

# **The National Contingency Plan for oil pollution in media: an analysis of Folha de São Paulo jornal**

## **O Plano Nacional de Contingência para incidentes de poluição por óleo em águas brasileiras na mídia: uma análise do jornal Folha de São Paulo**

***Juliana de Oliveira Vicentini***

*Postdoctoral at the University of Sao Paulo. Ph.D. and Master in Science (Applied Ecology - Environment and Society) by the Inter-unit Postgraduate Program in Applied Ecology at USP.  
Universidade de São Paulo, Programa de Pós-graduação Interunidades em Ecologia Aplicada, São Paulo (SP), Brasil.*

***Carolina de Albuquerque***

*Ph.D. in Science (Applied Ecology - Environment and Society) by the Inter-unit Postgraduate Program in Applied Ecology at USP.  
Universidade de São Paulo, Programa de Pós-graduação Interunidades em Ecologia Aplicada, São Paulo (SP), Brasil.*

***Mariana Secorun Inácio***

*Master in Criminal Sciences by the Graduate Program of PUCRS.  
PUC-RS, Programa de Pós-graduação em Ciências Criminais, Porto Alegre (RS), Brasil.*

<https://doi.org/10.46391/ALCEU.v21.ed45.2021.263>

ALCEU (Rio de Janeiro, online), V. 21, Nº 45, p.146-170, set./dez. 2021

## Introduction

Despite all the scientific and technological developments, the world is still extremely dependent on petroleum. This could be related to its immense versatility. It is the main source of energy and it originates many products, especially gasoline, diesel, kerosene, asphalt, industrial lubricants, synthetic rubber and plastic. In 2018, the world consumption was of 99,8 million oil barrels per day. The biggest consumers are the United States of America, China, and India – Brazil occupies the seventh ranking position (AGENCIA NACIONAL DE PETROLEO, 2019).

Since it is a global demand, oil transportation circulates the entire planet. In 2019, Brazil suffered an oil spillage on its coastal region whose responsibility has not been discovered until today. The event gained national and international repercussions. Due to the amount of oil on the beaches and the extension of the contaminated areas, the event became an environmental crisis in the country. Therefore, the (un)existence of public policies capable of mitigating situations as those – for instance, the National Contingency Plan (NCP) – was brought to public debate. And the media became one of the main information sources for the public in general.

The acquisition of socio-environmental information is mediated (HANSEN; COX, 2015). Such mediation occurs through schools, universities, governmental institutions, and others, however, it happens especially throughout what is disseminated by mass media (HANSEN, 2015). It has a relevant part in people's formation and shapes their debate concerning environmental subjects. Also, it influences the directions and results of those debates (HUTCHINS; LESTER, 2006). This happens through symbols, images and or narratives that influence people's imagination about nature (BAZAGO et al., 2020). The environmental disasters are part of this agenda and media becomes its main social actor to communicate and mobilize people about them (HOUSTON et al., 2015).

In Brazil, a few groups control the media: Globo, Record, Band, SBT, Abril, Folha, Estado, and Rede TV! (PASTI, 2013). The Folha de São Paulo newspaper journal is owned by the Folha Group. The printed newspaper has one of the largest daily circulations in the country and it holds the biggest number of followers in social media – in the journalistic category (AGÊNCIA NACIONAL DE JORNAIS, 2018).

A lot of daily events gain repercussions in society and are transformed into the media agenda. One of these events, as mentioned before, was the oil spillage in the Brazilian shore in august 2019, which

brought up debates regarding NCP. This fact raised a great deal of debate about the National Contingency Plan (NCP) elaborated to deal with oil spillage incidents in Brazilian waters. The National Contingency Plan (NCP) was the subject of some publications. The environmental impacts of the oil spillage in Brazil in 2019 have also been scientifically approached (SOARES et al, 2020). However, articles concerning the mass media coverage of NCP applied to the Brazilian waters' contamination due to oil spillage are practically non-existing. The present article intends to contribute to reducing this gap and, also, stir up the attention of many segments of society to this important issue.

The starting question is: in which manner was the National Contingency Plan approached by the Folha de São Paulo? Through a content analysis (BARDIN, 2011), the main objective is to critically discuss the news articles published by the printed newspaper journal regarding NCP applied to the oil spillage in Brazilian waters, between August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2019, and January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020, so there can be identified the communication mechanisms employed.

## **Media and Environment**

Mass media detains an important role in how people obtain knowledge about the world. It “is possibly the center, forum of which we as an audience or public, make sense of our environment, society and politics<sup>1</sup>” (HANSEN, 2015, p. 28).

The visibility of mass media is determinant in transforming environmental issues into political concerns (HANNIGAN, 2006). That is because a considerable part of debates occur from what is on its agenda, since “people tend to include or exclude from their knowledge what media includes or excludes from its own content<sup>2</sup>” (WOLF, 2006, p. 143).

Due to the symbolic power of mass media (VAN DJIK, 2008), that is a “power to do things with words” (BOURDIEU, 1989, p. 167), they have the strength to mobilize many different sectors in society. The element of mass media is language, which determines the way social reality is represented and understood. The strength of this symbolic construction depends on the enunciator's credibility, which in mass media, are hegemonic agents. The content's producers, such as journalists, can define what will become a topic, therefore, what will integrate the public debate, influencing the (il)legitimation of the

---

<sup>1</sup> “são possivelmente o centro, fórum através do qual nós, como audiências ou públicos, fazemos sentido do nosso ambiente, sociedade e política”.

<sup>2</sup> “as pessoas tendem a incluir ou excluir dos próprios conhecimentos o que a mídia inclui ou exclui do próprio conteúdo”

information. So, to analyze the massive enunciators contents regarding the environment – an essential subject to maintaining life – is a way of providing a service to the collectivity, in a sense to help it critically understand the world and to offer mechanisms to transform it, towards an egalitarian society provided with more knowledge.

The environmental agenda is complex and extensive. It is formed by environmental education, preservation, sustainability, biodiversity, health and wellness, land and aquatic environments, agriculture, hydric resources, responsible consuming, ecological cities and climate change (WENDLING, et al., 2020), for instance. Environmental disasters also are a part of the agenda and commonly are the object of media coverage. This may fluctuate “between spectacularization and civic vigilance” (BUENO, 2017, p. 27), being the first dedicated to sensationalism to draw the audience and the second debate the event in an educational manner, in the sense to engage in the promotion of the service to the community.

The environmental disasters may convert to enormous crises to the nations, and its mitigation may occur through mobilizing public and private institutions, those impacted by the event, volunteers and also the press (SPENSE et al., 2007; HOUSTON, et al., 2015). The conversion of these episodes in subjects may mobilize actions aiming to minimize the disaster, and for that reason, media is considered one of the main tools in reach for society to create environmental perceptions about the risks from the point in question (MILES; MORSE, 2007).

Many environmental disasters – derived from natural causes or due to anthropogenic negligence – have been transformed in media topics and objects of researches about media an environment. Amongst many, it can be highlighted the deforestation coverage (LADLE et al., 2010) and forest fires in Amazônia (SILVA et al., 2019), the hydric crisis in São Paulo, the dams’ ruptures in Mariana (FONTES; LOPES, 2017) and Brumadinho (SILVA et al., 2020), hurricanes (KEMPTON, 2019) and earthquakes (LAMBERT, 2020). The oil spillage in the Brazilian shore was also the object of news on the press and it is the object of analyzes for the present study.

### **The oil spillage in the Brazilian coast**

The historic, geographic, social, and economic transformation process of the Brazilian territory began on the coastal areas (IBGE, 2011). Part of the Brazilian demographic concentration is located in the

coastal zone, which nowadays holds 26,6% of the country's population, distributed in 280 cities, around 17 states (IBGE, 2018).

Many activities are developed in the Brazilian coastal area. Most of its population deals in tourism, fishing, and oil and gas production. Furthermore, the region is a frequent part of the route of many ships, just like the ones responsible for the transportation of oil (petroleum).

Brazil was the scenario of the largest oil spillage of its history in coastal waters. The first records of the disaster date from August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2019. This event reached more than three thousand and six hundred square kilometers throughout the Northeast region (Paraíba, Bahia, Ceará, Maranhão, Pernambuco, Piauí, Rio Grande do Norte, and Sergipe) and the Southeast region (Espírito Santo e Rio de Janeiro) (SOARES, et al., 2020), adding to 1.009 locations reached, through 130 cities (IBAMA, 2020), and corresponding to a quarter of the Brazilian coast (SOARES, et al., 2020). Around five thousand tones of oil were removed from those areas (NEXO, 2019).

In an attempt to unveil the social-environmental disaster, the Brazilian navy initiated an investigation process and notified ten countries whose oil ships were sailing close to the Brazilian coast, so they could explain their activities. Because of that, some culpability hypotheses were ventilated, such as those related to ships from Venezuela, Greece, and Africa; a tanker's shipwreck; a failure on the oil transfer between ships (*ship-to-ship*); criminal spillage. In August 2020, it became one year since the disaster and the investigation led by the Navy hasn't identified those accountable for it.

Disasters of this magnitude generate different types of damages. From the environmental perspective, there is the contamination of reefs, mangroves, water, and living beings. From an economical point of view, the contamination of the fishes prevents them from being utilized for commerce; the beaches pollution impacts the tourist market. Socially, there are psychological implications, health endangerment, and a fall in the quality of life.

The oil contamination extends to the human population. The frequent ocean bathers of the area, the locals, and the volunteers involved in cleaning and containing the advance of the oil do not always own the appropriate protection equipment and commonly have direct contact with the substance, which causes the inhaling of oil vapors and skin burns.

Furthermore, the mentioned impacts don't restrict themselves to the beaches, but also to the rivers that flow into the affected areas. The São Francisco river mouth, located in the border between Alagoas and Sergipe states, was affected by the oil's stains. To avoid that the oil reached the river, contention actions were determined by the Judiciary system due to the risk of compromising the supply of water to the cities along the Brazilian coast (MINISTÉRIO PÚBLICO FEDERAL, 2019).

Due to the gravity of the situation, some local actions were put in place. The Tamar Project and the Rio Grande do Norte Institute for Sustainable Development and Environment – IDEMA launched an educational material warning to preventive practices and for procedures in case of human or animal contact with the oil stains. The civil society, nonprofit organizations – ONG's and government agencies (for example the National Oil Agency and the Chico Mendes Institute for Biodiversity Conservation) promoted actions to clean the affected areas and to restrict the advance of the oil to the sea and beaches. Activists from Greenpeace organized a protest in front of the Planalto Palace in Brasília, pretending to spill oil in the country's official president's place, which led them to be arrested for an environmental crime. To clarify the situation, the Federal Prosecutor's Office filed the 23/2019 public civil lawsuit, to compel the Federal government to immediately start the National Contingency Plan.

### **Brazil's National Contingency Plan**

Oil spillage in Brazilian waters is not a recent phenomenon. The first incident of this nature happened in 1974, due to the crash of the Takimya Maru oil tanker on a rock in the São Sebastião/SP Canal, causing the leakage of six thousand tones (POFFO et al., 2001). In 1978, the Brazilian Marina ship also was responsible for an accidental oil spillage, which initiated some prevention and controls governmental measures (POFFO, et al., 2001). In 2000, the rupture of a duct from Petrobrás connecting the Duque de Caxias refinery to the Ilha d'Água terminal, in the Rio de Janeiro state, caused a spillage of more than one million liters of oil, forcing the government to rethink the answering plan to these type of accidents.

Due to the risk of new accidents, based on the 9.966/2000 national law, three plans for dealing with oil spillage were founded. They would be operated in a complementary manner: (1) Individual Emergency Plan (PEI) (to be approved with the environmental licensing of the enterprise); (2) Field Plan (the consolidation of several Individual Emergency Plans in a certain geographical area approved by the

licensing agency, including the integration of others plans defined for a determined region); (3) National Contingency Plan – the focus theme of this analysis.

According to the second article of the 9.966/2000 national law, the National Contingency Plan – NCP is the sum of procedures and actions that aims to integrate a diversity of sectorial emergency plans, and also to set the complementary human resources, materials, and equipment for the prevention, control and counteract the water pollution. It is directed to situations involving larger proportions when the individual actions are not enough to resolve the situation.

The involved agencies in NCP are (a) National Authority (the Environment Ministry coordinates its activities); (b) the Executive Committee (responsible for appointing the guidelines); (c) The Monitoring and Evaluation Group (which determines if the incident is of national relevance, therefore allowing the operational coordinator to activate the NCP); (d) the Operational Coordinator (who monitors the accident and activates the National Contingency Plan); (e) the Support Committee (that assists the other organs when necessary) (MINISTÉRIO DE MINAS E ENERGIA, 2012).

The committees are formed with public participation, therefore, the scope of action goes beyond the government itself. Besides, all parties involved are in a structured organization that depends, initially, from the Plan being activated by the National Authority.

The expenses are supported by a specific budgetary allocation and are divided into implementation, maintenance, and monitoring events and also response actions in case of incidents. The last one will be supported by the polluter responsible (MINISTÉRIO DE MINAS E ENERGIA, 2012).

The initial implementation of the government strategies focused on implementing internal programs of training and qualification, and also forwarding to the National Environment Council – CONAMA a proposition with objective criteria and a matrix to support the decision making process for utilizing methods and techniques to avoid oil pollution (MINISTÉRIO DE MINAS E ENERGIA, 2012).

From 2000 until 2012, the Plan was activated in Paraná state (2000) because of a million oil litters spillage in the Bariri e Iguçu river, from a duct connecting the Araucária refinery. However, in the spillage that occurred in Campos dos Frades (2011), of Chevron's responsibility, while importing 380 thousand litters of oil that were spilled in too deep waters in ten days, with no human casualties and no damage to

the Brazilian coast or the “sensible areas”, the Plan was not activated (MINISTÉRIO DE MINAS E ENERGIA, 2012). The accident in Campos dos Frades altered the procedures that must take place in case the NCP is not activated in these situations, impacting the second accident that happened in the same place (MINISTÉRIO DE MINAS E ENERGIA, 2012).

The specific regulation of a National Contingency Plan occurred with the 8.127/2013 federal decree, which fixed responsibilities, determined an organizational structure, and established guidelines, procedures and actions, with the primary objective to allow a coordinated action amongst governmental agencies and public and private entities, therefore increasing the response capacity in case of incidents involving oil pollution that could affect waters under the national jurisdiction and minimize environmental damages and avoid public health financial impact.

Once verified at risk of oil spillage in the Brazilian coast, the Monitoring and Evaluation Group must immediately communicate all potentially affected states, through their Environment government agencies. Also, they must communicate with the Ministry of Health representative in the Support Committee. From this point on, all necessary measures to protect human health are put in place, regardless of the incident is of national significance. The National Authority can request the participation of other federal agencies and entities, state and municipal agencies, as well as private entities.

## **Methodology**

The analysis goes through the news published in the Folha de São Paulo between August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2019 until January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020. This temporal cut contemplates five months of publications monitoring, and the first day refers to the date of the oil spillage on the Brazilian coast. The published news during that period was selected and investigated through content analysis (BARDIN, 2011).

Content analysis has been one of the main methodological resources used to analyze media coverage in Brazil and the world in subjects related to the environment (BAUM, 2012). Through this tool, it is possible to identify themes, senses, emphasis, silencing, news source, message profile, and its enunciator, effects on audience/readers, and other elements that integrate (or not) what is conveyed through the selected media (NEUENDORF, 2017).

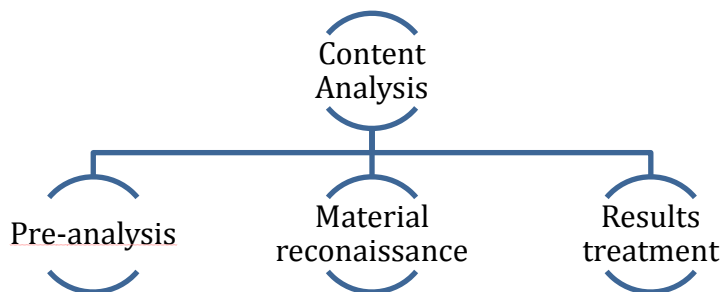


Content is what essentially is considered text (news articles, advertisement, websites, letters, field journals, articles, thesis, amongst others), or also what can be textually materialized (music, interviews, lectures, commercials, etc.).

Content analysis can be led in many different forms, i.e., according to the selected theoretical framework. In the present article, it is based on Bardin directives (2011, p. 44), which the main objective is “to obtain by systematical procedures and objectives of the content description of the indicative messages [...] that allow deducing knowledge relating the production/reception conditions [...] of these messages<sup>3</sup>”.

It is a research tool utilized to investigate any content through numeric indicators or not, with the main purpose of describing it beyond a common reading, supplying complementary information about them.

Content analysis comprehends three stages: (1) pre-analysis; (2) material reconnaissance; (3) results treatment (BARDIN, 2011) (Illustration 1).



**Illustration 1** – Stages of content analysis.

**Source:** the authors from Bardin (2011).

1 – Pre-analysis: it is the first step to start the analysis content. It contemplates the investigation structuring, selection of what will be analyzed, the execution of a fluctuating reading of the text body (first contact to familiarize the researcher with the material), choosing of the analysis indicators, and

<sup>3</sup> “obter por procedimentos sistemáticos e objetivos de descrição do conteúdo das mensagens indicadores [...] que permitam a inferência de conhecimentos relativos às condições de produção/recepção [...] destas mensagens”.

preparation of the analysis. In this stage, news about NCP and the oil spillage in the Brazilian coast were selected according to these criteria: (1) temporal cut (five months of monitoring – from August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2019 until January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020); (2) content category (exclusive news articles – other materials, such as opinion articles, letters section and advertisement were not considered); (3) the presence of predetermined keywords (National Contingency Plan; plan of action, plan of containment) in the news articles headlines, which were related to the study theme.

2 – Material reconnaissance: is the second stage of content analysis and it is the analysis itself. It involves the selection of an (a) record unity and (b) context. The (a) record unit is the one submitted to categorization and frequency counting. In the present study, the selected record unity is the whole word, which means, the word that “carries the meaning<sup>4</sup>” (BARDIN, 2011, p. 82) on its own, for instance, adjectives, nouns and figures of speech, and the news sources (individuals or organizations/institutes). The (b) context unity has the objective of identifying the meaning sequences of the record unity, “it can be, for instance, a sentence to the word and the paragraph for the theme<sup>5</sup> (BARDIN, 2011, p. 82). The record unites are analyzed within the context unit, since one whole word in its isolated form limits the comprehension of its meaning. In this stage, the counting rule for record unity is also established. In this article, it is the frequency of whole words, therefore the gathering of how many times the whole word appears on the text body. This quantitative procedure was achieved by the utilization of Lexico 3 software – a text metric program analysis. Finally, in this stage, the data decomposition occurs, which means the classification of the record unities. In the present study, they were classified by a semantic criterion, in which the whole words that present the same subjects are grouped in the same theme category.

3 – Results treatment: it is the third and last stage of analysis content. It involves handling the data to make it significant (BARDIN, 2011). In the present study, they are presented through tables, charts, and graphics. From this point, it is possible to interpret the data and reach the general objective of the research.

---

<sup>4</sup> “portadora de sentido”

<sup>5</sup> “esta pode, por exemplo, ser a frase para a palavra e o parágrafo para o tema”

## Results and discussion

The temporal cut for the present analysis comprehends five months of monitoring the news articles in the printed newspaper *Folha de São Paulo*: from August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2019 until January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020. In the selected period, the content chosen were the news articles. Therefore, opinion articles of the journal columnists, advertisements, or other types of materials do not compose the sample. The selection criterion for the body text was the presence of the keyword “National Contingency Plan”; “plan of action”, “plan of containment”, either in the headline or in the news article itself. After applying this selection criterion, there were identified 27 results. From this universe, 20 contents were related to this research theme: oil spillage on the Brazilian coast.

According to the data collection, the National Contingency Plan for Pollution Incidents caused by Oil became the agenda in *Folha de São Paulo* since October 11<sup>th</sup> in that year, which means fifty days after the social-environmental disaster. The topic was on the pages of the printed journal until December 24<sup>th</sup>, 2019. From this date until January 30<sup>th</sup> of the current year, the subject was no longer approached by the newspaper.

After the collection of the news articles for the composition of the body text, the fluctuating reading (BARDIN, 2011) was put in place on the 20 publications. It was observed that even though 20 news articles cited the NCP – which is a plan of action -, only three of them had it's mentioning on the headline (Chart 1): “Bolsonaro’s government extinguished plan of action in oil incidents committee”, published in 11/10/2019; “Federal prosecution office turns to Federal Court (TRF-5) and claims that the federal government has not activated the oil containment plan”, published in 28/10/2019; “Justice system determines that the federal government join the northeast states in the plan to contain oil”, published in 30/10/2019 (Chart 1). This indicator shows that the NCP was not the protagonist on the other 17 publications, being cited only in dialogue with other topics involving the oil spillage. *Folha de São Paulo* only published three news articles dedicated exclusively to it. Therefore, the content analysis in this study will be primarily on the three mentioned news articles.

**Chart 1** – News articles published about NCP – IPO in Folha de São Paulo composing the analysis.

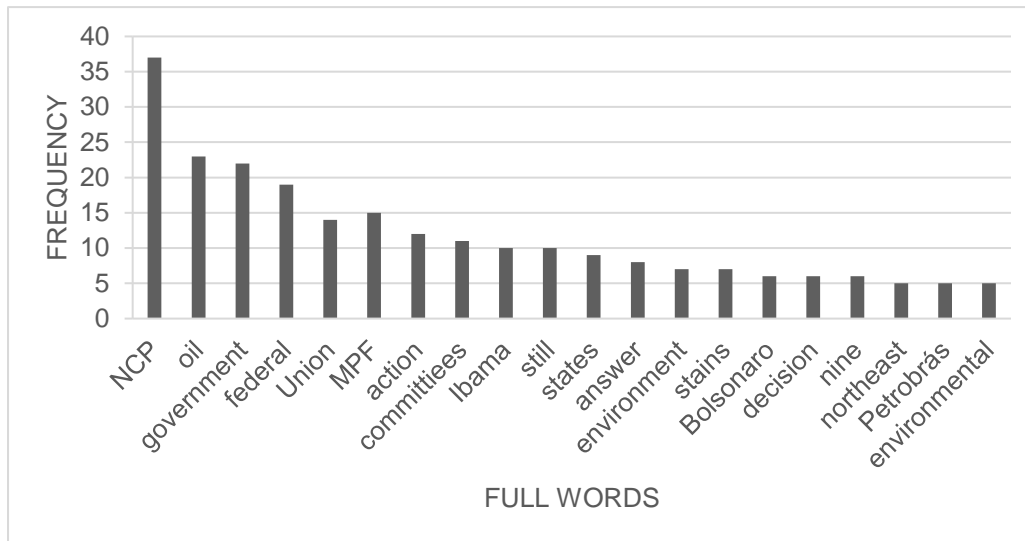
DATE	HEADLINE	SECTION
19/10/2019	Bolsonaro’s government extinguished plan of action in oil incidents committee	Environment
28/10/2019	Federal prosecution office turns to Federal Court (TRF-5) and claims that the federal government has not activated the oil containment plan	Environment
31/10/2019	Justice system determines that the federal government join the northeast states in a plan to contain oil	Environment

**Source:** the authors

The Folha de São Paulo journal is organized in theme sections, which means sections aiming to debate specific topics. Amongst the daily sections, the most highlighted are the Power section (about politics), Science section (that contemplates researches), World section (regarding international events), Daily section (that covers daily facts), Sports section (sports journalism), Market section (involving economical topics) and “Illustrated” section (that presents the cultural agenda). All news articles selected were published in the Environment section, dedicated to approaching topics related to the environment.

After the selection of the three news articles, it was carried out the frequency counting of the record unity (whole words) that were more prominent in the body text. To reach the indicator, all news articles were transcribed into a text file format. From this point on, they were put in the Lexico 3 software, which encoded the data. From the exclusion of prepositions and conjunctions, these are the 20 whole words with the largest frequency in the selected news articles (Graphic 1).

**Graphic 1** – Collection of the 20 most frequent words in the selected news articles



**Source:** the authors from the body text.

The most frequent whole word (37 occurrences) is “National Contingency Plan”, which appeared as the entire expression or through its respective abbreviation “NCP”. The second word that was most seen was “oil” (23 times). The top of the list formed by both words shows that the NCP related to oil incidents was the central theme of the three selected news articles, reaching the theme goal of the analysis.

Following it up, there are the words “government” (22), “federal” (19), and “federal union” (14). Although it shows a variation, it can be assumed that in reality, these three words are referring to the highest authority in the country involved/responsible for resolving the oil incident. The Federal Prosecutor’s Office – MPF (15) was mentioned as a news source and, also, as an agent responsible for filing public civil lawsuits. The word “lawsuit” (12) refers to the diligences placed in action by Federal Prosecution and the Federal Justice System to carry on measures for the oil crises. The word “committee” (11) shows as a reference to the committees that used to participate in the NCP’s and were extinguished by the federal government. The abbreviation “IBAMA” (10) was used about the government agency responsible for coordinating the investigation and the oil containment and, also, as a source of information.

The temporal adverb “yet” (10) was used to demonstrate the government's slowness in solving the oil spillage crises. “States” (9) was mentioned as a reference to the nine geographical regions affected by the oil. The word “response” (8) appeared when it was addressed the need for some government action to

the event. “Environment” (7) was cited referring to the Environment Ministry or the minister himself – the government agency directly involved in the situation. “Stains” (7) was the word used to mention the traces left by the oil on the waters and the beaches. “Bolsonaro” (6) is the last name of the current country president and was cited as the responsible person for extinguishing the committees related to the NCP’s. “Decisions” (6) relates to the measures taken by different agencies to compel public actions for solving the oil spillage. The word “nine” (6) and “Northeast” (6) were utilized to quantify the number and region of the States affected by the oil. “Petrobrás” (5) was the company mentioned as one of the collaborators in mitigating the oil spillage. The word “environmental” referred to the environmental spillage, which was classified as an “environmental disaster” and also connected to institutions related to the environment.

The whole words that integrate the analyzed news articles were used in articles with an exposing point of view, in the sense to inform the government omission in front of the environmental disaster such as shown:

“On lawsuit, Federal Prosecution talks about government omission in front of the largest environmental disaster of the Brazilian coast<sup>6</sup>”.

“According to the Federal Prosecution, the federal Union is not taking the appropriate measures to answer the emergency<sup>7</sup>”.

“[...] government slowness and disorganization to resolve the oil stains<sup>8</sup>”.

“Federal Union has not activated the Oil Containment Plan<sup>9</sup>”.

In the analyzed news articles, the government presents itself as incapable of investigating and addressing the oil spillage crises, and unable to inform the population about the severity of the situation itself and its containment actions. The main media source for presenting these subjects is the Executive Federal government agencies – as it will be latter approached. Therefore, the government inertia appears not only as an agent unable to solve emergencies as this but also as an informative agent of society, through its difficulty in dialogue with the media.

---

<sup>6</sup> “Em ação, Procuradoria fala em omissão do governo frente ao maior desastre ambiental no litoral brasileiro”.

<sup>7</sup> “Segundo a Procuradoria, a União não está adotando as medidas adequadas para responder à emergência”.

<sup>8</sup> “[...] demora e a desorganização do governo no combate às manchas de óleo”.

<sup>9</sup> “União ainda não acionou Plano de Contenção de óleo”.

Another important aspect of the analyzed news is the delay in the decision-making process and the formation of protocols able to protect the population's health. Initially, the spillage was not divulged as an important public health risk by the government and, consequently, by the media. That impacted not only bathers, fishermen, residents, and volunteers for cleaning the beaches, but also it was not informed to those consuming supplies from the contaminated areas. Once people had no information to act consciously, it was shown by the mass media many people cleaning the beaches without the necessary equipment, considering the stains were formed by toxic substances.

The article news that composes the body text also pointed this governmental inertia, a fact that led the Federal Prosecutor's Office to file a civil investigation and a public civil lawsuit, claiming at that moment that there had been "more than 40 (forty) days of significant environmental damages, without the identification of its source, and without any idea of the scope of the spillage<sup>10</sup>". The civil investigation intended to pursue many complaints related to the oil spillage, and the IBAMA and the state of Sergipe environmental protection agency were notified to provide information.

After that, the Environment Ministry – MMA was notified to take urgent measures for cleaning the beaches and environmental damages containment. The ministry provided no information and, also, asked for an extension. The meeting occurred with IBAMA and Petrobrás that decided not to act or to provide Strategic Plans for Protection of Vulnerable Areas (SPPVAs), which led to the public civil lawsuit that requested a daily fine of R\$ 1.000.000,00 (one million reais) so the Federal Unity would: adopt all necessary measures for containment, retrieval and proper destination of the oil from the environmental accident; from that moment start implementing the strategic plans for protection of vulnerable areas; implement protection barriers and monitoring rivers; determine IBAMA to monitor and supervise thoroughly all measures put in place; increase the fauna protection and continuous monitoring of the continental maritime platform in risk; provide financial resources; activate NCP.

Due to the concerning scenario of national and international repercussions and the pressure from the civil society and the legal system, forty-one days after the disaster, the Ministry of Environment activated the NCP.

---

<sup>10</sup> "mais de 40 (quarenta) dias de significativos danos ambientais, sem identificação da fonte de origem, sem a mínima ideia da extensão do vazamento".

Important precautions must be taken when elaborating on a plan towards the impacts of contamination by oil through monitoring measures and the environmental response, so the ecological, economical, and social effects of the spillage can be minimized. For that it is necessary to outline the degree and effects of the environmental contamination and the environmental toxicity of the oil; the biodegradation and the microbial reaction to the spillage; and to monitor the impact on marine resources and the coastal biota, as well on the traditional local communities, with the scope for recuperation. So, it is necessary the national and international cooperation, aiming to protect the ecosystems.

The government disclosed only a few facts, which automatically controlled the information provided to Brazilian media. That led to the sparse amount of news articles published by Folha, as accounted. This can result in misinformation, becoming one of the main ingredients to form a chaotic scene in the handling of environmental public politics.

In the analyzed body text, there were identified the sources utilized by Folha de São Paulo to approach the subject in question. The sources “are people, organizations, social groups or references; involved directly or indirectly to facts and events from whom the journalists obtain information, explicitly or confidentially to transmit to the public, through media<sup>11</sup>” (SCHMITZ, 2011, p. 9).

There were identified 16 news sources (Table 1), which can be divided into two categories: (1) official and (2) specialist.

Table 1 – News sources mentioned by Folha de São Paulo

NEWS SOURCE	OCCURRENCE
MPF	14
IBAMA	6
TRF	4
Attorney	4
President	4
MMA	4
federal judge	3
Federal government	3

<sup>11</sup> “são pessoas, organizações, grupos sociais ou referências; envolvidas direta ou indiretamente a fatos e eventos de quem os jornalistas obtêm informações de modo explícito ou confidencial para transmitir ao público, por meio de uma mídia”.



NEWS SOURCE	OCCURRENCE
Folha	3
Specialist	3
ONGs	1
WWF	1
Environmentalist	1
Governor	1
Petrobrás	1
Marinha	1

Source: the authors based on the body text.

(1) Official: are the sources that hold “public position or job and manifest through agencies sustained by the government and uphold the constituted authorities (executive, legislative and judiciary), as well as jointed organizations (commercial boards, registries, public companies, etc.)<sup>12</sup>” (SCHMITZ, 2011, p. 25)”. The printed newspaper had the Federal Prosecutor’s Office – MPF (14), IBAMA (6), the Federal Court (4), Attorney General (4), president (4), Ministry of Environment – MMA (4), a federal judge (3), the federal government (3), governor (1), Petrobras (1) and Navy (1) as official sources. They were all linked to people related to the government or agencies of government responsibility. This category had 45 mentions.

(2) Specialists: are those who “provide dissenting points of view with great authority”<sup>13</sup> (HERMAN; CHOMSKY, 2003, p. 82), which means that have credibility due to their occupation or profession. In the present study, they are: “Folha” (three occurrences) from the journalistic segment, that utilizes itself as a source of news and to auto-promote, “specialist” (three mentions) utilized in a generic form to refer to environmental and oil experts; “ONGs” (one mention), “WWF” (one citation) and “environmentalist” (once) that can be placed in a category of nongovernmental organizations and its representative, whose agenda is the environment. Overall, the specialist category was mentioned 9 times.

<sup>12</sup> “função ou cargo público que se pronuncia por órgãos mantidos pelo Estado e preservam os poderes constituídos (executivo, legislativo e judiciário), bem como organizações agregadas (juntas comerciais, cartórios, companhias públicas etc.)”.

<sup>13</sup> “fornecem visões dissidentes com grande autoridade”.

Although media has a preference for the official sources – due to their credibility (HERMAN; CHOMSKY, 2003), in the present case, the predominance of these sources indicates something worrying for the Brazilian democracy: the government detaining and controlling the information about the oil spillage. There are records on the analyzed news articles that the government agencies were prohibited to comment.

“Ibama is not authorized to give interviews and to pass information to the press<sup>14</sup>”,

“it is possible to notice that many measures are been taking in an isolated form and without the necessary coordination and sharing of information<sup>15</sup>”.

The difficulty in accessing information affects the necessary clarified knowledge for the exercise of democracy on a grand scale (DAHL, 2001) and to form public opinion. This comes from the fact that the conditions that allow an opinion relatively autonomous depends on the existence of an education system (and not of indoctrination) and a global structure of influence centers and global and diverse information (SARTORI, 1994), which in this case does not seem to exist since the lack of specific news (three) added to the control of the data by the official sources.

By systematically creating general misinformation, the problem of the information quality becomes an issue, that should be corrected by a more competitive system with multiple informers, however in this case it was all centered in the government. Nevertheless, maximizing does not mean necessarily optimizing, but democracy stands, first and foremost, on relative equality, impartially or correction of the information transmitted to the public, through the ethics of respect for the truth (SARTORI, 1994).

### **Final considerations**

Due to its commercial importance, oil transportation is a reality in the world. The Brazilian shore is one of the product routes and was impacted by an oil spillage of unknown authorship. The environmental disaster was the object of international and national media. The repercussion came from the extension of the accident and because the National Contingency Plan (PNC) wasn't activated immediately, which led the Federal Prosecutor's Office to file a public civil lawsuit. The population was informed about the accident

---

<sup>14</sup> “o Ibama está desautorizado de dar entrevista e repassar informações à imprensa”.

<sup>15</sup> “possível perceber que diversas providências estão sendo adotadas isoladamente sem a necessária coordenação e compartilhamento de informações”.

and the governmental actions through mass media. The coverage influenced the debates and people's imagination about nature and preservation, and it also mobilized social actions transforming the environmental issue into a political concern.

The content analyzes of massive enunciators, that detain the power to create new meanings to reality, or to generate the maintenance of old ones, is indispensable for its critical comprehension because it aims to denounce the spectacularization and value civic vigilance. The article here presented aimed to critically discuss the content of a printed newspaper concerning the PNC regarding the oil spillage in Brazil, that occurred in 2019.

The content analyzes of the news from Folha de São Paulo, in the predetermined timeframe, allows us to conclude that the subject was transformed into an agenda, having a posterior silence on the matter afterward. The debate regarding PNC, public policy able to provide a solution to the environmental disaster, wasn't immediately activated, therefore, wasn't on the agenda of the newspaper publication during the occurring of the oil spillage. In the opportunities that the PNC was cited in the headlines, it was lexically the protagonist of the news, being followed that demonstrate the State authority describing its responsibility towards PNC and its inaction. The Prosecutor's Office was the main source of news and the propeller of public civil lawsuits, despite also being an official organ.

The subjects that compose the body text indicate, successively, the investigation activities, the oil contention and the government slowness in the crisis solution at hand. This gives a certain amount of accusation imprint in the news, in a sense of informing the government's omission in front of the environmental disaster. The States, in the news, even as an official source and main news source shows itself inert or laconic as an informative agent of society. For instance, the government forbade announcements from governmental agencies, such as IBAMA, and did not take immediate responsibility with the decision making and protocol formation to protect the population's wellness, where PNC was only activated forty-one days after the disaster.

If media temporally allocates the news, the State allocates the contents available for the media inside this space of interest, with no further information and conclusions about the subject, in a short time, becoming available, producing misinformation. Furthermore, despite media preferring official sources, in this case, scientific sources were also consulted, due to the government's choice to limit information

<https://doi.org/10.46391/ALCEU.v21.ed45.2021.263>

ALCEU (Rio de Janeiro, online), V. 21, Nº 45, p.146-170, set./dez. 2021

access, what impacts the necessary enlightened understanding of the exercise of democracy and the formation of public opinion.

In conclusion, the symbolic power of mass media mobilizes the environmental agenda, including what concerns ecological disasters, and in the specific case of Folha de São Paulo, the analyzed coverage about the oil spillage comes close to civic vigilance, in the sense of trying to offer a public service and inform the difficulties created by the official source to obtain access to information, even though there is little news on the subject. The scarcity of contents can be related to the government silencing, in a sense of offering very little dialogue with society about the oil disaster or the topic being forgotten after an initial interest and involvement of media through debate. Therefore, the news analyzed in the selected media, about the oil spillage, indicate that the State does not want to or is incapable of investigating, resolving and informing about the crisis at hand, and in this last item also because it is the main media source – official source, once it detains and controls the speech, and the government omission becomes the main misinformation source on the printed newspaper.

**Juliana de Oliveira Vicentini**

ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-9031-6679>

*Universidade de São Paulo, Programa de Pós-graduação Interunidades em Ecologia Aplicada, São Paulo (SP), Brasil.*

*PhD in Science (Applied Ecology – Environment and Society) / USP*

*E-mail: ju\_vicentini@yahoo.com.br*

**Carolina de Albuquerque**

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8383-4972>

*Universidade de São Paulo, Programa de Pós-graduação Interunidades em Ecologia Aplicada, São Paulo (SP), Brasil.*

*PhD in Science (Applied Ecology – Environment and Society) / USP*

*E-mail: carolinadealbuquerque@yahoo.com.br*

**Mariana Secorun Inácio**

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8383-4972>

*PUC-RS, Programa de Pós-graduação em Ciências Criminais, Porto Alegre (RS), Brasil.*

*Master in Criminal Sciences / PUCRS*

*E-mail: mariana.inacio@mackenzie.br*

<https://doi.org/10.46391/ALCEU.v21.ed45.2021.263>

ALCEU (Rio de Janeiro, online), V. 21, Nº 45, p.146-170, set./dez. 2021

Received on: June 2, 2020.

Approved on: August 22, 2020.

### References:

AGÊNCIA NACIONAL DE JORNAIS. **Mídia Nacional 2018**. Disponível em: <https://www.anj.org.br/site/menagenda/97-midia-nacional/5251-tiragem-imprensa-dos-maiores-jornais-perde-520-mil-exemplares-em-3-anos.html>. Acesso em: jan. 2020.

AGÊNCIA NACIONAL DO PETRÓLEO. **Anuário Estatístico 2019**. Disponível em: <http://www.anp.gov.br/arquivos/central-conteudos/anuario-estatistico/2019/anuario-2019-texto-secao-1.pdf>. Acesso em: jan. 2020.

BARDIN, Laurence. **Análise de Conteúdo**. São Paulo: Edições 70, 2011.

BAUM, Lauren. It's Not Easy Being Green ... Or Is It? A Content Analysis of Environmental Claims in Magazine Advertisements from the United States and the United Kingdom. **Environmental Communication**, v. 6, n. 4, p. 423–440. 2012.

BAZAGO, Francisca García; GUARDIA, Maria Luisa García; GARCIA, Javier Sendra García. Environmental discourse in natural disaster scenarios, **Economic Research-Ekonomika**, v. 33, n. 1, p. 3093-3107, 2020.

BOURDIEU, Pierre. **O poder simbólico**. Rio de Janeiro: Bertrand Brasil, 1989.

BUENO, Wilson Costa. A cobertura jornalística de catástrofes ambientais: entre a vigilância e a espetacularização da notícia. **Ciência & Sociedade**, v. 39, n. 1, p. 21-41, 2017.

DAHL, Robert. **Sobre a democracia**. Brasília: UNB, 2001.

FONTES, Roberta Neves; LOPES, Ivonete da Silva. As representações da mídia sobre o rompimento da barragem do Fundão em Mariana, Minas Gerais. **Revista Espacios**, v. 38, n. 34, p. 32-46, 2017.

HANNIGAN, John. **Environmental Sociology**. New York: Routledge, 2006.

HANSEN, Anders; COX, Robert. **The Routledge Handbook of Environment and Communication**. New York: Routledge, 2015.

HANSEN, Anders. Communication, media and the social construction of the environment. In: **The Routledge Handbook of Environment and Communication**. New York: Routledge, 2015.p. 26–38.

HERMAN Edward, CHOMSKY, Noan. **A manipulação do público: política e poder econômico no uso da mídia**. São Paulo: Futura, 2003.

HOUSTON, Brian; HAWTHORNE, Joshua; PERREAULT, Mildred; PARK, E. H., GOLDSTEIN, Marlon; HALLIWELL, Michael; GRIFFITH, Stanford. Social media and disasters: A functional framework for social media use in disaster planning, response, and research. **Disasters**, 39, n. 1, p. 1-22, 2015.

HUTCHINS, Brett; LESTER, Libby. Environmental protest and tap-dancing with the media in the information age. **Media, Culture and Society**, v. 28, n. 3, p. 433-451. 2006.

IBAMA – Instituto Brasileiro de Meio Ambiente e Recursos Naturais Renováveis. Vistoria em áreas com localidades oleadas no litoral brasileiro 2020. Disponível em: [https://www.ibama.gov.br/phocadownload/emergenciasambientais/2020/manchasdeoleo/2020-03-19\\_LOCALIDADES\\_AFETADAS.pdf](https://www.ibama.gov.br/phocadownload/emergenciasambientais/2020/manchasdeoleo/2020-03-19_LOCALIDADES_AFETADAS.pdf). Acesso em: 02 set. 2020.

IBGE – INSTITUTO BRASILEIRO DE GEOGRAFIA E ESTATÍSTICA. **Atlas geográfico das zonas costeiras e oceânicas do Brasil**. Rio de Janeiro: IBGE, 2011.

\_\_\_\_\_. **Municípios defrontes com o mar**. Rio de Janeiro: IBGE, 2018.

KEMPTON, Stefanie Davis. Racialized Reporting: Newspaper Coverage of Hurricane Harvey vs. Hurricane Maria. **Environmental Communication**, v. 14, n. 3, p. 403-415, 2020.

LADLE, Richard; MALHADO, Ana Cláudia Mendes; TODD, Peter; MALHADO, Acácia. Perceptions of Amazonian deforestation in the British and Brazilian media. **Acta Amazônica**, v. 40, n. 2, p. 319-324, 2010.

LAMBERT, Catherine. Earthquake Country: A Qualitative Analysis of Risk Communication via Facebook. **Environmental Communication**, v. 14, n. 6, p. 744-757, 2020.

MARTIRANI, Laura Alves; PERES, Isabela Kojin. Crise hídrica em São Paulo: cobertura jornalística, percepção pública e o direito à informação. **Ambiente e Sociedade**, v. 19, n. 1, p. 1-20, 2016.

MILES, Brian.; MORSE, Stephanie. The role of news media in natural disaster risk and recovery. **Ecological Economics**, v.63, n. 2, p. 365-373, 2007.

MINISTÉRIO DE MINAS E ENERGIA. **Plano Nacional de Contingência**. Disponível em: <https://www2.camara.leg.br/atividade-legislativa/comissoes/comissoes-permanentes/cmads/audiencias-publicas/audiencias-publicas/08-05-2012-definicao-e-criacao-de-novos-modelos-eficazes-de-prevencao/apresentacoes/marco-antonio-almeida>. Acesso em: jan. 2020.

MINISTÉRIO PÚBLICO FEDERAL. **Urgente – desastre ambiental: óleo na costa do Nordeste**. Disponível em: <http://www.mpf.mp.br/se/sala-de-imprensa/docs/Agravo%20de%20Instrumento%20-%20ACP%200805679.16.2019%20-%20PNC%20e%20Regiao%20Nordeste.pdf>. Acesso em: jan. 2020.

NEUENDORF, Kymberly. **The Content Analysis Guidebook**. Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2017.

NEXO. **O que já se sabe e o que foi descartado sobre o óleo no Nordeste.** Disponível em: <https://www.nexojournal.com.br/expresso/2019/12/19/O-que-j%C3%A1-se-sabe-e-o-que-foi-descartado-sobre-o-%C3%B3leo-no-Nordeste>. Acesso em: jan. 2020.

PASTI, André. **Notícias, informação e território:** as agências transnacionais de notícias e a circulação de informações no território brasileiro 2013. 237. Dissertação (Instituto de Geociências). UNICAMP, Campinas. 2013.

POFFO Iris; XAVIER, José Carlos de Moura.; SERPA, Ricardo Rodrigues. A História dos 27 anos de Vazamento de Óleo no Litoral Norte do Estado de São Paulo (1974-2000). **Revista Meio Ambiente Industrial**, v. 3, n. 1, p. 98-104. 2001.

SARTORI, Giovanni. **A teoria da democracia revisitada.** São Paulo: Ática, 1994.

SCHMITZ, Aldo Antonio. **Fontes de notícias:** ações e estratégias das fontes no jornalismo. Florianópolis: Combook, 2011.

SILVA, Nathália Thais Cosmo; FRA.PALEO, Urbano; FERREIRA NETO, José Ambrósio. Conflicting Discourses on Wildfire Risk and the Role of Local Media in the Amazonian and Temperate Forests. **International Journal of Disaster Risk Science**, v. 10, p. 529–543, 2019.

SILVA, Matheus Batista; ARAÚJO, Carolina Lopes; SILVA, Janaína Siqueira. Mídia e meio ambiente: a representação de atores sociais em notícias sobre as tragédias de Mariana e Brumadinho. **Investigação Qualitativa em Ciências Sociais**, v. 4, p. 377-390, 2020.

SOARES, Marcelo de Oliveira et al. Oil spill in South Atlantic (Brazil): environmental and governmental disaster. **Marine Policy**, v. 115, n. 103879, p. 1-7. 2020.

SPENCE, Patric; LACHLAN, Kenetthe; GRIFFIN, Donyale. Crisis communication, race, and natural disasters. **Journal of Black Studies**, v. 37, n.4, p. 539-562, 2007.

VALADARES, João. Procuradoria recorre ao TRF-5 e alega que união ainda não acionou plano de contenção de óleo. **Folha de São Paulo.** Ambiente. Disponível em: <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/ambiente/2019/10/procuradoria-recorre-ao-trf-5-e-alega-que-uniao-ainda-nao-acionou-plano-de-contencao-de-oleo.shtml>. Acesso em: jan. 2020.

VAN DJIK, Teun. **Discurso e poder.** São Paulo: Contexto, 2008.

WATANABE, Phillippe. Governo Bolsonaro extinguiu comitês do plano de ação de incidentes com óleo. **Folha de São Paulo.** Ambiente. Disponível em: <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/ambiente/2019/10/governo-bolsonaro-extinguiu-comites-do-plano-de-acao-de-incidentes-com-oleo.shtml>. Acesso em: jan. 2020.

WATANABE, Phillippe. Justiça determina que União integre estados do NE em plano para conter óleo. **Folha de São Paulo**. Ambiente. Disponível em: <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/ambiente/2019/10/justica-determina-que-uniao-integre-estados-do-ne-em-plano-para-conter-oleo.shtml>. Acesso em: jan. 2020.

WENDLING, Zachary; EMERSON, John; SHERBININ, Alex; ESTY, Daniel. **2020 Environmental Performance Index**. New Haven: Yale Center for Environmental Law & Policy, 2020.

WOLF, Mauro. **Teorias das comunicações de massa**. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2006.

## Abstract

Mass media have a fundamental part of understanding socio-environmental subjects. In 2019, Brazil faced a crisis due to the oil spillage in the ocean, that brought to discussion the National Contingency Plan – PNC. The event gained international projections and became part of the media agenda. The objective is to critically discuss the content of Folha de São Paulo about PNC towards the oil incident, published from 30/08/2019 until 30/01/2020. Three news articles were published on the subject at hand. This small amount may be related to the fact that the news journal depended on official sources to inform its readers. The State proved to be incapable of providing society as a whole about the subject, therefore the selected media showed difficulties in promoting broad coverage concerning the disaster, compromising the adequate development necessary for the democratic arena.

**Keywords:** National Contingency Plan. Folha de São Paulo. Content Analysis.

## Resumo

Os meios de comunicação de massa possuem papel fundamental para o entendimento das questões socioambientais. Em 2019, o Brasil passou por uma crise em virtude do derramamento de óleo no mar, fato que trouxe à tona a discussão do Plano Nacional de Contingência - PNC. O evento ganhou projeções internacionais e se tornou pauta da mídia. O objetivo é discutir criticamente o conteúdo da Folha de São Paulo sobre o PNC voltado ao incidente por óleo, publicado de 30/08/2019 a 30/01/2020. Três notícias foram publicadas a respeito do assunto. Essa pequena quantidade pode estar relacionada ao fato de que o jornal dependia das fontes oficiais para informar os seus leitores. O Estado mostrou-se incapaz de informar a sociedade como um todo sobre o tema, logo a mídia selecionada teve dificuldades de promover uma cobertura abrangente a respeito do desastre, comprometendo o desenrolar adequado da arena democrática.

**Palavras-chave:** Plano Nacional de Contingência. Folha de São Paulo. Análise de Conteúdo.

<https://doi.org/10.46391/ALCEU.v21.ed45.2021.263>



## Resumen

Los medios de comunicación juegan un papel fundamental en la comprensión de los problemas socioambientales. En 2019, Brasil atravesó una crisis debido al derrame de petróleo en el mar, un hecho que trajo a la discusión el Plano Nacional de Contigência - PNC. El evento ganó proyecciones internacionales y se convirtió en un tema destacado de los medios de comunicación. El objetivo es discutir críticamente el contenido del periódico Folha de São Paulo sobre el PNC centrado en el incidente del petróleo, publicado del 30/08/2019 al 30/01/2020. Se publicaron tres noticias sobre el tema. Esta pequeña cantidad puede estar relacionada con el hecho de que el periódico dependía de fuentes oficiales para informar a sus lectores. El Estado no pudo informar a la sociedad en su conjunto sobre el tema, por lo que los medios seleccionados tuvieron dificultades para promover una cobertura integral del desastre, comprometiendo el desarrollo adecuado de la arena democrática.

**Palabras clave:** Plano Nacional de Contigência. Folha de São Paulo. Análisis de contenido.

*Este artigo é publicado em acesso aberto (Open Access) sob a licença Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial (CC-BY-NC 4.0), que permite que outros remixem, adaptem e criem a partir do seu trabalho para fins não comerciais, e embora os novos trabalhos tenham de lhe atribuir o devido crédito e não possam ser usados para fins comerciais, os usuários não têm de licenciar esses trabalhos derivados sob os mesmos termos.*