Vision Statements of Port Authorities: A benchmark comparison

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Strategic Planning is a widely spread culture in international port environments. A correct formulation of a Vision Statement is one of the pillars of any Strategic Plan. Although hundreds of references are available and easily accessible on ports' websites, there has not been any research analysing in-depth the content of this open information. A massive review of the Vision Statement of 169 Port Authorities has been carried out. This information has been compared with a benchmark group of 55 leading corporations operating in different sectors globally. Conclusions regarding the differences between the formulation of Vision Statements in public and private-oriented sectors are offered. Besides, a segmentation of the sample has been carried out in a way that conclusions over regional effects on Vision Statement's formulation can also be drawn.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Strategic planning in ports environments (**"SPPE"**) is a large spread and well-structured process. Practitioners have paid full attention to developing strategic plans in this industry during the last decades and there are hundreds of works available on the websites of different private port operators, port authorities or governmental agencies with competences in the development and management of port infrastructures and services (these three groups being collectively described herein as **"P.A.'s"** or **"Ports"**).

The American Association of Port Authorities (AAPA, 1988) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD, 1993) have positively contributed towards export strategic planning in the sphere of port managers, and ports' strategic plans have massively followed their recommendations and initial guidance.

These are two really outdated citations but, to the best of our knowledge, there has not been any other scientific work in this sphere until the one published by the Asociación Técnica de Puertos y Costas in 2020 Spanish Section of the Permanent International Association of Navigation Congresses PIANC (ATPyC, 2020).

These two works have made it clear that vision, mission, and corporate values represent the foundations of the strategic building of a port. They have to be set first, with a long-term perspective. Only when they have been formulated and once a proper environment screening has been carried out, is it possible to furnish the remaining elements of a strategic plan, such as goals and objectives, strategies and action plans with their associated targets and metrics.

Although the importance of adopting proper vision statements (**"VSs"**) in the strategic plan exercise of ports is now widely accepted, the importance of adopting proper vision

statements (**"VSs"**) in the strategic plan exercise of ports, to the best of our knowledge, there is not any scientific work discussing the proper way to formulate them, or the main elements or contents usually adopted by different P.A.'s.

This work intends to remedy this omission. First, by analysing the conceptual framework for the development of good VSs following the available scientific literature. Second, scrutinising how VSs of ports worldwide match a proposed standardised framework.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW. A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR VISION STATEMENTS

From the academic standpoint, the conceptual framework of VSs dates back to the early 2000s, and although we can find some practitioners tackling this issue in a para-academic approach, or hundreds of strategic plans in which a VS is developed, there is an evident lack of new valuable contributions accompanied by a scientific methodology supporting the findings (ATPYC, 2020).

Among these practitioners we can find Burke (2011), Mahmood y Rehman (2015), Greer (2017), Ray (2018) or, more recently, Stoner (2019), who have all discussed the main features of an effective VS.

Larwood et al. (1996) and Kirkpatrick et al. (2002) highlighted the main features of VSs: they are considered a key element within the theory of leadership and transformation of organisations (House, 1977; Conger and Kanungo, 1987; Bass, 1985; Doz and Prahalad 1987; Robins and Ducans 1988; Sashkin 1988; Kotter 1990; Hunt 1991: 199-203); ii), representing an effective and essential component in terms of business strategy (Ireland and Hitt, 1999); iii), also being a determining factor in the business management process (Timmons et al. 1990; Filion, 1991; Parikh and Neubauer, 1993).

Furthermore, several authors have investigated and empirically demonstrated the linkage between the establishment of an adequate VS and: i) the performance of the companies (Barling et al., 1996; Filion, 1991; Howell and Avolio, 1993; Kirkpatrick and Locke, 1996; Larwood et al . 1995; Baum et al ., 1998; Westley and Mintzberg, 1989), ii) the satisfaction of their employees (Kirkpatrick and Locke, 1996; Mahmood and Rehman, 2015).

A pioneering researcher to systematically study the companies' VSs was McClelland. This author developed a methodology of evaluating the reasons behind their formulation and contents (McClelland et al. 1958; McClelland and Boyatzis, 1982; McClelland, 1985). The approach of this author was later refined by Winter (Winter 1973, 1980, 1987, 1994 and Winter & McClelland, 1978). Later on, Kirkpatrick (2002) pointed out the advantages of using this methodology in an organisation based on: i) its solid theoretical development (anchored in the theory of motivation); ii) the fact that a relevant number of studies have previously adopted it (allowing it to carry out benchmark exercises); iii) the possibility of being applied at different levels (individual, group, organisational, society as a whole, etc.) without the need of carrying it out in field studies or interacting with managers of the organisations.

Wilson (1992) emphasised that VSs must be realistic, considering the market, competition, economic and regulatory conditions. Thus, before adopting a VS, it is necessary to critically assess, both the external and internal constraints and the corporate values of the company. This author, based on the study of the VSs of a wide set of companies, introduced a series of valuable likenesses regarding the basic elements, essential characteristics, and most typical errors regarding their formulation:

•   It is recommended that VSs be based on six basic attributes: i) scope of the business; ii) scale or size of activities; iii) target products and markets; iv) competitiveness; v) image and relationships; vi) organisation and culture. We refer to these six elements in this work as **"Wilson's Attributes"** or **"W-At"** and we will have labelled the model of attributes of VSs described in Wilson (1992) as Wilson's model.

•   VSs of successful companies have five essential characteristics: i) clarity; ii) coherence; iii) power of communication; iv) consistency; v) flexibility. We refer to these five characteristics as **"Wilson's Characteristics"** or **"W-Ch"**.

After Wilson (1992), many authors have analysed the most relevant characteristics of an effective VS (Table 1). Most of them agree on the need for VSs to draw and point to the future of the company, but to do so in a way that is clear and identifiable by its employees, managers and stakeholders; and that represents a challenging, ambitious, and vibrant statement.

While W-Ch are certainly a subjective set of properties of a given VS, many authors differ in which of these are key factors. The inclusion of W-At in a VS can be easily checked more objectively and it refers specifically to its "*optimum*" contents.

In essence, there are not as many works discussing VSs attributes (contents) as those addressing their characteristics.

Finally, Larwood et al. (1995) demonstrated how certain aspects affect VSs' patterns. They studied different companies and figured out how the most relevant characteristics of the company (its size, region in which it operates, its typology, sector, and market in which it competes) and their leaders play a determinant role in VSs' formulation.

The role of the leaders in creation and implementation was intensively addressed by Robins and Ducans (1988), being an issue out of the scope of this research.

Table 1.
Features that distinguish effective visions from ineffective ones according to various authors.

Attribute / Contributor	Sims y Lorenzi (1992)	Sa-hskin (1988)	Jacobs y Jaques (1990)	Locke et al. (1991)	Nanus (1992)	Collins y Lazier (1992)	Wilson (1992)	Baum et al (1998)	Levin (2000)	Burke (2011)	Mahmood y Rehman (2015)	Greer (2017)	Ray (2018)	Stoner (2019)
Clarity / Identifiable			•				•	•		•	•		•	•
Consistent/ Realistic / Achievable / Credible							•		•		•			
Communicable							•				•			
Consistency							•							
Flexibility							•				•			
Brevity / Conciseness				•				•		•	•		•	
Abstractness				•				•		•	•		•	
Challenging / Vibrant / Ambitious / Coura-geous / Bold	•	•			•		•	•	•	•			•	•
Future – Oriented [Im-aginable]			•			•		•	•	•	•	•	•	
Stability				•				•		•			•	
Inspiring / Convincing / Persuasive	•	•						•	•				•	
Set desirable goals										•	•	•	•	
Provides guides in decision making										•		•	•	
Durable														
("Never-ending")													•	
Results–oriented													•	
Have a timer horizon													•	
Shared [by employees]											•			

3. GOALS

The goals of this research are to check the four main *hypotheses* related to VSs in P.A.'s, as follows:

Hypothesis 1: Ports have a strong long-term strategic culture and they have developed VSs, to guide their development and their decision-making processes.

Hypothesis 2: Ports follow Wilson's model and adopt Wilson's Attributes in the formulation of their respective VSs.

Hypothesis 3: As suggested by Larwood et al. (1995), the common characteristics of Ports have a direct influence on how these entities formulate their VSs, if comparing them with a set of other VSs adopted by companies operating in other sectors. In this context, it is relevant that Ports usually operate on a public-policy decision environment.

Hypothesis 4: As suggested by Larwood et al. (1995), while Ports' VSs share common characteristics, there are some identified patterns when they are regionally classified.

4. METHODOLOGY

To check the hypotheses 1 to 4 above, a set of 169 Ports have been selected and a macro-survey has been carried out.

The criteria for selecting these ports were: i) to allow the authors to carry out an intensive benchmarking of different ports in different environments, and ii) to use only as source of research publicly available data (accessible on internet) to measure also the degree of transparency of different ports (i.e. its willingness to share its strategic vision without constrains).

These ports are globally spread (22 ports in North America, 76 in Europe, 25 in Asia, 19 in Africa and the Middle East, 15 in South and Central America, and 12 in Oceania). The sample accounts for 63 different countries (three in North America, eighteen in Europe, twelve in Asia, sixteen in Africa and the Middle East, ten in South and Central America, and four in Oceania). In summary, the largest ports in each region (in terms of their respective cargo throughput) and the most representative ones (although smaller in terms of comparative cargo throughput) of certain countries have been taken. Therefore, it can be concluded that the sample is not only wide, but also very diverse due to its geographical location, size, and market, as well as governance model.

To check the hypotheses 3 and 4, a set of 55 companies of other sectors has been selected (the "Benchmark Group"). Twenty of them are big international corporations being leaders in their respective markets, while the remaining thirty-five are a set of companies whose shares are the most liquid stocks traded in Spain, being listed and incorporated in the selective index Spanish Exchange Index (IBEX35). The latter are leaders in their respective segments in Spain, but they also operate internationally, representing very noticeable companies in their respective sectors.

The reason why this last set of companies has been selected is that the regional environment chosen to check the regional component of VSs is Spain. This is a very suitable regional market because: i) we can find a statistically significant sample of twenty-eight Ports Authorities; ii) it is a port system with a long tradition in SPPE, since the Spanish Port Act dated 1992 (amended several times since then) already introduced the recommendation for Ports to translate their strategy through Strategic Plans and many practical contributions are openly accessible.

To check the above-mentioned hypotheses in an objective way the following metrics have been used:

•	The percentage of P.A.'s which have developed and published their VS. (i.e. the ratio of P.A.'s in which the VS is publicly available versus the entire set of ports of each group)

•	The conciseness of the VSs of each P.A. and comparison with the Benchmark Group (i.e. the number of words of each VSs)

•	The number of Wilson's Attributes included in the formulation of the VSs of each P.A. and comparison with the number of attributes adopted by the selected Benchmark Group.

•	The content of the VSs of each P.A. based on a semantic analysis of them, analysing the concepts (words or groups of words) more frequently used in them.

5. RESULTS

5.1. Test 1: Degree of Long-term Strategic Planning Deployment in Port Systems

Concerning the VSs of P.A.'s in different geographical areas (Table 2), the main conclusions of the survey can be drawn as follows:

•	In aggregate terms, the ports demonstrate an acceptable "strategic orientation" regarding the formulation of their foundations, since 59 % of the ports (100 out of 169) have their vision made explicit. It must also be taken into account that VSs have been extracted directly, either from their websites or from annual reports (downloadable via their websites). Therefore, this percentage may be higher since: i) some Ports may decide not to upload its VS for different reasons (considered it a piece of confidential information, or dedicating their websites to purely operational or commercial matters, etc.); ii) some Ports do not edit their webpages in English, Spanish or French (this is the case of most Chinese P.A.'s), thereby being inaccessible for the researcher, inasmuch as they could not detect the existence of VSs due to a language barrier.

•	American ports (North, Central, and South) are those with a more explicit strategic culture (100 % of ports have a published VS), closely followed by those in Oceania (92 %). In this section, the ports of the United States, Canada, Mexico, and Australia stand out, since all of them published their VSs in a very transparent way on their web pages.

• Curiously, it is the European ports group which have presented a lower degree of response to the search, since only 49 % of them make public their VS on their websites. If we exclude the case of the Spanish Ports, this percentage decreases to 31 %. The impossibility of detecting the VSs of ports in Germany, the United Kingdom, Italy, or France is relevant. This could seem contrary to the transparency and promotion of public participation policies, as promoted by the European Union. In some cases, as in the UK, this could be due simply to its governance model, since a set of selected ports are managed by a single body that does not develop individual VSs for each port, but rather for the entire group.

• In the case of Asian ports, the degree is 60 %. This figure is highly influenced by the sample of Chinese ports in which only two out of the 10 P.A. made their VS accessible. If we were to discount Chinese ports, this percentage would rise to 87 % for the remaining Asian Ports.

• Finally, African and Middle East ports show a percentage of 68 %.

Table 2.
Deployment of vision in International Ports.

	NORTH AMERICA	EUROPE (SPAIN EX-CLUDED)	ASIA (CHI-NA EX-CLUDED)	AFRICA & MIDDLE EAST	SOUTH & CENTRAL AMERICA	OCEANIA	TOTAL
SAMPLE / (NUMBER OF PORTS CONSIDERED)	22	76 (48)	25 (15)	19	15	12	169
NUMBER OF PORTS WITH ACCESSIBLE PUBLISHED VISION STATEMENT	22	37 (15)	15 (13)	13	15	11	100
PERCENTAGE	100 %	49 % (31 %)	60 % (87 %)	68 %	100 %	92 %	59 %

5.2. Test 2: Conciseness: Length of VSs

Related to the second indicator (length of VSs considering the number of words used in its formulation) we can conclude that:

• In general terms, P.A.'s are in favour of concise statements (twenty-five words on average), and there are no significant deviations regarding different geographical areas. The longest statements are in Europe (thirty-seven words), while the shortest (the most concise ones) are to be found in Oceania (eighteen words). Those of North America and Asia Ports show similar metrics (twenty-two/three words on average), while South American ones are slightly above the average (twenty-eight words)

• The largest statement is the one of Peel Ports (UK), whose VS has 134 words, followed by Cadiz (Spain) with eighty-four words, the port of Cartagena (Colombia) with eighty-two, Bilbao and Cartagena (both in Spain, with seventy-eight and seventy-seven words respectively). Townsville (Australia) has a seventy words-long VS, which stands out over the extensions of other Australian ports that choose, on average, no more than ten words.

• Considering their conciseness, Windsor P.A. (Detroit, USA), Kenya P.A. (Kenya), Port of Milford Haven (UK) and Helsinki (Finland) stand out, making very idealistic proposals with just five or six words.

Length (number of words) of the vision statements in international ports.

	NORTH AMERICA	EUROPE (SPAIN EXCLUDED)	ASIA (CHINA EXCLUDED)	AFRICA & MIDDLE EAST	SOUTH & CENTRAL AMERICA	OCEANIA
MAXIMUM VALUE	57	134	69	65	82	70
MINIMUM	5	6	7	5	8	7
MEAN	23	37	23	22	28	18
STANDARD DEVIATION	12	39	18	18	22	18

Comparing Ports with the Benchmark Group, we may conclude that the average length of their VSs (twenty-five words) is in alignment with those of the big International Corporations (twenty-six words), with a very similar standard deviation (twenty-three and twenty-six respectively). However, the average length of Spanish Public Companies is longer than its international comparison group (thirty-seven versus twenty-six), and the length of the Spanish Ports' VSs is also substantially longer than those observed in the group of international ports (forty-four versus twenty-five), but relatively aligned with those of other Spanish Public Companies listed in IBEX35 (forty-four versus thirty-seven).

Table 4.
Length (number of words) of the vision statements in international ports.

	INTERNATIONAL COR-PORATIONS	SPANISH PUBLIC COMPANIES INCLU-DED IN IBEX35	INTERNATIONAL P.A.'S	INTERNATIONAL CORPORATIONS
MAXIMUM VALUE	111	140	134	84
MINIMUM	3	5	5	9
MEAN	26	37	25	44
STANDARD DEVIATION	26	27	23	25

In terms of its statistical distribution, it has been figured out that the most common length of VSs ranged ten-thirty words (first tranche) followed by <ten words (second tranche). We have also observed that the shape of the distribution is very similar in the case of International Corporations (Figure 1) and International P.A.'s (Figure 2), while this distribution is substantially different in the case of Spanish Public Companies (Figure 3), or Spanish P.A.'s (Figure 4). In the Spanish case, it is observed that a significant number of entities are in the range of thirty-fifty, and even above fifty.
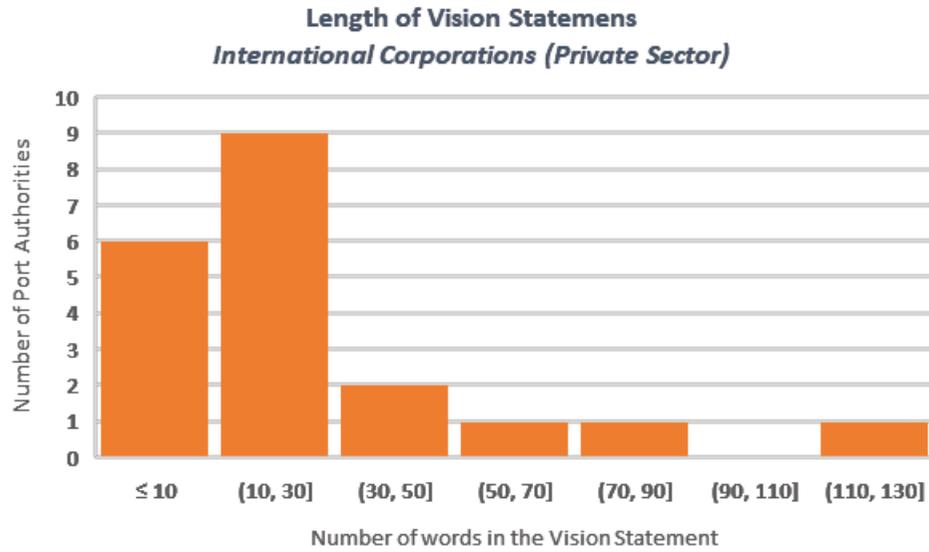
Figure 1.
Length of Vision Statements. International Corporations (Private Sector).
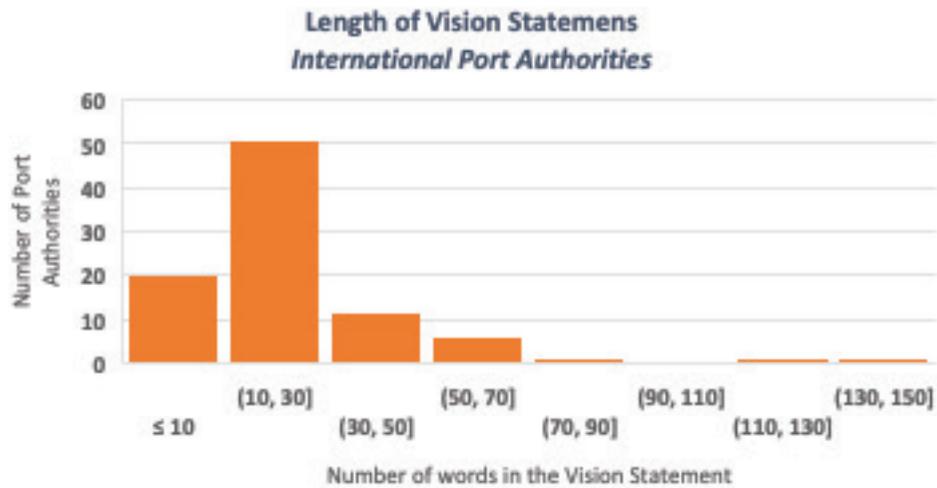

Figure 2.
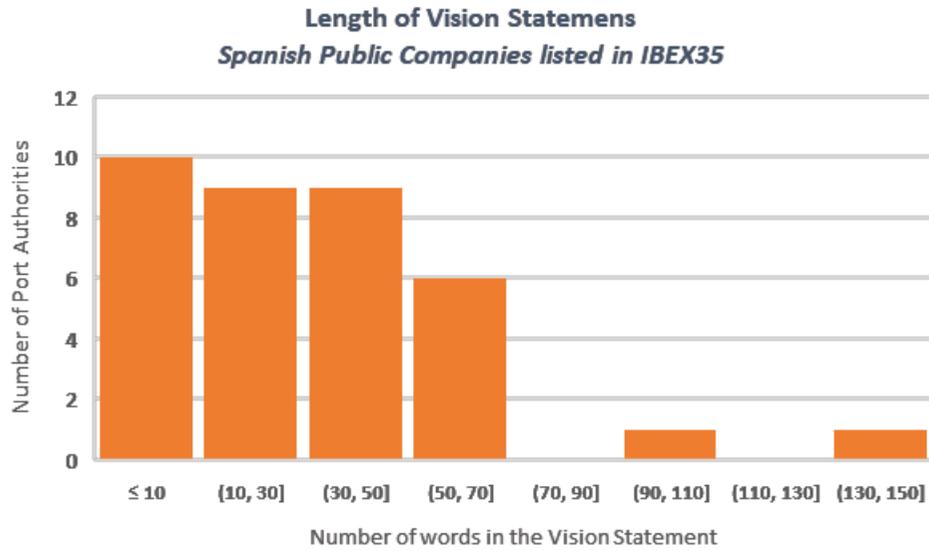Length of Vision Statements. International Port Authorities.

Length of Vision Statemens
Spanish Public Companies listed in IBEX35

Figure 3.
Length of Vision Statements. Spanish Public Companies (listed in IBEX35).

Length of Vision Statemens
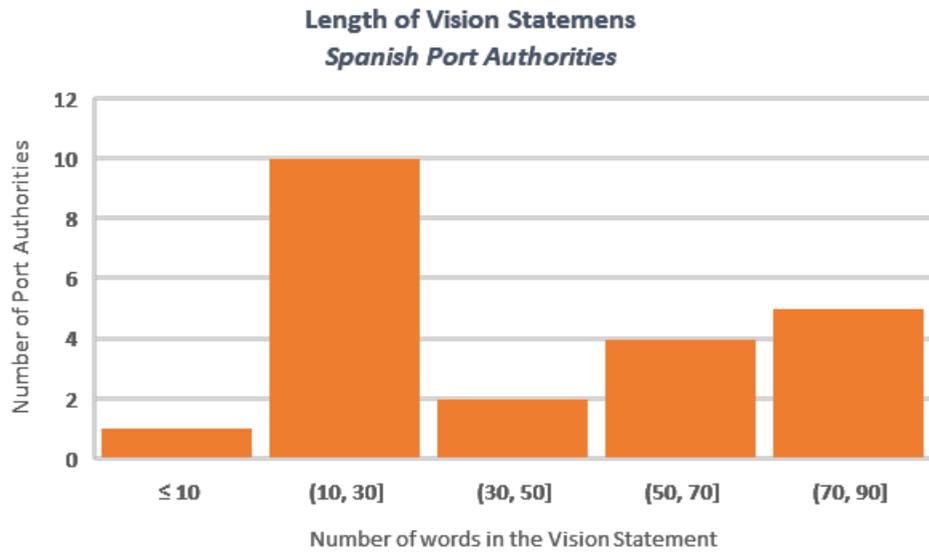*Spanish Port Authorities*

Figure 4.
Length of Vision Statements. Spanish Port Authorities.

These results seem to confirm the previous findings of Larwood et al. (1995) related to the regional influence in the formulation of VSs, at least in one of its characteristics (conciseness). The explanation of this specific item can be found in the specific semantic and linguistic structure of the language in which VSs of the set of organisations scrutinised has been formulated (Spanish *versus* English). Further ongoing research is needed to confirm this hypothesis by testing other sectors, apart from P.A.'s.

In terms of other characteristics pointed out by Larwood et al. (1995), and taking into consideration the shape of the statistical distribution as shown in Figures 1 and 2, it is not inferable or intuitive that the sector in which a company operates is a driver in determining the conciseness of its VS.

5.3. Test 3: Number and Frequency of Wilson's Attributes Included in the Formulation of the VS of Each P.A. and the Selected Benchmark Group

Analysing the contents of the VSs of International Ports and adopting Wilson's model, it is observed that 18 % include six of the W-At, and approximately 50 % include four or more. However, the most common value adopted by this group is only three out of the six W-At. (Figure 5).

The most repeated W-At in the international port environment is the "*target products and markets*" covered by 76 % of the Ports. The occurrence of the attribute "*competitiveness*" is 72 %, preceding "*image and relationships*" (64 %) and "*scale or size of activities*" (63 %). In the last positions of the queue of merits, "*business scope*" is found (51 %) and the last one is "*organization and culture*" (43 %), as shown in Figure 6.

Figure 5.
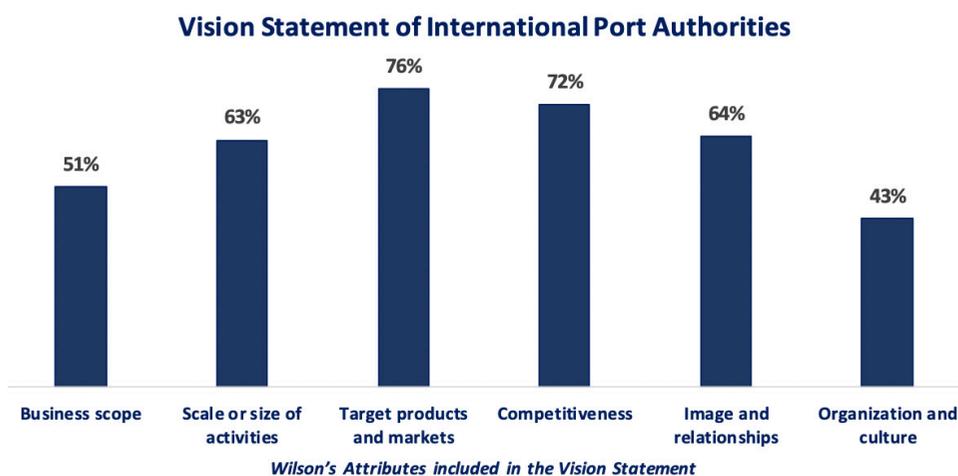Percentage of attributes of Wilson's attributes included in the VS of international ports.

Figure 6.
Number of times that an attribute of Wilson's Model is collected in the VS of intl. ports.

Focusing on the Spanish case and analysing the content of VSs its Port Authorities, it is figured out that only 5 % of them include the six W-At., while 6 out of 22 (27 %) accounts for four or more attributes. The most common value is also three attributes (36 %), but Spanish P.A.'s embrace Wilson's model substantially worse than the international benchmark (Figure 7).

The most common W-At. within the Spanish group of P.A.'s, is the "*target products and markets*" that is covered by 13 out of 22 P.A.'s (59 %), followed by the attributes "*image and relationships*"

and "*organization and culture*" (both 55 %). Afterwards we have found "*competitiveness*" (41 %), and, at the end, "*business scope*" and "*scale or size of activities*" (both 32 %), as illustrated in Figure 8.

One of the most significant findings of the macro-survey and subsequent benchmarking is that P.A.'s adapt worse in their VSs to Wilson's model than their private sector counterparts. This happens in the two experimental segments analysed (the set of international corporations and international P.A.'s, and the set of Spanish Companies and Spanish P.A.'s), as shown in Table 5.

Vision Statement of Spanish Port Authorities

Number of Wilson's Attributes included in the Vision Statement

Figure 7.
Number of attributes of Wilson's Model captured in the DVs of Spanish P.A.'s.

Vision Statement of International Spanish Authorities
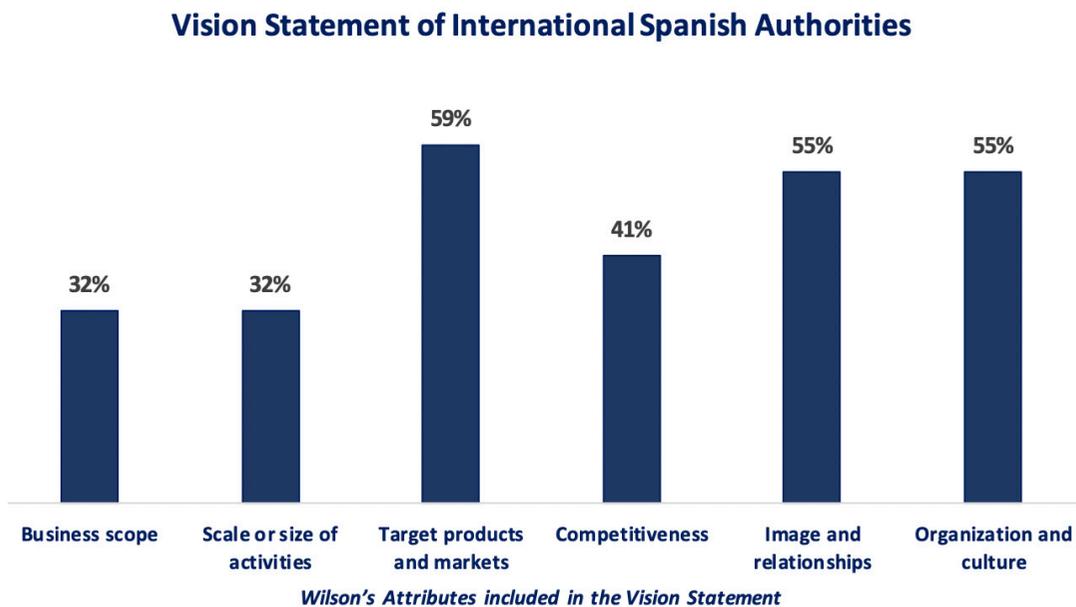
Wilson's Attributes included in the Vision Statement

Figure 8.
Number of times that an attribute of Wilson's Model is captured in the VS of the Spanish P.A.

Percentage of Wilson's Attributes included in the Vision Statement of each segment of companies.

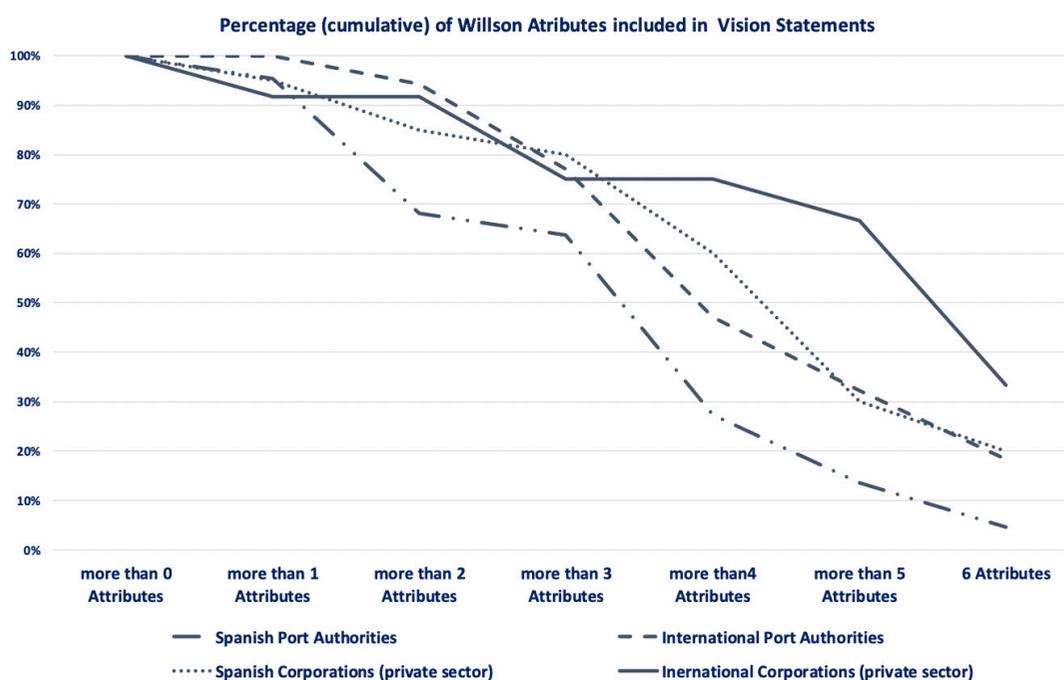| Number of Attributes includ-ed in the VS	Spanish P.A.'s	International P.A.'s	International Corporations	Spanish Public Companies
0 Attributes	5 %	0 %	5 %	8 %
1 Attributes	27 %	6 %	10 %	0 %
2 Attributes	5 %	17 %	5 %	17 %
3 Attributes	36 %	30 %	20 %	0 %
4 Attributes	14 %	15 %	30 %	8 %
5 Attributes	9 %	14 %	10 %	33 %
6 Attributes	5 %	18 %	20 %	33 %

Figure 9.
Percentage (Cumulative) of Wilson's Attributes included in the Vision Statement of each segment of companies.

Additionally, it is also very relevant that the private sector better fits "Wilson test" than the public one (at least as far as the P.A.'s are concerned), something shown graphically in Figure 9.

One of the key elements determining if all W-At. are equally adopted by the segments used in this research (Table 6) and whether they are indistinctly embraced in all regional environments (Figure 10). The main conclusion of the analysis is that the more frequent attribute in all segments is "*target products*

and markets" and the more uncommon one is variable in terms of the sample. It is therefore "*business scope*" in Spanish P.A.'s, "*organization and culture*" in International P.A's, "*competitiveness*" in International Corporations, and "*scale or size of activities*" in Spanish Public Listed Companies. In general terms, P.A.'s pay more proportional attention to "*image and relationships*" than the Benchmark Group.

Table 6.

Percentage of Wilson's Attributes included in the Vision Statement of each segment of companies.

Wilson Attribute	Spanish P.A.'s	International P.A.'s	International Corporations	Spanish Public Companies
Business scope	32 %	51 %	75 %	70 %
Scale or size of activities	32 %	63 %	83 %	50 %
Target products and markets	59 %	76 %	83 %	75 %
Competitiveness	41 %	72 %	58 %	65 %
Image and relationships	55 %	64 %	67 %	55 %
Organization and culture	55 %	43 %	67 %	55 %

In terms of the regional embracement of Wilson's model, it can be concluded that companies working in the public sphere are less sensible to this model than the ones included in the private sector. It happens independently of the regional segmentation implemented and the fact is that the results are quite similar in the two selected experimental samples (i.e. the set of international companies and P.A.'s, and the set of Spanish Companies and P.A.'s) (Figure 10).

The reason behind Wilson's model fitting better with the Benchmark Group than P.A's can probably be explained by the public / private nature of these two sets of companies. Thus the attributes more public-policy oriented match better with the long-term aspirations of the P.A.'s, rather than those selected by Wilson thinking in commercial profit-companies. New attributes shall be suggested in the following section of this work.

Another finding is that the regional effect is bigger in the case of P.A.'s than in the case of corporations operating in the private sector. This can be observed by looking at Figure 11, and realising that the curves of international and Spanish private sector companies on the left are closer than the curves of international and Spanish P.A.'s on the right.

Percentage of Wilson Attributes included in the VS of International Corportations and Port Authorities

Percentage of Wilson Attributes included in the VS of Spanish Public Companies and Spanish Port Authorities
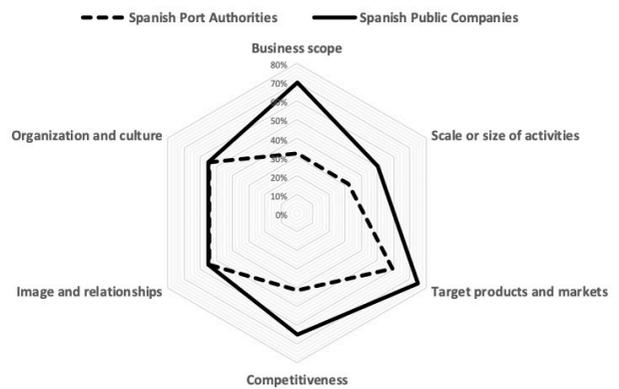
Figure 10.
Percentage of Wilson's Attributes included in the Vision Statement of each segment of companies. Sector Analysis (Public versus Private Sector).

Percentage of Wilson Attributes included in the VS of Public Companies

- - - Spanish Public Companies — International Corporations

Percentage of Wilson Attributes included in the VS of Port Authorities

- - - Spanish Port Authorities — International Port Auhoritites

Figure 11.
Percentage of Wilson's Attributes included in the Vision Statement of each segment of companies. Regional Factor Analysis (International versus Spain).

5.4. Contents of the VSs of the P.A.'s and Proposal for New Attributes' Model

Finally, the semantic contents of VSs have been analysed using the free-access software *wordcounter.net* to determine how many times a word (string 1x), a sequence of two words (string 2x), or three words (string 3x) are repeated (Table 7). **Error! Reference source not found.** This is an indirect but useful and objective way of testing the most frequent attributes included in VS.

The main discoveries of this research are:

• The most individual words used in P.A.'s VSs at the international level are "*Port*" (75 repetitions), "*World*" (17 repetitions) and "*Economic*", "*Development*", and "*Logistics*" (all of them with fifteen repetitions) followed by "*Trade*" (fourteen repetitions) and "*Services*" (twelve repetitions).

• Concerning more complex concepts made up of two words, the groups "*Logistics hub*" and "*World class*" with eight repetitions are the most used structures followed by "*Added value*" and "*Port Authority*" with four. The compositions "*Supply chain*", "Most

efficient", "Social responsibility", "Economic development", and "Economic growth" counts with three repetitions each.

• If we were to analyse more complex structures made up of three-word sequential chains, only the groups "*Creating added value*", "*Preferred gateway trade*", "*Gateway trade travel*", and "*Trade travel recreation*" would present a slightly significant frequency of two repetitions.

• Moving to the Spanish sample, the number of repetitions of words or chain of words in the VSs of the Spanish Ports reveals that the most frequently used nouns or adjectives are "*Port (noun)*" (twenty-three repetitions), "*services*", "*reference*" and "*port (adjective)*" (nine repetitions) and "*logistic*", "*quality*" (seven repetitions). As for two-word strings, we could highlight those that refer to "*sustainable development*", "*inter-modal networks*", or geographical realities in combination with the words "*Mediterranean*", "*South*" or "*Europe*" (three repetitions). The most repeated chains of three are variations of the previous ones, but we could highlight sequences such as "*quality of life*", "*of the citizens*", "*area of influence*" or "*development arc*" or "*reference intermodal*", as shown in Table 8.

Table 7.
Semantic contents of the vision statements of international ports.

	Chain 1x	Chain 2x	Chain 3x
1	75 - Port	8 - Logistics hub	2 - Creating added value
2	17 – World	8 - World class	2 - Preferred gateway trade
3	15 – Economic	4 - Added value	2 - Gateway trade travel
4	15 - Development	4 - Port authority	2 - Trade travel recreation
5	15 – Logistics	3 - Innovative port	
6	14 – Trade	3 - Supply chain	
7	12 – Services	3 - Most efficient	
8	11 - Efficient	3 - Social responsibility	
9	11 – Value	3 - Economic development	
10	11 - Hub	3 - Economic growth	

Note: In each cell, a number is expressed followed by a "word" (1x) or "word chain" (2x or 3x).
The number indicates the frequency of repetition of said "word" or "string of words" in the set of VSs

Table 8.
Analysis of the semantic content of the vision statements of Spanish ports.

	Chain 1x	Chain 2x	Chain 3x
1	23 - Port (noun)	3 – sustainable development	5 – the port of
2	9 – services	3 – inter-modal networks	4 – a framework of
3	9 – reference	3 – [The] Mediterranean	4 – reference in the
4	9 – port (adjective)	3 – [The] South	3 – the port of
5	7 – Logistic	3 – [Of] Europe	3 – the quality of
6	7 – Quality	3 – the traffics	3 – in the frame of
7	6 – development	3 – Port Authority	3 – the sustainable development
8	6 – Authority	3 – [the] innovation	3 – the reference in
9	5 – South	3 – [the] services	3 – in the Mediterranean
10	5 – Traffics	3 – logistic node	3 – quality of life
11	-	-	3 - Of the citizens
12	-	-	2 – the economic activity
13	-	-	2 –are of influence
14	-	-	2 – arc of development
15	-	-	2 .- South of Europe

Note: In each cell, a number is expressed followed by a "word" (1x) or "word chain" (2x or 3x).
The number indicates the frequency of repetition of said "word" or "string of words" in the set of VSs

Given this semantic analysis and the results obtained by using Wilson's Attribute model in P.A.'s, it is suggested to modify in the context of this set of companies operating in the public sector the more-suitable attributes of the VSs. The proposal would be to replace the attribute "*scale and size of activities*" included in Wilson's model but poorly adopted by P.A.'s by *"added value, economic growth and development"*, which in line with the above contents analysis fits better ports' long-term motivations.

Additionally, it is suggested to reformulate the attribute "*competitiveness*" to a wider concept including "*competitiveness and operational efficiency*",and to include a seventh attribute under the umbrella of "*social responsibility and sustainability*".

Summarising the new model would be formed by the following attributes: i) scope of the business; ii) added value, economic growth, and development; iii) target products and markets; iv) competitiveness and operational efficiency; v) image and relationships; vi) organisation and culture; viii) social responsibility and sustainability.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the data and results of the research, it can be concluded that:
• The first hypothesis of this work is partially confirmed. Accordingly, with the data of the macro-survey, Ports have a strong long-term strategic culture and they have developed VSs to guide their development and their decision-making process. However, the degree of implementation is quite different between regions, being outstanding in America, Oceania or Asia (China excluded), and very poor in Europe (exception made of the Spanish Ports), or some specific countries (China).
• The second hypothesis is not confirmed: Ports do not follow Wilson's model and, broadly speaking, they do not adopt all Wilson's Attributes, as well as the set of companies of the private sector. A new model based on Wilson's one is suggested. The attributes for P.A. would be as follows: i) scope of business; ii) added value, economic growth, and development; iii) target products and markets; iv) competitiveness and operational efficiency; v) image and relationships; vi) organisation and culture; viii) social responsibility and sustainability.
• The third hypothesis is confirmed: As suggested by Larwood et al. (1995), the common characteristics of Ports have a direct influence on how these entities formulate their VSs. They share characteristics as conciseness, and they include attributes related to the public-policy decision environment in which they operate.
• The fourth hypothesis is confirmed: As suggested by Larwood et al. (1995), while Ports' VSs share common characteristics, there are some identified patterns when they are regionally classified. In fact, the regional location of an organisation is a more important factor in terms of VS conciseness

than the sector. Thus, the statistical distribution of the length of VSs of a set companies of different sectors remains homogenous if you consider a wide international sample, but it differs when the sample is compared against a set of companies of one specific sector in a specific market/location. The conclusion in terms of attributes included is identical.

The following may be suggested as areas for future research:
• The sample used to determine the "regional" effects has been Spain exclusively. For future research, it would be worthy to expand the study to other markets in order to test whether this conclusion can be also drawn in other contexts. Ports in the USA or Australia would be a good market since the number of Ports in these countries represent a statistically representative sample.
• The sample used to determine the "sector" effects and the convenience of adopting other attributes in VSs for a public-policy oriented organisation has been exclusively Ports. It would also be worth expanding the study to other sectors, in order to test if this conclusion could be confirmed. Public Health Systems or Education Public Systems would be ideal candidates.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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