

Basque radio networks. New sources in basque radio stations

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Abstract:

The present article has two objectives: firstly, the author seeks to provide information on radio journalism in the small European country of Euskal Herria (the Basque Country) and, secondly, on news sources in radio network stations. The research affords the first overall view of the real and current situation of news gathering in all types of radio stations all over the Basque Autonomous Community (Spain). The author attempts to explore the continuing struggle over who sends and receives news in Basque radio stations and makes an effort to define the controversial news source concept by his own schema of the waterfall. He goes over the meaning this word has for some authors. The article provides intensive up to date information on the news gathering percentages that the author has obtained in Basque newsrooms during 1995 and the first months of 1996. Therefore, the last chapter is supported by empirically based data in order to identify the news sources which are the origin of the countless words pouring into Basque radio newsrooms every day.

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Firstly, I would like to define the purpose of the present article. Although I have two goals: to inform on the real situation of Basque radio networks and to provide information about news gathering of those stations, I think the main aspect that will shape the present study is to show the importance of news gathering in the radio networks of the Basque Country: a small European country in which there are three languages and three political communities.

1. Basque radio networks

The Basque Country has, throughout its history, been identified by its language called Euskara, the only pre-Indo-European language still alive in Europe. Nowadays, the Basque Country, or Euskal Herria, spreads over both sides of the Pyrenees along the Bay of Biscay in the Atlantic Ocean. It is divided into two autonomous communities (Euskadi and Navarre) in the south, located on the Iberian Peninsula, and the community of the North Basque Country in the Aquitaine (France). Basque is spoken today by over half a million people and this vestige of old European languages coexists with Spanish in the south and French in the north. As a result, the media in the Basque Country offer the consumer a variety of broadcast products in these three languages.

Therefore, there are three Basque communities, and the largest is the Basque Autonomous Community (BAC). This is the political name of the most densely populated of the three. Over 2 million people live in this administrative area where the inhabitants are extremely aware of their identity as a nation. The political party PNV/EAJL is the most voted in this community, and with the Catalanian nationalists, is one of the key parties on Spain's political scene today.

In the field of the media in the Basque Country the appearance of the national public media: EITB

(Basque Radio-Television) has been the most important event in the past two decades since the death of General Franco and the instauration of the democratic monarchy². In only twenty years, this radio-television network has become the leader in audience rates in the BAC. It is also quite clear that this network does not suffer from stunted growth like other networks all over the Basque Country³. In April of 1996, an agreement was reached between the two community governments of the South Basque Country so that the people who live in Navarre have full access to Basque radio-television stations in Castilian (Spanish) and Basque. However, the recent change of government in Navarre numbed the accord last autumn. Secondly, an overall view of the linguistic situation shows a high rate of success in Basque language schooling. The Basque Public Radio is the only one among major national networks which is clearly in favor a non-diglossia situation or normalization of the Basque language⁴. Euskadi Irratia (total radio) and Euskadi Gaztea (all music-news station; format radio) are the stations which Basque speakers prefer. The radio stations within this public broadcast network have a total budget of 1,689 million pesetas (\$13,731 million) for its four stations⁵. Audience rates for 1995 and 1996 are as follow:

Source: EGM

It should not be forgotten that the Basque language was forbidden for many years during General Franco's regime. Thus, Basque radio stations have grown gradually in recent years. Furthermore, as is the case in Catalonia, radio stations have multiplied more quickly than the written press⁶.

The stations in the Basque Country have a larger number of listeners than that registered in other areas of Spain. At present, nearly 56% of the adult population in the two communities in the South Basque Country listen to the radio whereas this percentage does not reach even half of the population over 14 years of age in other communities in Spain. The following tables show the total number of listeners (in thousands) in the South Basque Country and the AM and FM audience for 1996 ⁷.

Source: CIES

Hence, the radio network scene in the Basque Country changed greatly on 20 May 1982 when the Basque Autonomous Government created Eusko Irratia or the Basque Radio Network. In 14 years, this network has reached second place in the total ranking of Basque radio stations. The Basque Public Radio Network has three total radio stations; two in Castilian and one in Basque in addition to Euskadi Gaztea (format radio) which is an all music-news station. The total radio stations broadcast in each of the Basque Autonomous Community's major cities. These stations are Euskadi Irratia (in Basque, based in San Sebastian), Radio Euskadi (mostly in Castilian, based in Bilbao) and Radio Vitoria (mostly in Castilian, based in Vitoria). These three stations have 198,000 listeners in the BAC. The listeners in the North Basque Country and Navarre must also be added to this figure. In the BAC the Basque Public Radio Network ranks second in audience rates only to Spain's leading major network: the SER. The following table shows listener rates for the different radio networks which broadcast in the BAC during 1996:

Source : CIES

However, there are more stations and networks that broadcast in Basque on the Basque radio broadcasting

scene. I have not yet mentioned the stations based in the North Basque Country in France. The audience rates of northern Basque broadcasting are similar to that of the southern communities, but higher than Navarre's although both communities have the same number of Basque speaking inhabitants⁸. In the three regions that make up this territory to the north of the Pyrenees, 31.9% of the inhabitants listened to at least one Basque programme daily⁹. This indicates that in 1991 these radio stations' Basque programmes had 63,000 listeners over 15 years of age of a total population of 250,000. Nowadays there is a wrestling match in the arena of the radio broadcasting in this administrative area. The audience rates for 1996 are as follow:

Radio France P.B. 21% (12.3% in 1991). RFPB broadcasts 50 h. in Basque on working days only from Baiona.

Irulegiko Irratia 20% (12.5% in 1991). This station broadcasts 80% in Basque from Lower Navarre.

Gure Irratia. 13% (17.6% in 1991). Only in Basque from Baiona.

Xiberoko Botza. 7% (9% in 1991). 70% in Basque from Zuberoa.

France Inter 6%

Others 33%

Source: Siadeco

Having contemplated some data on the main networks and on the complex situation of radio stations in a small, politically divided and multilingual country, I must mention all the networks that coexist in the three communities of the Basque Country.

When establishing the categorization of our territorial stations, two main frames of reference can be used: first of all, the situation of radio networks and their coverage; and in addition, the sort of radio. According to this second factor, we could classify the radio stations of the Basque Country in three groups: institutional or public (national, state or municipal), commercial and free (alternative and cultural). Applying both factors, we could make the following classification which is most useful for analysis of radio news sources:

1. State networks: Radio France Pays Basque, SER-Euskadi, RNE...
2. Basque Public Stations: Euskadi Irratia, Radio Euskadi...
3. Regional stations: Bizkaia Irratia, Gure Irratia, Donostiako Herri Irratia, Xiberoko Boza...
4. Municipal stations: Getxo Irratia, Arrasate Irratia, Oñati Irratia...
5. Commercial local radios: Radio 7, Kosta Irratia, Radio Correo, Onda Vasca...
6. Free radios: Euskalerrria Irratia, Xorroxin Irratia, Hala Bedi Irratia...

The stations which appear in the last four categories belong to the group of stations designated as local radios.

I must point out that it is difficult to classify some stations as it is still not clear whether they will continue to broadcast, i.e., whether they will be granted a license or not or whether they will have national or another type of coverage. Furthermore, nor is it clear which make up will be chosen (municipal, commercial or free). Such is the case of Egin Irratia, which, although today is operating as free radio - without a broadcast license- future broadcast coverage could include the three Basque historical territories of the BAC. In spite of the fact that there were sixteen municipal stations located all over the BAC in 1995, only three of the town halls where they are located have requested broadcast licenses. Thus, the other stations will have to go on broadcasting without a license.

On the other hand, nowadays free radio stations, i.e., the stations that created alternative public spheres in the Basque Country, are experiencing a serious crisis. At a meeting of the free radios of the Basque Country, held in January 1994, there were representatives from 16 stations. The promoters' pessimism in some aspects of broadcasting and the impediments and difficulties mentioned were clear. As Jacqueline Urla (1995) pointed out, "the appearance of free radios is directly related to the radical youth movement

of the eighties". Free radio came somewhat late to the Basque Country. The first stations of this type appeared in the early eighties and approximately in 1987-88, at the height of the movement, there were about 50 stations in operation. Therefore, this movement has waned significantly in last years, and some promoters of free stations have joined municipal stations.

2. News sources: conception and definition

There is no doubt that the subject developed in the following section is important and gives rise to much reflection. The knowledge and analysis of news sources in a radio newsroom will facilitate numerous data on the characteristics of these stations, the number of journalists who work in them and the dominant ideological trend in the broadcasting itself. This is due to the key role that news gathering and selection play in the structure of the news making cycle. In the planning of this cycle, gathering, selection and production are the phases which permit radio journalists to create the reality that radio broadcasting brings to the listeners hourly. After planning predictable events to be covered and designating resources, the newsperson gathers news material and chooses some items after sifting through a great number of them. The selected items are sorted out, prepared for appropriate presentation and a package is arranged to make up a bulletin for final transmission.

Station agendas and newsroom organization fall into three fields: time-day or night, working day or weekend; place-where the information is usually gathered, and thirdly, news sources. These three factors are essential to set up the framework which exists in radio newsrooms.

There is a symbiosis between media and news sources since both are mutually needed until a relationship of interdependence is reached. Professor Caminos (1995) maintains that this characteristic is essential for the radio journalist's work: "sources need journalists so that undisclosed matters reach the public, but journalists need sources to offer the best available information. News sources are thus converted in the central vertex of the journalistic activity."

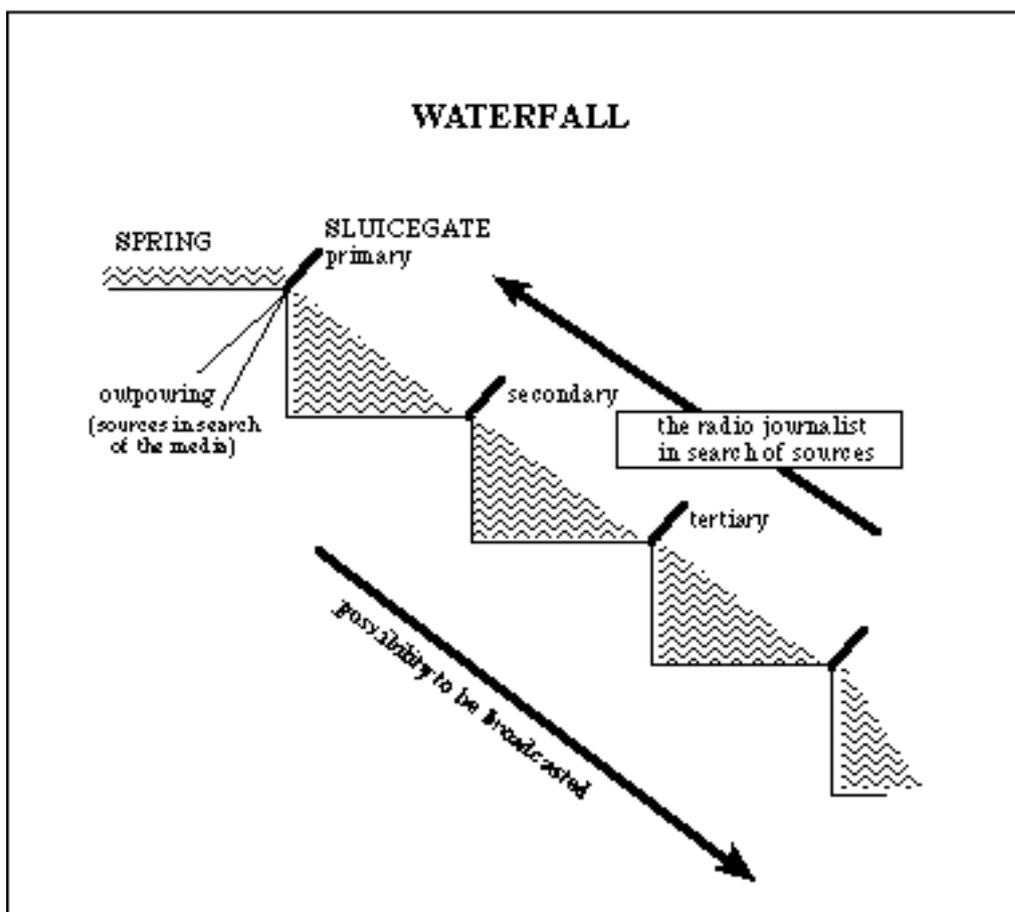
The concept of news sources must be defined prior to mentioning the type of news sources which are used in radio and after having said that every aspect related to news sources is vital in news making. To tell the truth, this concept is quite ambiguous, as Blumler and Gurevitch (1986) pointed out when indicating that it has been applied to the organizations, groups or individuals that represent the sources themselves.

I shall begin with the definition offered by Abraham Moles, who has explained in detail the concept of source. Moles uses the terms flow and well to explain the meaning of the word. According to Moles, source is the place from which the news flow comes and well the place where the news flow is received. Perhaps it would be advisable to use other terms rather than place since source can be a physical space or correspond to a person or entities. In any case, as Villafañé and others (1987: 54) have noted, the definition is correct because it refers to the communication process:

"Moles' definition is perhaps the most complete as it refers to the concept of source associated with a well and with a communication process. However, this communication process is not simple. We could say that it is a long chain made up of a succession of sources and wells, and each link of the chain is susceptible to undergoing a mediation process. It is somewhat similar to the black cases of the General Systems Theory with their inputs and outputs".

On the other hand, Mariano Cebrián (1981) offers the following definition of the source concept: "In communication theory, all communication entities that produce and broadcast messages"; which is a useful and general definition for those of us who study and research the world of journalism. López de Zuazo (1985) defines news sources as the origin of the data of a news item. This broad definition covers numerous sources, from the protagonists of the news items to hospitals or airports. Therefore, when examining this type of sources the casuistry is too large. Along the same lines, Vázquez Montalbán (1973) gives us the following definition: "News sources are the events themselves or their protagonists". This last definition, in spite of being too broad, deserves reflection since the journalist must always attempt to obtain the protagonists' words and interview the participants in the news events as well as obtain images and photographs from the place where the event took place. This work is most important as it enables us to offer the listeners first hand information.

The news source concept can be represented as a waterfall. The spring, i.e. the address of the water flow and the height of the fall are elements which should be pointed out to give us an account of the process which is being studied in the present article. As we can observe in the diagram of the waterfall, the sluiceways are what we usually call sources.



It is advisable for these lockgates to be closed to the spring as long as possible to enable us to obtain reliable information. The farther we are from the spring, the farther we are from serious broadcasting. The newsperson must go against the current and not along with it to receive the news item in the last sluiceways.

There is a group of people behind all news sources. In the source or in the well, there is the human element which supplies information. People are behind the institutions or services. In spite of this being the real conception, we can also apply the term source to institutions or services as Angel Faus (1981) points out. Therefore, when we say the teletext is the source, we must think of the journalists that offer this service; or when we say that the source is the press agency, we think of the people who provide information from that news organization.

Returning to Moles (1975), we can say that all the messages to which content analysis is applied have two fundamental aspects. The denoting message (what is said) and the connotative message (the way of saying it) coexist in all the information originating from the different news sources. With this I am referring to the stylistic and semantic aspects of each message. On the one hand, this refers to the reality that is contained within the field of meaning and on the other hand, to the aspects related to the aesthetics and the manner of expression. We must be aware of these two realities or aspects during all the communicative process from the time the news items are produced until it is released on the air or is printed in the paper. The connotative aspects of the news broadcasted by sources or released by protagonists must be taken into account as well as the denoting message because, in this way, the sources can be ranked on a scale ranging from high to low according to the value placed on them by the journalist. Gauging the news sources' reliability is basically the task of the newsperson. The more intermediaries appear in the process, the lower the reliability of the news items. Journalists know quite

well that this process is a key part of the production process of news making and therefore, they should have a clear idea from the start what sort of sources they wish to depend on.

3. Obtaining information on Basque radio stations' news sources

The present study has focused on news gathering and the choice of news sources rather than selection criteria and news presentation. Study of the news gathering process will supply data on the different levels of importance the media assign to certain sources rather than others.

Drawing up lists of news sources and observation in situ of the productive process of several Basque radio stations' news programmes were the methods used to objectively establish the relationship between the receiver structures-according to the categories set forth in the first chapter of the present article --, the stations and the incidence of news source selection which make up the raw material of the presentation, which is the phase following the productive process. The approach thus involves a look at the different lists of sources the news writing carried out in several radio stations is based on. These stations represent the different categories previously pointed out.

Within the methodology used, the initial hypothesis is that the mediation which occurs during routine professional activities in the productive process in the fields of writing and selecting news is determined by the station's receiver structures and the personal and human resources. Thus, the more resources the station has the more completely does the radio journalist develop the news item. As a result of this, it is possible to detect that less direct influence is exercised by the large stations' stable information sources.

One or two stations from each category were visited to carry out the study. The samples were taken in 1995 and 1996 and data were collected during three consecutive days from each radio station. These ordinary working days were chosen taking into account the fact that the top priority was to get good average percentages. Data were collected and there was no truly remarkable difference on the days mentioned because the plan of considering news items out of the ordinary was abandoned at the beginning of the research. Thus, the study was made on the basis of the daily working routine in news programmes, getting significant samples in the shortest period of time it could be done. The stations broadcast in the BAC and no distinction was made between the stations based on which of the two official languages of the autonomous community broadcasting was carried out in.

3.1. State radio stations

Concerning radio stations included in the first category which I set down in chapter one, it should be noted that at present, the state stations are decentralized and produce their own news programmes for the Basque provinces located in the Iberian peninsula as well as those located to the north. However, they connect with central stations when broadcasting key news programmes. Therefore, these stations' news sources are doubtlessly very similar to those used by stations whose scope is limited to the Basque Country.

The two networks chosen were RNE (Radio Nacional de España) and SER-Euskadi. The study was carried out on three consecutive working days in April of 1996. Data were collected on the sources used in news programmes broadcasted by the previously mentioned radio stations in the Basque Country.

RNE has a station located in each of the three capital cities of the historical territories in the Basque Country. A total of 29 employees-journalists and technicians-work in the three stations.

The percentages collected in RNE-Basque Country were as follow:

Source %
Journalist 34
Press conferences 20.2
Government sources 17
Press agencies 10.6
Labor unions 6.3

SER-Euskadi, a subsidiary of the state network with the highest listener rates in Spain, has five stations in the BAC.

The figures pertaining to SER-Euskadi's news programmes were quite similar to those obtained in RNE-Basque Country with the variation of a larger percentage of press conferences than news obtained by the journalist. The following percentages were also collected during three consecutive working days in April 1996.

Sources %
Press conferences 30.7
Journalist 26.9
News agencies 19.2
abor unions 7.6

3.2 Basque national radio

When analysing the resources used, Euskadi Irratia and Radio Euskadi are stations which have high budgets considering they are part of a poor media sector such as radio. 17 journalists work in the central news writing department daily in the Bilbao station while 4 work on holidays and weekends (in addition to the employees in charge of technical control). These professionals also work with an additional eight staff members in the Basque Country delegations (six in the BAC, one in Navarre and one in the North Basque Country) and six correspondents based in Madrid, Washington, London, Paris, Brussels and Rome. On the other hand, the Euskadi Irratia station in San Sebastian employs a similar number of radio journalists to carry out its news tasks (22 radio journalists work in the central news writing department, 7 correspondents are based outside the Basque Country and an additional 7 journalists work in the Basque delegations¹⁰). In addition to human resources, the great interest shown in stable sources can also be seen by the fact that three press agencies (Efe, Vasco-Press and Reuters) send news by computer link ups. Due to the fact that these are public radio stations which depend on EITB (Basque Radio-Television) and have a firm commitment to all sectors of Basque society, it is quite clear that they take great care in news gathering and selecting sources. Since the population of the BAC is made up of politically diverse fragments, it is understandable that these stations should receive greater criticism than other smaller stations which go unnoticed.

Unlike stations which work on a smaller scope, newswriting in these stations involves greater work on the journalists' part to search out news sources. While the television is more passive than the written press and depends more heavily on institutional sources, radios which have resources at their disposal are more similar to newspapers in the field of news gathering. In the two EITB stations I was able to witness how sizeable human resources made it possible to work more directly with the news items and depend on the teletext or newspaper news to a lesser degree. The radio journalist in these two stations was more concerned about checking the veracity of his sources and seeking more data or viewpoints on the news items.

The data collected in Radio Euskadi and Euskadi Irratia on the sources consulted for broadcast of midday and evening news programmes were as follow:

Source %
Journalist, correspondent, agenda 35.4
News agency 17.7
Government sources 11.3
Press 11.3
Political parties 9.6
Institutions or social associations 9.6
Experts 4.8

As these data reveal, the radio journalist becomes a key news source. The news writer or correspondent often goes out in search of news without waiting for the news to catch up with him. He thus breaks out of the passive tendency in news searching which has been detected by some researchers in television.

Thanks to the agenda, the journalist finds news items which will head news programmes.

Correspondents' news also play a key role. Nevertheless, if we add these two sources the figure is still lower than those corresponding to government sources and radio journalists. It should not be forgotten that this tendency was pointed out earlier by Professors Villafañe, Bustamante and Prado (1987) in an in situ study carried out in several major radio stations.

Concerning the identification of sources which I was able to check in these stations, my attention was drawn to the lack of ethics when mentioning news items "borrowed" from rival stations' broadcasts. Ten out of the ten times checked these went on the air without the slightest mention of the rival radio station which had initially gathered the news item. It is evident that there is no fear of the law or codes of ethics in the world of radio.

3 Territorial radio stations

The station Bizkaia Irratia was chosen to show the sources used in the third group. Five employees work in this station's news services and its broadcasting range covers almost all the historical territory of Bizkaia. The samples were taken in March of 1995 and the main morning and midday (8:00 and 13:00) news programmes as well as the evening news (20:00) were analysed.

The great use made of the written press as a news source can clearly be seen in the morning news programmes. The following table shows the combined data on the morning and midday news programmes:

Sources %
Press 50
Agency (Efe) 27.4
Monitoring 14.5
Ertzaintza (Basque police) 3.2
Government sources 3.2
Press conferences 1.6

In the 20:00 hourly news bulletin, however, no more than two sources were normally used. The tendency to use the press as a source gives way to use of the teletext and news items heard on rival stations in the following percentages:

Sources %
Agency 62.5
Monitoring 37.5

3.4. Municipal radio stations

I have previously mentioned municipal radio stations in group four. The study was focused on the station Getxo Irratia in particular as it is a clearly defined municipal radio station. Analysis of three news programmes (64 news items) revealed the following data:

Sources %
Monitoring 42.1
Press 21.8
City information 14
Social associations 12.5
City police-Basque police (Ertzaintza) 6
Radio reporter 1.5 Files 1.5

In spite of these available data, it should be pointed out that city news occupies a key position on the station, i.e. it is given great importance within the news services schema. On the other hand, if we add the two first sources, we see that an absolute majority of 63.9% is attained thus relegating other sources to only 35.5%. This clearly shows the Getxo municipal station's tendency when selecting news sources. While the station does not omit national, state and international news, these are considered to be less important and this approach gives rise to the tendency in use of news sources which we have observed. This consists of resorting to broadcasting items heard on other stations as well as reading newspapers to obtain non local news. Other stations focused on the municipality make connections to cover these three

news fields or tap the signal from stronger broadcasters such as Euskadi Irratia.

3.5. Local commercial radio stations

With respect to the stations included in the fifth group, M.Teresa Santos's study (1994) on local commercial radio stations' news sources in the BAC should be mentioned. Their main news source is the written press according to the results of Teresa Santos's research:

Sources %
Press 70
Radio broadcasts 24
Callers 4
Press conferences 2
Social associations -
Agencies -
Tas-Tas Agency -

Items broadcasted by other stations appear as the second most important news source and according to Teresa Santos, AM stations are most frequently consulted to obtain last minute news.

Continuing with the fifth group through data obtained in 1995 during the present study we can affirm that news sent by fax, i.e. from public institutions' press cabinets, ranks first as a news source. It should be kept in mind that Teresa Santos's data correspond to 1986-88 and at that time the influence of press cabinets was not so great. However, the following data correspond to 1995:

Sources %
Government sources 31.3
Press 19.3
Radio broadcasts 18.1
Files 12.
Callers 7.2
Social institutions 4.8
Ertzaintza 4
Radio reporter 2.4

Use of fax has become quite commonplace in these stations and its influence has been widely felt as is shown by the data above.

3.6. Free radio stations

When analysing the next group of radio stations, it is seen that current events do not play the key role they are assigned in free noncommercial radio stations since the latter's main feature is news. This tendency has been very common in the history of pirate radio stations. Due to this aspect, it is evident that these stations' main news sources are social organizations. In Teresa Santos's research (1994), news sources of the Basque Autonomous Community's free radio stations were ranked as follow:

Sources %
Written press 4
Radio news items heard on other stations -
Callers 4
Press conferences -
Social organizations 81
Agencies -
Tas-Tas Agency 11

As can be seen in the table, the alternative news comes from social organizations. These free radio stations do not have teletexts and since they normally have contacts with the leftist Basque nationalist movement, they often choose news which occurs in this social group or which is of interest to the members of the group. This news is frequently boycotted by the more powerful media.

In order to fill the gap caused by lack of a news agency and to create closer relations among the free radio stations in the Basque Country, the alternative agency Tas-Tas was created. Three telephones installed in Bilbao, Vitoria and Errenteria are used to collect news to be sent to the free radio station members of the agency.

Nevertheless, by 1995, this agency had been discontinued. The data in the following samples correspond to the news sources used by free Basque radio stations last year (February 1995):

Sources %

Associations or social movements 58.9

Written press 20.5

Political parties 10.2

Journalists and collaborators 7.7

Labor unions 2.5

Use of fax has become quite common in free radio stations' newsrooms and has silenced the voice of social movements and associations which previously had direct access to the microphones. Messages sent by fax have become more widely used.

On the other hand, there is no substantial change between the data collected by Teresa Santos and those which are presented above. It should be kept in mind that approximately eight years have elapsed between the two samples. However, the free radio movement is much weaker than before and proof of this is the lack of desire to start up another news source of its own.

4. Conclusions

Examination of news programmes in some Basque radio stations does not indicate that the radio journalist consults different news sources. Unfortunately, the habit of confirming information is not widespread in most of the radio stations included in our study. This affirmation leads us to our first conclusion. The more locally orientated the radio station, the stronger its tendency to receive news from only one source. On the other hand, in the autonomous radio stations in the Basque Autonomous Community, the newsperson's effort to confirm and work on the news items when time permits can be clearly observed. This is especially clear in the case of major news items when the radio journalist examines the news sources more deeply and makes an effort to obtain news from very different sources. In any case, the habit of making use of official news sources is quite widespread. As is the case of newspapers, the key task of radio newsrooms is to find reliable, predictable and programmable news raw material since these same stations also broadcast standard news. This is proof of the bureaucratic affinity principle mentioned by Mark Fishman (1980). Institutional sources'/agencies' and the media's bureaucratic makeup is similar and they are dependent on each other. All radio workers know that there is a lower news flow at the weekend because the institutions are closed. This is the reason, to a certain extent, why radio stations do not take greater care in weekend news programming.

As a second conclusion, we can state that the journalistic research carried out in radio stations located in the Basque Country leaves a great deal to be desired. The radio journalist is constantly rushed for time and lacks the desire or calm necessary to set up continuous contact with news sources. This is clearly reflected by the nonexistent journalistic research carried out in Basque stations. In addition, it appears that this type of research journalism will not be very successful in future. The truth is that the radio is still the television and press's poor relation. Some private statewide radio programmes can be mentioned as an exception, but the radio newsperson may be more guided by political interests rather than the desire to carry out research journalism.

The third conclusion is that of the competition which exists between items heard on other stations and reading the daily press, both considered news sources, there is a greater tendency to consult the press for morning news programmes. Concerning items heard on other stations, I have run into journalists who only take them into account in rare cases.

Manipulation of news items is a subject that always comes up when studying radio stations. Therefore, in order to avoid errors and particular bias, we must make use of trustworthy sources. It should be kept in mind that the closer the newsperson is to the origin of the news, the more able he will be to offer proper

journalistic news. Thus, it is not surprising that the radio journalist is quite pleased when he manages to obtain data from primary sources without any intermediaries or is actually present at what other authors have called the news site. In any case, even if the radio newsperson does not rely excessively on news sources and is pleased with the work he has done, everything is in vain if he does not carry out his task ethically and professionally.

We must not forget that some sources have subtle malicious mechanisms to control the type of news they wish to release and how they wish it to be made public. This control arises in news sources and Txema Ramírez's (1995) suggestion on how to avoid it is quite useful: to take into account or give greater opportunities to the less powerful news sources and that each media should have its own diary by subjects.

Large and small radio stations alike depend excessively on large communications companies for news. Ranging from CNN and the large television channels to the autonomous radio stations in the Basque Country, the same news sources are used and similar routines are carried out to obtain news. The present study only detected a wide enough news field for the radio to offer a fresh approach to the process of creating and elaborating news from radio reporters on a municipal level. This is due to the fact that radio can still compete at the same municipal level with the other large media.

In a sense, the radio journalist does not usually do more than amplify the news items that news agencies and institutions release to the public. This is clearly seen in the Basque radio stations included in the present study.

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Notas

1. The Basque Nationalist Party

2. The Spanish government created legislation in 1908 that gave the central state the right to establish and exploit all systems for broadcasting. Thus it happened that "when the Basque government agreed to start Euskal Irrati Telebista in 1982, their action constituted the most significant institutional change of broadcasting since the Spanish civil war. It was, moreover, a direct assault on the national law that had regulated radioware communication for over seventy years" (Richard Maxwell, 1996: 335).

3. As professor Carmelo Garitaonandia (1995: 3) has pointed out "these television and radio stations are vital to the development of Basque culture as they are the only ones operating in this language except for some local radio stations in the Basque Country located on both sides of the border".

4. EKB, the main Basque Culture Association, filed a complaint against the Spanish state with the UN Economic, Social and Cultural Committee on 29 April 1996. This denouncement was prompted, among other issues, by the fact that the Spanish Public Television broadcasts less than 0.1% of total programming in Basque in the BAC and Navarre. Euskal Irratia, the only station which broadcasts in Basque in Pamplona, was denied permission to broadcast on October 25 1990. This gave rise to complaints that their native language was being discriminated against from most of the 80,000 Basque speakers in the area.

5. The total cost per radio hour that Basque inhabitants listen to is approximately 5 pesetas (\$0.05). Therefore, I think that the Basque Public Radio Network is not as expensive for the Basque people as has been suggested by other authors (Díaz Mancisidor, 1994).

6. Since 1990 there has been only one national newspaper in Basque (Euskaldunon Egunkaria-Basque People's Newspaper) which had daily average circulation of 12,500 copies in 1996 (Euskaldunon Egunkaria. December 6. 1996:11).

7. These data cover the whole year and have been published by CIES. There is a 95% reliability level.

8. There are 70,000 potential listeners for Basque language broadcasting in the northern territory. This datum appeared in the newspaper Egin on 26 September 1995.

9. These data were published by SIADECO in 1991. 10All data correspond to April 1995.