

Emergency journalism after a judicial closure: birth and death of the newspaper *Egunero*

Periodismo de emergencia tras un cierre judicial:
nacimiento y muerte del periódico *Egunero*

Larrialdi-kazetaritza itxiera judizial baten ondoren:
Egunero egunkariaren jaiotza eta heriotza

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RESUMEN LABURPENA ABSTRACT

Los empleados del único periódico publicado enteramente en euskera (*Euskaldunon Egunkaria*), cerrado mediante orden judicial por presunta conexión con el terrorismo, se las arreglaron para publicar otro periódico (*Egunero*) el día después de la intervención policial (21 de febrero de 2003) y continuaron publicando un número diario del mismo durante cuatro meses, hasta la creación de un nuevo periódico de tirada diaria en euskera (*Berria*). En este estudio se analiza cómo un grupo de antiguos empleados de un medio de comunicación, desprovisto de todas sus instalaciones y financiación económica, se las arregló para publicar un periódico temporal durante cuatro meses en el marco de una situación judicial incierta.

Euskara hutsean argitaratutako egunkari bakarra (Euskaldunon Egunkaria) agindu judizial bidez itxi eta biharamunean (2003ko otsailaren 21ean), bertako langileek beste egunkari bat (Egunero) ateratzea lortu zuten eta, ondorengo lau hilabeteetan, egunero argitaratu zuten, euskarazko egunkari estandar berria (Berria) sortu zuten arte. Ikerketa honetan aztertzen da komunikabide bateko langile-ohien talde bat, euren egoitzak eta diru kontuak itxita zeuzkatela, nola moldatu zen lau hilabetez behin-behineko egunkari bat argitaratzeko ziurgabetasun handiko egoera judizial baten erdian.

The employees of the only newspaper published entirely in Basque (*Euskaldunon Egunkaria*), shut down by a judicial order for alleged terrorist connections, managed to publish another newspaper (*Egunero*) the day after the police intervention (February 21, 2003), and continued publishing a daily issue for four months, until the foundation of a new standard newspaper in Basque (*Berria*). This study analyses how a group of former employees of a media organization, dispossessed of all its premises and economic funds, managed to publish a new temporary newspaper for four months, in the context of an uncertain judicial situation.

PALABRAS CLAVE GAKO-HITZAK KEY WORDS

Berria, conflicto, Egunero, Egunkaria, periodismo, prensa.
Berria, gatazka, Egunero, Egunkaria, kazetaritza, prentsa.
Berria, conflict, Egunero, Egunkaria, journalism, press.

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Fecha de recepción/Harrera data: 17/11/2018
Fecha de aceptación/Onartze data: 12/05/2019

On February 20, 2003 the Spanish Civil Guard shut down the only Basque daily newspaper, *Euskaldunon Egunkaria* – which means “newspaper of the Basque-speakers” – and arrested ten members and former members of the staff and board, following the orders of a judge in the Audiencia Nacional, the Spanish special court for terrorist affairs, on the grounds that it was an instrument of ETA, the Basque pro-independence armed group. It was the abrupt end of twelve years of a paper published in all the Basque speaking areas, on both sides of the French-Spanish border. Seven years later, all the defendants were absolved on all counts. The jury resolved that there was no evidence of any link between ETA and *Egunkaria*¹. However, *Egunkaria* was never published again.

The closure of *Egunkaria* came during a very troubled period in the Basque Country. Soon after Aznar came to power in Spain in 1996, ETA initiated a deadly campaign targeting politicians of the so-called Spanish *constitutionalist* parties, mainly the right-wing PP (Partido Popular) and the left-wing PSOE (Partido Socialista Obrero Español), as well as journalists, judges and businessmen, in order to force the government to negotiate. The Spanish government opted for a hard line and initiated, aided by some judges, a new counterterrorism policy; they broadened their target from the armed group to the political and civil organizations considered to be in ETA’s orbit. In December 1998, all twenty-three members of the leadership of Herri Batasuna, the name at the time of the political party of the pro-independence Nationalist Left, were sentenced to prison for diffusing an electoral campaign video made by ETA. In July 1998, after some other judicial operations against civil organizations linked to the Nationalist Left, the daily newspaper *Egin* was shut down by a judicial order, accused of being an instrument of ETA. After the parenthesis of the Lizarra-Garazi peace process from September 1998 to November 1999, ETA resumed, and even accelerated, its armed campaign against politicians and other civilian targets, and the Spanish political and judicial authorities responded with an even harder line since the PP got an absolute majority in the 2000 elections. The climax of the policies against what was called “*entorno de ETA*” – ETA’s environment – came when the Spanish parliament approved in 2002 a new Party Law, a legal text designed to outlaw the political party of the Nationalist Left (now named Batasuna), which was eventually banned by a Supreme Court sentence in March 2003, later confirmed by a Constitutional Court ruling in January 2004.

That was the political context on February 20, 2003, when a judge of the Audiencia Nacional ordered the closure of *Egunkaria*, the only

¹ Audiencia Nacional (2010), Sentencia nº 27/2010, Sección Primera, Sala de lo Penal, Madrid.

daily newspaper published entirely in Basque. It was the second Basque language daily paper in history. The first one, *Eguna*, was founded in January 1937 in the midst of the Spanish Civil War by members of the PNV, the Basque Nationalist Party in charge of the autonomous Basque government. Its short lifetime also ended by force, when Bilbao was taken by Pro-Franco troops in June 1937 and all Republican media organizations were seized and any publication in Basque was strictly banned². Over time, publications in the Basque language appeared again; the post-1975 democratic system enabled the foundation of multiple and plural media organizations, but Basque speakers would have to wait until 1990 to have a daily paper in their language. *Egunkaria* newspaper was founded on 6 December 1990, driven by a group of journalists and other professionals linked to Basque cultural circles who organized a movement called “Egunkaria Sortzen” – meaning “creating a daily newspaper” – funded by contributions of thousands of shareholders through a giant fundraising campaign³. *Egunkaria* emerged in a context of heightened political controversy, as the Basque Government confronted *Egunkaria Sortzen*’s project, arguing that the newspaper in Basque should be owned by a public enterprise with public funds, and commissioned a group of journalists to design a public newspaper project⁴. However, *Egunkaria Sortzen* won the race; but the price was to start without any public subsidies and with the opposition of the Basque Government, which was a very risky adventure given that the Basque speaking market was too limited to guarantee economical viability to the new project. In any case, *Egunkaria* made its way, demonstrated that there was a market willing to consume a daily paper in Basque, improved its relationship with the public institutions and started to receive public subsidies from 1994. What in December 1990 was a newborn paper with an uncertain viability and future had become, by February 2003, a developed and stable enterprise with almost a hundred professionals and more than 50,000 readers⁵.

Suddenly, all that seemed to vanish when heavily armed Civil Guards entered the headquarters of *Egunkaria* in the early morning

2 Joseba Agirreazkuenaga: “Prensa euskaraz: 1936.eko Gudaldian eta Lehen Euskal Gobernuaren garaian”, *Jakin*, 50, 1989, pp. 95-110; Javier Díaz Noci: “Los medios de comunicación y la normalización del euskera: balance de dieciséis años”, *RIEV*, 43, 2, 1998, pp. 441-459.

3 Jexumari Zalakain: *Joxemiren Uzta. Euskal prentsa herri proiektua da*, Tafalla, Txalaparta, 1993.

4 Javier Díaz Noci: “El caso de Euskaldunon Egunkaria: Lengua Vasca, Información y libertad de expresión”, VII Congreso de la Asociación de Historiadores de la Comunicación. 25 años de la libertad de expresión, Barcelona, Universitat Pompeu Fabra, 2004.

5 Teresa Agirreazaldegí and Txema Ramírez de la Piscina: “Euskaldunon Egunkaria: diario de referencia de la cultura vasca”, *Zer Revista de Estudios de Comunicación*, 14, 26, 2009, pp. 185-209.

of February 20, 2003. The Civil Guard had the president of the Board of Directors, Joan Mari Torrealdai, the CEO of the editing enterprise, Iñaki Uribe, and the editor of the paper, Martxelo Otamendi, as well as other seven members and former members of the staff, in isolated detention⁶; had seized *Egunkaria*'s headquarters and all territorial offices – except the one in Bayonne, in the French Basque Country –; and the judge had ordered the blocking of all current accounts and financial funds of Egunkaria SA, the editing company. However, the very next day, on February 21, 2003 a new daily paper was born. *Egunero*, which means “daily”, a sixteen page black and white tabloid newspaper, went out with the following headline: “Itxia baina ez isildua” (“Closed but not silenced”). It was the third daily Basque speaking newspaper in history.

The objective of this research is to analyze the factors that made possible the creation and existence of a sui generis newspaper such as *Egunero* in very exceptional circumstances, such as the judicial closure of its predecessor, *Egunkaria*.

This case study has been carried out following qualitative research strategies. Explanatory case study methodology is used when ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions are posed, to shed light on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context⁷, as is the case in the present research. As put by Schramm⁸, the essence of a case study is that “it tries to illuminate a decision or set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result”. This is what this investigation intends, in relation to the decisions taken by the makers of the newspaper *Egunero*.

In case study interviews, documents, observations, and secondary analyses are usually the main data sources. In this investigation, documents such as the whole collection of the *Egunero* issues have been observed and analyzed, but the main tool for data collection in this case

2. METHODOLOGY

6 Seven out of ten detainees in the operation against *Egunkaria* in February 2003 claimed that they had been ill-treated and tortured while in solitary confinement. Six of them were imprisoned. The torture allegations were closed without trial, but the European Court of Human Rights ruled in favor of the only one who appealed to Strasbourg, the editor Martxelo Otamendi. The ruling established that the Spanish court closed the case without having investigated it sufficiently, and it was ordered to pay the editor compensation of €24,000 (Court of Strasbourg, Third Section, Case of Otamendi Egiguren V. Spain, 47303/08, October 16, 2013).

7 Robert K. Yin: *Case Study Research. Design and Methods*, 2nd edn, London, Sage Publications, 1994.

8 Wilbur Schramm: *Notes on Case Studies of Instructional Media Project*, Washington, DC, Information Center on Instructional Technology, 1971.

study was episodic interviewing. According to Flick⁹, subjects' experiences of a certain domain are stored and remembered in forms of "narrative-episodic and semantic knowledge". Episodic interview is a tool used to access both forms of knowledge: open narrative collects narrative-episodic knowledge, while semantic knowledge is made accessible by specific pointed questions.

Seven people who were instrumental in the process of making *Egurnero* were interviewed for this investigation: the CEO of the publishing house, Joanmari Larrarte; the editor of the newsroom, Andres Gostin; the head of production, Pilar Mendibil; the head of distribution, Manex Txopeitia; the manager, Mikel Sorozabal; the head of advertising, Igor Sota; and the head of Technology, Oskar Angulo. None of them had any official responsibility within the enterprise or the newsroom, as the special circumstances prevented the naming of any official staff. However, their unofficial responsibilities as stated above were real. The interviews were carried out from June to August, in the summer of 2010.

3. STATE OF THE QUESTION

The case of *Egurnero* has not been addressed by scholars, aside from some brief mentions in works about *Egunkaria*, its predecessor¹⁰. There is no extensive account, not even journalistic, about the experience of creating and publishing this temporary newspaper in such exceptional circumstances. Only the journalist Agirre, in her narration about the shutting down of *Egunkaria*, dedicates some lines to briefly relate how the former workers of the silenced paper manage to put a new one in place¹¹.

The experience of *Egunkaria* has been researched from different perspectives: Zalakain analyzed the creation process of the project¹²; Díaz Noci analyzed the closure of *Egunkaria* when the judicial procedure

9 Uwe Flick: *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*, 2nd edn, London, Sage Publications Ltd, 2002.

10 Javier Díaz Noci: *Kazetaritza hizkuntza minorizatueta: Espainiako kasua*, Bilbao, Servicio Editorial de la Universidad del País Vasco, 2009; 'Historia del periodismo vasco: 1600-2010', *Mediatika Cuadernos de Medios de Comunicación*, 13, 2012, pp. 1-261; Jexuxmari Zalakain: "Egunkaria itxi dute, baina proiektua bizirik dago", *Uztaro*, 45, 2003, pp. 29-69; Teresa Agirreazaldegui and Txema Ramirez de la Piscina: "Euskaldunon Egunkaria: diario de referencia de la cultura vasca", *Zer Revista de Estudios de Comunicación*, 14, 26, 2009, pp. 185-209.

11 Lorea Agirre: *Gezurra ari du. Egunkariaren itxieraren kronika*, Donostia, Askoren artean, 2004.

12 See notes 3 and 10.

was just started¹³; Ibarra and Zallo studied the whole judicial procedure to conclude that there was no justification for the closure¹⁴; and Urzelai compiled the details of the seven-year-long procedure against the paper and the defendants that were eventually absolved on all counts¹⁵; Agirreazaldegi and Ramirez de la Piscina examined the newspaper's social and linguistic contribution¹⁶.

The case of the pioneer Basque newspaper, *Eguna*, which the Pro-Franco authorities also closed by force, has been studied by, among others, Reizabal¹⁷, Diaz Noci¹⁸, Agirreazkuenaga¹⁹ and Kintana²⁰. The Dictatorship that emerged from the outcome of the Civil War did not allow the emergence of any publication to fill the vacuum left by *Eguna*.

The end of another Basque language publication, the weekly magazine *Eskualduna* – in fact, one of the oldest press products published entirely in Basque, since it was founded in 1887 – had some similarities with the case studied here, since it was closed by a government order and was shortly replaced by another publication also in Basque, *Herria*. *Eskualduna* was a very conservative paper edited in Baiona and distributed all over the continental Basque Country, i.e. the Basque speaking areas in the French territory²¹. During the Spanish Civil War, *Eskualduna* enthusiastically supported the Pro-Franco side and, during the Second World War and the Nazi invasion of France, embraced the pro-Nazi Vichy Regime. After the Allies' victory, the new authorities closed *Eskualduna* and, a few months later, a group of moderate priests led by Pierre Laffite created *Herria*, a weekly magazine still alive today²².

Other cases of newspapers closed or seized in the Basque Country and Spain by the authorities have been studied, such as the ones closed

13 See note 4.

14 Pedro Ibarra and Ramón Zallo: "El papel de *Egunkaria* y las consecuencias de su clausura", in Txema Ramirez de la Piscina, Teresa Agirreazaldegi, Pedro Ibarra and Ramón Zallo (eds.), *Egunkaria: la verdad de un sueño*, Donostia, Ttartalo, 2010, pp. 39-127.

15 Pello Urzelai: *Egunkaria-ren ameskaiztoa*, Donostia, Berria, 2010.

16 See note 5.

17 Gorka Reizabal Arruabarrena: *Eguna, único diario en euskara (Bilbao, 1937)*, Thesis, Universidad de Navarra, 1973.

18 Javier Díaz Noci: "Sociedad y medios de comunicación en lengua vasca en el periodo de entreguerras (1919-1937)", *Anales de Historia Contemporanea*, 11, 1995, pp. 263-268.

19 See note 2.

20 Jurgi Kintana: "Euskarazko prentsaren hasiera eta garapena Bilbon (1815-1937)", *Revista de humanidades y ciencias sociales de Bilbao*, 16, 2005, pp. 141-169.

21 Eneko Bidegain, *Lehen Mundu Gerra 'Eskualduna' astekarian*, Bilbo, Euskaltzaindia, 2013.

22 Javier Díaz Noci, *Mediatika Cuadernos de Medios de Comunicación*, 13, 2012, pp. 1-261.

by the pro-Franco authorities after the outcome of the Civil War²³, and the closure of the daily *Madrid* in a much later period of the Franco years, in 1971²⁴.

The closest precedent of the shutting down of *Egunkaria* and the emergence of *Egunero* was the closure of *Egin* and the subsequent creation of *Euskadi Información*. Just five years earlier it had been closed by the same procedure – a precautionary decision by a judge of the Audiencia Nacional – for the same accusations (links with ETA). The victims of this closure reacted in the same way, i.e. publishing the very next day a temporary newspaper until the foundation of a new enterprise to publish a new standard newspaper, *Gara*. The closure of *Egin* and its radio station Egin Irratia, was an important landmark in the history of Basque journalism, and the temporary publication of *Euskadi Información* over a six month period was an important part of that episode. However, there is no research about the case, and information is scarce. The main, and almost only source is an unsigned collective book written by former workers of *Egin* about the closure of their newspaper, in which a chapter is devoted to *Euskadi Información*²⁵.

4. THE MAKING OF THE PAPER

In the early hours of February 20, 2003, while a contingent of heavily armed Civil Guards were searching their headquarters in Andoain, a town 15 kilometers inland of San Sebastian, four members of the *Egunkaria* staff were holding a meeting inside a car. The police operation under way turned these four people into the main leaders of the company, as their president, their CEO and the editor, among others, were under arrest. Telephones started ringing at three in the morning and by four they found themselves in a car, trying to understand what was really happening and discussing how to react. Before dawn, they managed to find a more appropriate place to meet - the premises of a Basque language academy in Andoain, just 850 meters away from their headquarters. As day broke, the rest of *Egunkaria's* workers began arriving in Andoain; those with some responsibilities within the company were directed to the new temporary headquarters while everyone else gathered in front of the main headquarters, occupied at the time by the Civil Guard.

23 Begoña Zalbidea, *Prensa del Movimiento en España: 1936-1983*, Bilbo, Servicio Editorial de la Universidad del País Vasco, 1996; "La prensa del Movimiento en Euskadi", *Vasconia Cuadernos de Historia-Geografía*, 27, 1998, pp. 225-233.

24 Myriam Lafuente: *El diario Madrid: Historia del cierre de un periódico durante el franquismo*, Murcia, UCAM/EDOS, 2002.

25 Euskadi Información: *La ley del silencio*, Hernani, Birsortu SL, 1998.

The first decision of the non-arrested members of staff was that, whatever the judge's decision, whatever the fate of the *Egunkaria* brand, they would try to publish a Basque language newspaper the next morning. That became the main priority of the day: Basque readers should have their daily dose of print news in their language. The former *Egin* workers' reaction to the closure of their paper five years previously, served as an important precedent in influencing that decision, according to one of the staff members: "That showed us the way"²⁶.

There were multiple decisions to make and problems to solve in order to fulfill their objective. The first important issue, finding a newsroom, was solved very quickly. The editing company of *Egunkaria*, associated with some local associations, had launched a daily newspaper with only local news in Tolosaldea, a district of 45,000 inhabitants in the inland of Gipuzkoa: *Tolosaldean Egunero*. Although *Egunkaria SA* was the main share holder, it was a separate company, *Tolosako Komunikabideak SL*. There were only eight desks and as many computers – while not enough for a standard newspaper, it could work for an emergency newspaper. The local paper found a place to continue working - the offices of one of their associates, the monthly magazine *Galtzaundi*, and published their local daily paper under the magazine's name.

With just eight computers, they organized a team of fourteen journalists to produce the paper of the day: one computer for production, and one computer for each two journalists who would work in pairs, one online and one offline. Aside from the fourteen journalists, two production technicians, two computer technicians and a designer were recruited. The rest of *Egunkaria's* employees were occupied in other multiple tasks related to the closure of their paper and the police operation.

The first two decisions related to the informative product were easy to make: it would not have the usual sections of a daily paper, but only one devoted to the closure of the paper, and it would be in black and white, for technical reasons. The outcome of the third decision, whether to have eight or sixteen pages, was to try and produce a sixteen-page paper.

The journalists had to start from scratch in many ways. All their contact agendas, as well as document and photo archives, were unavailable inside the seized headquarters, and they had no news or photo agency service. The computer had Internet access, but their corporate email addresses were inaccessible; Gmail service did not even exist, but there were other services available with which to set up free email addresses²⁷.

²⁶ Joanmari Larrarte, in person interview, Andoain, June 3, 2010.

²⁷ Andres Gostin, in person interview, Azkoitia, June 4, 2010.

When the team started working to elaborate a sixteen-page newspaper, they would have to come up with a name for their product. Neither the journalists nor their lawyers knew what the legal situation was. They could easily guess that, in any case, it would not be prudent to use the masthead of *Egunkaria*. In a context of legal uncertainty, what did seem certain was that the new publications would need a legal masthead, a legal company and a director. Given that there was no time to create a new company, they opted for the local company, Tolosako Komunikabideak SL. It was a very short-term temporary decision, the best option being to create a new company, which they would do as soon as possible. Consequently, they used the masthead owned by the chosen company, *Egunero*, but with a different geographic reference: instead of *Tolosaldean Egunero* (“daily in the Tolosaldea district”), *Euskal Herrian Egunero* (“daily in the Basque Country”).²⁸

More decisions were taken related to the uncertain legal situation. As a safeguard, all information pieces were unsigned, as no one knew what to expect from the courts. That decision was maintained during the four months that *Egunero* was published with the only signed pieces being the op-eds and some articles made by external contributors.

It was not only about writing news pieces. The first job for the commercial team was to call advertisers and advertising agents who had ads contracted for the next day’s *Egunkaria* issue. They would be informed that a newspaper in Basque, whatever the name, would be published and, if they wanted, their ads would appear in that temporary paper. Some of them accepted the deal. The first issue of *Egunero* published adverts from the Basque government (Health and Housing ministries), a trade union (LAB), an association of municipalities (Udabiltza), an association of Basque language organizations (Kontseilua), and a political party (EB).²⁹

The printing of the paper was another big issue. *Egunkaria* had never owned a rotary press. In 2003, it had been printed for five years on the printing press of Zeroa Multimedia, the owner of the *Diario de Noticias*, a newspaper in Pamplona with links to moderate Basque nationalists. The company was prepared to publish the new temporary paper, provided that the promoters of *Egunero* signed a contract ensuring that they did not have any links with *Egunkaria*. Such links did exist, but the contract was signed, declaring that they did not. Thousands of copies of *Egunero* were printed, and several vans began distributing them throughout the Basque territories.

²⁸ Pili Mendibil, in person interview, Andoain, May 27, 2010.

²⁹ Igor Sota, in person interview, Bilbao, June 10, 2010.

Each day, the distribution section decides exactly how many copies will be printed that morning. As the headquarters was closed, on that day the team did not have access to their data base. However, they knew that day would be special, and decided to print 60,000 copies, three times as many as *Egunkaria* up to that point, and much more than any Basque language newspaper ever. They sold out in most of the kiosks.³⁰

The first issue did not publish, as it should have, the name of the editing company or of the editor, but the second issue, the one dated February 22, did: the editing company was Tolosaldeko Komunikabideak SL and the editor was Joxemi Saizar, simply because he was the editor of the local newspaper from which the new paper took its masthead. The third issue published the name of a new editor: Eneko Bidegain. Until the closure of *Egunkaria*, Bidegain was the head of the delegation in Bayonne. Now, he was appointed editor because, as a French citizen, there was less risk of him being prosecuted by the Audiencia Nacional. Bidegain would officially be the editor of *Egunero* for the next four months but, as the former head of the only delegation of *Egunkaria* still open, he would focus more on spreading news about *Egunkaria*'s closure all over France and Europe rather than working for the transitional paper.

As soon as possible, a new editing company was created: Bagabiltza SL. Its name appeared for the first time in the issue dated March 21. According to documentation in the Mercantile Register of Gipuzkoa, the company was founded with an initial capital of 3,000 Euros (the legal minimum). The editor himself, Bidegain, owned 99.8% of the company, holding 500 of the 501 six-Euro shares, and was also the company's sole administrator³¹.

Bagabiltza SL was a company with no contracted workers and, therefore, did not pay any salaries. In official terms, all *Egunkaria*'s former workers were now jobless, receiving unemployment benefit, with some of them working for Bagabiltza SL as volunteers, just as the rest were volunteering in other tasks related to the reaction to the closure. It was an irregular and illegal procedure, but it was a risk they decided to take. To all other intents and purposes, Bagabiltza SL acted as any other company, fulfilling all its commercial and legal obligations in its relations with other companies and with official institutions.³²

5. THE EVOLUTION OF *EGUNERO*

30 Manex Txopeitia, in person interview, Andoain, June 3, 2010.

31 Mercantil Register of Gipuzkoa: Depósito de Cuentas, Sociedad Bagabiltza Hedabideak SL, Tomo 2022, Folio 127, 2003.

32 Mikel Sorozabal, in person interview, Donostia, June 22, 2010.

When the Audiencia Nacional closed down *Egunkaria*, it also blocked all its bank accounts. The manager of Egunkaria SA was able to withdraw 6,000 Euros in cash early in the morning on February 20, in order to address some urgent needs. From then on, they would be unable to touch any of Egunkaria SA's money. Companies awaiting payment would have to wait until the court, several weeks later, ordered the dissolution of the *Egunkaria* company, and facilitated the due payments. In any case, beyond the initial difficulties due to cash shortage, the new company (Bagabiltza SL) did not have any serious economic problems. In fact, *Egunero* was the most economically profitable newspaper in Basque ever. Firstly, they did not have any paid workers; all were volunteers. Secondly, its production was less costly than usual newspapers, as it had fewer pages than standard papers, while the copy price was standard, i.e. 80 cents. Finally, its sales numbers were higher than any other previous paper in Basque, because many people who opposed the closure of *Egunkaria* expressed their solidarity by buying the new paper. Unlike Basque language media organizations in general, *Egunero* did not receive any public subsidies – none were applied for since the priority was the project for a new standard newspaper and *Egunero* was a transitional one.

The headquarters in Tolosa, while appropriate as a temporary solution, were too small for a more long term operation and, moreover, they were needed by the local newspaper. The wave of solidarity resulting from the closure also had an effect on this issue: the Local Authority of Tolosa offered premises for free, and two private individuals offered one in San Sebastian and another in Hernani, an inland town near San Sebastian. The premises in Hernani were chosen, for the simple reason that they had been used as the newsroom for *Euskadi Información* in 1998 and had the proper wiring already in place. In Pamplona, a private individual provided an office in the same building as the closed *Egunkaria*'s old delegation. In Bilbao and Vitoria-Gasteiz *Egunero*'s journalists worked from home, whilst in Bayonne the *Egunkaria* office was still open.

Egunero published adverts every day. To be precise, in the 103 issues released over four months, it published 21,381 modules. It ran an average of 207 modules per day, a little more than four full pages daily, taking into account that each page is divided into 50 advertising modules. Public institutions were the biggest advertisers. In fact, the institution which placed the most adverts and, therefore, invested the most money in *Egunero* was the Basque regional government (3,730 modules in total). The provincial governments of Araba, Gipuzkoa and Bizkaia, as well as some municipalities, were also habitual advertisers.

Egunero printed the most copies in the first three days of its existence. From then on, sales in kiosks gradually decreased while subs-

scribers increased as the department became better organized. After selling out the 60,000 copies printed on the first day, on the following five days they printed just over 45,000 copies, and sold about 30,000. From then on, sales gradually decreased and, in June, the last month of *Egunero*'s life, they printed an average of 35,000 copies and sold an average of 22,000.

According to CIES, a company specialized in Basque media audience surveys, *Egunero* had an average readership of 51,000 when the only media survey done during *Egunero*'s existence was carried out, i.e. from March 20 to April 7. It was the sixth newspaper in terms of readership in the Basque Autonomous Community after *El Correo*, *El Diario Vasco*, *Gara*, *Deia* and *Marca*, and the seventh in Navarre, after *Diario de Navarra*, *Diario de Noticias de Navarra*, *Gara*, *Marca*, *El País* and *El Mundo*³³.

On the first day, February 20, there were fourteen journalists working for *Egunero*, but the number of staff increased from the very next day. Over time, the conditions for making a proper newspaper improved. In the initial period in Tolosa they had no news agency service, nor any photo archive. By the time of the move to Hernani, *Egunkaria*'s digital photo archive had been recovered and the services of the Efe agency contracted.

Egunero had an internet edition from the very beginning. The web *egunkaria.com*, just like the print newspaper, was shut down by judicial order, and its former workers did not open a domain for the first day. However, Indymedia (Independent Media Center), a global publishing network, offered them their website from which to temporarily host *Egunero*'s content. Indymedia was needed only for one day, as *egunero.info* was operative by February 21, and remained so throughout the time *Egunero* was being published. It was limited to publishing the pieces already printed in the paper edition.

The number of pages in *Egunero* increased over time, reaching a maximum of 32. On the last day of its existence, June 20, it was a 24-page newspaper. Although the possibility to improve the product by publishing in color existed, the decision to use only black and white was a deliberate one. This, along with decision to limit the number of pages was an attempt to highlight the 'abnormality' of the situation as a reminder of the closure of *Egunkaria*.

The contents of the publication evolved towards a standard model of newspaper. The first nine days it was a 16-page monographic exclusively about the closure of *Egunkaria* and its consequences: 14 pages were devoted to news, and two pages to op-eds. On March 4, *Egunero*

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33 CIES: Estudio de Audiencia de Medios de Euskadi y Navarra, 1a ola de 2003.

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became a newspaper with general information structured in the usual sections, plus the special section on the closure.

On May 7, the front-page headline of *Egunero* announced that five million Euros would be needed “for the new daily paper”. This kicked off a major fundraising campaign. Every day in May and June, *Egunero* published information and announcements about the campaign, together with adverts promoting it. On June 20 *Egunero*’s headline announced its own death: “From tomorrow, *Berria*”.

On the day of the closure, the journalists who went to the temporary newsroom in Tolosa with the aim of making a newspaper for the next morning did not know if they would succeed. The main reason for that uncertainty was that they had no idea how the Audiencia Nacional would act regarding their attempt. A few months later they realized they had been right to worry about possible judicial consequences. On October 16, 2003, there was a second police operation related to the *Egunkaria* case. The same judge of the Audiencia Nacional ordered the arrest of nine more people somehow linked to *Egunkaria*. One of them was Amando Hernandez, the head of the company Tolosako Komunikabideak SL, the publisher of the local paper *Tolosaldean Egunero* but also, in official terms, the publisher of *Egunero* until a new company was created. In the end, he was not prosecuted, despite spending several nights in isolated detention. The head of Technology of *Egunero* remarks that uncertainty and fear led them to act “with psychosis”, because they were afraid of committing a “continuity crime” in the judge’s eyes; in this regard, they sometimes behaved “as if they were underground”, hiding backups of everything³⁴.

There were more than sixty employees in *Egunkaria* and, according to the interviewees, none of them left after the closure. Salary could not have been the motivation, as everybody became officially jobless and in receipt of unemployment benefit. Why continue working? “We had no choice. They closed our newspaper. It was our response”, explains one interviewee³⁵. “They did not take away just our jobs from us. They took our project away from us”, said another one³⁶. The nature of the foundation of *Egunkaria* may explain that feeling of belonging to a project: it was created thanks to the economic support of many citizens; they knew that their working and salary

³⁴ Oskar Angulo, in person interview, Andoain, May 27, 2010.

³⁵ See note 28.

³⁶ See note 32.

conditions would be worse than in another newspaper of the market because it was highly likely that a Basque language daily would have serious economic difficulties. Therefore, the workers would have to somehow combine a professional spirit with a volunteer spirit. The Audiencia Nacional did not close a small company owned by a few partners, but a project of which its employees and many customers felt part.

The interviewees remark that *Egunero* made several contributions. In the first place, it was an instrumental platform from which to inform about the *Egunkaria* case; it gave a voice to the arrested people, their lawyers, their families, and the former workers. In addition, it gave a voice to a wide range of people who wanted to denounce the closure of the newspaper and show their solidarity. *Egunero*, as a commercial product, also facilitated an easy and practical way to show solidarity and support *Egunkaria*: buying the newspaper was a way of denouncing what was seen as an unjust situation.

Egunero was also important because it linked the old, *Egunkaria*, with the new, *Berria*. “It linked both: *Egunkaria*’s readers read and bought *Egunero*, and *Berria*’s readers and buyers were previously *Egunero*’s readers”³⁷. The interviewees are certain that, without *Egunero*, *Berria* would have started with considerably fewer readers. In fact, *Egunkaria* had 6,000 subscribers at the time of the closure, but *Berria* inherited twice as many from *Egunero*. Finally, *Egunero* was also an effective platform from which to promote the fundraising campaign for the new project, *Berria*. Over time, the daily section containing information about the closure of *Egunkaria* became the section about the campaign for *Berria*.

Egunero was a newspaper with some different features from standard newspapers, as it was born, and lived, within a context of exceptional circumstances. The special features of *Egunero* detected in this research are the following:

- Improvisation: it was created from one day to the next, without any previous planning. This circumstance greatly conditioned the product.
- Uncertainty: while the members of *Egunkaria*’s staff were held in custody and their newspaper closed down, the promoters of *Egunero* founded it and worked on it without knowing how the Audiencia Nacional would act regarding the product patently replacing the banned newspaper. This factor conditioned both their organizational path and the product itself.

- Precariousness: it started with fewer resources than any standard newspaper as a consequence of the judicial measures against its predecessor, *Egunkaria*. This material precariousness had a direct impact on the limitations of the product and its quality.
- Temporariness: the promoters of *Egunero* knew from the beginning that their newspaper was temporary, that it would last only until the new standard newspaper was born. Therefore, even though they could have improved the product over time as more resources became available, they decided not to increase the number of pages and not to publish it in color, because they wanted to project an image of temporariness as opposed to one of normality, in order to remind people every day that *Egunkaria* had been closed down.

From a journalistic perspective, *Egunero* did not make any special contributions, given that it was a very limited informative product, not comparable with the rest of the newspapers in the market of the time. Nevertheless, it satisfactorily fulfilled several functions. This research has detected the following:

- A great part of Basque society reacted by mobilizing against the closure of *Egunkaria*, and *Egunero* played an instrumental role in that reaction. On the one hand, its creation was an important part of this reaction; in fact, the masthead of *Egunero* became a symbol of the reaction to the closure of *Egunkaria*. On the other, *Egunero* was the voice of *Egunkaria*, the closed paper, and an effective platform for the agents participating in the mobilization against its closure.
- *Egunero* was an instrumental platform for the creation of the new daily newspaper in Basque, *Berria*. Since the former staff of *Egunkaria* announced they intended to create a new publication, *Egunero* became the loud speaker of the fundraising campaign.
- *Egunero* was a link in the chain for the continuation of Basque language daily press. The fact that Basque speakers could continue reading the news in their language, even in the exceptional context of the judicial closure of the only daily in Basque, was of extreme importance symbolically. More than half a century has passed between the death of *Eguna* and the birth of *Egunkaria* and, now, after 13 years of *Egunkaria*, the Basque readers who are used to reading a paper in Basque every morning greatly value the fact that they can continue with this habit.
- From a legal and formal perspective, *Egunero* did not have any links neither with *Egunkaria* nor with *Berria*. Yet, in practical

and sentimental terms, *Egunero* was the continuation of *Egunkaria*, and *Berria* the continuation of *Egunero*. The three newspapers were made by the same people and, to a great extent, were read by the same public.

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