

Disinformation Narratives in the San Matías Gulf

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Written by Fabricio Di Giacomo

Peer reviewed by Phil Newell

Edited by Sandra Ata and María Rosario Coll

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Introduction

In the north of Argentine Patagonia, the San Matías Gulf and Valdés Peninsula form one of the most biodiverse areas of the South Atlantic and the world. Its calm, clear waters are home to whales, dolphins, sea lions, migratory birds, fish, algae, mollusks, and many other forms of marine life. For this reason, the area includes four protected natural reserves and a national park, while the Valdés Peninsula has been declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This territory is inhabited by coastal communities whose way of life is based on tourism, artisanal fishing, and other sea-related activities.

However, this natural and social balance is under threat: energy sector corporations, supported by the provincial and national governments, are promoting hydrocarbon projects—an oil pipeline, an oil port, and LNG ships—that aim to be established without considering the irreversible impacts they could cause, not only at a regional level but also globally by contributing to the climate crisis.

Among the main ongoing projects is Vaca Muerta Oil Sur SA, a megaproject that includes the construction of an oil port and a pipeline over 400 kilometers long to transport crude oil from the Vaca Muerta fields in Neuquén to the coast of the San Matías Gulf in Río Negro. Additionally, just a few kilometers off the coast, two liquefied natural gas (LNG) megaships are planned for export.

In order for these projects to move forward, laws were unconstitutionally amended, and attempts were made to bend popular will by excluding communities from decision-making. The media and social networks are used to spread narratives that promote extractivist projects, conceal the real risks they entail, and render invisible the struggles of communities defending their territories. It is in this context that a dominant economic narrative emerges, which links “progress, development, work, and investment” to the advance of the hydrocarbon industry.

All of this leads us to ask:

How do disinformation narratives operate that present hydrocarbon extractivism as a driver of development and progress in the San Matías Gulf region? And what interests, actors, and socio-environmental consequences are being hidden behind these stories?

Discussion

Context

The defense of the San Matías Gulf has a long history of community organization in the



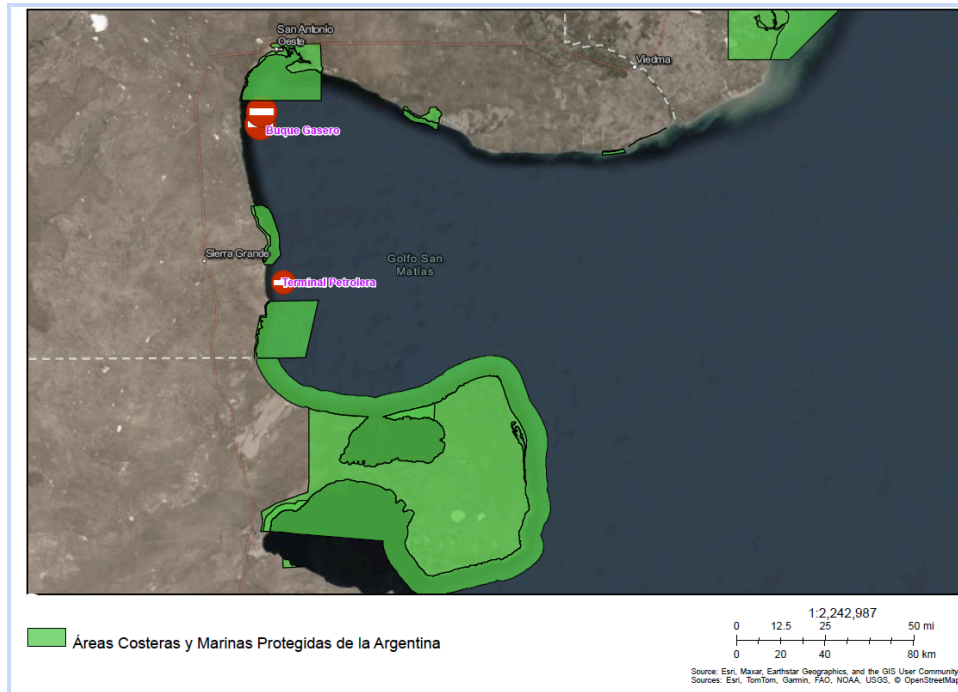
face of advancing oil interests.

In 1995, the then privatized Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales – Fiscal Oilfields (YPF) proposed constructing a pipeline and a port terminal in the gulf. The company had been created in 1922 by the national government as a symbol of energy sovereignty, was converted into a corporation in the 1990s, and currently operates as a mixed enterprise with both state and private capital participation. The oil extractivist initiative in the San Matías Gulf sparked a strong and diverse popular mobilization.

This collaboration between coastal communities, scientific, business, and tourism sectors, as well as social organizations, managed to temporarily halt the project and led to the enactment of [Law 3308](#), unanimously approved in 1999 by the Río Negro Provincial Legislature. The law guaranteed the protection of the region by prohibiting all

hydrocarbon exploration, exploitation, and prospecting activities, as well as the construction of loading and unloading terminals and pipelines in the San Matías Gulf and the Río Negro territorial waters.

For more than twenty years, this legal framework ensured the preservation of the ecosystem and allowed the sustained development of coastal communities. During all that time, the Gulf served as an example of balance between human development and environmental conservation.



This balance was broken in September 2022, when the Río Negro Legislature repealed Law 3308 at the [request of YPF](#) to allow the construction of the [Vaca Muerta Oil Sur \(VMOS\)](#) pipeline. The reform was approved without prior consultation with indigenous communities ([as established by ILO Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples](#)), in a closed session that violated the principles of the Escazú Agreement, the principle of environmental non-regression, and the principle of progressiveness established in the [General Environmental Law](#), which prohibit rolling back already acquired environmental rights.

Communities, together with socio-environmental and civil society organizations, carried out all kinds of actions in the territory –such as [meetings](#), [information sessions](#), workshops, and [marches](#) –always aimed at building community networks across the plurinational territory to develop joint strategies and strengthen regional resistance.

On the legal front, lawsuits were filed in defense of the San Matías Gulf, encountering formal responses that avoided addressing the substance of the problem. In Río Negro, the Superior Court of Justice [dismissed the request for unconstitutionality](#) of the amendment to Law 3308 due to “lack of legitimacy” and for not having “an interest that shows a personal and direct harm or prejudice.” In the neighboring province of Chubut, similar claims were also rejected. These rulings, based on procedural technicalities, reveal a

persistent trend: a judiciary that remains distant from social and environmental claims, while the extractive model consolidates its advance in the region.

The power of extractive projects

The Vaca Muerta Oil Sur project represents the most significant expression of this advance, which involves the construction of a pipeline over 400 km long from Añelo (Neuquén) to Punta Colorada (Río Negro), where a petroleum port with single-point mooring buoys and storage tanks is also planned. Additionally, another polluting project was added, [this time involving LNG](#), which includes the installation of two liquefied natural gas (LNG) vessels for export.

The magnitude of the project sheds light on the political and economic pressures that led to the law being rescinded. In 2024, YPF announced the start of the first construction phase with the support of the provincial and national government. Shortly afterwards, the Vaca Muerta Oil Sur (VMOS) consortium was formed, consisting of the main oil companies operating in the country: YPF, Pan American Energy, Vista, Pampa Energía, Pluspetrol, Shell, Chevron, Tecpetrol, and Gas y Petróleo de Neuquén. In July 2025, the project secured additional financial backing through a \$2 billion USD [syndicated loan](#), granted by 14 national and international banks, including Citi, Deutsche Bank, Itaú, JP Morgan, and Santander.

These developments confirm the structural power of the hydrocarbon lobby, which is capable of influencing all three branches of government to dismantle a legal framework that had provided environmental protection for two decades. They also mark the beginning of a new phase of the extractivist model, in which media narratives and disinformation campaigns become central tools for attempting to build social consent through false or misleading information.

The legitimization campaign behind the project: media, power, and narrative

The progress of the VMOS project relies not only on physical infrastructure, but also on narrative infrastructure. In parallel with the construction of the pipeline, a communication network is being deployed to promote a vision of the project linked to progress, development, and job opportunities as symbols of major economic improvement. The campaign combines disinformation strategies with traditional media and social networks, digital advertising and symbolic construction, where corporate, state, and media interests converge.

Traditional and regional media: amplifiers of the narrative

The main regional media outlets –*Diario Río Negro*, *LMNeuquén*, *Más Energía*, *Vaca Muerta News*, *Econojournal*, among others –act as spokespeople for the expansion of hydrocarbon projects, effectively functioning as informational extensions of the VMOS consortium. On their websites and social media platforms, the pipeline and oil port are portrayed as the most significant fossil infrastructure works of recent decades, emphasizing cutting-edge technology, job creation, and the “economic reactivation” of the involved areas.

These media narratives respond both to editorial lines aligned with the oil industry and to direct or indirect advertising funding. The convergence of messaging –even across outlets with different audiences –reveals the existence of a coordinated communication strategy that frames the project as a matter of national interest and positions hydrocarbon activity as synonymous with development.

The influence of these media outlets is significant: [a 2025 study](#) shows that in the Alto Valle region of Río Negro, more than half of the population (56%) gets their information from online news websites and 40% from social media, while 51% report that the information they consume on social networks influences their opinions. In this context, information disseminated by local and regional media, perceived as “trustworthy” sources, has a decisive impact on shaping public opinion.

The role of YPF: energy nationalism and corporate legitimacy

YPF communicates very little about the VMOS project directly through its official channels. Instead, its strategy focuses on broad institutional campaigns portraying the company as being “at the service of the nation,” a leader in technology and in energy exports –a clear example of what is commonly referred to as *greenwashing*.

During the first half of 2025, the company allocated more than [53 billion pesos](#) to advertising and publicity –a 60% increase compared with the same period in 2024 –revealing the scale of the effort to build legitimacy and symbolic capital while avoiding exposure to the socio-environmental conflicts generated by its projects.

These campaigns appeal to [identity-based values](#): energy as national pride, economic independence, and Argentine labor. Narratively, YPF does not need to speak directly about

the pipeline; it presents itself as its natural guarantor, reinforcing the notion that fossil exploitation



is both a patriotic duty and an opportunity for growth. In doing so, it demonstrates clearly that withholding information is also a powerful form of disinformation.

This omission is not a void but a discursive strategy that reshapes common sense. By choosing what is said and what is left unsaid, the company produces an interpretive framework in which extractivism becomes synonymous with development, while environmental concerns are reduced to a mere technical or bureaucratic obstacle. In other words, it does not explicitly distort the facts; instead, it constructs a narrative that is incomplete yet effective and socially acceptable.

At the same time, YPF does not operate alone: its silence functions in synchrony with a broader communication apparatus. Regional media, digital outlets, and social media accounts –many of them supported by advertising funds or political alignment –reproduce and amplify its narrative, filling in what the company does not state directly. In this circuit, YPF’s institutional message is reinforced by local campaigns that translate this epic narrative into concrete promises.

As a result, disinformation operates on two complementary levels: corporate omission and media amplification. YPF’s strategic silence opens space for other actors to occupy the communicational arena and legitimize the project. The absence of information becomes a tool of legitimization, delegating the task of persuasion to an ecosystem willing to sustain the same narrative: extractivism as destiny, as mandate, and above all, as a source of Argentinian pride.

The province of Río Negro: politics, governance, and discourse

The Government of Río Negro has become a central actor in the promotion of these dominant narratives. Through official accounts –[those of the governor](#), the [provincial government](#), and agencies such as [Energy](#), Environment, or [Labor](#) –messages are disseminated that present the projects as historic initiatives that will bring progress, employment, and public infrastructure.

This narrative is built on two main pillars: the promise of economic well-being (local employment, royalties, infrastructure), and the reinforcement of political legitimacy (representing the interests “of the people of Río Negro,” strengthening the governor’s political profile and that of his allies).

The government’s communication strategy combines media presence with social media campaigns that emphasize “strict environmental and labor controls” and major benefits, creating the impression of a transparent, profitable, and well-regulated process.

However, the conditions agreed upon with the consortium are opaque: the agreement for the oil pipeline includes a fee for the province of USD 1 billion over 13 years, compared to an investment estimated in several billions, revealing a significant asymmetry in the distribution of benefits.

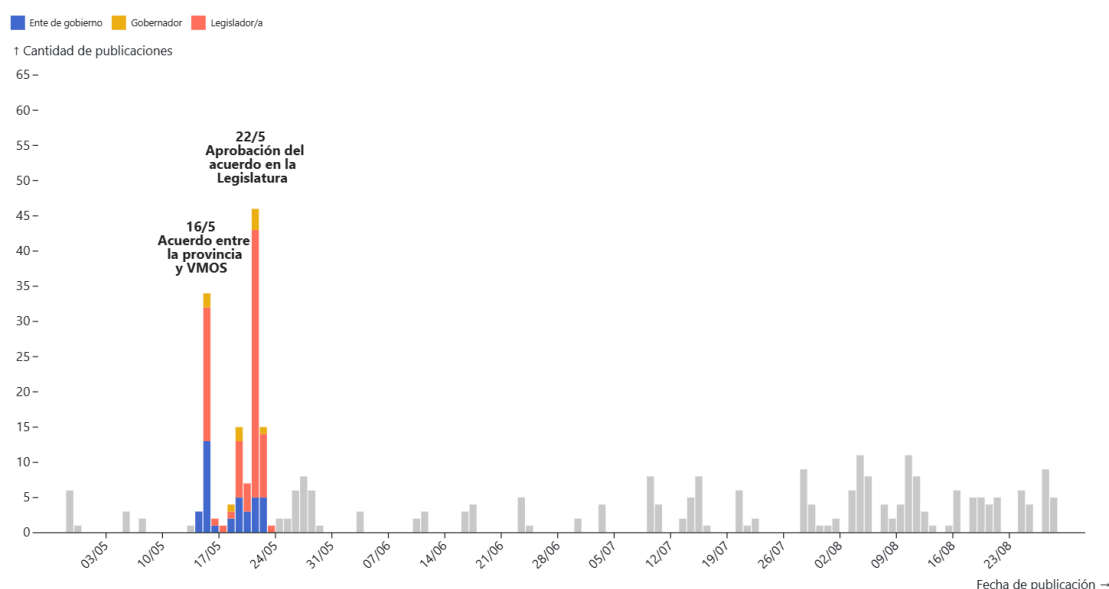
As an example illustrating how these “benefits” actually materialize, in 2024 the energy sector recorded a trade surplus of USD 5.668 billion, while [studies indicate](#) that only USD 31 million (0.5%) remained in the country. The outflow of capital occurred through various financial mechanisms, such as interest payments to related companies, purchases of assets abroad, and the settlement of part of its revenues outside the foreign exchange system regulated by the Central Bank of the Argentine Republic, among others.

In addition, the province’s adherence to the [Large Investment Incentive Regime \(RIGI\)](#) establishes a legal framework of exceptionality for 30 years. This effectively shields corporate privileges against any future attempt at regulation or reform: for three decades, the State will be unable to modify tax conditions or introduce new levies affecting the companies receiving these benefits. Under the premise of attracting investment, the RIGI grants unprecedented autonomy to private capital, stripping provinces of their ability to influence revenue or adjust rules in response to socio-environmental impacts.

These impacts are far from negligible: for example, in Vaca Muerta, at least [2,049 environmental incidents were recorded in 2021](#), an average of 5.6 incidents per day (spills, gas leaks, water contamination, etc.). This scale puts the narrative of “progress under control” under strain —when thousands of incidents occur, the silence or downplaying of them by corporate communication operators and authorities reveals that risk management falls well short of the discourse.

Regarding digital activity, there was a noticeable peak that coincided with key moments: the signing of the agreement between the consortium and the province (16 May) and its legislative approval (22 May). During those days, official social media accounts reported a sustained flow of posts, videos, and statements celebrating the agreement as a “provincial victory.”

El rol de la provincia en la concreción del proyecto aparece con fuerza en la firma del acuerdo entre el consorcio VMOS y Río Negro el 16/5 y la aprobación en la legislatura el 22/5



Este gráfico muestra la frecuencia de publicación de legisladores, entes de gobierno (ministerios y secretarías) y el gobernador entre enero y agosto de 2025, en plataformas de redes sociales (incluyendo Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, Youtube y LinkedIn).
Fuente: Junkipedia.

On the other hand, starting in July and more strongly in August, extractivist projects became a daily axis of official communication. The accounts mentioned above (Government of Río Negro, Secretariat of Energy and Environment, supported by areas such as Labor and Public Works) sustained a narrative of institutional control and efficiency, aimed at reinforcing the idea that the project is moving forward [under strict environmental](#) and [labor](#) regulations, seeking to dispel any suspicion about the risks or inequalities embedded in the agreement.

In this way, the provincial State, in alliance with companies such as YPF, operates as a deliberate disinformation mechanism that renders impacts invisible, distorts benefits, and reinforces and amplifies the corporate discourse that translates the extractive promise into a narrative of governance and local pride.

Visual narratives: progress made image



The legitimization campaign also operates on the visual plane. Across images disseminated by media outlets and institutions, VMOS is portrayed against backdrops of modernity and productivity in arid, uninhabited, or “empty” territories. Within this aesthetic of progress

– [pipelines advancing through](#)

[barren landscapes](#), [machinery in motion](#), [workers in hard hats](#), [technical renderings](#) and growth charts –the impression is constructed that there is nothing pre-existing that could be harmed. It appeals to a classic developmental imaginary: the territory becomes an empty space to be conquered by technology. Pre-existing ways of life, longstanding regional activities, and coastal ecosystems are thus erased. Instead, a visual language of order, cleanliness, and efficiency is privileged and conveys security and control.

In parallel, and reinforcing the dynamics described above, YPF [strengthens a nationalist visual identity](#) through national colors, industrial symbols, [heroic language](#), [sponsorship of popular sports](#), [associations with Messi](#) and the national football team, consolidating the idea that the project does not belong to a corporation, but rather “to the Argentine people.”

The response of the Gulf communities

In the face of this hegemonic disinformation mechanism, organized communities are [developing campaigns](#) and constructing counter-narratives grounded in different values: marine life, coastal landscapes, [biodiversity](#), belonging, and collective enjoyment. These narratives reinforce a longstanding sense of identity while exposing the extractive risks that have been deliberately obscured.



"Atlanticazo" in Las Grutas – January 4, 2024 PH

However, this symbolic struggle unfolds in a profoundly unequal context. The communities operate with limited material and communication resources, while on the other side stand corporations with multimillion-dollar budgets, professional teams, and direct ties to the State and major media outlets.

In this landscape, alliances with NGOs, socio-environmental collectives, and other supportive organizations have made it possible to create and sustain campaigns, provide technical tools, and amplify their reach. Nevertheless, the communication “battle” remains highly asymmetrical and requires constant effort from the communities to secure a place in public discourse.

A cross-cutting network

Taken together, the communication efforts of companies, government, and media construct a cross-cutting disinformation network operating on multiple levels: economic, political, cultural, and emotional.

Discourses of “progress” and “development” speak to the desires and needs of local communities amid a deep economic crisis. At the same time, alliances are strengthened between corporations, the State, and media structures that sustain the dominant narrative and displace dissenting voices.

Without the need for any formal or explicit coordination –though it remains implicitly visible –this network of actors forms a communicational ecosystem that amplifies a shared message: hydrocarbon expansion is inevitable, necessary, and beneficial. That naturalization lies at the core of the dominant narrative.

Media analysis

New media, old narratives

Based on an analysis of the regional information ecosystem, a less visible component in the construction of the dominant narrative was identified: the rapid emergence of new digital media outlets seemingly oriented toward reinforcing and multiplying the same extractivist discourse.

The focus was placed on active sponsored publications through a [temporal and comparative analysis](#) using the Junkipedia tool, with “Vaca Muerta Sur,” “Punta Colorada,” “Vaca Muerta Oil Sur,” and “Golfo San Matías” as key search terms. The selected timeframe spanned from June 2024 to September 2025.

This consolidated dataset made it possible to identify publications, dates, estimated advertising spending, predominant themes, target audiences, reach, and narrative lines. The information was then systematized to detect communication behavior patterns and connections between the messages and the platforms that promote them.

In an initial phase, official and media narratives related to VMOS were examined, which made it possible to identify the overall structure of the dominant message. Building on that initial mapping, the monitoring of sponsored content opened an unexpected path: new information portals with no previous presence in the regional media ecosystem began to emerge. Individual analysis of each advertisement revealed that these sites had been recently created, in parallel with the advancement of hydrocarbon projects.

The manual and systematic compilation of data enabled comparisons of indicators, media classification, and the tracing of connections among actors. Despite certain limitations, such as the lack of formal academic training and the difficulty of accessing financial data online, open-source tools and specialized guidance supported and deepened the investigative process.

What became clear is that, over the past several months, a number of newly created news websites and Facebook pages have begun to populate Río Negro’s information ecosystem. All of them share similar structural traits: recent creation (between 2024 and 2025), low levels of organic engagement, very few followers, and a high volume of sponsored posts. Many of them aimed at promoting extractive projects, particularly the Vaca Muerta Oil Sur (VMOS) project.

Although these pages have very few followers, their sponsored posts reach significant figures. Millions of accumulated [impressions have been recorded](#)—meaning millions of

instances in which advertisements appear on users' screens (which does not necessarily entail likes, comments, or other interactions). This enables a virtually unknown outlet to achieve massive reach: it does not rely on its actual audience, but rather on the financial investment used to amplify its messages. Advertising spending allows narratives with no prior grounding in the region to take hold, displacing genuine public debate and silencing local voices.

In this way, a message backed by heavy investment, rather than by the community, comes to appear as the majority view, while the absence of real participation is concealed behind these staged disinformation campaigns, deliberately designed to manufacture consensus and social legitimacy.

It is also evident that many of these outlets alternate [pro-extractivist content](#) with [politically oriented posts](#) that reinforce the provincial government's discourse while delegitimizing opposing or critical voices. This blend of messages—seemingly disconnected—appears to be part of a coherent communication strategy, in which the defense and reinforcement of the extractive model are intertwined with the consolidation of a regional political figure.

Relevant data overview

To conduct an in-depth analysis, three media outlets were selected: *Tiempos Australes*, *Pulso Sur*, and *Agarrá la Pala Río Negro*. They were chosen for their sustained volume of publications and for the role they play in the dissemination and reinforcement of hegemonic narratives. Follower counts and interaction levels correspond to the moment of data collection, though they are expected to continue rising as their digital reach and advertising investment grow.

Due to time and resource constraints, the research focused on these three cases, enabling a detailed analysis of their communication dynamics. However, we surveyed nine additional outlets with similar characteristics (twelve in total) which, although not studied in depth, also contribute to the reproduction and maintenance of the same narratives. The examples that follow are meant to illustrate a broader trend within the current media ecosystem and allow us to infer the likely existence of an even larger number of such "news outlets."

Below is a breakdown of media outlets and data that supports this analysis:

1-Tiempos Australes

Facebook: [Tiempos Australes](#)

-**Type:** News website / media outlet

-**Page created:** July 10, 2024

-**Administrators:** 10 (all located in Argentina)

-**Followers:** 255

-**Following:** 0

-**Ads:** Currently running active ads (social issues / political topics) [Meta Ad Library: Tiempos Australes](#)

Between September 26, 2024 and September 27, 2025, a total of 32 paid posts were published — all of them linked to VMOS.

-**Estimated spending:** ARS \$526,000 – \$618,968

-**Approx. impressions:** 1,790,000 – 2,120,000

Narrative focus:

Promotion of energy infrastructure and export-oriented development: VMOS oil pipeline, Punta Colorada port, and LNG as key drivers of Argentina's global positioning. Employment is mentioned, but the emphasis remains on macro-economic growth and "Argentina to the world."

Examples:

"Construction advances on the country's largest oil export terminal in Punta Colorada"

"With the leadership of Governor Alberto Weretilneck, the Punta Colorada Export Terminal near Sierra Grande has already reached 10% progress as part of the Vaca Muerta Oil Sur (VMOS) project, positioning Río Negro as a key player in the national energy sector. The inspection was led by Energy and Environment Secretary — and current candidate — Andrea Confini, together with Mayor Roxana Fernández."

Analysis: Reinforces international positioning and provincial leadership within the national energy sector.

"Facundo López, Weretilneck's closest ally: 'We will defend Río Negro in Congress and prioritize investment and public education'"

"The Juntos Defendemos Río Negro Senate candidate emphasized his commitment to strategic investments in Vaca Muerta Sur, LNG projects, public infrastructure and the

provincial public university. He highlighted that his coalition will prioritize federal development and local employment while defending Río Negro's interests in the Senate."

Analysis: Explicit integration of VMOS with political and electoral capital, centering federal representation and institutional legitimacy.

"VMOS bonus: Weretilneck secures 60 million pesos for the province's development"

"The funds, resulting from an agreement with the Vaca Muerta Oil Sur consortium, will be allocated to the construction of schools, hospitals, roadworks and sports facilities, as well as the purchase of educational technology and state-of-the-art medical equipment. This investment reaffirms the government's commitment to driving social and productive growth across Río Negro."

Analysis: Links extraction, public infrastructure, and social welfare, legitimizing oil revenues as a collective benefit.

Website: <https://tiemposaustrales.com/>

- 458 days old - Created on 2024-07-01

- [Domain information](#)

Excerpt:

Registry Admin ID: Not Available From Registry

Admin Name: REDACTED FOR PRIVACY

Admin Organization: Knock Knock WHOIS Not There, LLC

Admin Street: 9450 SW Gemini Dr #63259

Admin City: Beaverton

Organic traffic (domain including subdomains . usando

<https://ahrefs.com/traffic-checker/>)

Organic traffic 4 / Traffic value \$0

2- Pulso Sur

Facebook: [Pulso Sur - Facebook](#)

-**Type:** News website / media outlet

-**Date created:** May 21, 2025

-**Administrators:** 6 (Argentina)

-**Followers:** 108

- **Following:** 0

-**Ads:** On social issues, elections, or political topics

[Pulso Sur Ad Library](#)

Between June 28, 2025 and September 28, 2025, a total of 40 paid posts were published, of which 24 were related to VMOS.

-**Estimated total spending for 40 posts:** ARS \$503,000 – \$617,460

-**Estimated spending for 24 VMOS-specific posts:** ARS \$326,000 – \$394,976

-**Approximate impressions for VMOS-specific posts:** 1,050,000 – 1,250,000

Narrative focus: VMOS is presented as the central financial tool to sustain social development and the continuity of public works in Río Negro. The messages highlight Governor Weretilneck's efficient management and the provincial capacity to generate progress through southern energy. / Celebratory and politically legitimizing tone, with a focus on provincial leadership.

Examples:

1- **"Weretilneck protects provincial resources: río negro maintains key works thanks to the vaca muerta oil sur bonus"**

The governor announced key projects to maintain development and growth in the province, which were made possible thanks to the use of the VMOS bonus, functioning to efficiently utilize provincial resources."

→ Links VMOS directly with the sovereign use of energy resources and internal development.

2- **"Health: the new hospital for sierra colorada thanks to the vmos bonus"**

"Governor Alberto Weretilneck announced new works in the province made possible by the signing of the VMOS bonus. These include projects at the Sierra Colorada hospital, which will focus on modernizing and equipping the facility with the latest technology."

→ Establishes a positive relationship between extractivism and social welfare (health as a political legitimizer).

3- **"Weretilneck launches paving of access to san javier with vmos bonus funds"**

"The project, financed through the VMOS bonus, the mechanism created by the agreement between the Río Negro government and the Vaca Muerta companies, includes paving, a temporary bypass, lighting, and signage, improving connectivity in the

municipality. The bid opening was conducted publicly as part of the tender process.”
→ Positions VMOS as a driver of connectivity and employment in the provincial territory.

Website: <https://pulso-sur.com/>

-140 days old - Created on 2025-05-20

- [Domain information](#)

Excerpt:

Registry Tech ID: Not Available From Registry

Tech Name: REDACTED FOR PRIVACY

Tech Organization: Knock Knock WHOIS Not There, LLC

Tech Street: 9450 SW Gemini Dr #63259

Tech City: Beaverton

Organic traffic (domain including subdomains . usando

<https://ahrefs.com/traffic-checker/>)

Organic traffic 0 - Traffic value \$0

3- **Agarra la Pala Río Negro**

Facebook: [Agarrá la Para Río Negro Facebook](#)

-**Type:** News website / media outlet

-**Date created:** April 7, 2025

-**Administrators:** 5 (Argentina)

-**Followers:** 203

-**Following:** 0

Ads: Currently has active ads (social/political topics)

[Ad Library: Agarrá La Pala RN](#)

-**Period analyzed:** July 31, 2025 – September 15, 2025

-**Total paid posts:** 13, of which 6 were related to VMOS

-**Estimated total spending for 13 posts:** ARS \$139,100 – \$173,187

-**Estimated spending for 6 VMOS-specific posts:** ARS \$49,100 – \$61,194

-**Approximate impressions for VMOS-specific posts:** 200,000 – 240,000

Narrative focus: Pro-management and “projects that transform lives.” Health, education,

and employment are emphasized. VMOS is positioned as a driver of provincial development and as evidence of “efficient” governance that counters national criticism.

Examples:**1- “Historic: more than ARS \$1.4 billion invested thanks to the Vaca Muerta Oil Sur bonus**

“While the national government stays uninvolved, Weretilneck continues building in Río Negro. In Sierra Grande, the multipurpose room of School No. 60 and ESRN 39 will be expanded

Defending means managing decisively!”

→ Reinforces the narrative of investment, public works, and provincial governance linked to VMOS.

2- “Weretilneck fights for Río Negro and the results are visible: the first payment from the VMOS bonus is already driving key works in San Antonio. Works that will generate jobs and progress for the people of Río Negro. ‘Because defending is building”

→ Directly associates VMOS with employment and progress in the province.

3- “With VMOS funds, Weretilneck ensured that wealth stays in Río Negro and is transformed into works: hospitals, schools. This is not rhetoric, it is defending the province through action”

→ Connects financing, health, and education as concrete results of VMOS.

Website: <https://agarralapalarionegro.com/>

-178 days old - Created on 2025-04-07

-[Domain information](#)

Excerpt:

Registry Admin ID: Not Available From Registry

Admin Name: REDACTED FOR PRIVACY

Admin Organization: Knock Knock WHOIS Not There, LLC

Admin Street: 9450 SW Gemini Dr #63259

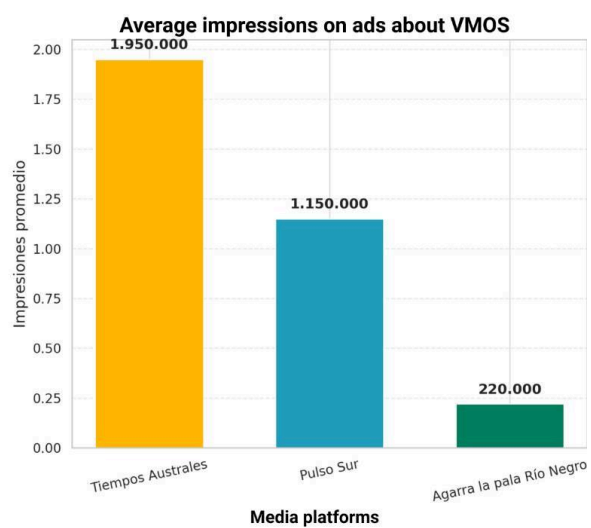
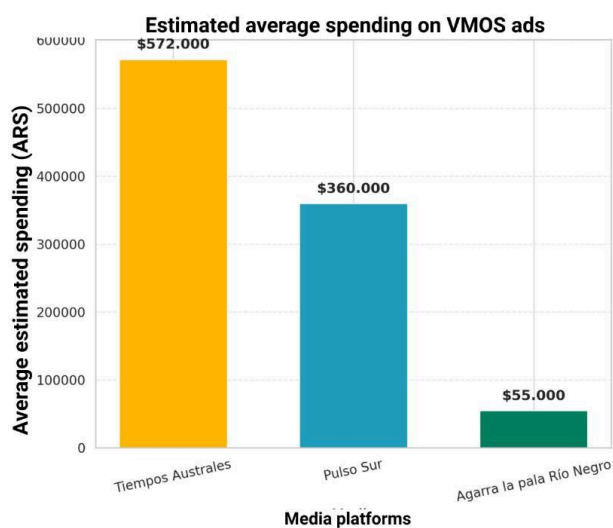
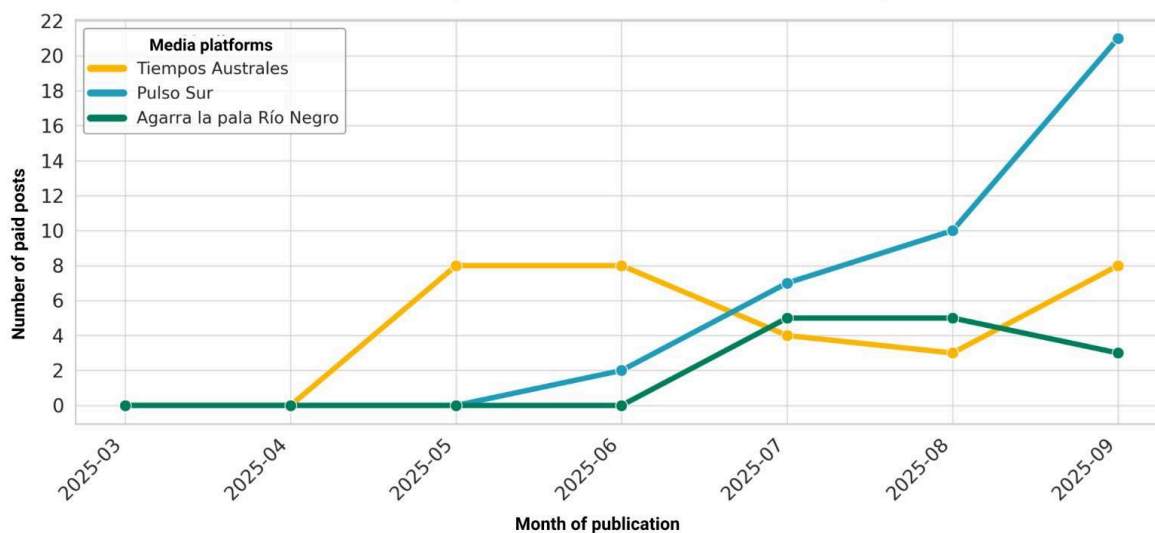
Admin City: Beaverton

Organic traffic (domain including subdomains . usando

<https://ahrefs.com/traffic-checker/>)

Organic traffic 0 - Traffic value \$0

Monthly activity of paid posts (March – September 2025)



Additionally, below is information on other media outlets that have similar characteristics to those previously described:

4- Río Negro al Frente

FACEBOOK: [Rio Negro al Frente - Facebook](#)

-**Type:** News website / media outlet

-**Date created:** March 10, 2025

-**Administrators:** 7 (all from Argentina)

-**Followers:** 439 • **Following:** 0

-**Ads:** Currently has active ads on social issues, elections, or political topics

Website: <https://rionegroalfrente.com/>

-204 days old - Created on 2025-03-12

-[Domain information](#)

Excerpt:

Registry Tech ID: Not Available From Registry

Tech Name: REDACTED FOR PRIVACY

Tech Organization: Knock Knock WHOIS Not There, LLC

Tech Street: 9450 SW Gemini Dr #63259

Tech City: Beaverton

- Organic traffic (domain including subdomains . usando

<https://ahrefs.com/traffic-checker/>)

Organic traffic 0 / Traffic value \$0

5- Línea Nacional

-**Type:** News website / media outlet

-**Date created:** February 11, 2025

-**Administrators:** 11 (Argentina)

-**Ads:** Yes, on social issues, elections, or political topics

-**Ad Library:** [Línea Nacional](#)

Website: <https://lineanacional.com/>

-267 days old - Created on 2025-01-13

-[Domain information](#)

Excerpt:

Registry Admin ID: Not Available From Registry

Admin Name: REDACTED FOR PRIVACY

Admin Organization: Knock Knock WHOIS Not There, LLC

Admin Street: 9450 SW Gemini Dr #63259

Admin City: Beaverton

Organic traffic (domain including subdomains . usando

<https://ahrefs.com/traffic-checker/>)

Organic traffic 0 / Traffic value \$0

6- Orgullo Rionegrino

FACEBOOK: [Orgullo Rionegrino Facebook](#)

-**Type:** Sitio web de noticias / medio de comunicación

-**Date created:** 10 de marzo de 2025

-**Administrators:** 6 (Argentina)

-Followers: 1.000

-Following: 0

-**Ads:** Currently active on social issues, elections, or political topics

-[Biblioteca de anuncios Orgullo Rionegrino](#)

Website: <https://orgullorionegrino.com/>

- 209 days old - Created on 2025-03-12

- [Domain information](#)

Excerpt:

Registry Tech ID: Not Available From Registry

Tech Name: REDACTED FOR PRIVACY

Tech Organization: Knock Knock WHOIS Not There, LLC

Tech Street: 9450 SW Gemini Dr #63259

Tech City: Beaverton

Organic traffic (domain including subdomains . usando

<https://ahrefs.com/traffic-checker/>)

Organic traffic 0 - Traffic value \$0

7- El Mirador Noticias

FACEBOOK: [El Mirador Noticias Facebook](#)

-**Type:** News website / media outlet

-**Date created:** July 29, 2025

-**Administrators:** 6 (Argentina)

-**Followers:** 59 • **Following:** 0

-**Ads:** Currently active on social issues, elections, or political topics

- [Ad Library: El Mirador Noticias](#)

Website: <https://elmiradornoticias.com/>

475 days old - Created on 2024-06-19

[Domain information](#)

Excerpt:

Registry Tech ID: Not Available From Registry

Tech Name: REDACTED FOR PRIVACY

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Tech Street: 9450 SW Gemini Dr #63259

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Organic traffic (domain including subdomains . usando

<https://ahrefs.com/traffic-checker/>)

Organic traffic 0 - Traffic value \$0

8- Bandera del Sur

FACEBOOK: [Bandera del Sur Facebook](#)

- **Type:** News website / media outlet

- **Date created:** June 27, 2025

- **Administrators:** 8 (Argentina)

- **Followers:** 703

- **Following:** 0

- **Ads:** Currently active on social issues, elections, or political topics

- [Ad Library: Bandera del Sur](#)

Website: <https://banderadelsur.com/>

-102 days old - Created on 2025-06-27

- [Domain information](#)

9- Radar del interior

FACEBOOK - [Radar del interior](#)

- **Type:** Sitio web de noticias / medio de comunicación

- **Date created:** 8 de agosto de 2025

- **Administrators:** 8 (Argentina)

- **Followers:** 343

-**Following:** 0

-**Ads:** Yes, on social issues, elections, or political topics

-**Ad Library:** [Radar del Interior](#)

Website: <https://radardelinterior.com/>

- 62 days old - Created on 2025-08-06

[Domain information](#)

10- La Estrella del Sur

FACEBOOK: [La Estrella del Sur Facebook](#)

-**Type:** News website / media outlet

-**Date created:** July 10, 2024

-**Administrators:** 10 (Argentina)

-**Followers:** 217

-**Following:** 0

-**Ads:** Yes, on social issues, elections, or political topics

-**Ad Library:** [La Estrella del Sur](#)

11- Punto de Vista Noticias

FACEBOOK: [Punto de Vista Noticias Facebook](#)

-**Type:** News website / media outlet

-**Date created:** January 30, 2025

-**Administrators:** 10 (Argentina)

-**Followers:** 211

-**Following:** 0

-**Ads:** Yes, on social issues, elections, or political topics

-**Ad Library:** [Punto de Vista Noticias](#)

Website: <https://puntodevistaweb.com/>

270 days old - Created on 2025-01-10

[Domain information](#)

12- La Directa

FACEBOOK: [La Directa - Facebook](#)

-**Type:** News website / media outlet

-**Date created:** February 5, 2025

- Administrators:** 9 (Argentina)
 - Followers:** 150
 - Following:** 0
 - Ads:** Yes, on social issues, elections, or political topics
 - Ad Library:** [La Directa](#)
- Website: <https://ladirectaweb.com/>

Conclusion

A (dis)informative network at the service of extractivism?

Between June 2024 and September 2025, approximately 200 paid posts were recorded across the twelve digital media outlets investigated. These figures only include ads with financial investment—excluding organic posts—and reflect an estimated total expenditure of between 3,500,000 and 4,200,000 Argentine pesos (ARS). Altogether, these ads generated between 10,600,000 and 12,500,000 impressions, providing a sense of the real amplification capacity these media achieve through digital advertising.

The results show a sustained trend: the rapid creation of digital media outlets with limited actual reach but high amplification potential through paid ads. These portals act as repeaters of the pro-extractive discourse, which links regional development and social welfare to the expansion of hydrocarbon infrastructure. The dominant narrative combines and expands official discourse with concepts of works, investment, energy, and the future, creating a communication “package” that reaches diverse audiences.

This evidence allows us to identify a silent yet significant transformation of the communication ecosystem in Río Negro. Within this framework, advertising functions as a legitimizing device, providing volume, continuity, and the appearance of credibility to media outlets without real territorial presence. The multiplication of broadcasters generates an illusion of informational diversity and social consensus around extractive projects. This aligns with recognized mechanisms of climate disinformation, in which political and corporate actors deploy local media and supposedly “neutral” narratives to conceal impacts and normalize fossil expansion.

Taken together, this seems to configure a new phase of the communication apparatus associated with the extractivist model: the mass production of low-apparent-impact media that operate as instruments for establishing and normalizing hegemonic

narratives, presenting hydrocarbon expansion as synonymous with development and the future, while climate risks and threats are minimized or directly rendered invisible.

Peaks of activity, tonal coincidences, and the repetition of common phrases suggest the existence of a planned dissemination strategy. This operation resembles what is known as *Pink Slime*: networks of sites that present themselves as local media while spreading political content through low-cost and automated structures, as documented [by international research](#) on this phenomenon. In the case of Río Negro, the simultaneity of messages and the repetition of narrative frames seem to configure a communication network that reinforces public acceptance of “hydrocarbon development,” simulating informational diversity and broad territorial support.

These practices align with patterns of climate disinformation, particularly those aimed at naturalizing fossil projects as inevitable and beneficial, while minimizing or leaving out socio-environmental risks and local controversies.

Far from the logics of traditional journalism, this communication network articulates a homogeneous narrative that promotes hydrocarbon expansion as an inevitable horizon of progress and collective well-being. It is not just information: emotions, expectations, and perceptions about the province’s future are constructed, aligned with political and corporate interests. This operation is consistent with documented tactics of climate disinformation, which aim to reduce the perception of harm, amplify hypothetical benefits, and blur the line between information and propaganda. Within this logic, socio-environmental impacts are left out of the picture, while fossil projects are presented as “necessary” and without viable alternatives.

The temporal overlap of the data shows that the increase in publications coincides with key institutional moments of the Vaca Muerta Oil Sur project, reinforcing the official narratives of the provincial government and YPF. This synchrony suggests that communication does not respond to the informational flow but rather to a strategic agenda aimed at legitimizing the project.

This constant flow of messages, centered on “employment,” “investment,” and “future,” directly intervenes in the construction of common sense: it shifts the focus of conflict and reframes public debate as a false dichotomy between “progress” and “resistance.” In this way, narratives that for decades defended the territory are increasingly challenged by new stories that present extractive expansion as a tangible improvement in everyday life.

For coastal communities that have historically protected the sea and their way of life, this narrative shift is far from innocuous: it seeks to rewrite identities, expectations, and

legitimacy, eroding society's capacity to question the present and future harms of fossil expansion.

The sustained pattern of media creation, with discursive, temporal, and thematic coincidences, is hardly attributable to chance. All evidence points to the existence of a large-scale communication operation of disinformation.

A network that, under the appearance of plurality, seems intent on reorganizing the common perceptions of the territory, attempting to turn the fierce and destructive extractive advance into a new and "acceptable" normality.

Notes

This work constitutes an initial stage within an ongoing research process. The data collected and the correlations observed allow us to glimpse a complex scenario, shaped by disinformation practices that directly influence the construction of common sense around the extractivist model.

The study could continue to grow in scale and scope, incorporating additional analytical dimensions and strengthening its empirical base. This first approach lays the groundwork for future stages that expand understanding of the links between communication, power, and territory, and that further reveal how global climate disinformation mechanisms operate at the local level.

In this way, a process of collective information and understanding is opened in response to narratives that distort, conceal, and manipulate information. Deepening this line of research entails continuing to expand this process, strengthening the community's capacity to identify and dismantle these communication mechanisms, and building shared tools to counteract them.

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