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ORGANIZATIONS VERSUS POLICY-MAKERS: THE CASE OF BASQUE TELEVISION

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INTRODUCTION(*)

The aim of this paper is to describe and analyze the establishment of Basque Television (ETB), its evolution, and especially what became a turning point: the creation of ETB-2, its second channel, which involved an apparently major shift of goals. This shift is the central point of interest here.

We must start by describing the history of ETB, whose first and original channel broadcasts in the Basque language, Euskara. Once the main facts are known it will be possible to focus on the two most relevant questions that the establishment of a second channel in Spanish raises. The first is how the organization imposed its goals on policy-makers and the second is why the new channel was established in such an abrupt way. As we will see from the narrative, the answer to the second question lies quite clearly in some peculiar features of the Basque polity throughout the transition. The first question, on the contrary, demands a longer analysis.

THE HISTORY OF BASQUE TELEVISION (ETB)(1)

During the 1960s a movement seeking the "normalization" of the Basque language, Euskara, arose in the Basque Country. It aimed at transforming a private, minority language, limited to the family and the rural environment (spoken by only a quarter of the population) into a public and urban one, which could be useful as an instrument of communication for all kinds of messages. This implied the use of Euskara in education, the administration, the mass media and so on. Some of these demands could be and were directly implemented from the late 1960s onwards through the creation of Basque-speaking schools (ikastolas) and magazines in Euskara. But others, which needed not only the tolerance but the active involvement of the administration, were to remain unsatisfied until the creation of democratic institutions.(2)

The creation of a Basque-speaking Television channel was one of those deferred claims and also one of the most important. The existence of such a radio and television service was held to be a

necessary condition for the survival of any language in the late 20th century.(3)

In 1979, after the return of Spain to democracy the Estatuto de Autonomíateua for the Basque Country was approved. It declared that the Basque Country could "regulate, create and maintain" its own mass media, although this competence seemed to be restricted by the "basic norms" of the State on the subject. The Estatuto also included a provision to allow the Basque government, as a concession, to administer a third channel of TVE (Televisión Española), the Spanish television, if it were created.(4)

In the winter of 1980, the first Basque Parliament was elected.(5) The refusal of the members of the radical Herri Batasuna (HB) to attend Parliament meant that de facto the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV) had an absolute majority which allowed it to form a government, presided over by Carlos Garaikoetxea. This first government included as one of its essential targets "the creation of a Basque infrastructure of mass media," for furthering the double objective of the "cultural promotion" of citizenship and the strengthening of Basque national identity, based on Euskara.

At the end of 1980 an agreement was signed by the Basque and central governments whereby TVE would create a third channel in the Basque Country that would be financed and administered by the Basque government. This Basque-speaking channel was to start in the second half of 1981 and, in the meantime, Basque-speaking programmes would be introduced on the second channel of TVE. This agreement did not exclude the possibility that the Basque government might create its own "fourth" channel in Euskara (as regulated in the Estatuto), in which case the third channel would be transformed into a bilingual one.

The agreement was not implemented(6) and therefore in September 1981 the Basque minister of culture announced that the Basque government temporarily renounced the creation of a third channel and would instead establish the fully autonomous channel authorized by the Estatuto de Autonomíateua. The budget, technical projects and studies previously assigned to the third channel would be used for this "fourth" channel.

From that moment, talks with the central government broke down and a series of conflicts followed. The central government considered the purchase of some foreign technical equipment illegal, as public authorities in Spain are obligated to buy national equipment, when available. But the main argument between the two governments was over the concession of frequencies to Basque Television. The central government considered that the reference to the "basic norms" on mass media of the Estatuto de Autonomíateua included the norm that gave it the authority to distribute broadcasting frequencies. Therefore, Basque TV could not be created without the authorization and concession of frequencies from the central government. The Basque government, on the contrary, held that the right to create a Basque mass media could not be conditional on the decision of the central government as to whether or not to concede a broadcasting frequency. Therefore it announced that broadcasting would start with or without the concession of frequencies from the central government.

During 1982 the Basque government continued taking steps to create a TV station. A building in which to house it was constructed; courses in audio, video, and electronic journalism were started; foreign programs were bought and dubbed and a bill for the creation of Euskal Irrati Telebista (Basque Radio Television, EITB)(7) was sent to the Basque Parliament in March 1982. The law was approved in May. Among other things the institution was to serve as an instrument for the diffusion of political information and for encouraging political participation, as well as a medium for cooperation with the educational system and as a means for the promotion and diffusion of Euskara, while respecting linguistic pluralism. The head of EITB was the director general, appointed by the government. Parliament appointed a Board of Administration that had no real power: it only had to be consulted before important decisions were taken. This model of

organization was much criticized by the opposition as it resembled that of TVE, which was notorious for giving the government full control over national television.

In July 1982, the first Board of Administration was elected and the government appointed Josu Zubiaur as the first director general. He had been vice-minister of Culture and, as such, had directly participated in the creation of ETB up to that moment. From then to the end of 1982, training programs were developed in the Basque Country and Germany and all the arrangements were made to start broadcasting experimentally in January 1983. Before transmission started, however, Zubiaur resigned, and a new director general, Antxon Areizaga, was appointed. Luis Iriondo was appointed director of ETB.

Although no broadcasting frequencies had yet been conceded, on New Year's Eve ETB began its experimental broadcasts. In April 1983 a regular program plan started and by the first days of December ETB was broadcasting 26 hours a week. Only news programs were produced by ETB and the rest (cartoons, series, documentaries) were foreign productions. All the programs were in Euskara but foreign ones were also subtitled in Spanish. In late December 1983 a new half-hour daily news program in Spanish was introduced during new lunch-time broadcasts.

The central government tolerated ETB but did not collaborate with it. TVE prevented it from entering the EUR (European Union of Radio and Television) which hindered its access to images from abroad; TVE also refused to rent its network of transmitters to carry signals to ETB through Spain, which precluded ETB from broadcasting live sporting events, especially football matches, that were held outside the Basque Country. This was very much resented as football matches are an important source of advertising revenue. Even before broadcasting started TVE also tried to obstruct ETB, by threatening foreign companies that sold programs to Basque Television with a reduction in purchases from them by TVE.⁽⁸⁾

Developments in 1984 were similar. Broadcasting time expanded (up to 40 hours a week), with only a daily half-hour news program in Spanish, and the open conflict with TVE remained unresolved, although it had become routine, and received less attention from the media. The second Basque Parliament was elected in February. The PNV again received a plurality that the absence of HB transformed into an absolute majority.⁽⁹⁾ It is important to note that, before the elections, there was a confrontation between President Garaikoetxea and PNV leaders about the subjection of the president of the Basque government to party discipline. After Garaikoetxea explained his position in a press conference that was broadcast live by ETB, a party assembly confirmed him as the candidate of the party to the presidency, releasing him from party discipline against the advice of the leadership. The transmission by ETB of that press conference was much criticized by PNV leaders, as it implied that ETB had taken sides in the quarrel.

After the elections a new Board of Administration was elected and some members of the management were changed. Antxon Areizaga remained as director general of EITB but a new director of ETB, Luis Alberto Aranberri, was appointed. As director of News Programs he had been responsible for the transmission of the decisive press conference of Garaikoetxea and therefore he was not approved of by the party leadership. Labor relations also began to be troublesome that year in ETB. In April, a strike was called and suspended after an agreement on salaries and working hours was reached. But a new strike was held from 30th December 1984 to 22nd January 1985.

Meanwhile, Garaikoetxea had resigned as the result of the long confrontation with the leadership of the PNV. The new president, José Antonio Ardanza, who was closer to the apparatus of the party, was elected in January 1985, after signing a pact with the PSE-PSOE. The PNV government would receive support from the socialists, and negotiate with them the most important pieces of legislation. Once the new government took office there were rumors about

the probable destitution of Areizaga and Aranberri since they were considered to be too close to Garaikoetxea. However, they were kept in their posts.

The first important study of television audiences was made public in February 1985. They indicated that, with the exception of some sports transmissions, ETB's audience was around 20 per cent of the population. These data could hardly surprise anybody, given the percentage of Basque speakers. However, their diffusion reawakened the complaints of certain social groups and the non-nationalist parties about the linguistic policy of Euskal Telebista. They claimed that it was financed out of public revenues but it only benefited a part of the population. There were even some who opposed the model arguing that the "technological reserve" of a separated channel worked against Basque.⁽¹⁰⁾ The direction of ETB, however, defended and maintained the ongoing policy, with the support of the government and the PNV.

Broadcasting time was expanded to 49 hours a week from April 1985. In June, after the firing of a worker, labor conflicts began again and an intermittent strike was called. From June 9th onwards workers struck every Sunday and Monday. Their claims were related to work organization, job classification, and salaries. After three months of struggle Director General Areizaga resigned. His successor was José María Gorordo, who was known as the "party expert" on the media (he started the PNV newspaper *Deia*) and a man close to the party leadership. Even before being officially appointed, he held a meeting with the workers' committee in which he declared himself ready to raise previously imposed sanctions, re-admit those who had been fired, and start negotiations on the basis of the workers' proposals. The committee gave him a vote of confidence and stopped the strike. After such a clear break with the position of the previous management, the director of ETB, Aranberri, also resigned.

Regarding the linguistic issue, Gorordo's first comments made him appear more open to change than the previous team, but no firm declaration was made. On the 31st of May 1986, however, Gorordo announced to the Board of Administration, to its members' amazement, that a second channel of ETB would be started as soon as technically possible. This second channel would be preferably in Spanish. Broadcasting began the following day, using technical work that had been started in secrecy three weeks earlier. Enormous opposition developed against the creation of ETB-2. The central government said it was illegal and tried to stop it by taking the Basque government to the Constitutional Court. But the Court ruled that the case was not within its competence and no other judicial proceedings were pursued. Other criticisms were made of the lack of budgetary provisions for the second channel, the disdain the surprise move displayed towards Parliament and the Board of Administration, the sharp contrast between this increase in the number of TV channels with the long resistance of the Basque government to concede new private radio stations licenses, the lack of frequencies available for future private TV companies, and the timing of the decision, as general elections were going to be held on the 22nd of June. The argument over the change of linguistic policy was overshadowed by these debates about procedures. Only HB centered its criticism on that point.

The Basque government argued that ETB-2 was more "allegal" than illegal and that its situation was in any case no different from that of ETB-1 (as the original channel was now called). The declared objectives of the new channel were to secure a wider audience, more advertising income, to improve the use of technical and human resources, and to satisfy the demand from an important sector of the population for local programs in Spanish.

"Experimental" programs continued until October, when broadcasts on ETB-2 became regular. At the beginning of September 1986, ETB-1 had 62 weekly hours of programs of which three and a half hours were in Spanish. By the end of October ETB-1 had 79 hours and ETB-2 had 27 hours. ETB as a whole had doubled its number of hours on the air in only one year. This extension of hours was made possible by the broadcasting of a daily film on ETB-1 in the

afternoon and the transmission by ETB-2 of previously broadcast programs now dubbed into Spanish.

In the meantime, Garaikoetxea created a new party called Basque Solidarity (EA). In November 1986 President Ardanza called for elections that resulted in a heavily fragmented Parliament as the traditional vote of the PNV was split.⁽¹¹⁾ After long negotiations a coalition government was formed in February 1987 in which PSE-PSOE and PNV each had half of the posts. The president was again Jose Antonio Ardanza.

In the period 86-87 ETB-2 continued expanding. Some well-known Spanish-speaking TV stars were hired to make new programs (usually talk-shows) for the Basque channel. By April 1987 ETB-2 was broadcasting more than 40 hours a week, although 15 of them consisted of the simultaneous transmission in Euskara of programs from ETB-1 (usually for children). The indefinite repetition of films and the purchase of very cheap South American soap operas (that did not need to be dubbed) made the per-hour cost of broadcasting lower by this time than when Gorordo had taken office.

In March 1987 Gorordo resigned to run for mayor of Bilbao, and was replaced by Josu Ortuondo, also known as a "party man." He had been in charge of the finances of the PNV and had no experience in the mass media. He is still the director general and has continued the policy of Gorordo in general terms. Today ETB-1 broadcasts 68 hours a week (only in Euskara) and ETB-2 65 hours, of which 16 are simultaneous with ETB-1 (still usually children's programs in Euskara).⁽¹²⁾ Excluding the latter, the proportion of broadcasting time between the two channels and the two languages is then approximately 70 to 50 hours. In percentages that means 58% for Basque-speaking ETB-1 and 42% for Spanish-speaking ETB-2. ETB-1 is still considered as the privileged channel. It gets more resources; more hours of broadcasting; its star prime-time programs begin one hour before those of ETB-2; foreign films and series that are going to be broadcast on both channels are shown several months before in Euskara; and finally children programs and sports, which have a big audience, are always broadcast in Euskara by ETB-1.⁽¹³⁾ The audience of ETB is now around 10% of the population for ETB-1 and 20% for ETB-2.⁽¹⁴⁾

The most recent episode of importance in this story took place in June 1989. An agreement was signed in Madrid whereby the central government recognized the existence and legality of both channels and agreed to assign to them the necessary frequencies. The Basque government renounced the establishment of a "third channel." This agreement may allow the entrance of ETB into the EUR.

The central interest of this paper is in the shift in linguistic policy represented by the creation of ETB-2, which implied a dramatic change in the policy of the institution as I hope the previous pages have indicated. I will analyze first the curious procedures used and secondly the causes of this change of policy.

ESTABLISHING A TELEVISION STATION IN ONE DAY

The story of the secret installation of equipment, of Gorordo announcing that a new channel was going to be established and of the start of broadcasting on the following day is unquestionably puzzling and worthy of attention. However, once we know the whole story of ETB, and more about the political atmosphere in the Basque Country, these occurrences become less surprising. The creation of ETB-2 is perhaps the most striking example of a series of decisions that were taken by the Basque government in overt opposition to the central government and sometimes with dubious legal authority. Other examples include the establishment of a semi-clandestine Basque police whose members protected ministers, high officials and public buildings;⁽¹⁵⁾ the refusal of PNV mayors to accept town council secretaries legally designated by the central

government; and the symbolic refusal to put any flag on public buildings despite a legal order that both the Spanish and Basque flags should be flown from their facades.⁽¹⁶⁾ The creation of ETB itself entailed just such an episode of struggle between the two governments.

From 1977 onwards the PNV continually increased its share of the votes and there was a feeling that its majority would increase even further. The clear-cut division between nationalist and non-nationalist parties, led to an identification between the Basque Country and nationalism and between nationalism and the PNV. Since the nationalist parties have obtained over 60 % of the vote in the Basque Country since 1979, the central government has always suffered from a certain lack of legitimacy with which to oppose the "arrogant" attitudes of the PNV. The party, in turn, benefited from a certain fear of taking action on the part of the central government and, to some degree, it also used the existence of the terrorist organization ETA to blackmail the authorities in Madrid.⁽¹⁷⁾ With respect to the Basque Parliament, the PNV's attitude was also always peremptory.⁽¹⁸⁾ It put little emphasis on the search for consensus and often neglected the positions of parties that "bow to Madrid".⁽¹⁹⁾ The feeling of unchallenged supremacy led to a policy of accomplished facts. Since the ruling party knew that Parliament would always approve their initiatives, the government often began taking action before obtaining Parliament's approval.

All these characteristics of the Basque polity explain the tendency and ability to confront the opposition and central government that define the political style of the PNV. The creation of ETB-2, then, is just one more episode in a story of multiple confrontations between the Basque and central governments, and correspondingly between the PNV and non-nationalist parties. Given that the original ETB channel itself had been considered illegal and denied official broadcasting frequencies, the Basque government had no incentive to try to establish the second channel in a legal manner.

But the secrecy of the decision and its surprise announcement still remain to be explained. Various factors are relevant. Since no opposition party had a clear model for ETB, a number of those involved believed that an open debate on the creation of ETB-2 would probably be long and fruitless.⁽²⁰⁾ In addition, in this case, implementation and the technical changes associated with it were particularly easy to accomplish without being noticed. Finally, it seems that Gorordo is a "man of action" particularly given to theatrical effects.⁽²¹⁾

THE CHANGE OF POLICY

Although less spectacular than the circumstances of its origination, the major shift in linguistic policy that ETB-2 represented is no less interesting and requires a more elaborated explanation. My hypothesis may be summarized in four assertions:

- a) The "normalization" of Euskara was the real intention of those who established the first channel of ETB, not an excuse.
- b) The creation of ETB-2 meant a real departure from the position held by the previous management.
- c) Such a change was not the result of a change in attitudes of society, the government, the ruling party or even the leadership of the party about ETB.
- d) Instead, ETB-2 was the product of a series of conditions that allowed ETB to follow its own tendencies rather than those designed by the policy-makers of the Basque government.

a) The original project

There is no doubt that the creators of ETB thought of it as an instrument of linguistic policy. In an enormous number of interviews given to the newspapers before and after the TV station was created, the most relevant actors said again and again that Basque TV would be mostly or totally in Euskara.⁽²²⁾ Here is one representative example:

A program plan must be understood globally and the goals which led to the creation of ETB are very clear. Conditioning the program to a bigger audience is neither defensible nor sustainable in any medium of communication. There are other values that must be taken into account. ETB was created to be a TV in Euskara and if some day things changed in that respect we would be witnessing a great fraud. One must not forget the reason why ETB was created.⁽²³⁾

Remarkably enough, whenever I asked my respondents for their general impressions of ETB, they always started talking about Euskara, and the fight to defend it and to transform it into an everyday urban language.⁽²⁴⁾ Sometimes they even seemed to ignore the fact that ETB also currently broadcasts in Spanish.⁽²⁵⁾

Apart from very general declarations, however, no detailed project on how Euskara and Spanish would interrelate in ETB was ever made public. The law establishing EITB was also very vague on that point. The project existed quite clearly in the minds of those who established the TV station, but the political style of the PNV militated against a clear statement of it beforehand. The broad social base of the PNV, which includes many people who are not Basque speakers, the absence of any need to bargain over the content of the law with the opposition, the hope of being in power for enough time to implement the project in its entirety, were all factors which encouraged imprecise public statements about the question.

Nevertheless, a certain (although evolving) project existed. In an initial period (1979-1980), the people who would later create ETB, such as Labayen, Zubiaur, Iriondo and Aranberri, thought of it as a channel exclusively in Euskara. But from 1981 onwards the project was to create a bilingual TV channel. The idea was to establish a "conventional" TV channel, with all kinds of programs in Euskara, and a number of news and cultural programs in Spanish, to guarantee the right of Spanish speakers to information and political participation. At this time, it was also decided to subtitle dubbed programs. The idea was, then, to insert Spanish-speaking news programs and debates or documentaries into a generally Basque-speaking channel. In fact two of the first seven people hired for the news programs were Spanish-speaking journalists.⁽²⁶⁾

Before regular broadcasting began, however, these same managers reconsidered the idea of inserting Spanish-speaking programs. The failure of bilingual experiments in the radio and press indicated that the language familiar to all, Spanish, tended to relegate the other language to marginal or folk topics and to secondary times or spaces. In addition, if a half-hour news program in Spanish, for example, were simply inserted into the daily scheme, hardly anybody watching a different channel would switch to ETB to see it, and for the Basque speakers already watching it would mean a disruption. For the first time what we might call the "logic of the media" and "linguistic logic" appeared to be contradictory.⁽²⁷⁾ The solution finally adopted in late 1983 was to create a new, separate block of broadcasting, at lunch time, composed of a Spanish-speaking news program accompanied by "whatever we could find".⁽²⁸⁾

This solution was seen as provisional, since the "logic of the media" seemed to demand separate channels for separate languages. Following this "logic of the media," in 1985 Areizaga, director general of EITB, and Aranberri, director of ETB, developed a proposal for a channel in Spanish that they would not have the opportunity to implement. The channel would broadcast no more

than three hours a day (at prime time, 8 to 11 p.m.) and only Monday to Friday; its contents were to be mainly informative and cultural, with news programs, debates, documentaries and films (in the original version but subtitled in Spanish); it would be aimed at adults, rather than children and would compete only with TVE and not with ETB-1.(29) b) A real change

The establishment of a second channel was not, therefore, an original idea of Gorordo's. However, the way in which he implemented it involved a clear break with the past. Soon after regular broadcasting started, the contents of the new channel expanded beyond news: there were talk shows, soap operas and films (dubbed into Spanish, not subtitled).

This break with the original project is accepted by those who manage the TV today(30) and denounced by previous incumbents. For the latter, ETB-2 is a conventional TV channel that has been run without dignity because of the lack of resources, becoming a third-rate TV. Linguistic goals have been also renounced by introducing Spanish on ETB-1 (in advertisements, interviews, news programs, etc.). The appearance of ETB-2 has damaged ETB-1 in many ways: overusing equipment, buildings and personnel designed for less hours of broadcasting, diminishing its audience, reducing advertising and drawing musical and variety attractions from ETB-1 to ETB-2.(31) c) "Nobody" wanted it

These changes, however, were not a product of a change of the intentions of the Basque government or the PNV. First, the appointment of Gorordo as director general of EITB in September 1985 was not a result of the widely heralded pact signed by the PNV and the socialists in February of that year. His election was the effect of a mere routine decision taken inside the PNV, where he was considered in fact a "party man."(32) The decision to replace Areizaga and Aranberri was not related to the linguistic policy of ETB or their resistance to a project for a "conventional" ETB-2. The PNV's distrust of them was related purely to their independence (i.e. their refusal to send cameras to party events when asked) and to the transmission of the famous press conference of President Garaikoetxea in late 1983, which helped him to win release from party discipline against the wishes of the party leadership. Despite that, when President Ardanza took office the government did not immediately fire them, as it would have appeared as an act of revenge in the party crisis. The television workers knew about this lack of support from the party and used it against the management in the strike of 1985, forcing the resignation of Areizaga, which was readily accepted by the government.(33) Gorordo was then appointed with two mandates: to bring peace to the labor conflict and to be more "sensitive" to party demands about news programs.(34) The object was not to change the linguistic policy of the institution.(35)

Moreover in 1987, after the division of the PNV and the creation of EA, the PNV held an extraordinary general assembly to redefine its program. Curiously enough, the party asked Aranberri to prepare the party declaration on the mass media, and he reproduced in it the ideas that he and Areizaga had developed in their project of 1985: creation of a "conventional" TV channel in Euskara and a secondary, complementary and limited TV channel in Spanish, the latter designed to increase the information offered to, and the political participation of, Spanish speakers. Although the declaration was slightly modified with amendments proposed by Gorordo, the main points remained untouched.

At the same time, the team led by Gorordo was shaping ETB-2 according to a different model, making a conventional TV channel. This continuing contradiction led the party to reopen internal debate about ETB and the use of Euskara and Spanish. The Euzkadi Buru Batzar, head of the party, appointed a commission that met at least seven times between September 1988 and May 1989.(36) Among its members were some of the figures who have already appeared in this account such as Labayen, Aranberri and Ortuondo.(37) The commission never produced a unified report since the differences of opinion among the members persisted. The majority in

favor of the original model, however, was clear, but the defenders of the current model refused to resolve the question by taking a vote on it.⁽³⁸⁾

In any case, it is clear that the PNV's official position on ETB, favorable to the original concept, is not a mere pretense. The existence of the internal commission and the distribution of forces within it are the best indication that there is no hidden intention to develop a policy different from the one officially stated. d) But it happened

How can we explain, then, that ETB-2 was established and continues expanding to this day? The answer is again in the struggle between mass media logic and linguistic logic. A television channel tends, by nature, to follow mass media logic, i.e. to seek a wider audience and more advertising revenue. Only when the management was clearly conscious that the channel had been created to be a linguistic instrument, could that trend towards mass media logic be restrained. Gorordo released ETB from this constraint and it soon began to follow a mass media logic, which resulted in a self-reproducing dynamic very difficult to stop.

The relevant conjuncture must still be analyzed if we are to understand why that initial release took place. As explained above, Gorordo was appointed at a very difficult time for ETB. He had to relaunch an institution that was at an all-time low as regards audience-ratings and social prestige.⁽³⁹⁾ There were not many candidates available for the post so that he was probably given a free hand to do his best to reduce labor conflicts and the bad public image of ETB. If we also consider that Gorordo had experience in the mass media, but no relation to the forces seeking to promote Euskara, and a tendency to an entrepreneurial view, it is not difficult to understand why he created a conventional Spanish-speaking second channel.

Why was he not prevented from doing so? As I said before, a proposal for a second channel had been made in 1985 by Areizaga and Aranberri. When the government decided to start ETB-2 it had in mind that proposal of a television limited both in broadcasting time and contents, although again only vague references to information and culture were made.⁽⁴⁰⁾ This was in late May 1986. Experimental broadcasting continued until October, when a regular program started. Gorordo left ETB in March 1987. During that period ETB-2 deviated further and further from the model designed by the preceding management. This became increasingly obvious,⁽⁴¹⁾ but at that time the government was facing a number of other unrelated difficulties, which prevented it from confronting the television question. Throughout the summer of 1986 the crisis of the PNV occupied all the attention of its members. In September, EA was created, Parliament was dissolved and elections were held in November. The new government took office in February. It was precisely in that period that ETB-2 defined itself. Although its self-definition involved a clear rejection of previous party policies, neither the party nor the government had the means to avoid it. Gorordo could implement his own idea of ETB because there was nobody with the time, attention or resources at that moment to stop him.

In addition we must take into account the immediately favorable reaction that the change produced. To begin with, the people working in ETB experienced unprecedented positive feedback. They felt that most of their friends and acquaintances were watching ETB and that people in the street and the papers were talking about it.⁽⁴²⁾ Party leaders and members of the government probably recognized the audience potential of the new channel.⁽⁴³⁾ Finally, reactions from the outside were definitely favorable, once the initial storm about procedures blew over. Newspapers praised its programs, more people watched ETB, and people liked it. Even from the point of view of nationalism, ETB-2 may have a role to play in the "building of the nation." Spanish-speaking citizens might recognize themselves, and feel recognized as Basques when watching Basque television, especially when watching programs on Basque music, history, art or villages -even if they were in Spanish.⁽⁴⁴⁾

These favorable effects of the birth of ETB-2 also explain the evolution that ETB followed under Josu Ortuondo. Like Gorordo, he is a man with a commercial background, with no ties to the groups pursuing the resurgence of Euskara. He does not even speak it (Gorordo learned it as an adult). He has overtly followed mass media logic, increasing the portion of broadcasting time and budget allotted to ETB-2; and in the current debate within the PNV, he openly proposes that ETB-2 should be a conventional channel, with the exception of sports and children's programs, reserved for ETB-1.⁽⁴⁵⁾ Although this practice is in direct contradiction to his party's official policy, ETB does not make the headlines any longer. Moreover, any attempt to reshape ETB-2 in line with the original ideas would probably generate as much conflict and protest as did its inception. Therefore, despite a contrary majority inside the PNV, it is probable that ETB will continue to follow its current path.

RATIONALITY AND GOVERNMENT AGENCIES: THE CASE OF ETB

A story like the one reviewed in this paper addresses many of the problems discussed in the literature on the policy process and in particular in that with an institutional approach to organizational theory. The most important aspect is also the most obvious: this is the story of a government agency that imposed its own institutional logic over the programmatic ideas of the policy-makers. What is most interesting, however, is the absence in this account of some of the features that are seen as most important in the studies of organizations as rational systems, even in the school that considers the possibility of some deviations from full rationality.

The authors reviewing this school, usually look at the works of Simon (1947) and March and Simon (1959) and their concept of bounded rationality. They describe organizations that are ready to confront any kind of event with a complete set of routines and standard operating procedures (SOPs), which combine to form complicated programs and repertoires; highly formalized organizations of limited flexibility in which change happens only incrementally, and where the best way to predict what is going to happen at moment t is to look at moment $t-1$ (Allison 1971: 78-96; Scott 1981: 60-79; Perrow 1986: 119-127). All this conveys an image of a venerable agency full of bureaucrats unprepared to change the way they have been doing things for years, zealous defenders of their organization, and disdainful of politicians who are no more than inexperienced newcomers.⁽⁴⁶⁾

None of these archetypical features appears in ETB. Euskal Telebista is a very young organization, very small,⁽⁴⁷⁾ with a young staff. Even now it would be difficult to describe it as highly bureaucratized, much less so four years ago, when ETB-2 was created. It is definitely not a powerful organization in the sense that a ministry can be. In addition, the man who set its present course was not someone of "the house," but an outsider who had been in the institution for only nine months.

The case of Euskal Telebista is then appealing because it reveals how very few favorable factors are needed for an organization to take on a life of its own and overcome directives and goals given by "rationally acting" policy-makers. Obviously one case is not enough to draw general conclusions. But in ETB we can appreciate some features, previously pointed by scholars with a natural approach, that may reasonably appear in almost any other case and which might explain why organizations tend to follow a certain institutional logic.

First, the case illustrates vividly the difficulties that stand in the way of achieving the consistency between different objectives that is one of the desiderata of the rational actor model (Allison 1971: 29-30). The establishment of Basque television was sought in order to fulfill a very well defined purpose. There was one major goal - a linguistic one. However, in the process of its creation ETB "acquired" new goals, some deliberate, like becoming an instrument for information and political participation, and some only discovered when they were actually

fulfilled, like fostering the integration of the Spanish speakers into the community.

Of course, an institution with only one goal can not exist. Every institution always has other objectives that must be added to the first. One is the survival of the institution itself (Scott 1981: 81; Selznick 1984: 10, 249-251), or that "from a means, organization becomes an end" (Michels 1968: 338). In the case of Euskal Telebista the fight for survival meant the improvement of audience rates. Another goal is one of not becoming a source of trouble, not being a disaster.⁽⁴⁸⁾ The latter was essential in the case of ETB, and the need that the politicians experienced to avoid constant negative publicity about the organization was a powerful factor reconciling them to its transformed goals. Even in a polity like that of the Basque Country, which was strongly controlled by a single party and where no bargaining among political parties was necessary, objectives different from those of the ruling party rose to the fore.

Second, as many scholars have studied, the appearance of multiple and conflicting goals has powerful consequences on a supposedly rational organization (Allison 1971: 71-72; Lindblom 1980a: 149-152). In the end, means and goals are selected at the same time and then transformed again in the process of implementation (Lindblom 1980b: 64-70). The decision-making process is not guided by a search for the best possible policy, but for one that is merely satisfactory (March-Simon 1959: 140-141; Lindblom 1980a: 151). The most extreme version of this idea is March and Olson's garbage can theory (1987: 24-37) according to which problems raise and solutions are created by different processes, and they are only put together, rather accidentally, in the moment of taking decisions. The idea of creating a second channel might be understood in that way as a solution searching for a problem. Not going so far, the establishment of ETB-2 was in any case a "satisfactory" decision, with many positive outcomes, but not an optimal solution produced after an evaluation and classification of goals and selection among different alternatives.

But, finally, satisfactory for whom? The enormous workload that many bureaucrats face prevents them from ever really being on top of what goes on in their own departments (Allison 1971: 145). Politicians and high officials suffer from the same problem and tend to act as firemen. They run from one problem to another putting out "fires." This can take all or most of their time and allows some organizations under them, such as government agencies, to act quite freely, as long as they do not kindle any new "fires." If their performance is "good enough" in some respects, they will not be disturbed, even if the course of action that has been chosen is not the one that high officials and members of the government would have taken.

The frequent multiplicity of goals, a "satisficing" system of selection among policies, and ultimate authorities who can be little more than firemen are three essential conditions that explain how organizations can obtain great autonomy and impose their own "logic" on the nominal policy-makers. These three were clearly present in the case of ETB, to an extreme degree. However, the use of an extreme case as an illustration does not mean that the ideas presented in this paper only explain the "pathology" of organizations, as Scott (1981: 94) suggests. There is a good chance that those three conditions appear in many other organizations, especially in government agencies and in young institutions. If that is the case, those organizations will also obtain great autonomy and phenomena as the ones studied in Euskal Telebista will appear._

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No.2. A former member of the direction of ETB and one of its creators.

No. 3. A member of the current direction of ETB.

No. 4. A worker of ETB.

No. 5. A current member of the intermediate staff of ETB.

No. 6. A current member of the intermediate staff of ETB.

No. 7. A member of the PNV who took part in the Board of Administration and in the special commission on ETB of in the PNV.

No. 8. A PNV member who had government responsibilities at the time of the creation of ETB-2.

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NOTES

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(1) The following pages are based mainly on an examination of the press, especially the newspapers El País and El Correo Español, from 1982 to 1989. [Back to text](#)

(2) For all this process see Aranberri (n.d.), Núñez (1977) and Euskaltzaindia (1978a, 1978b, 1979).[Back to text](#)

(3) Interview no.2: In 1974 or 1975 we understood that the "normalization" of the language implied the presence of Euskara in TV.

"Without a radio and a television in Euskara, our language will not outlive the year 2000", interview with Ramon Labayen, minister of culture of the Basque government, El País, 26th May, 1982.

An elaborated expression of these ideas can be found in Torrealdai (1986).[Back to text](#)

(4) At that time the Spanish government was thinking of setting up a third channel of Spanish television (TVE) that would be controlled by the different Comunidades Autónomas.[Back to text](#)

(5) The 60 members of Parliament were distributed as follows: PNV (Basque Nationalist Party, nationalist, center) 25; HB (Popular Unity, radically leftist and separatist) 11; PSE-PSOE (Socialist Party of the Basque Country, non-nationalist socialist) 9; UCD (Union of the Democratic Center, non-nationalist, center) 6; EE (Basque Country's Left, nationalist, moderate left) 6; AP (Popular Alliance, non-nationalist right) 2; and PCE-EPK (Communist Party of Spain, non-nationalist communist) 1.[Back to text](#)

(6) The law to create the third channel of TVE was not sent to the Spanish Parliament until February 1982.[Back to text](#)

(7) Note that EITB includes both Euskal Telebista (Basque Television, ETB) and Euskadi Irratia (Basque Country Radio, EI). The concern of this paper is only with the television.[Back to text](#)

(8) Interview no. 1.[Back to text](#)

(9) Out of 75 members the results were the following: PNV 32, PSE-PSOE 19, HB 11, CP (Popular Coalition, non-nationalist center and right) 7 and EE 6.[Back to text](#)

(10) A good example of that kind of arguments can be found in Cepeda (1987).[Back to text](#)

(11) Out of 75 members the Socialists had 19 seats, PNV 17, HB and EA 13 each, EE got 9

and the non-nationalist right and center 4. Socialists had less votes than PNV but got more seats because of the over-representation of the province of Alava, in which non-nationalist parties are stronger.[Back to text](#)

(12) Data for June 1989.[Back to text](#)

(13) Interview no. 5. However, interviewee no. 3 said that, although there is not a separate budget for each channel the studies made on the use of personnel, equipment and other resources suggested that the distribution of resources is about 60 % for ETB-1 and 40 % for ETB-2. This distribution is similar to the current distribution of broadcasting times, so the economic "privilege" of ETB-1 is just a correlation of its broadcasting time.[Back to text](#)

(14) Interview no. 5. In 1986, before ETB-2 was created, the audience of the Basque-speaking channel was between 10 and 15% of the population. [Back to text](#)

(15) When the Basque police was legally created the members of this strange corps were included in it.[Back to text](#)

(16) For many years these laws were completely ignored by Basque authorities. Only on special occasions, like the local festivals of villages, were the Spanish, Basque and local flags hoisted. A "flag war" began when HB started a campaign to mount, even in those cases, only the Basque flag and the police were sent to remove it or to hoist the others that were legally prescribed.[Back to text](#)

(17) Interview no. 1: "The government of Madrid was pretty conscious that if we did not get our TV 'the boys' would blow the tower of TVE in Madrid." I do not mean that PNV supported ETA, but that in certain conditions it was a given factor that played to the PNV's advantage.[Back to text](#)

(18) Interview no. 1: "The Parliament is like a donkey: you have to make it go to the fountain, not the contrary." See also next note.[Back to text](#)

(19) Interview no. 1: When asked about which parties supported the law that had created ETB in Parliament, the interviewee answered: "I do not remember. We did not care about the opinion of certain parties. We were the majority."[Back to text](#)

(20) Interview no. 3: "If a debate had been started we still would not have ETB-2."[Back to text](#)

(21) Interview no. 3: Three days before ETB-2 started only four or five people in ETB knew what was going on.[Back to text](#)

(22) Ramón Labayen, minister of culture of the Basque government from 1980 to 1983: Egin, 20 August 1981; Deia, 24 April 1981 and 20 January 1982; El País, 26 May 1982; La Gaceta del Norte, 08 June 1982.

Josu Zubiaur, director general of EITB from July to December 1982: El Correo Español, 24 August 1982.

Luis Iriondo, director of ETB from 1982 to 1984: Euzkadi, 05 December 1982.

Antxon Areizaga, director general of EITB from 1982 to 1985: Deia, 30 May 85.

Luis Alberto Aranberri, director of ETB from 1984 to 1985: Deia, 02 February 1983; El Correo Español, 24 July 1984; El País, 31 July 1984; El Correo Español,

17 February 1985.

Luis María Bandrí, minister of culture of the Basque government from 1985 to 1987: El Correo Español, 01 May 1985.[Back to text](#)

(23) Luis Alberto Aranberri, director of ETB from 1984 to 1985, in El Correo Español, February 17th, 1985.[Back to text](#)

(24) Interviews nos. 1, 2, and 3.[Back to text](#)

(25) Interviewee no. 1 answered very briefly any question about ETB-2. To him, the purpose of ETB was and still is the promotion of Euskara. ETB-2 was just another channel in Spanish of the many that would exist in a year's time, when private channels will be started. ETB-2 appeared to be a residual, secondary element of ETB. He obviously did not like the issue.[Back to text](#)

(26) Information about the original project proceeds from Interview no. 2. [Back to text](#)

(27) I take these expressions from interviewee no. 2.[Back to text](#)

(28) Interview no. 2.[Back to text](#)

(29) Interview no. 2 and "Modelo lingüístico y programático de ETB", document presented to the special commission on ETB of the PNV. It reflects the project for a second channel of ETB that was designed by Areizaga and Aranberri in 1985. [Back to text](#)

(30) Interview no. 3.[Back to text](#)

(31) Interview no. 2.[Back to text](#)

(32) Interview no. 6.[Back to text](#)

(33) Interview no. 2.[Back to text](#)

(34) Interview no. 2.[Back to text](#)

(35) Interview no. 2. Interview no. 3: "I do not have any reason to believe that he had the idea or the order to set up ETB-2 when he took office."[Back to text](#)

(36) The existence of this commission was not made public. I had access, however, to the summaries of some of its meetings and to some documents presented at them explaining the position of some of its members.[Back to text](#)

(37) With the exception of Gorordo, one could say that almost every party member that has had a high post in EITB or in the Ministry of Culture was on the commission (Zubiaur and Areizaga are now in EA). This gives an idea of the level of representation of the commission and the importance that the question is given by the party.[Back to text](#)

(38) Nine out of sixteen members of the commission were in favor of the original model and another three were not clearly defined. Only four out of sixteen were definitely in favor of ETB-2 being a conventional TV.[Back to text](#)

(39) Apparently Gorordo had made his reputation as an expert in "desperate missions" which started when he helped to set up the PNV newspaper Deia in three months.[Back to text](#)

(40) Interviewees differ about who took the initiative to establish ETB-2, Gorordo or the government. The only person who took part in the decision affirms that it was made by the government and the party in "intimate cooperation" (Interview no. 8). Doubtlessly the starting was approved by the both, but the crucial point is that the implementation stayed out of their control.[Back to text](#)

(41) Several members of the Board of Administration of those appointed by the PNV opposed the contents proposed by Gorordo's team, although they supported his ideas about the number of hours of broadcasting. Interview no. 7.[Back to text](#)

(42) This contrasted with the demoralizing effect on ETB workers of the lack of public repercussion over the strike of 1985. Interview no. 3.: "It was terrible seeing that there was almost no protest, no letters to the newspapers, after three months of strike."[Back to text](#)

(43) Interview no. 4.: When they started they did not realize what a TV is. They have increasingly discovered the potential of the medium's influence.[Back to text](#)

(44) As it was said earlier, before ETB-2 was created Spanish speakers might consider ETB's policy discriminatory.[Back to text](#)

(45) "Euskal Telebista: un modelo dinámico reflejo de la sociedad vasca." Document presented by Josu Ortuondo, current director general of EITB, to the special commission on ETB of the PNV. It reflects the model defended by the current management.[Back to text](#)

(46) I have exaggerated the image a little, and do not mean to suggest that these authors only refer to such extreme cases.[Back to text](#)

(47) Now it employs around 450 people and in 1986 there were probably less than 300.[Back to text](#)

(48) Allison (1971: 82) argues that in fact policy-makers' ability to control organizations is so small that all goals are transformed into the single object of avoiding complete disaster.[Back to text](#) _