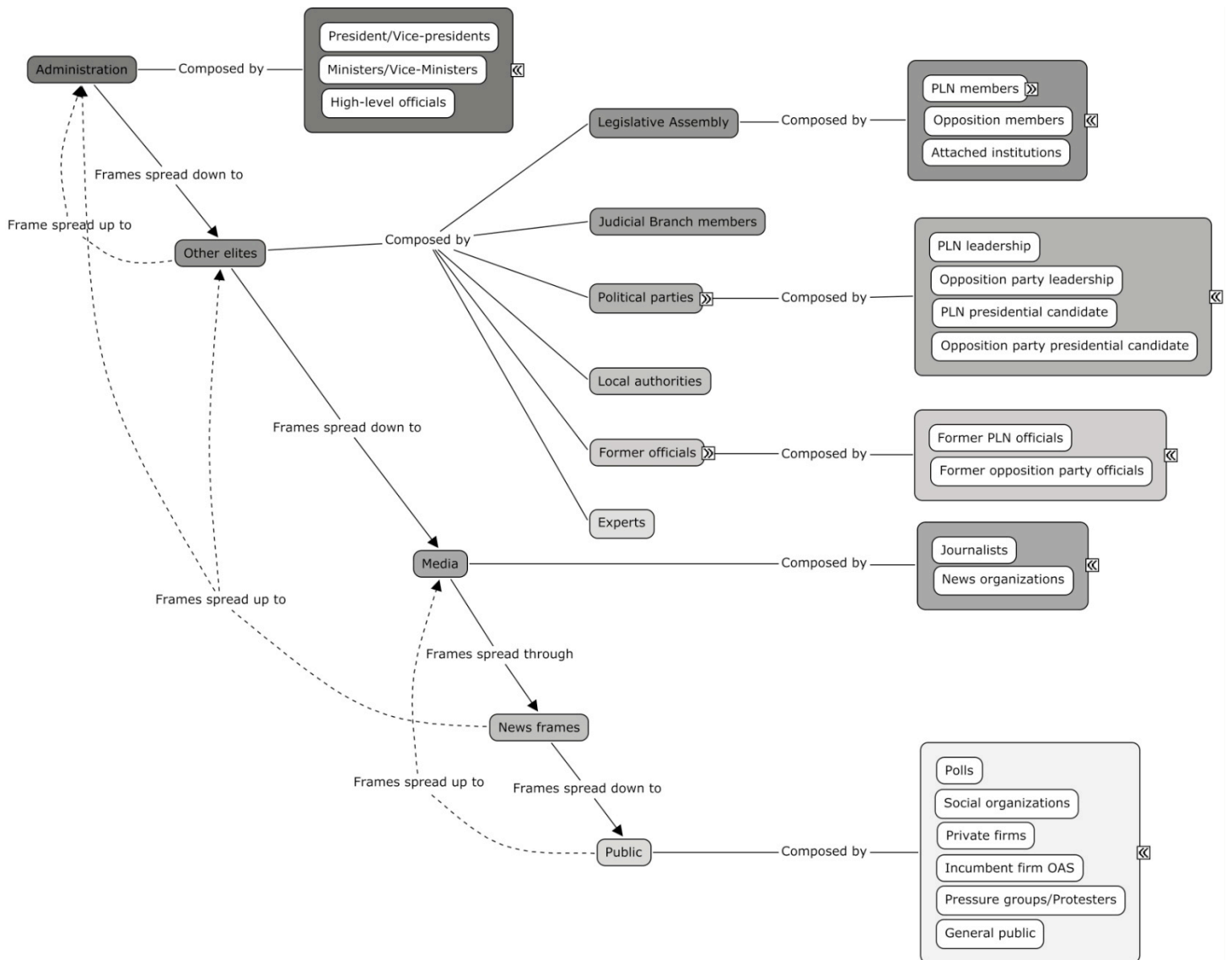


Diagram 3: Positive frames on the concession included in the content analysis

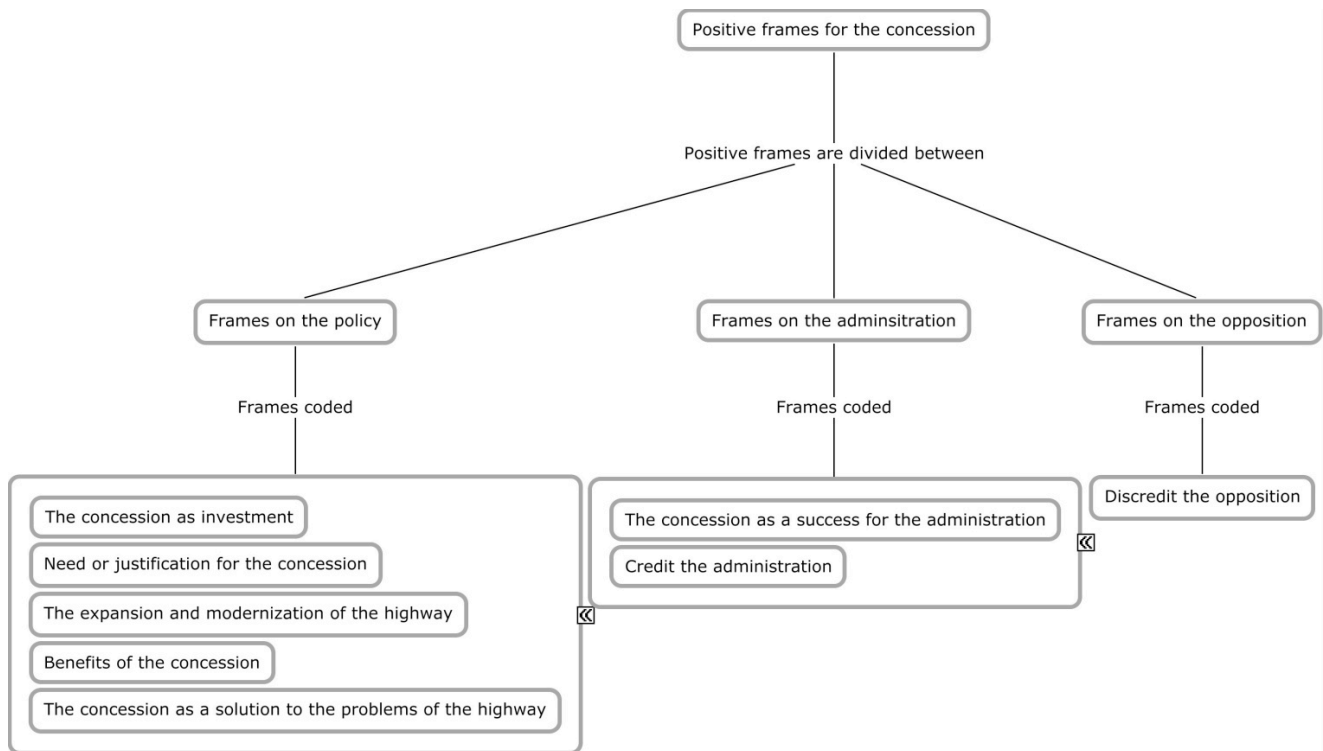


Diagram 4: Negative frames on the concession included in the content analysis



The headline of each article was also coded for, both in terms of sources present in the headline and the position towards the concession is expressed in the headline. Finally, the coding frame also includes variables on the general focus of the article (procedural, substantive or both), the overall balance of the article towards the policy (positive, negative, ambivalent or neutral).

These variables were included in the first version of the coding book, which was piloted on a randomly selected sample of 10% of the corpus of data. A second coder was trained, and separately coded this sample, and an Inter-coder Reliability (ICR) measure was calculated using the Percent Agreement method (Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2002) for practical reasons including its simplicity and the ease of calculation. The coding book was then revised and amended accordingly. The revised and final version of the coding book is included as Appendix B.

Finally, the entire corpus of data was coded for; and a randomly selected subsample of 10% of the data was again subjected to an ICR test using the Percent Agreement measure. Diagram 5 summarizes the results obtained from the ICR calculations, while a table reporting the ICR score for each variable is included in Appendix C.

Diagram 5: Summary of the Intercode Reliability test

| Strong (Source variables) More than 0.80 | Strong (Frame variables) More than 0.80 | Acceptable Between 0.70 and 0.79 | Weak Less than 0.7 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Minister/VM •High-level official •Legislative Assembly PLN •Legislative Assembly Opposition •Legislative Assembly Institutions •Judicial Branch •PLN leadership •Opposition party leadership •PLN presidential candidate •Opposition party presidential candidate •Local authority •Former PLN official •Former opposition official •Expert •Journalist •News organization •Polls •Social organization •Private firm •Incumbent firm OAS •Pressure group/Protester •General public •Anonymous/Unattributed •Other source •Presence of dominant source | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Need/Justification •Benefits •Investment •Expansion/Modernization •Concession as solution •Concession as success •Credit the administration •Discredit the opposition •High costs and tolls •Impact and harm •Irregularities •Solution is government built highway •Corruption •Lack of information •Credit the opposition •Discontent •Opposition to figure of concession •Private interests •Private profit | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •President/VP •Dominant source •Position of dominant source •Doubts and concerns •Conflict •Concession is not a solution | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •First source •Position of first source •Second source •Position of second source •Third source •Position of third source •Source in the headline •Distrust •Concession as failure •Discredit the administration •Representativity •Focus of the unit •Balance of the unit •Position in the headline |

ANALYTICAL CHAPTER

Results

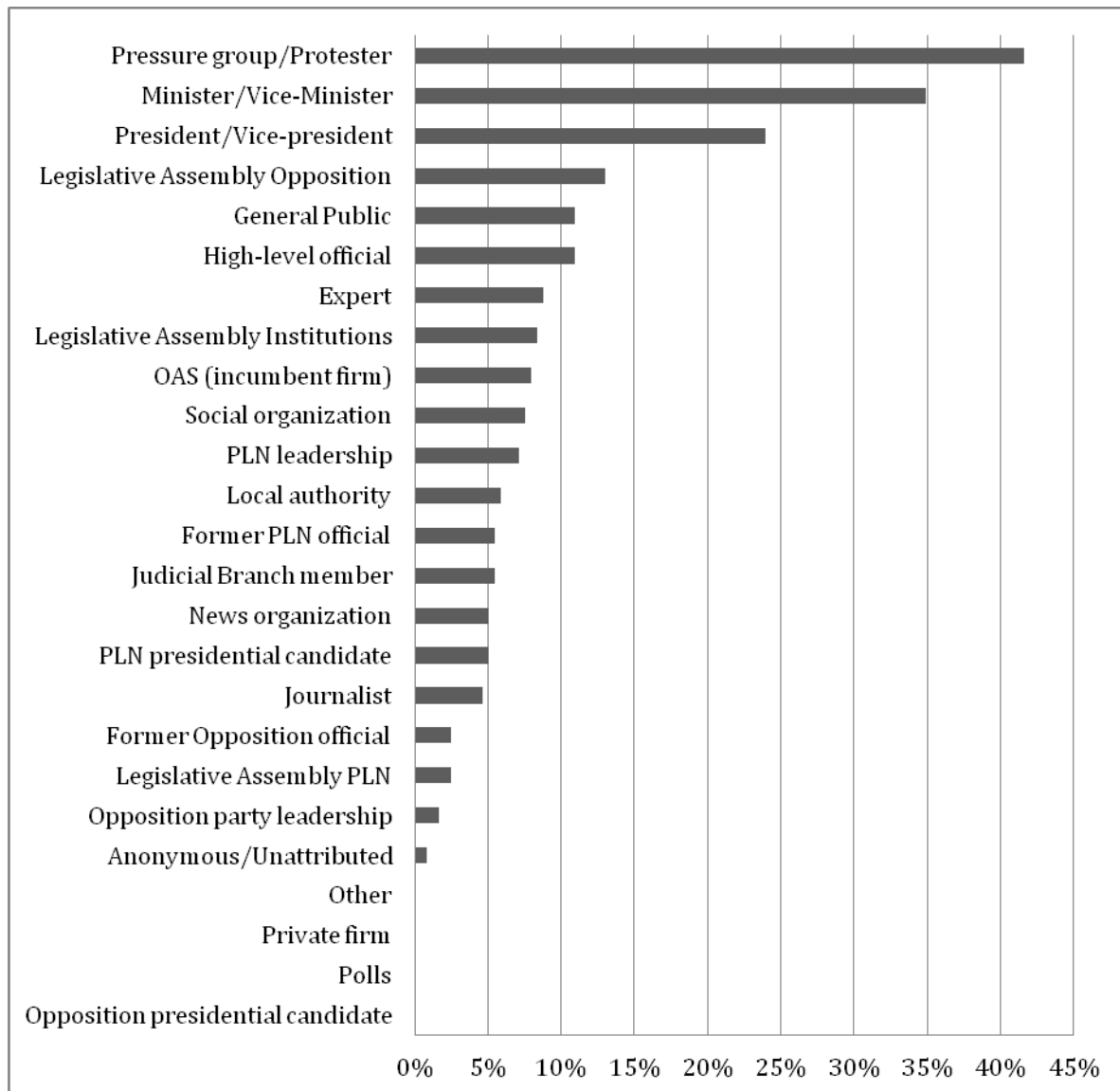
The content analysis was conducted in two stages, and the report of the main results obtained from this analysis also follows that structure. Therefore, the results regarding the sources that were present in the articles will be reported first, followed by the report on the frames present in the articles.

Results regarding the sources present in the articles

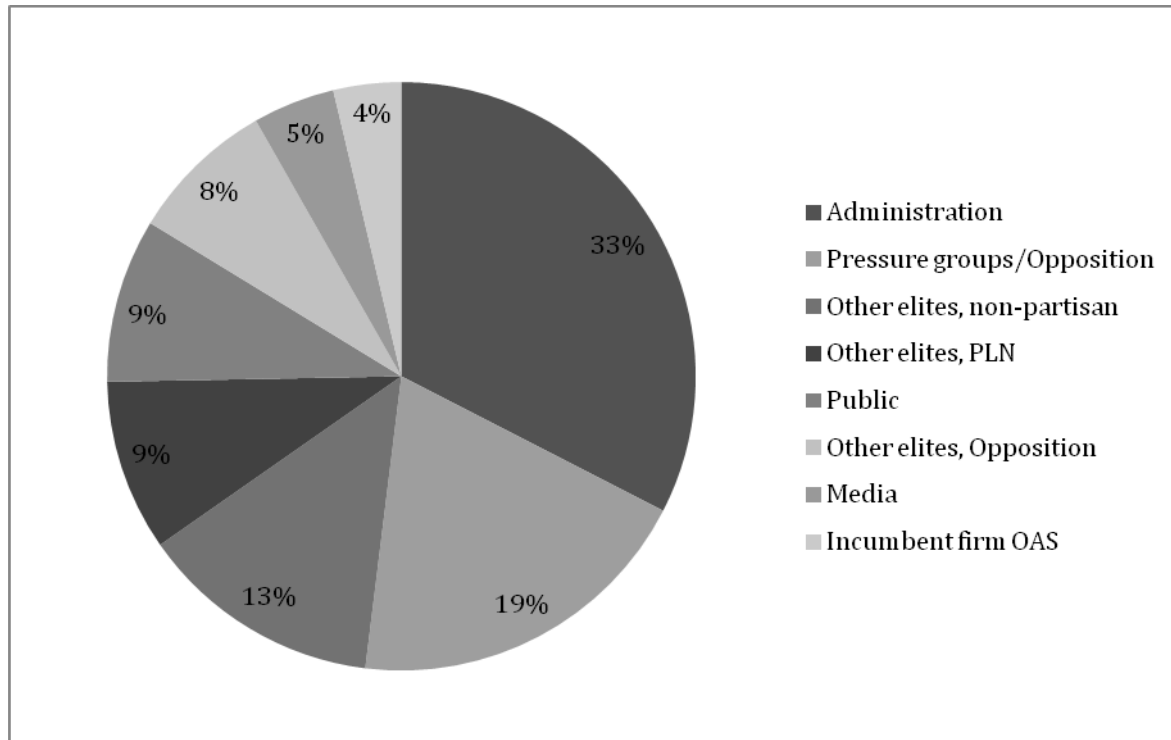
As suggested in the theoretical framework, the sources quoted or referenced in the articles are of great importance; it is this presence in the news that allows the political actors to push their frame forward. This section summarizes the main findings of the content analysis with regards to the sources present in the news. The first findings refer to the actual presence that each coded source had in the news, which is summarized in Graph 1.

Graph 1 illustrates the articles that reference each source, as a percentage of the total of articles coded. The individual source that appears more frequently in the articles is that which includes members explicitly identified as part of the pressure groups or protesters against the concession. However, this graph can be misleading, as the President, ministers and officials members of the administration. Therefore, Graph 2 groups the sources according to more general categories, which allow a description of the groups of sources present in the articles.

Graph 1: Percentage of articles that reference each source



Graph 2: Percentage distribution of the categories of sources, in the total of quoted sources

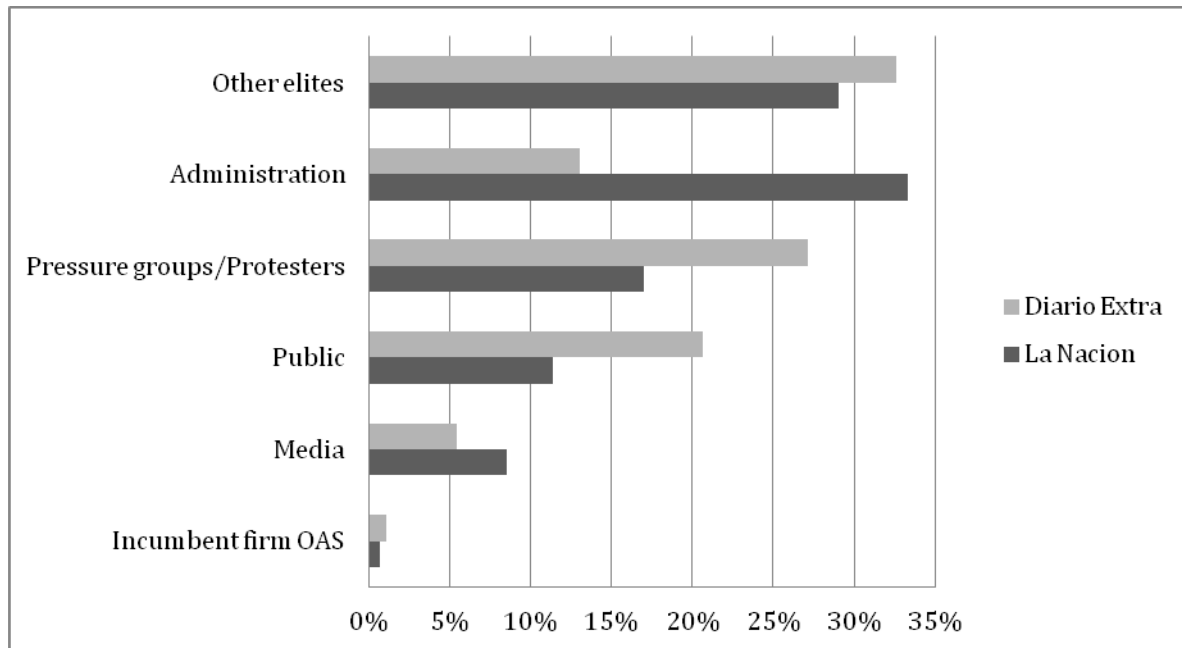


Graph 2 illustrates the percentage, out of the total number of references to a source (the 238 articles include 510 quoted sources), which each category of sources represents. The administration accounts for 33% of quoted sources, which clearly make it – as both the indexing hypothesis and the cascading model would predict – the most often cited source in the articles. It is interesting that the groups opposing the concession account for 19% of the total of quoted sources. However, this fact has to be put in the appropriate context. In order to distinguish other elite sources associated with the governing PLN, the more general category of other elite sources was broken down into those that are part of the governing party, those that are part of opposition parties, and non-partisan elite sources (the judicial branch, autonomous institutions, local authorities and experts). If grouped together, the political elite outside of the administration accounts for almost 31% of all quoted sources. Again, this fact is consistent with what the cascading model would predict. Appendix D includes a graph that reinforces these findings, by depicting the total number of articles that quote each source, by date of publication of the article.

The content analysis also coded for the dominant source in each article, as well as for the source that is present in the headline. These variables provide information about the prominence awarded to the sources in the articles; therefore providing clues as to which sources were awarded more importance within an article, giving the source more space and a

greater opportunity to put forth their proposed framing of the concession. In this sense, Graph 3 illustrates, in the total of articles that have a dominant source, the percentage distribution of that dominant source, grouped in the above-mentioned categories, and by newspaper.

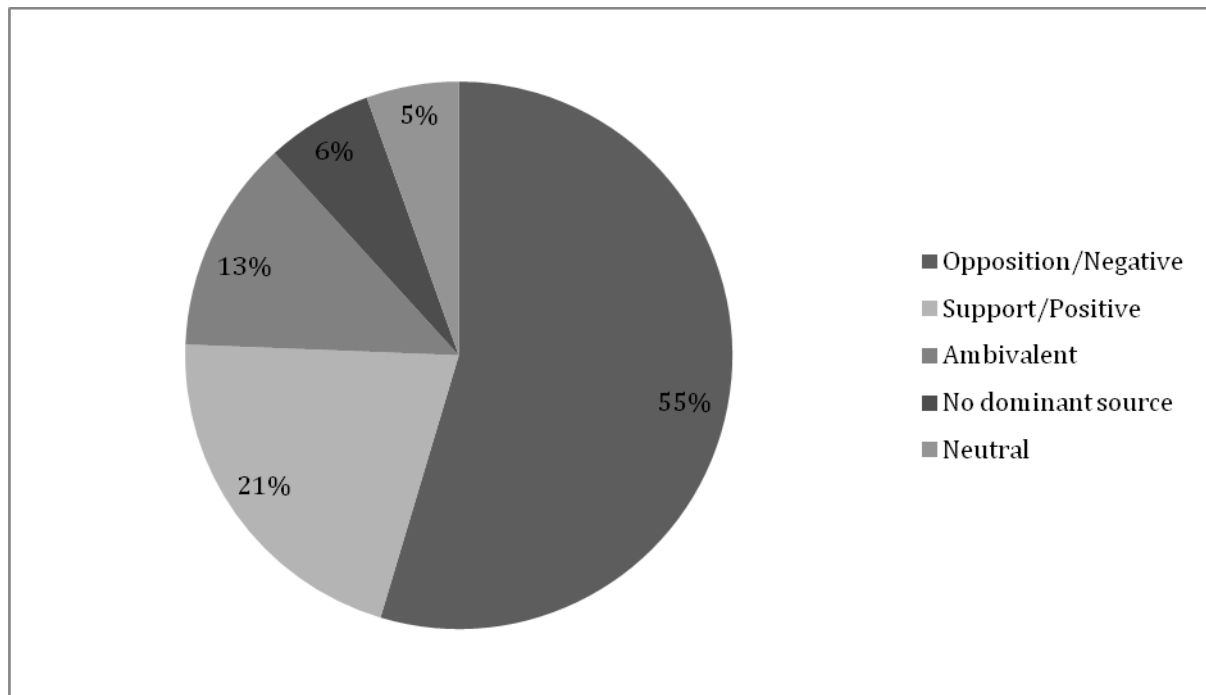
Graph 3: Percentage distribution of the dominant source, by newspaper



Graph 3 shows that, in articles with a dominant source, both newspapers gave a prominent position within the article to elite sources outside the administration. However, while La Nación tended to have articles in which sources from the administration were the dominant source, Diario Extra tended to give more prominence to sources from the pressure groups and the general public. These results are consistent with those resulting from the coding of the source present in the headline of the article, as evidenced by the graph included in Appendix E.

Finally, Graph 4 illustrates the positions towards the concession expressed by the dominant source, as a percentage of the total number of articles coded. As the graph shows, 55% of the articles have a dominant source that expresses opposition or a negative position towards the concession. 18% of the articles have a dominant source that expressed either ambivalence or a neutral position towards the article; while 21% of dominant sources express support towards the policy. Graph 4 illustrates the prominence that sources opposing the concession were awarded in the coverage of the issue.

Graph 4: Percentage distribution of the position of the dominant source towards the concession, in the total number of articles

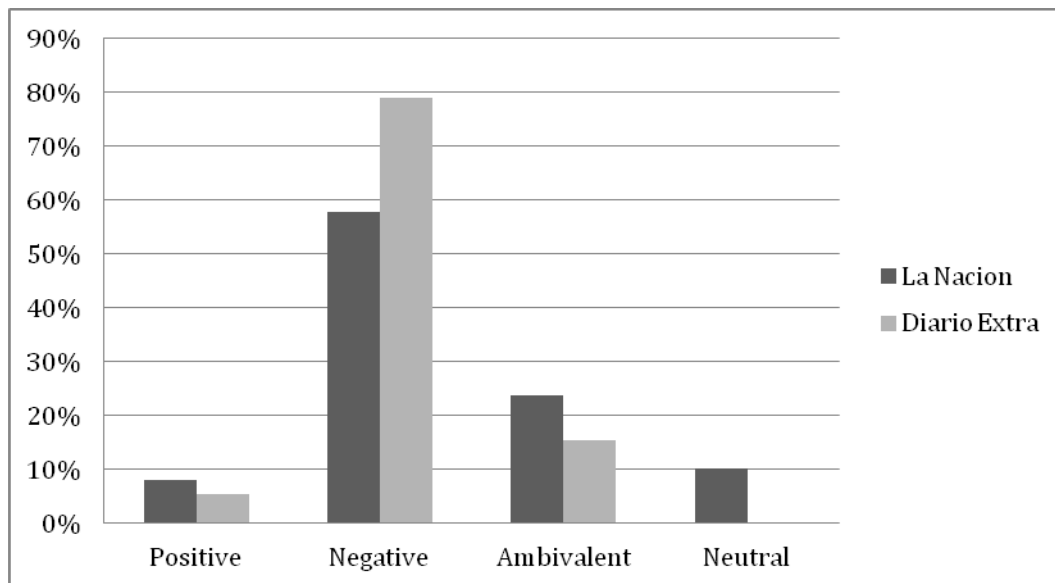


Results regarding the frames used in the articles

This section refers to the main findings with regards to the frames used in the articles analysed. But first, it is useful to summarize the main findings with regards to the overall balance of the news articles regarding the concession.

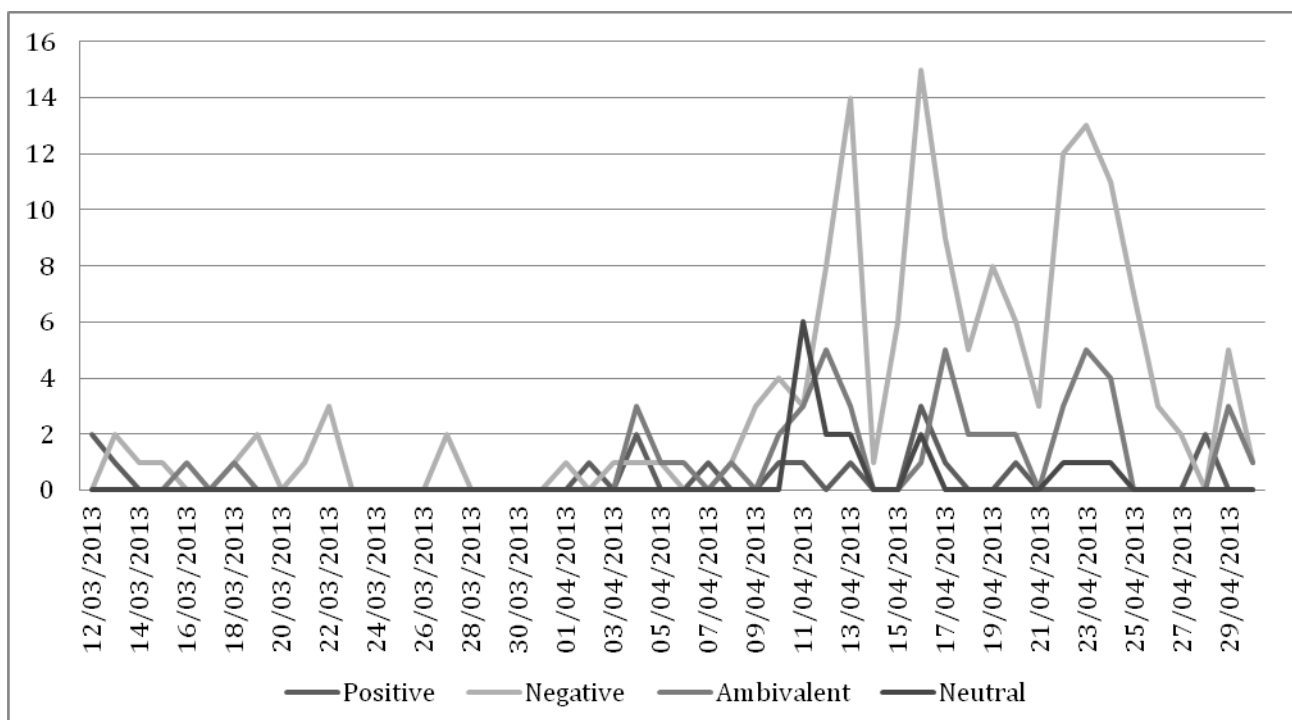
Graph 5 summarizes the distribution of the articles published by each newspaper, according to the overall balance of the article towards the concession. As this graph illustrates, although both newspapers clearly tended to publish articles that, in balance, are negative towards the concession, Diario Extra tended to publish more negative articles towards the concession; while La Nación published more articles that were ambivalent or neutral towards the project. Again, this coincides with the application of the χ^2 test, which results in a p-value of 0.0013 that allows the rejection of a null hypothesis of no association between the variables of the outlet that publishes the article and the balance of the article.

Graph 5: Percentage distribution of the balance of the article, by newspaper



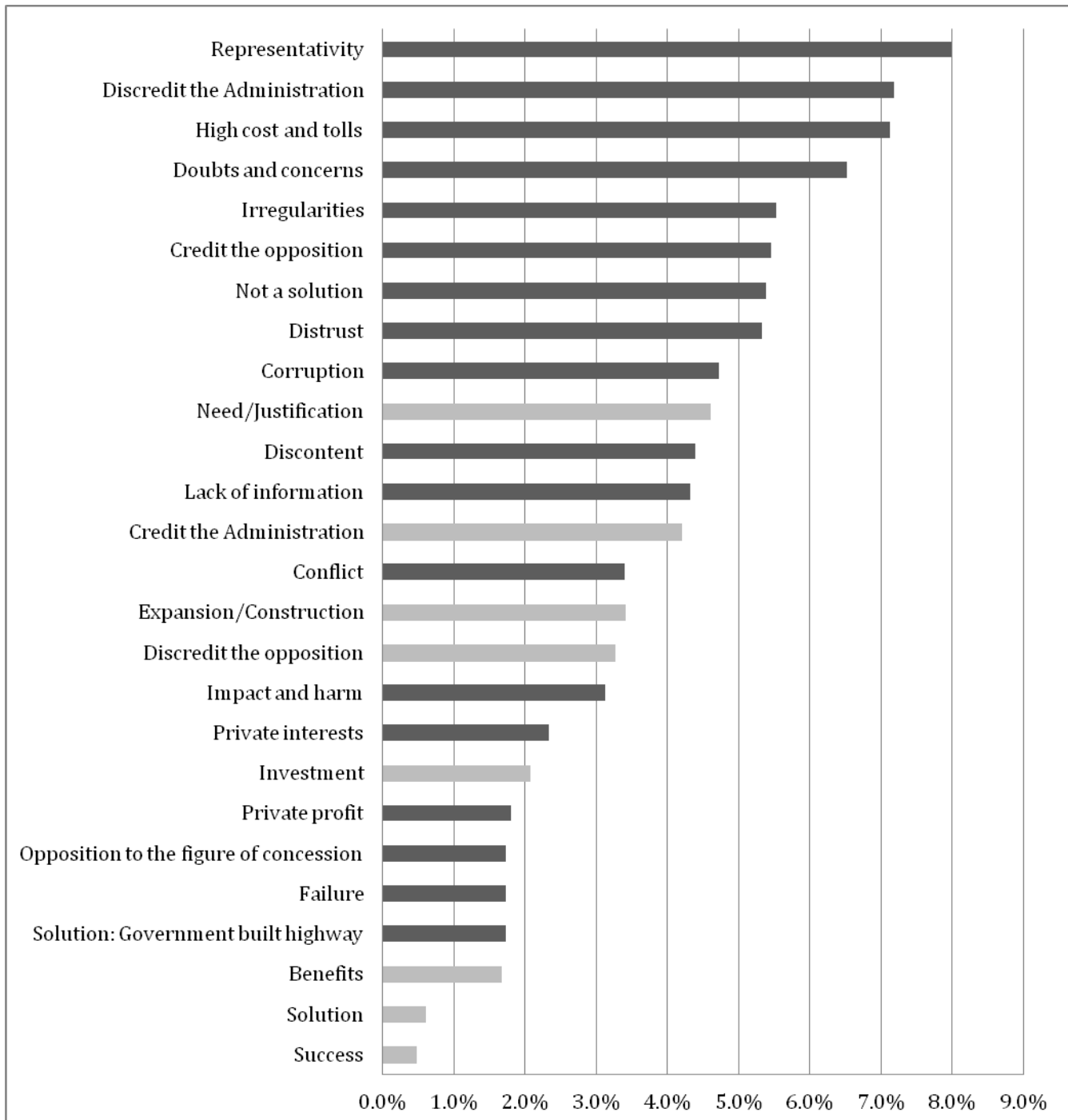
Looking more closely at how the balance of the articles published changed across time, Graph 6 illustrates not only the overwhelming dominance of articles that are negative towards the concession, but also highlights the fact that the debate surrounding this policy in the news was concentrated between the dates of April 11th to the 29th; period that is also very clearly dominated by news articles that are negative towards the policy.

Graph 6: Balance of the unit, by date of publication



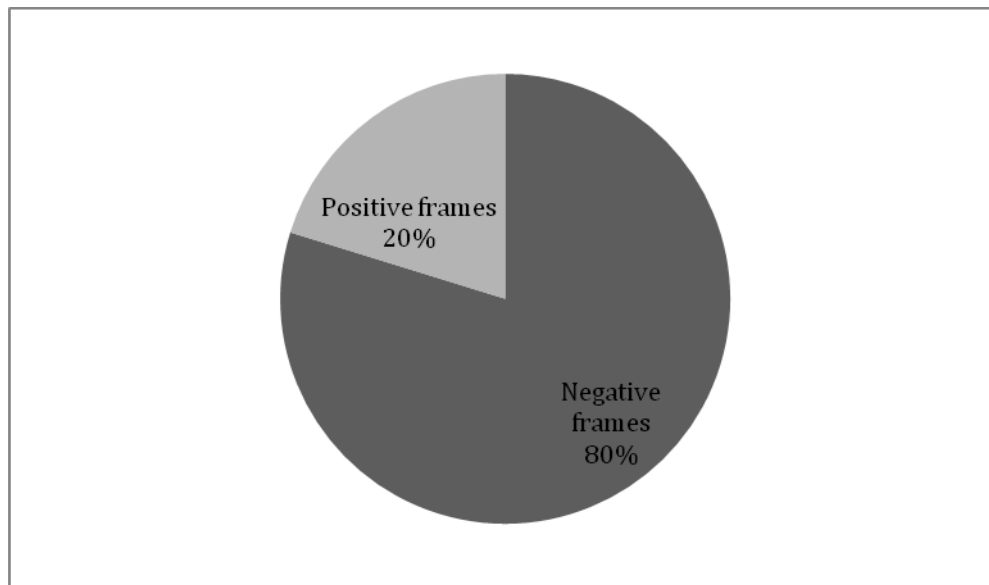
With regards to the frames deployed, some were used more frequently than others. Graph 7 illustrates the distribution of these frames, as a percentage in the 1503 total frames used in the coverage of the concession; positive frames are shown in a lighter shade than negative frames.

Graph 7: Percentage distribution of the frames used, in the total number of frames deployed



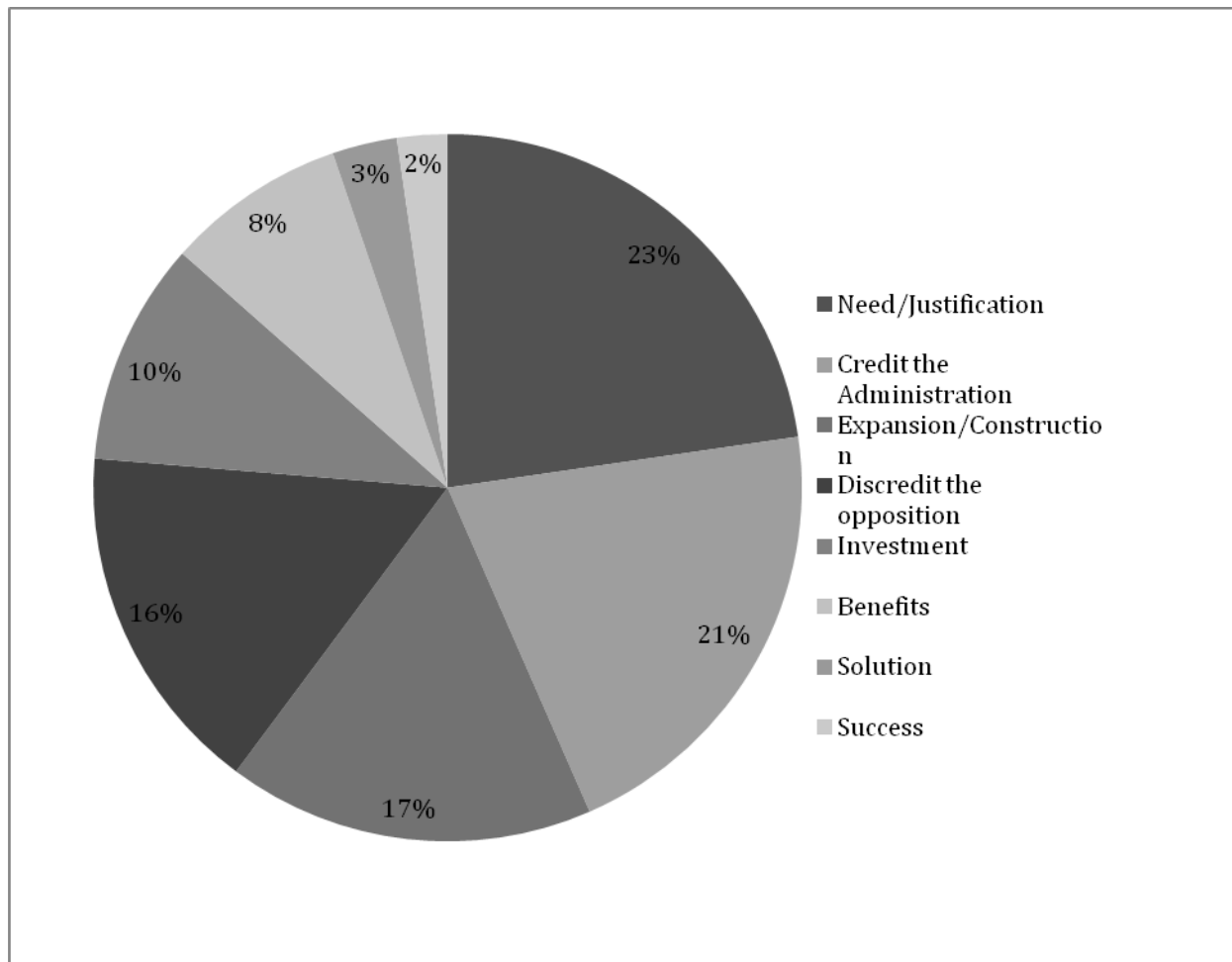
As Graph 7 shows, the frames more often used in the coverage of the concession were negative frames. The frames mentioned more frequently are those that refer to the representativity of the opposition movement, the discrediting of the administration, the high cost and tolls the concession would entail, the doubts and concerns surrounding this project, the irregularities in the process of awarding this concession, the crediting of the opposition movement with positive attributes, the fact that this concession is not a solution to the problem, the distrust towards the administration, and the corruption within the administration. Together, these nine frames account for more than 55% of the total frames used with regards to the concession. The dominance of a negative framing is clearly illustrated in Graph 8, which shows the distribution of the positive and negative frames used, as a percentage of the total number of frames deployed in the coverage of the concession.

Graph 8: Percentage distribution of positive and negative frames, in the total number of frames deployed



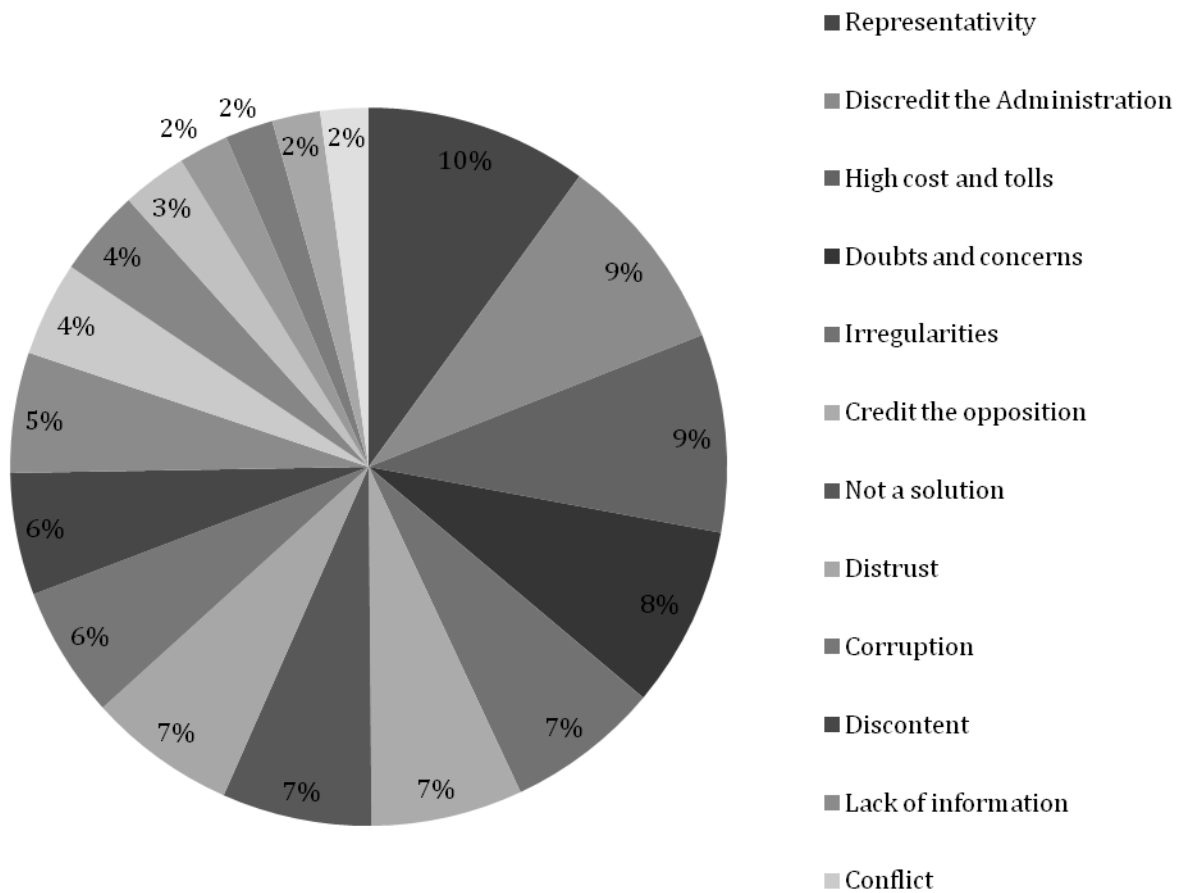
The final two graphs included in this section illustrate the percentage distribution of both the positive and the negative frames, within the total of positive frames and the total of negative frames deployed in the coverage of the concession.

Graph 9: Percentage distribution of the positive frames used



With regards to the positive frames deployed, as Graph 9 illustrates, there are three frames that were more prominently used to frame the concession: the need or justification for the project, the overall crediting of the administration with positive attributes, and the references to the expansion, construction and/or modernization of the highway. Together, these three frames account for over 60% of the total of positive frames deployed in the coverage of the concession.

Graph 10: Percentage distribution of the negative frames used



The distribution of the negative frames, as Graph 10 shows, is much more evenly distributed, due in part to fact that there was a greater number or different negative frames used to frame the concession. In this case, the first six frames account for exactly 50% of the total of negative frames used with regards to the concession. However, as has already been established, these negative frames were much more prominent in the overall framing of the concession.

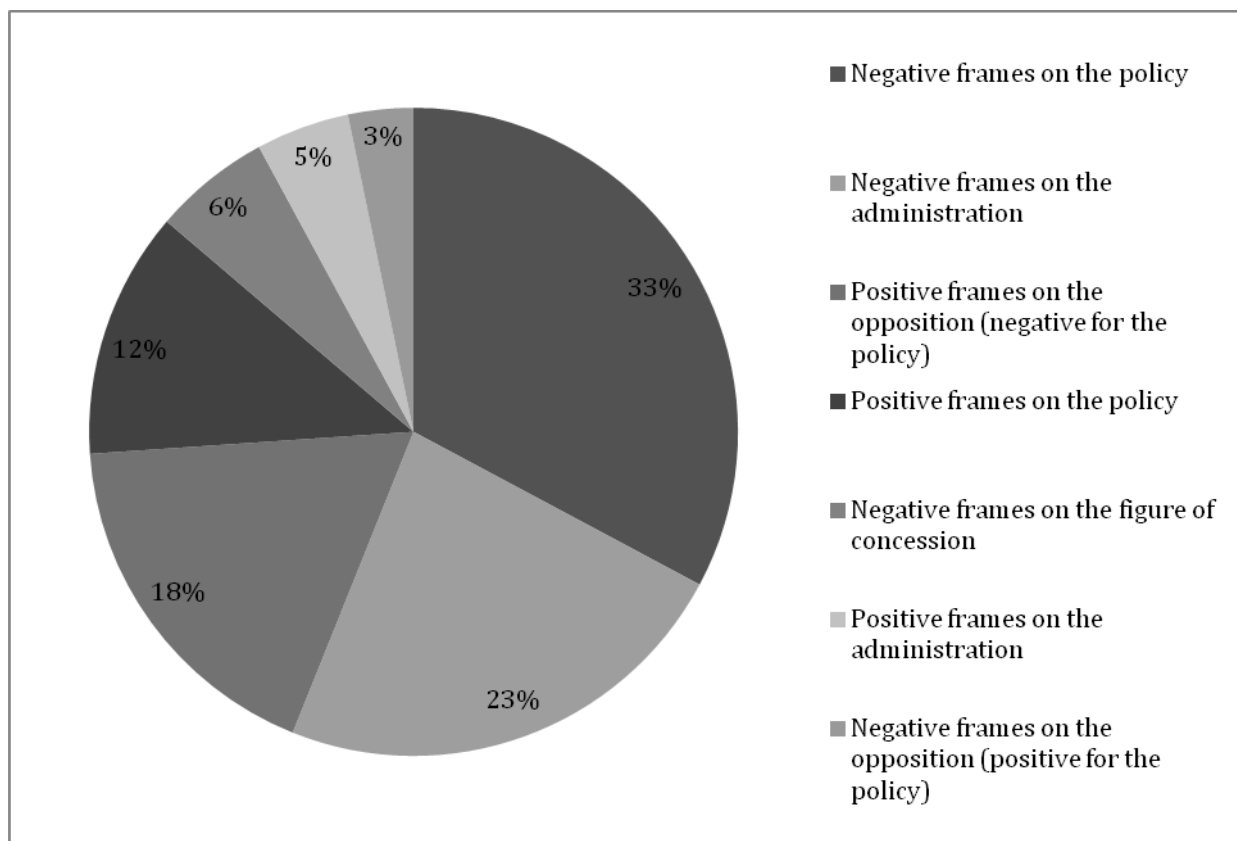
DISCUSSION

The discussion section situates the previous findings in the wider context of the theoretical framework outlined earlier, and interprets their relevance using the theory on framing, the cascading model, the press-politician relationship and the conceptualizations of power and media power. The discussion will be organized around the questions posed in the theoretical chapter, as part of the statement of objectives of the present dissertation.

Framing the concession: What were the frames deployed in the coverage of this policy?

While there certainly were differences in the frames used more prominently by each newspaper, this section will focus on the overall use of frames across both outlets. A more detailed look at the differences between newspapers is included in Appendix E. With regards to the frames used on the concession in the totality of news articles coded, Graph 11 illustrates the percentage distribution of the different categories of frames that were used with regards to the concession.

Graph 11: Percentage distribution of the categories of frames used



Graph 11 illustrates again the overall dominance of negative frames used in framing the concession. However, it is useful to consider first the positive frames that were deployed to frame the concession, as these were the first to appear in the coverage of the concession as part of the administration's announcement of the approval to transfer the contract to the firm OAS and the consequent re-launching of the project.

The positive framing of the concession consisted mainly of positive frames on the policy itself; these frames highlight the need and justification for the concession, the project as an expansion, construction or modernization of the highway, the characterization of the project as investment, and the benefits that the concession would entail. Although the content analysis also coded for the framing of the concession as a solution to the problems posed by the current state of the highway, this frame was seldom used, and therefore was not part of the framing of the concession put forth by the administration. The first and most prominent of these positive frames on the policy are those that serve to define the problem and establish the concession as the solution to that problem. The frame on the need for this project emphasizes the current state of the highway: the structural flaws, the deteriorated infrastructure, the limited capacity that fails to cope with the vehicular flow, the traffic jams and potential accidents, etc. This frame's primary function is to define the vulnerable state of the highway as the problem. Additionally, the positive frames deployed to define the concession as an expansion, a construction, and/or a modernization of the highway, together with the need for the concession, serve to endorse this project as a solution to this problem. Finally, the frame that highlights the fact that this project is an investment, serves to convey a positive moral judgment, in the sense that it is not an expense, but an investment that will yield positive results, gains and future benefits.

However, none of the positive frames deployed on the concession define the cause of the problem. In a sense, the administration defaulted in defining what caused the problem. Unfortunately, the methods and data used in this dissertation do not allow the formulation of a conclusive answer to the question of why the administration chose not to deploy a frame that would define the cause of the problem.

However, as Graph 11 illustrates, this positive framing did not achieve the same prominence as the negative framing. As for these negative frames, the most widely used were those that directly frame in negative terms specific issues about the concession. Within this category, the most prominent frames were those that highlight the high cost and tolls that the project entails, the doubts and concerns that the project has spurred, and the alleged irregularities in

the process. Using Entman's (Entman, 2009: 5-6) conceptualization of frames, it is important to note that all of these frames are serving the function of defining the issue as problematic; in other words, these frames are defining the concession itself as the problem. Together with the negative frame that states that the concession is not really the solution to the deteriorated highway, and therefore calling for the contract to be rescinded, not only are these frames defining the concession as a problem, but also endorsing its cancellation as the appropriate solution.

The next category of frames used on the concession, as Graph 11 shows, is that of negative frames referring to the administration. Amongst these frames, the most prominent were the one discrediting the administration, and the ones that highlight the distrust in the administration, the corruption within it and the lack of information they supplied on the concession. While the previous category defined the concession as the problem and proposed a solution, these negative frames on the administration focus on the functions of identifying the cause of this problem and conveying a moral judgment (Entman, 2009: 5-6). These frames identify the administration as the cause of the problem: an inefficient or incapable government, plagued with corruption, and actively distrusted by the citizenship – not least on account of how little information it has given about this project. The moral judgment implied in these frames is that this is a bad administration – and, as some of the protesters put it, bad political elite in general.

The following category of frames, in terms of their prominence, is the one positively framing the pressure groups and opposition movement to the project; this category includes the more prominent frames that highlight the representative nature of these groups, the positive attributes of this protest movement and, to a lesser degree of prominence, the one that highlights the discontent and discomfort caused by the concession. Together, these frames reinforce the identification of the cause and the moral judgment advanced by the previous category. These frames focus on the fact that this opposition movement is comprised of discontent neighbours and citizens in representation of their communities, and highlight this protest movement not as a violent protest or unjustified claim, but as a 'pacific protest'⁶ (La Nación, 11/04/13), a 'respectful protest' (La Nación, 19/04/13), a 'defence of patriotism' (Diario Extra, 9/04/13), and a 'social protest' (Diario Extra, 16/04/13). By highlighting these aspects, these frames enhance the identification of the administration as the cause of the problem that is this concession, by situating it in opposition to neighbours, communal leaders, ordinary men and women, that are discontent and upset about this project, and that are fighting a just battle against a bad and corrupt administration that promotes a project

⁶ All quotes from the corpus of data are translations by the author of the present dissertation.

that will harm them. These frames also strengthen the moral judgments against the concession, by defining the ‘good and bad guys’ in this conflict; while the previous category of negative frames on the administration clearly defined them as the ‘bad’ side, this category of positive frames on the opposition movement defines them as the ‘good’ side of the struggle.

Spreading the frames: Which political actors deployed those frames and how did these frames spread through the cascade?

Looking first at the positive framing of the concession, all the positive frames were unsurprisingly first used by the administration – and reproduced in the newspapers. As for the negative frames, all but two of them were initially put forth by the movement opposing the concession. The only two negative frames that were not first employed by the opposing pressure groups were the framing of the issue as a conflict, and the highlighting of the general distrust towards the administration; which were first used by La Nación.

The newspaper’s coverage of the concession displayed both the positive and negative framing; but, as the results of the content analysis indicate, the negative frames quickly gained prominence. By echoing – and eventually endorsing – the negative frames, the press gave a platform to the counter frame put forth by the groups opposing the concession. This counter frame was thus relayed to other elites outside the administration, as the leadership of both the governing PLN and other opposition parties, as well as members of the opposition in the Legislative Assembly, soon started to question the concession on the same grounds as the opposition groups, and eventually started pressuring the government to rescind the contract. These elite voices expressing doubts and concerns about the project gave increased presence to the negative frames in the press; as did the opinions voiced by experts, local authorities, and social organizations that joined in the chorus asking the government to rescind the contract.

Following Entman’s (2009: 13-17) explanation of spreading activation, it is important to take a closer look at how the four variables that can influence the spreading of a frame – power, strategy, motivations and cultural resonance – interacted to enhance or undermine the spread of the positive and negative frames on the concession. As for the first of these variables, power is undoubtedly the domain of elites; power not only to influence other elites, but also the power to push a frame by having access to news organizations (Entman, 2009: 90-91). Although the administration usually enjoys more power to push a frame forward, in

this particular case, the administration's power was not enough to push their positive framing of the concession to be the dominant frame in the news. Even though the administration did consistently enjoy access to the press (as did other elites outside the administration, most of them opposing the concession), perhaps the most interesting and noteworthy fact is the access that the opposition movement enjoyed to the news organizations, despite not being part of any elite.

Moreover, as evidenced by the scarce press releases from the presidency, the administration did not pursue a communication strategy to inform the population about the concession, to publicize its benefits, to defend its validity, and to push this positive framing forward. As Entman (2009: 91) notes, this deliberate and planned activation of mental associations is usually the domain of elites. But in the case of the concession, the administration's strategy was not evident, if not entirely non-existent⁷. In fact, this dissertation argues that it was only after the concession came under attack by opposing groups and, later, by other elite actors; that the administration was forced to actively defend the project. Again, it is the movement opposing the concession that provides the unexpected; though being far outside the elites and lacking traditional political power, the groups opposed to the concession did manage to plan, develop, and successfully deploy a strategy to push the spread of their negative framing of the concession. Through protests, collection of signatures, press releases, and other activities, the citizens opposing the concession not only gained visibility in the news, but also managed to spread their frame up the cascade, to more powerful political actors and, through the news texts, to the general public. Two cases that illustrate the strategy and tactics deployed by these groups are included in Appendix G.

With regards to the motivations that work internally to pull mental associations into a person's thinking (Entman, 2009: 13-14), the findings suggest that the administration – though it is an easy and dependable source for journalists – did not put forth a frame that resonated with the motivations of journalists and news organizations. The opposition movement, on the other hand, offered a frame that highlighted irregularities, accusations, judicial investigations, protests, angry neighbours, corruption and scandal. These elements are much more resonant with journalists' motivations, especially those that refer to newspaper sales and holding the government accountable. It is also a frame that resonates with political elites outside the administration: since presidential and legislative elections are less than a year away, opposition parties would be motivated to criticize the government; and even the PLN's own presidential candidate would be motivated to distance himself from this

⁷ The corpus of data does not allow the conclusive affirmation that this strategy was nonexistent; although the evidence analyzed does seem to support this fact.

administration. These different but similar motivations, it is argued, would work internally to enhance the spreading activation of the negative frame on the concession.

This dissertation argues that the positive framing of the concession does not have elements that are culturally resonant. Although people might agree with the administration's frame on the imperative need for a new highway, this frame does not trigger any particular mental associations, particularly since the administration's frame does not identify the cause of this problem. The opposition movement's negative framing, on the contrary, not only defines the concession as the problem, but also identifies the administration as the cause of this problem. This element of naming the government as cause of the problem is extremely resonant, as evidenced by the fact that President Chinchilla has the lowest approval ratings of the last six administrations (Oviedo, 2013) and is the worst rated president in Latin America (Vindas, 2012). Furthermore, the frames that highlight the irregularities in the process of the concession and the corruption within the administration are highly resonant, and enhance the overall cultural resonance of the negative framing. This is due not only to previous allegations of corruption in the Chinchilla administration, but also to previous high profile cases of corruption in government, that ended with two ex-presidents in jail. It is argued here that any frame that highlights corruption, distrust in the administration or a general discrediting of the political elite, would be highly resonant within the Costa Rican population; these frames would trigger the mental activation of accusations of corruption in this and previous administrations, and an overall sense of distrust in the political elite, which would serve to enhance the power of the negative framing of the concession.

The upper hand: Power and the press-politician relationship

As has been shown, the administration did put forth a positive framing as part of their announcement on the re-launching of the concession. Although La Nación initially endorsed most of the aspects of that positive framing, Diario Extra remained critical. However, the coverage of the concession in both newspapers soon became critical of the administration's frame. Using Entman's (2009: 92) words, in the case of the concession, the findings demonstrate that the press did spread a fully realized counter frame. In the sense that this negative counter frame clearly dominated the coverage of the concession, this dissertation argues that, contrary to what the propaganda and indexing models would suggest, the press not only criticized, but spread a frame that successfully challenged that put forth by the administration. These results suggest that, in this particular case, it was the press that had the upper hand in defining the dominant framing for the concession.

However, that counter frame was not the media's own. The negative framing for the concession was surprisingly put forth by citizens who organized themselves in groups and forums to fight the concession. The movement opposing the concession successfully developed and spread a fully realized and highly resonant counter frame, that spread up the cascade towards the media and, through the news text, fed up to other elites, who quickly echoed the voices of the opposition movement and endorsed this negative frame. Again, these elite dissenting voices received the attention of the press, who spread the frame both up the cascade to the administration, and down to the general public. The motivations of the journalists and news organizations and other elite actors outside the administration, and the cultural resonance of this negative framing, worked together to internally pull the mental associations that allowed a quick spreading activation of the counter frame; while the strategy deployed by the groups opposing the concession worked externally to push the frame forward.

The spreading activation of the negative framing of the concession was further enhanced by the administration's inability to deploy a strategy to further their preferred positive framing. As Entman very accurately explains, 'Poor strategy creates a power vacuum that opposing elites and journalists may enter with their own interpretation' (Entman, 2009: 91). In this case, the power vacuum left by the administration was of such magnitude, that not only the press, but organized groups of citizens – without any apparent quota of power – successfully managed to propose and impose their interpretations. Although Entman himself acknowledges that "strategic adoption and adaptation of frames rarely occurs among members of the public" (Entman, 2009: 91), this dissertation not only demonstrated that members of the public can deploy strategies to spread their own framing; but also, and most importantly, that – in the absence of an administration that exerts its power and deploys a strategy to push their frame – they can impose their interpretation as the dominant framing for an issue of domestic policy.

The independence from the administration that the press demonstrated by reiterating this counter frame, gave it the magnitude and prominence needed to impose it as the dominant framing on the concession. By emphasizing the negative framing and giving prominence to the chorus of voices asking for the rescission of the contract, the press effectively communicated to the administration that there was a great public pressure against this concession. The perception of that pressure was eventually enough to force the President to rescind the contract by mutual agreement with OAS. In this sense, the press acted as a powerful political actor in its own right, not only by openly challenging the administration's positive framing of the concession, but also by spreading the negative counter frame put forth

by opposing groups and giving it enough prominence to establish it as the dominant framing on the concession.

The power of a frame: Media power and the implications of the struggle over the framing of the concession

This dissertation has argued that, in the case of the concession of the highway between San José and San Ramón, the press had the upper hand in the press-politician relationship, as it used its independence and power to spread the counter frame put forth by the movement opposing the concession. However, was the negative framing of the concession powerful enough to force the President to rescind the contract? Unfortunately, the limitations imposed by the corpus of data and the method of analysis do not allow the formulation of an answer to this question. Nonetheless, it is possible to advance some potential explanations that could be analyzed in more detail in future research.

First of all, coverage of the concession did not include polls or surveys that could indicate how the frames deployed affected the perception of the general public of the concession. Even though there are several mentions in the news about the popular opposition to the concession, there is no tangible evidence that the population was in fact opposed to the concession. Newspapers note the number of members of different Facebook groups, or the opinions of members of several organized groups opposing the concession; but there are no surveys or polls to suggest that the general population shared these views. It would be interesting to conduct further research into how the alternative framings on the concession actually spread amongst the citizenship, as well as the resonance that each frame had among the population. These lines of research could provide evidence to ascertain if the citizenship did in fact oppose the concession; or if, on the contrary, they actually supported it – or if they were indifferent to it, for that matter – and it was the press' own framing of the public opinion that spread the perception of general public opposition to the project.

It is certainly possible that the frame put forth by the groups opposing the concession, as it spread up the cascade – through the media, the news texts and other elites outside the administration – also spread throughout the general public. If this were in fact the case, the press would have correctly identified this popular opposition to the project and effectively fed it back up to the political elites; it would also have played a pivotal role in spreading the negative framing and giving it sufficient prominence to allow its spreading activation through its audiences. This would be consistent with Silverstone's (1999) conceptualization of media

power. Firstly, by spreading the negative counter frame rather than the administration's positive framing, the media promoted a particular interpretation of the concession. Secondly, the media gave a group outside the traditional circles of power the platform to express their opinions and actively – and effectively – promote their particular interpretation of the concession. In this sense, this dissertation argues that the media did change the balance of power between state and citizen. According to the President herself, 'The overwhelming majority of Costa Ricans do not believe that the project is what we need, nor are they willing to assume the cost it implies' (Press release from the Presidency, 22/04/13). According to these words, the perception of a negative public opinion drove the President to rescind the contract. It is argued that, despite her interest in moving forward with the project, she effectively gave in to the demands of the groups opposing the concession.

CONCLUSION

The present dissertation has explained how the press framed the concession of the highway between San José and San Ramón. As has been stated, the administration put forth a positive framing of the concession that emphasized the problem of the current state of the highway, and the need to invest in this project of expansion of a vulnerable and obsolete highway. The corpus of data and the methodology used do not allow the researcher to explain why the administration failed to deploy an efficient strategy to push the spread of this positive framing. However, it is suggested that a possible explanation that could be analyzed in future research, is that the administration initially did not feel the need to defend and publicize a project that responded to a clear necessity of the population. In this sense, such a necessary and beneficial project would not require a communication strategy to be well received by the population. This dissertation suggests that a possible explanation for the lack of a clear communication strategy on part of the administration is that they did not expect the concession to be met by such strong opposition.

On the other hand, the negative counter frame put forth by the opposition movement defined the concession itself – which was framed as the solution in the administration's frame – as the problem, given the high cost and tolls it would entail, and the doubts and concerns raised about it, as well as the irregularities that plagued the process. According to this framing, the cause of the problem is a corrupt and inept administration, actively distrusted by its citizenship. The solution proposed by neighbours and communal leaders is to rescind the concession contract. The magnitude awarded to this frame in the coverage of the concession, as well as the high cultural resonance of the most relevant elements of this negative framed, allowed it to quickly spread, through the news texts, to other elites and to the general population. The strategy deployed by the opposition movement and the resonance of this negative framing, worked together to establish it as the clear dominating framing of the concession in the news.

As for the theoretical implications of this dissertation, it is argued here that this research demonstrates the usefulness, relevance and value of Entman's conceptualization of framing and his cascading activation model (Entman, 2003, 2008, 2009, 2010) as analytical tools for understanding the spread of frames and the complexity of the press-politician relationship. The application of this conceptual framework to the case of study demonstrates the

applicability of these tools to different national contexts, as well as to issues other than foreign policy.

Contrary to what other scholars have suggested (Bennett, 1990; Bennett et al., 2006; Edward S. Herman & Chomsky, 1994), this research demonstrated that the press is not always just a platform for the dominant political elite to spread its message, interpretations and ideology; nor does it always merely reflect the elite consent or dissent on a given subject. This dissertation has illustrated one particular case for which the press not only did not spread the administration's preferred framing; but it actually spread a fully realized counter frame that negatively framed the policy endorsed by the administration. In this sense, the press had the upper hand in defining the dominant framing of the issue, and was clearly the more powerful side in the press-politician relationship. However, one of the most surprising conclusions of the present research is the fact that this counter frame was not developed by the press itself, nor by other political elites outside the administration; it was a frame developed and strategically spread by organized citizens fighting the concession.

Were the media able to persuade the general public to oppose the concession? Were they able to persuade the administration to rescind the contract? Was the administration's decision to rescind the contract ultimately caused by the groups opposing the concession? These questions cannot be answered in the present dissertation; but can hopefully be addressed in further research. What this dissertation does argue is that, in this case, the administration did not have the power to stop the spreading activation of a counter frame that explicitly challenged its preferred interpretation and interests. Moreover, the administration did not have the power to uphold the contract. Whether this was due to the spread of a negative counter frame, the pressure from the press, the pressure from the public opposition, the perception of a negative public opinion, or to the threat of protest and social upheaval; that is a subject for another dissertation.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: A more detailed look at the conceptualizations of power and media power.

Before delving into media power, it is imperative to briefly discuss the concept of power that will be used throughout this work. As Castells aptly puts it, ‘Power is the most fundamental process in society, since society is defined around values and institutions, and what is valued and institutionalized is defined by power relationships’ (Castells, 2009: 10). As such a fundamental process, power has been much debated, from the ancient Greeks to modern day scholars; consequently, it has been defined in different ways – sometimes consistent definitions, and other times, quite contradictory ones. Dahl, for example, writing within the pluralist approach, defines power as a relation between people, in which ‘*A* has power over *B* to the extent that he can get *B* to do something that *B* would not otherwise do’ (Dahl, 1957: 202-203). Another classic pluralist definition of power, this time from a sociological perspective, is that provided by Max Weber in his influential sociological treatise, where he defines “Power” (*Macht*) is the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability resides’ (Weber, 1978: 53).

These pluralist approaches to power were criticized by authors like Bachrach and Baratz (1962) for being too focused on actual decision-making and ‘key issues’. Those authors contend that power ‘is also exercised when *A* devotes his energies to creating or reinforcing social and political values and institutional practices that limit the scope of the political process to public consideration of only those issues which are comparatively innocuous to *A*’ (Bachrach & Baratz, 1962: 948). But these critiques were in turn subjected to further criticism from authors like Lukes (Lukes, 2005), who contends that both the pluralist approach and their critics’ approach are too focused on behaviour, and consider only observable conflict and subjective interests.

Lukes’ radical approach to power from a political philosophy perspective focuses both on decision-making and the control over the political agenda; it deals with issues as well as with potential issues. Most notably, though, he considers both observable and latent conflict, and subjective and real interests (Lukes, 2005: 29). One of the merits of this approach is that it incorporates all three dimensions of power, and is therefore a very comprehensive conceptual framework for understanding power and how it is exercised. Lukes’ underlying concept of

power is that ‘A exercises power over B when A affects B in a manner contrary to B’s interests’ (Lukes, 2005: 30). It is precisely this attention to both observable and latent conflict that makes this conceptualization of power particularly useful for this dissertation, for – as will be explained later on – framing can be a tool for shaping how an event or a policy is perceived; and, as Lukes contends,

(...) is it not the supreme and most insidious exercise of power to prevent people, to whatever degree, from having grievances by shaping their perceptions, cognitions and preferences in such a way that they accept their role in the existing order of things (...)? (Lukes, 2005: 28).

However, it must be acknowledged that Lukes’ conceptualization of power does not explicitly take into account the role of the media. Authors like Castells (Castells, 2009) and Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1998) have proposed conceptualizations of power that do take into account the particular role and power of the media. Nonetheless, Lukes’ conceptualization is still the most relevant to the present research, as the logical structure and clarity with which Lukes analyzes power and how it is exercised, allows for a more straightforward, coherent and structured application to the present study. Additionally, this view allows for the consideration of different forms of exercising power, which in turn permit a more comprehensive understanding of the power relations at play in this case of study.

Having clarified what is meant by power, it is possible now to delve into the concept of media power. Though it is a much more modern concept than power, it has also been the subject of much debate. Nevertheless, before defining what is meant by media power, it is important to make several distinctions. First of all, it is relevant to distinguish the literature on media power from that of media effects, perhaps best exemplified by the debate between more pessimistic authors like Putnam (Putnam, 2001) and Postman (Postman, 1985), and more optimistic authors like Norris (Norris, 2000). Though the concept of media effects does refer to the influence that the media have – and the extent and consequences of that influence – on people, and, in that sense, it is a discussion on the power of the media; the effects literature gives places great emphasis on the effects of that influence on the audience. Given that the audience and the effects of the media and framing on it are outside of the scope of this dissertation – particularly on account not just of the time and space limitations, but also those imposed by the main corpus of data being composed of newspaper articles – although a very important one, the concept of media effects is not relevant for the present research.

Having established then that this dissertation is concerned with media power as the power that the media in general have – or lack – over society, it is possible then to discuss what

different authors have said about media power. McQuail (McQuail, 2010) provides a comprehensive discussion of the socio-historical concept of media power and how it has changed over time. He identifies two overarching models for understanding media power, the dominance and pluralist models (McQuail, 2010: 87-89). Loosely following his lead, it is indeed possible to identify authors that take a rather stark and pessimistic view of media power, as subordinated to the power of the dominant political elite. Along this line are authors from the Frankfurt School's Adorno and Horkheimer and their theories on culture and massification (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1972), Herman and Chomsky and their propaganda model and theories on the manufacture of consent (Edward S. Herman & Chomsky, 1994), and Bourdieu with his concepts of symbolic power and invisible censorship (Bourdieu, 1998). Despite the differences in their conceptualizations of media power, these authors and others like them share a pessimistic view of the media, which they see as subordinated to the more powerful politico-economic elites. In this view, the media are controlled by political and economic interests, and merely transmit their messages and ideology to a relatively passive audience.

On the other hand, there are authors that, though not entirely optimistic like the pluralist model that McQuail presents (McQuail, 2010: 87-89), do present a more nuanced view of media power. Along these lines, authors like Silverstone (Silverstone, 1999, 2005, 2007), McNair (McNair, 2011), Schudson and his work on the sociology of news (Schudson, 2003) and Castells with his theories on communication power (Castells, 2009), all do recognize the limitations that the media faces in the face of political and economic power of politicians and owners; however, they also acknowledge the potential of the media, and the different ways in which it does exert power in its own right, both in relation to elites and to the audience, as well and to society in general. This paper agrees with this second group of authors that present a more nuanced view of media power, and – it is argued – a view that more closely captures the complex and intricate power relations, and therefore allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the power of the media.

Inasmuch as this dissertation is focused on framing, it is argued that Silverstone's conceptualization of media power is the most relevant one to this research; not just on account of the breadth and meticulous nature of this view, but also because it takes into account the varied and extensive forms of power that the media wield in contemporary societies. Silverstone accurately and comprehensively captures what is meant by media power, how, in what ways, and to which ends the media exert this power, as well as the limitations imposed on it by political actors, economic forces or the audience itself. In his own – and very eloquent – words, Silverstone argues that

It is all about power, of course, in the end. The power the media have to set an agenda. The power they have to destroy one. The power they have to influence and change the political process. The power to enable, to inform. The power to deceive. The power to shift the balance of power: between state and citizen; between country and country; between producer and consumer. And the power that they are denied: by the state, by the market, by the resistant or resisting audience, citizen, consumer. (...) It is about the media's power to create and sustain meanings; to persuade, endorse and reinforce. The power to undermine and reassure. It is about reach. And it is about representation: the ability to present, reveal, explain; and also the ability to grant access and participation. It is about the power to listen and the power to speak and be heard. The power to prompt and guide reflection and reflexivity. The power to tell tales and articulate memories (Silverstone, 1999: 143).

This view on media power is relevant to the case of study at hand because it incorporates two of the dimensions of media power that concern this research; that which relates to the power of media in relation to other political actors, and that which refers to the power of the media in terms of perception, representation, mediation and meaning.

Finally, having established that this dissertation will draw from Silverstone's conceptualization of media power, it is important to make one last distinction, the one between media power as a general overarching concept, and the power of the media and, more specifically, the power of the press, in relation to the power of the political elite, which is the relationship with which this dissertation is concerned. But before looking more closely at this complicated press-politician relationship, it is necessary to review the literature on the concept of framing, which provides the conceptual tool that will be used to gauge the relative power in the relationship, as this research seeks to elucidate which of these political actor had the power to impose their frame as the dominant one.

Appendix B: Coding book.

Section I: General information

- Variable 1: Date of publication of the unit

Label: DATE

This variable codes for the date the unit was published or made public.

Codes and values:
dd/mm/yy

- Variable 2: Source of the unit

Label: SOURCE

This variable codes for the news outlet or source of the unit.

Codes and values:

- 1: La Nación
- 2: Diario Extra
- 3: Presidency
- 4: Foro de Occidente

- Variable 3: Type of unit

Label: TYPE

This variable codes for the type of publication.

Codes and values:

- 1: Press release
- 2: News article
- 3: Editorial
- 4: Column
- 5: Op-ed
- 6: Interview
- 7: Other

- Variable 4: Word count of the unit

Label: WCOUNT

This variable codes for the word count of the unit.

Codes and values:

Number of words in the article, excluding title or headline.

Section II: Information about the sources

Subsection A: Presence of a source

Sources are taken here to mean political actors that refer to the specific policy of the concession (that is, actors that make reference to other subjects in a unit will not, for the purpose of this analysis, be regarded as sources). Therefore, in coding for the presence of a source, the coder should code 1 if the source is quoted or their position is discussed in the unit; and code 0 if the code is not present in the unit. (A brief mention of the actions is not equivalent to presence of a source; for example, mention of the Contraloría's approval to transfer the contract is not counted as presence of a source and should be coded as 0, while an explanation from their staff of why they did approve the transfer would count as presence of the source and should be coded as 1). In the case of columns, the authors shall be coded as the source (and the dominant source) of the unit; therefore, the coder should code 1 for the presence of a source if the author of a column is, for example, an expert, a former official or a member of the general public.

Sources from the administration

- Variable 5: President and Vice-presidents

Label: SAPRES

This variable codes for the presence of the President and Vice-Presidents.

Codes and values:

- 0: Not present
- 1: Present

- Variable 6: Ministers and vice-ministers

Label: SAMIN

This variable codes for the presence of ministers and vice-ministers of the administration.

Codes and values:

0: Not present

1: Present

- Variable 7: High-level officials in the administration

Label: SAHIGH

This variable codes for the presence of high-level officials, which include directors of governmental institutions, presidents of decentralized institutions, and other high-ranking officials of institutions of the Executive branch.

Codes and values:

0: Not present

1: Present

Sources from other elites outside the administration

Sources from the Legislative Branch

- Variable 8: PLN members of the Legislative Assembly and staff

Label: SOELAPLN

This variable codes for the presence of PLN members elected to the Legislative Assembly and their staff.

Codes and values:

0: Not present

1: Present

- Variable 9: Opposition party members of the Legislative Assembly and staff

Label: SOELAOPP

This variable codes for the presence of opposition party members elected to the Legislative Assembly and their staff.

Codes and values:

0: Not present

1: Present

- Variable 10: Institutions attached to the Legislative Assembly

Label: SOELAIN

This variable codes for the presence of high-level officials of the institutions attached to the Legislative Assembly; specifically, the Defensoría de los Habitantes (Ombudsman) and the Contraloría General de la República (Comptroller General).

Codes and values:

0: Not present

1: Present

Sources from the Judicial Branch

- Variable 11: Members of the Judicial Branch

Label: SOEJUD

This variable codes for the presence of judges of the four main chambers of the Courts, as well as members of the Supreme Court of Justice, the Procuraduría General de la República (Attorney General), and Fiscalía (Public Prosecutor); as well as other high-level officials of the Judicial branch.

Codes and values:

0: Not present

1: Present

Sources from political parties

- Variable 12: PLN leadership

Label: SOELPLN

This variable codes for the presence of members of the political directing bodies of the governing PLN.

Codes and values:

0: Not present

1: Present

- Variable 13: Opposition party leadership

Label: SOELOPP

This variable codes for the presence of members of the political directing bodies of opposition parties.

Codes and values:

0: Not present

1: Present

- Variable 14: PLN presidential candidate

Label: SOEPCPLN

This variable codes for the presence of the presidential candidate of the incumbent PLN.

Codes and values:

0: Not present

1: Present

- Variable 15: Opposition party presidential candidates

Label: SOEPCOPP

This variable codes for the presence of the presidential candidates of the opposition parties.

Codes and values:

0: Not present

1: Present

Sources from local authorities

- Variable 16: Local authorities

Label: SOELOCAU

This variable codes for the presence of local authorities, including city mayors and other elected officials to mayoralties and municipal councils.

Codes and values:

0: Not present

1: Present

Sources from former officials

- Variable 17: Former PLN officials

Label: SOEFORPLN

This variable codes for the presence of former PLN officials in the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial branches of government.

Codes and values:

0: Not present

1: Present

- Variable 18: Former opposition party officials

Label: SOEFOROPP

This variable codes for the presence of former opposition party officials in the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial branches of government.

Codes and values:

0: Not present

1: Present

Expert sources

- Variable 19: Experts

Label: SOEEXP

This variable codes for the presence of members of the public that are regarded as experts in their field, because of their education and/or academic or professional experience; and whose opinion is sought and highly regarded on these grounds, as expert advice rather than as public opinion.

Codes and values:

0: Not present

1: Present

Sources from the media

- Variable 20: Journalists

Label: SMJOUR

This variable codes for the presence of journalists as a source in the article, either by being quoted by the article or by giving their own opinion, such as in columns or op-ed articles (columnists should be therefore coded as journalists here, unless they are former officials or experts).

Codes and values:

0: Not present

1: Present

- Variable 21: News organizations

Label: SMNORG

This variable codes for the presence of news organizations as a source, as in the case of editorials.

Codes and values:

0: Not present

1: Present

Sources from the general public

- Variable 22: Polls

Label: SPPOLL

This variable codes for the presence of polls and the reporting of their results with regards to the issue of the concession.

Codes and values:

0: Not present

1: Present

- Variable 23: Social organizations

Label: SPSOCORG

This variable codes for the presence of social organizations; specifically, this variable refers to non-governmental social organizations (such as unions, associations, commercial chambers, etc.) that are not directly associated with the groups opposing the concession.

Codes and values:

0: Not present

1: Present

- Variable 24: Private firms

Label: SPPRIFIR

This variable codes for the presence of private firms and corporations, except for the incumbent firm OAS.

Codes and values:

0: Not present

1: Present

- Variable 25: OAS

Label: SPOAS

This variable codes for the presence of the contracting firm OAS.

Codes and values:

0: Not present

1: Present

- Variable 26: Pressure groups and protesters

Label: SPPROT

This variable codes for the presence of pressure groups and protesters fighting the concession of the highway.

Codes and values:

0: Not present

1: Present

- Variable 27: General public

Label: SPGENPUB

This variable codes for the presence of members of the general public as a source; for example, quotes of the opinion or position of a citizen not identified as a member of the movement opposing the concession.

Codes and values:

0: Not present

1: Present

- Variable 28: Anonymous or unattributed

Label: SPANON

This variable codes for the presence of anonymous or unattributed sources.

Codes and values:

0: Not present

1: Present

- Variable 29: Other

Label: SPOTHER

This variable codes for the presence of any other source not included in the previous categories.

Codes and values:

0: Not present

1: Present

Subsection B: Position of the sources

- Variable 30: Presence of a dominant source

Label: ASPRESDOM

This variable codes for the presence of a dominant source in the article.

Codes and values:

0: No dominant source

1: Presence of a dominant source

- Variable 31: Dominant source

Label: ASDOM

This variable codes for the dominant source in the unit. The coder should code for the source that is the dominant source of the unit, 0 if there is no dominant source, and 99 for 'Does not apply' (in the case of certain documents published by the opposition movement).

Codes and values:

0: No dominant source

1: President/Vice-presidents

2: Minister/Vice-ministers

3: High-level officials

4: PLN members of the Legislative Assembly and staff

5: Opposition party members of the Legislative Assembly and staff

6: Institutions attached to the Legislative Assembly

7: Judicial branch members

8: PLN leadership

9: Opposition party leadership

10: PLN presidential candidate

11: Opposition party presidential candidates

12: Local authorities

13: Former PLN officials

14: Former opposition party officials

15: Experts

16: Journalists

17: News organizations

18: Polls

19: Social organizations

20: Private firms

21: OAS

22: Pressure groups/Protesters

23: General public

24: Anonymous/Unattributed

25: Other

99: Does not apply

- Variable 32: Position of the dominant source

Label: ASDOMPOS

This variable codes for the position that the dominant source expresses or shows towards the policy. The possible values are a supportive or positive position towards the concession, opposition or a negative position, ambivalence (the source mentions both positive and negative aspects of the concession), or neutral (the source does not establish a position towards the policy). Finally, the coder should code 99 for 'Does not apply' for certain units that do not have sources that can be attributed positions towards the policy.

Codes and values:

0: No dominant source

1: Support/Positive

2: Opposition/Negative

3: Ambivalent

4: Neutral

99: Does not apply

- Variable 33: First quoted source

Label: ASFIRST

This variable codes for the source that is quoted or mentioned first in the unit. The coder should code 0 if there is no first quoted source, or 99 for 'Does not apply' (in the case of certain documents).

Codes and values:

- 0: No dominant source
- 1: President/Vice-presidents
- 2: Minister/Vice-ministers
- 3: High-level officials
- 4: PLN members of the Legislative Assembly and staff
- 5: Opposition party members of the Legislative Assembly and staff
- 6: Institutions attached to the Legislative Assembly
- 7: Judicial branch members
- 8: PLN leadership
- 9: Opposition party leadership
- 10: PLN presidential candidate
- 11: Opposition party presidential candidates
- 12: Local authorities
- 13: Former PLN officials
- 14: Former opposition party officials
- 15: Experts
- 16: Journalists
- 17: News organizations
- 18: Polls
- 19: Social organizations
- 20: Private firms
- 21: OAS
- 22: Pressure groups/Protesters
- 23: General public
- 24: Anonymous/Unattributed
- 25: Other
- 99: Does not apply

- Variable 34: Position of the first quoted source

Label: ASFIRSTPOS

This variable codes for the position that the first quoted source expresses or shows towards the policy. The possible values are a supportive or positive position towards the concession, opposition or a negative position, ambivalence (the source mentions both positive and negative aspects of the concession), or neutral (the source does not establish a position towards the policy). Finally, the coder should code 99 for 'Does not apply' for certain units that do not have sources that can be attributed positions towards the policy.

Codes and values:

- 0: No first source
- 1: Support/Positive
- 2: Opposition/Negative
- 3: Ambivalent
- 4: Neutral
- 99: Does not apply

- Variable 35: Second quoted source

Label: ASSEC

This variable codes for the source that is quoted or mentioned second in the unit. The coder should code 0 if there is no second quoted source, or 99 for 'Does not apply' (in the case of certain documents).

Codes and values:

- 0: No second source
- 1: President/Vice-presidents
- 2: Minister/Vice-ministers
- 3: High-level officials
- 4: PLN members of the Legislative Assembly and staff
- 5: Opposition party members of the Legislative Assembly and staff
- 6: Institutions attached to the Legislative Assembly
- 7: Judicial branch members
- 8: PLN leadership
- 9: Opposition party leadership
- 10: PLN presidential candidate
- 11: Opposition party presidential candidates
- 12: Local authorities
- 13: Former PLN officials
- 14: Former opposition party officials
- 15: Experts
- 16: Journalists
- 17: News organizations
- 18: Polls
- 19: Social organizations
- 20: Private firms
- 21: OAS
- 22: Pressure groups/Protesters
- 23: General public
- 24: Anonymous/Unattributed
- 25: Other
- 99: Does not apply

- Variable 36: Position of the second quoted source

Label: ASSECPOS

This variable codes for the position that the second quoted source expresses or shows towards the policy. The possible values are a supportive or positive position towards the concession, opposition or a negative position, ambivalence (the source mentions both positive and negative aspects of the concession), or neutral (the source does not establish a position towards the policy). Finally, the coder should code 99 for 'Does not apply' for certain units that do not have sources that can be attributed positions towards the policy.

Codes and values:

- 0: No second source
- 1: Support/Positive
- 2: Opposition/Negative
- 3: Ambivalent
- 4: Neutral
- 99: Does not apply

- Variable 37: Third quoted source

Label: ASTHIRD

This variable codes for the source that is quoted or mentioned third in the unit. The coder should code 0 if there is no third quoted source, or 99 for 'Does not apply' (in the case of certain documents).

Codes and values:

- 0: No third source
- 1: President/Vice-presidents
- 2: Minister/Vice-ministers
- 3: High-level officials

- 4: PLN members of the Legislative Assembly and staff
- 5: Opposition party members of the Legislative Assembly and staff
- 6: Institutions attached to the Legislative Assembly
- 7: Judicial branch members
- 8: PLN leadership
- 9: Opposition party leadership
- 10: PLN presidential candidate
- 11: Opposition party presidential candidates
- 12: Local authorities
- 13: Former PLN officials
- 14: Former opposition party officials
- 15: Experts
- 16: Journalists
- 17: News organizations
- 18: Polls
- 19: Social organizations
- 20: Private firms
- 21: OAS
- 22: Pressure groups/Protesters
- 23: General public
- 24: Anonymous/Unattributed
- 25: Other
- 99: Does not apply

- Variable 38: Position of the third quoted source

Label: ASTHIRDPOS

This variable codes for the position that the third quoted source expresses or shows towards the policy. The possible values are a supportive or positive position towards the concession, opposition or a negative position, ambivalence (the source mentions both positive and negative aspects of the concession), or neutral (the source does not establish a position towards the policy). Finally, the coder should code 99 for 'Does not apply' for certain units that do not have sources that can be attributed positions towards the policy.

Codes and values:

- 0: No third source
- 1: Support/Positive
- 2: Opposition/Negative
- 3: Ambivalent
- 4: Neutral
- 99: Does not apply

- Variable 39: Source present in the headline

Label: ASHEAD

This variable codes for the source that is quoted or mentioned in the headline of the unit. The coder should code 0 if there is no source mentioned in the headline, 26 if there is more than one source quoted in the headline, or 99 for 'Does not apply' (for example, columns and editorials may not have headlines).

Codes and values:

- 0: No source in the headline
- 1: President/Vice-presidents
- 2: Minister/Vice-ministers
- 3: High-level officials
- 4: PLN members of the Legislative Assembly and staff
- 5: Opposition party members of the Legislative Assembly and staff
- 6: Institutions attached to the Legislative Assembly
- 7: Judicial branch members

- 8: PLN leadership
- 9: Opposition party leadership
- 10: PLN presidential candidate
- 11: Opposition party presidential candidates
- 12: Local authorities
- 13: Former PLN officials
- 14: Former opposition party officials
- 15: Experts
- 16: Journalists
- 17: News organizations
- 18: Polls
- 19: Social organizations
- 20: Private firms
- 21: OAS
- 22: Pressure groups/Protesters
- 23: General public
- 24: Anonymous/Unattributed
- 25: Other
- 26: More than one source in the headline
- 99: Does not apply

Section III: Information about the frames

Subsection A: Presence of a frame

News frames are coded for on a present/absent basis. The coder should code 1 for the presence of a particular frame (that is, when the words, opinions, actions and explanations stated explicitly fit within the aspect of the frame delineated in that category being coded for), and code 0 otherwise. Each variable codes for a particular frame regarding the concession.

Positive frames towards the policy

Positive frames on the policy

- Variable 40: Need or justification

Label: NFPNEED

This variable codes for references to the justification for the project, the need or necessity for it, the technical specifications that make it necessary, etc.

Codes and values:

0: Absent

1: Present

- Variable 41: Benefits

Label: NFPBEN

This variable codes for references to the benefits of the proposed project, particularly the savings in time, petrol, and money.

Codes and values:

0: Absent

1: Present

- Variable 42: Investment

Label: NFPINV

This variable codes for references to the project as an investment (a positive connotation, since investments imply a future gain in terms of profit or benefits).

Codes and values:

0: Absent
1: Present

- Variable 43: Expansion, construction or modernization

Label: NFPEXP

This variable codes for references to the project as an expansion, widening, construction, modernization or improvement of the highway.

Codes and values:

0: Absent
1: Present

- Variable 44: Solution

Label: NFPSOL

This variable codes for references to the project as a solution to an existing problem (that is, the current vulnerable state of the highway).

Codes and values:

0: Absent
1: Present

Positive frames on the administration

- Variable 45: Success and satisfaction

Label: NFPSUC

This variable codes for references to the project as a success, an achievement, or a cause of satisfaction for the administration.

Codes and values:

0: Absent
1: Present

- Variable 46: Credit the administration

Label: NFPCRED

This variable codes for references to the good performance of the administration in general, recognition of good and responsible actions on their part, their disposition to dialogue, etc. (for example, good policy decisions, good governance, previous achievements, opening up to dialogue, listening to citizens, etc.)

Codes and values:

0: Absent
1: Present

Negative frames on the opposition

- Variable 47: Discredit the opposition

Label: NFPDISOPP

This variable codes for references to the discrediting of the movement opposing the concession; particularly, references to the members of the pressure groups as protesters (in a negative context), violent actions and clashes with the police, threats made by members of the pressure groups, impediments presented, and roadblocks put up by protesters.

Codes and values:

0: Absent
1: Present

Negative frames towards the policy

Negative frames on the policy

- Variable 48: High cost and tolls

Label: NFNCOST

This variable codes for references to the high cost of the project, both in the sense of the overall cost of the project itself and the high toll rates that would be charged to users of the highway.

Codes and values:

0: Absent

1: Present

- Variable 49: Doubts and concerns

Label: NFNDOUBT

This variable codes for references to doubts, concerns, objections, and questions raised about the project.

Codes and values:

0: Absent

1: Present

- Variable 50: Harm and impact

Label: NFNHARM

This variable codes for references to the impact that the project will have, the harm it will cause to users of the highway, and how it will affect the neighbours of the towns along the highway.

Codes and values:

0: Absent

1: Present

- Variable 51: Irregularities

Label: NFNIRREG

This variable codes for references to irregularities or anomalies in the process of approval of the transfer of the contract or the project itself, references to illegal aspects or actions with regards to the project, violation of laws, rules or norms, misdeeds or offences.

Codes and values:

0: Absent

1: Present

- Variable 52: Conflict and controversy

Label: NFNCONF

This variable codes for references to the conflict that the project has sparked, and the controversy surrounding the concession.

Codes and values:

0: Absent

1: Present

- Variable 53: Not a solution

Label: NFNNOT

This variable codes for references to the project not being a solution for the problem; particularly references to the project not being a construction of a new highway or even the modernization of the existing one, but rather the maintenance of the existing highway.

Codes and values:

0: Absent

1: Present

- Variable 54: Government built highway as a solution

Label: NFNSOL

This variable codes for references to a government built highway as the real solution to the problem.

Codes and values:

0: Absent

1: Present

Negative frames on the administration

- Variable 55: Corruption

Label: NFNCORR

This variable codes for references to corruption within the administration, or in the political elite as a whole, including references to previous acts of corruption (in this or previous administrations).

Codes and values:

0: Absent

1: Present

- Variable 56: Distrust

Label: NFNDIST

This variable codes for references to distrust in the administration, in public institutions, in the political elite, or in the democratic system as a whole; including references to secrecy, lack of transparency, falsehood, or lies.

Codes and values:

0: Absent

1: Present

- Variable 57: Failure

Label: NFNFAIL

This variable codes for references to the project as a failure, error, or mistake of the administration.

Codes and values:

0: Absent

1: Present

- Variable 58: Lack of information

Label: NFNLACK

This variable codes for references to the lack of explanation, evidence, sufficient justification, or information about the project on the part of the administration.

Codes and values:

0: Absent

1: Present

- Variable 59: Discredit the administration

Label: NFNDISGOV

This variable codes for references to the general poor performance of the administration, as well as accusations of it being incapable, unable, inefficient, or irresponsible.

Codes and values:

0: Absent

1: Present

Positive frames on the opposition

- Variable 60: Credit the opposition

Label: NFNFIGHT

This variable codes for references to positive aspects of the movement opposing the concession; including references to the fight put forth by organized groups of citizens, peaceful demonstrations, pacific protests, social protests, patriotism, etc.

Codes and values:

0: Absent

1: Present

- Variable 61: Representativity

Label: NFNREP

This variable codes for references to the representativity of the movement opposing the concession; it includes references to the group as representatives of the citizens or neighbours, the communal grassroots of the movement, and the neighbours and communities that make up the movement.

Codes and values:

0: Absent

1: Present

- Variable 62: Discontent and discomfort

Label: NFNDISC

This variable codes for references to the discontent, discomfort, or outrage among the members of the opposition movement.

Codes and values:

0: Absent

1: Present

Negative frames on the figure of concession

- Variable 63: Opposition to the figure of concession

Label: NFNOPPC

This variable codes for references to the opposition to the legal figure of concession in general; including references to the figure as bad, inappropriate, inefficient, or irresponsible.

Codes and values:

0: Absent

1: Present

- Variable 64: Private interests

Label: NFNPRIV

This variable codes for references to the private interests and private participation in this project; including references to the business component and the transnational character of the contracting company.

Codes and values:

0: Absent

1: Present

- Variable 65: Private profit

Label: NFNPROF

This variable codes for references to the profit that the contracting company stands to make from the project; including references to the earnings and accumulation that the firm stands to make.

Codes and values:

0: Absent

1: Present

Subsection B: Other information on framing

- Variable 66: Focus of the framing

Label: NFFOCUS

This variable codes for the predominant focus of the framing in the unit, whether procedural (focus on actions, processes, leadership, evaluation of an actor's behaviour and legitimacy), substantive (focus on the substantive aspects of the policy, analysis of the policy, its implications, cost, benefits, justification, etc. and generally providing information to stimulate support or opposition towards the policy), or both.

Codes and values:

- 1: Procedural
- 2: Substantive
- 3: Both

- Variable 67: Balance of the unit

Label: NBAL

This variable codes for the overall balance of the unit towards the concession, whether positive, negative, ambivalent (mentions both positive and negative aspects), or neutral (does not take a position towards the concession).

Codes and values:

- 1: Positive
- 2: Negative
- 3: Ambivalent
- 4: Neutral

- Variable 68: Position in the headline

Label: NHEAD

This variable codes for the position towards the concession expressed in the headline of the unit, whether the headline expresses no position (for example, if the headline is completely unrelated to the concession), expresses support, expresses opposition, expresses ambivalence, or expresses a neutral position towards the concession (for example, stating a fact that does not motivate support or opposition). The coder should code 99 for 'Does not apply' in the case of units that do not have a headline.

Codes and values:

- 0: No position
- 1: Support
- 2: Opposition
- 3: Ambivalence
- 4: Neutrality
- 99: Does not apply

Appendix C: Report of the Intercode Reliability for each variable.

Table 1: Report of the Intercode Reliability for each variable

| Variable | ICR |
|---------------------------|-------|
| Date | 1,000 |
| Source of unit | 1,000 |
| Type | 1,000 |
| Word count | 1,000 |
| President/Vice-Presidents | 0,769 |

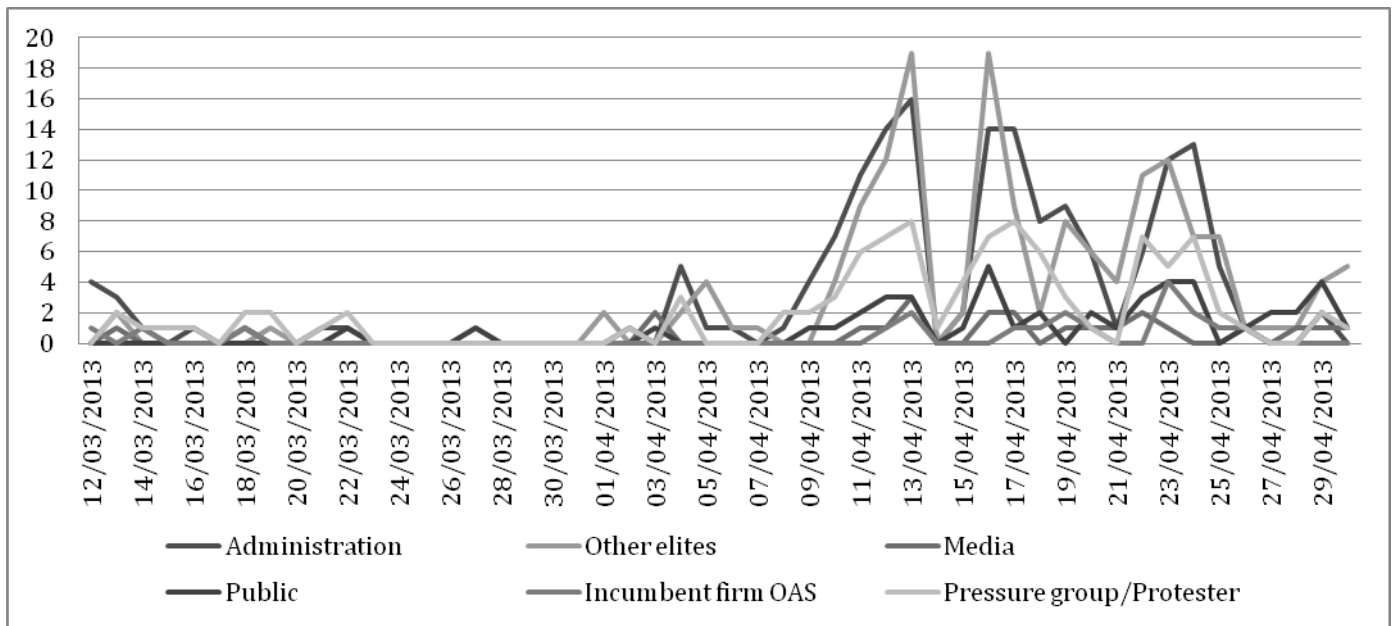
| | |
|-----------------------------------------|-------|
| Ministers/Vice-ministers | 0,885 |
| High-level officials | 0,923 |
| Legislative Assembly PLN | 1,000 |
| Legislative Assembly Opposition | 0,962 |
| Legislative Assembly Institutions | 0,923 |
| Judicial Branch | 0,962 |
| PLN leadership | 0,962 |
| Opposition party leadership | 1,000 |
| PLN presidential candidate | 0,962 |
| Opposition party presidential candidate | 1,000 |
| Local authority | 1,000 |
| Former PLN official | 1,000 |
| Former opposition official | 1,000 |
| Expert | 0,962 |
| Journalist | 1,000 |
| News organization | 1,000 |
| Polls | 1,000 |
| Social organization | 0,962 |
| Private firm | 1,000 |
| OAS | 0,962 |
| Pressure group/Protester | 0,885 |
| General public | 0,962 |
| Anonymous/Unattributed | 0,962 |
| Other source | 1,000 |
| Presence of dominant source | 0,923 |
| Dominant source | 0,769 |
| Position of dominant source | 0,731 |
| First source | 0,615 |
| Position of first source | 0,654 |
| Second source | 0,615 |
| Position of second source | 0,462 |
| Third source | 0,692 |
| Position of third source | 0,692 |
| Source in the headline | 0,500 |
| Need/Justification | 0,808 |
| Benefits | 0,808 |
| Investment | 0,923 |
| Expansion/Modernization | 0,846 |
| Concession as solution | 0,846 |
| Concession as success | 0,923 |
| Credit the administration | 0,808 |
| Discredit the opposition | 0,885 |
| High costs and tolls | 0,808 |
| Doubts and concerns | 0,731 |

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-------|
| Impact and harm | 0,885 |
| Irregularities | 0,846 |
| Conflict | 0,731 |
| Concession is not a solution | 0,731 |
| Solution is government built highway | 0,885 |
| Corruption | 0,885 |
| Distrust | 0,692 |
| Concession as failure | 0,462 |
| Lack of information | 0,808 |
| Discredit the administration | 0,538 |
| Credit the opposition | 0,808 |
| Representativity | 0,692 |
| Discontent | 0,808 |
| Opposition to figure of concession | 0,923 |
| Private interests | 0,846 |
| Private profit | 1,000 |
| Focus of the unit | 0,615 |
| Balance of the unit | 0,615 |
| Position in the headline | 0,500 |

Appendix D: Articles that quote each source, by date of publication

Graph 12 illustrates the number of articles that reference all the sources included in the more general categories of sources. The categories correspond to those proposed in Entman's cascading activation model, with the exception of sources from the contracting firm OAS and members of the groups opposing and protesting the concession, which were extracted from the general public category, on account to their relevance to the particular case of study.

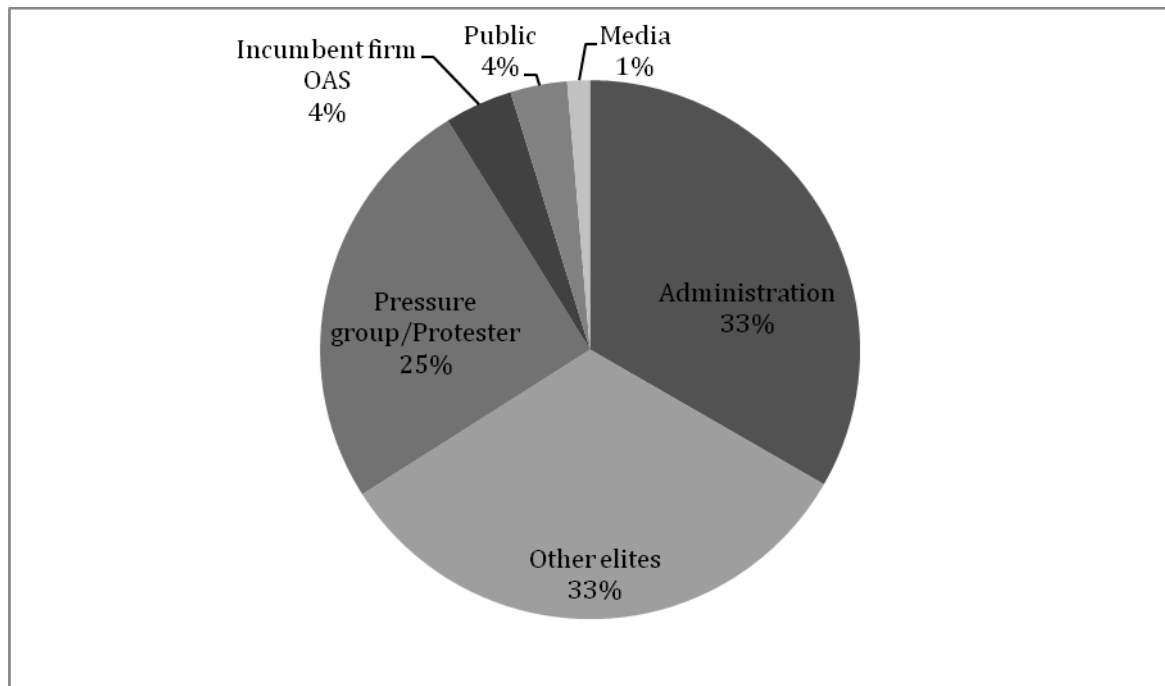
Graph 12: Articles that quote each group of sources, by date of publication



Graph 12 reinforces the presence of the political elite in this debate. However, it is important to underline that, despite the political elites clearly dominating as sources in the articles, the groups opposing the concession were not excluded from the news; on the contrary, they represent the third group of sources most often referenced in the articles (and again, if each source is taken separately, they are the most often quoted sources, as stated in the first graph).

Appendix E: Percentage distribution of the categories of sources present in the headline of articles with a single source in the headline.

Graph 13: Percentage distribution of the source present in the headline, in the total number of articles that have a headline with a single source



Graph 13 above shows the prominence that each category of sources is awarded, as evidenced by their mention in the headline of an article. In the total number of articles that do have a headline that features a single source, both the administration and other elites each account for 33% of the mentions of a single source in a headline; however, it is worth pointing out the prominence awarded in this sense to the pressure groups and protesters opposing the concession, which account for 25% of the mentions of a source in the headline of an article.

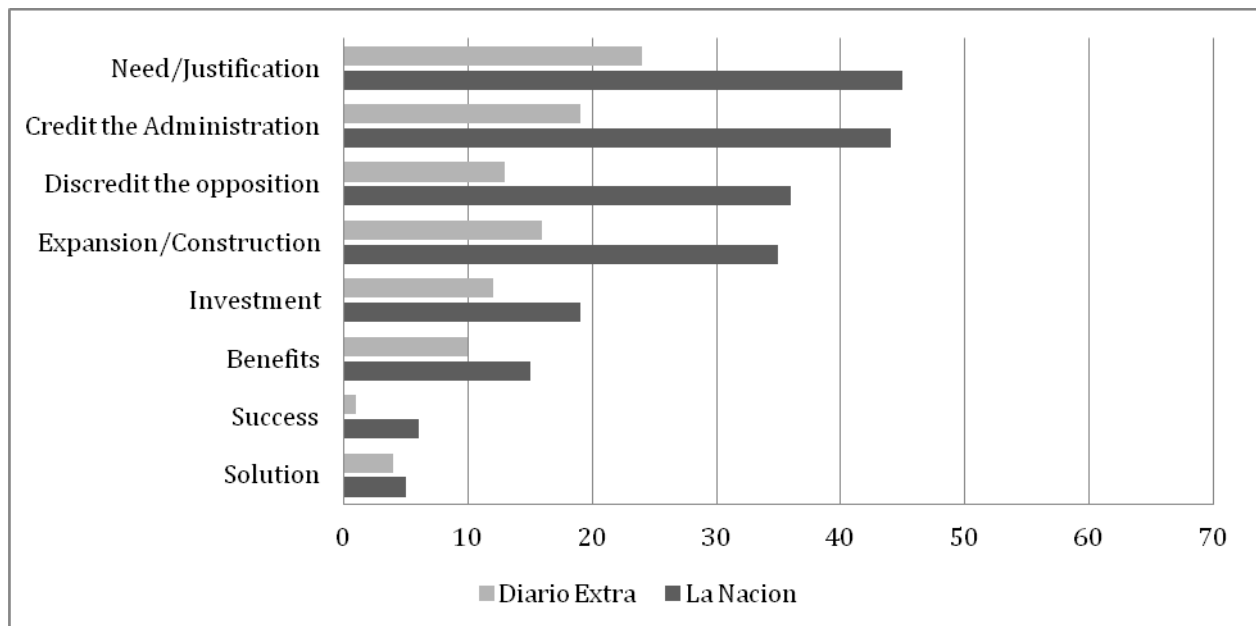
Appendix F: Differences in framing between La Nación and Diario Extra

As has been stated, the negative framing of the concession clearly dominated the coverage of this issue in both La Nación and Diario Extra. However, the negative frames were more prominently deployed by the articles published in Diario Extra. This is in part due to the fact that La Nación initially supported the concession, as evidenced by their editorial line. In the first editorial on the concession, published on March 13th, La Nación repeated the positive frames used by the administration. The editorial explains the importance of this highway and the ‘pressing need’ (La Nación, 13/03/13) for this project to alleviate the vulnerability of the highway due to numerous structural flaws. Though it also recognizes the distrust that has arisen around the figure of concession of infrastructure works – and the mistakes in previous

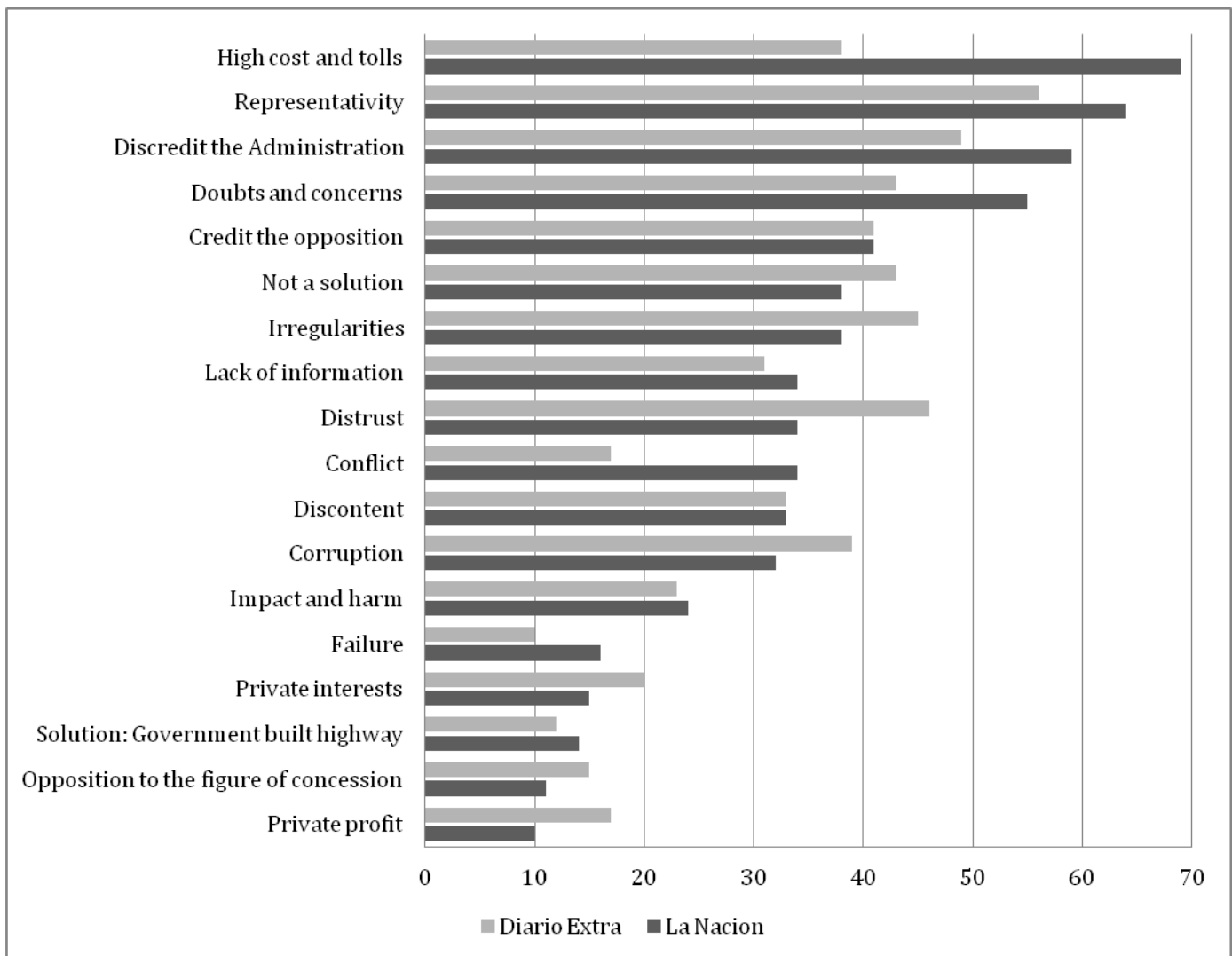
projects executed through this legal figure – the newspaper clearly endorses this project. As time passed, however, La Nación adopted a more critical approach, as the following two editorials have a negative balance towards the concession. In the last editorial published on the subject during the period analyzed, the newspaper expresses its support to the concession scheme, stating that ‘The deficiencies exist, but the model is necessary’ (La Nación, 30/04/13); the editorial warns against reaching the wrong conclusions from this episode, in the sense that although this particular concession was the subject of numerous questions and concerns, this does not mean that the legal figure of concession is not a valid one to solve the infrastructure problems that the country faces. Diario Extra, on the other hand, consistently maintained a more critical approach to the concession, which is evidenced by the fact that all of the editorials on the subject are either ambivalent or negative towards the concession.

These differences in the coverage of the concession between both newspapers are also evident in the frames that they tend to use in reference to the project. The following graphs illustrate these differences, by displaying the total frequency that each positive or negative frame was used in an article, within both newspapers, therefore allowing a comparison of the frames that each paper used in framing the concession. The graphs have the same scale, in order to highlight the lower frequencies of the positive frames with respect of those of the negative frames, used more often.

Graph 14: Absolute frequency of the positive frames used, by newspaper



As Graph 14 shows, La Nación consistently published articles that made much more frequent use of positive frames than Diario Extra. However, as Graph 15 very evidently illustrates, both newspapers show a much higher frequency of negative frames towards the concession. Graph 15 shows more variation between the newspapers than the previous graph. Three facts are worth pointing out from Graph 15. First of all, La Nación favoured the publication of the negative frames that refer to the high cost and high tolls that the project would entail the representativity of the opposition movement towards the concession, the discrediting of the administration and the doubts and concerns expressed about the project. Diario Extra, on the other hand, shows less bias towards any single frame. Furthermore, compared to La Nación, Diario Extra published the frames that refer to the irregularities of the project, the general distrust towards the administration, and accusations of corruption within the administration, much more frequently. Although the methodology does not allow a conclusive answer as to why the negative frames used differ between these media outlets, it is possible to hypothesize that this would in part be due to their nature as a broadsheet and a tabloid. Frames that refer to corruption, irregularities or distrust are much more scandalous than, for example, references to the high economic cost that the project entails, or the doubts and concerns expressed by other elites. However, answering this question would require other analytical tools, like interviewing editorial staff in both outlets, in order to establish why they tended to display some frames more prominently than others.

Graph 15: Absolute frequency of the negative frames used, by newspaper

Appendix G: Illustrating the strategy of the groups opposing the concession.

The organized groups of citizens fighting against the concession, as has been shown, deployed an effective strategy to push the spread of their preferred negative framing of the concession. To exemplify this strategy, two particular instances are highlighted in this appendix, to illustrate the tactics and effectiveness with which these groups managed to establish their negative frames as the dominant framing of the concession.

The first example refers to a particular incident on which the groups opposing to the concession managed to capitalize to their advantage. As has been stated, the debate surrounding the concession – and the struggle to establish the dominant framing for it –

received the most attention in the news during the period between April 11th and April 24th. This is in part due to the events that took place on April 11th, when – during civic celebrations – protesters clashed with the police, who tried to exclude them from the square where the President and her ministers participated in the celebrations. The violence and repression of the protests received ample attention by the press, as did the President for remaining silent in the face of these events. The opposition movement capitalized on the attention received, and used every opportunity to promote their framing and agenda regarding the concession. These events marked a turning point in the coverage of the concession, and the negative framing quickly spread to other elites outside the administration, until the administration rescinded the contract on April 22nd.

The second example refers to the most ingenious tactic deployed by the organized groups opposing the concession, the ‘choripeajes’ (Diario Extra, 22/04/13; La Nación, 22/04/13). These information booths installed by members of the Foro de Occidente, the main group opposing the concession, were used to inform the public about the dangers of this concession, the harm it would entail, the high costs and tolls it would imply, and why the contract should be rescinded. In these booths, members of the Foro offered information on the concession, gave out stickers and leaflets and collected signatures to petition the government to rescind the contract. But perhaps the most relevant element was their name: *choripeaje* is the combination of two words, *peaje* (toll booth) and *chorizo* (literally, sausage, in Costa Rica, it is colloquially used to refer to corruption, dirty business by politicians). This simple tactic was strategically designed to highlight the most widely used negative frame on the concession itself – the high tolls it would entail –, and the highly culturally resonant negative frame of corruption.

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