

Dealing with the crisis: Income inequality and digital media in the Basque Country (2008-2018)

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Abstract

The global economic crisis, and the austerity measures held in the European Union as a consequence, have had a different impact in the different countries and territories of the Continent. We will examine the treatment of one aspect multiplied by the crisis, such as income inequality (both inequality between nations and countries and amongst individuals and social classes in one single state) in the Basque Country, as part of the Kingdom of Spain, a state whose structure is almost federal (composed by regions with a great level of self-government, called "autonomies"), enjoys a different tax freedom unique in Spain and in Europe, the so-called *economic concert*, once rejected and in present times claimed by some other regions like Catalonia, which presumably allowed the Basque Autonomous Community a better position to face the impact of the crisis. As a hypothesis and using qualitative designed content analysis (QDA) we will try to prove that the treatment provided to this specific topic was different and biased by this circumstance when compared with the general informative framework of the geographic, economic and political area of influence.

Keywords

Income inequality. Digital media. Online journalism. Basque Country

1. Introduction

During 2018, a group of scholars, members of the so-called Digidoc research group, Pompeu Fabra University (Barcelona) decided to create a working group on the treatment that media, especially digital ones, bestow to a sensitive topic, a relevant public issue that the economic crisis ignited in 2008 -and some other circumstances as well- has brought to the pages of media: income inequality. The *Income Inequality and Communication Group* started its activity this year¹. It is its intention to follow the treatment of this topic in the Spanish digital press, and make a comparison of the international media.

¹ <https://www.upf.edu/web/digidoc/income-inequalities-communication-group>. It is composed, for the time being, by Ana Serrano Tellería, Ariadna Fernández-Planells, Javier Díaz Noci, Juan Linares Lanzman, Laura Pérez-Altable, Lucía García-Carretero, Marcos Lamelas, Siscu Baiges and Vicenç Sanclémente.

This paper is also a modest outcome of an ongoing research project, which examined the role active audiences play in setting public agenda (CSO2015-64955-C4-1-R), with funding from the Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness. This project is devoted to explain how the use of digital social networks, and the dissemination of news, contributes to the formation of a public opinion. As a result, the working group on income inequality and communication presented a paper in the congress of the Spanish Communication Researchers' Association in Salamanca, July 2018, in which the group analysed conversation in Twitter around the concept on income inequality, during the year 2017, one of whose conclusions was that "the concept of 'income inequality' seems to be in the political agenda, but it seems that neither the politicians nor the media outlets are setting the concept in the political/media agenda in the digital public sphere." This paper tries to highlight some other point of views and some other agents of the information process, digital (legacy) media in the Basque Country, assuming that the special characteristic of this autonomous region of Spain could shed some light on how media deal with this public issue.

Actually, the Basque Country has a special fiscal system, the so-called concert and economic agreement (*concierto y cupo económico*) which gives from 1876 onwards a larger tax autonomy to the Basque Country, compared with the rest of Spanish regions. That singularity makes appealing to analyze how income inequality is treated in the Basque media, and to which extent do they deal with both concepts altogether. If income inequality is an informative issue that has emerged during the crisis, and the Basque Country is a region which, thanks to its particular economic and tax regime, has resisted better than others the attack of the crisis, we suppose that to some extent both issues must be related in, at least, some of the informative strategies of the Basque media. It is our intention, in this short paper, to preliminary examine how digital Basque media dealt on this question during a whole decade, from 2008 to the present year of 2018. A deeper analysis is due, since searching using keywords through media's archive accessible through the Internet is unequal and limited in most cases. This is a secondary goal of this paper: to show how difficult is for researchers to rely on such digital archives, and how helpful it could be if those interfaces could provide to us a more refined search strategy based on the potentialities of a dataset and, most especially, on the possibility of doing Boolean searches combining terms and operators and the chance of filtering the results. In this respect, the difference of Basque digital media amongst those of Vocento Group and all the others are remarkable.

1.1. The concept of 'income inequality'

The concept -and its related search terms- of 'income inequality' is of great help for our research group, which during three years has applied different methodologies, including content analysis and social network analysis, to important, relevant public issues, even of political importance, but with no direct relation with elections or political parties. 'Income inequality' is a well defined term of high univocity, even in some other languages different from English, i.e. in Spanish (the most usual term is *desigualdad económica*) and in Basque (*desberdintasuna* is the most fruitful search term, as we will see, even though it is limited since it embraces any kind of inequalities, not only the economical ones). Other related terms are quite productive as well, being *brecha salarial* the clearest one (actually, 'salary gap' is a consequence or one of the symptoms, but not the only one, of income inequality).

Income inequality, and not any other kind of inequality which may have an influence on income (e.g. gender inequality) is the object of this preliminary definition, especially intended to be operational within the framework of our research project on how public opinion is forged and disseminated through digital networks by active users.

First obvious thing to remind is that income inequality can be considered to happened *within* and *between* societies, and to some extent and at least to start with, both are useful for our research project. The first kind of income or economic inequality to be considered in social sciences has been usually the second one, and it is to be found in the origin of the very concept of inequality itself. It has been given some different and recognizable names, such as International inequality, World income inequality or Cross-national inequality. It has also been referred to as ‘The Great Divergence’ (Adam Smith, David Ricardo, Robert C. Allen, E. Hobsbawm, R. Wilkinson & K Pickett). It means, *grosso modo*, inequality amongst nations and countries. There are some other related terms: globalization, wealth of nations, poverty. Probably the best known index to measure it is *World Income Distribution Dataset*, and the most widespread measure the Gini coefficient or ratio.

The second kind of income inequality is personal or household, that is, related to the relative health of individual people when compared to the other people of a given community, being that a nation, a social class or world wide. It has been defined: “Variations in living standards across a whole population” (McKay, 2002). Personal or household inequality has to do with social classes or groups, since, following Debraj Ray, income inequality is “the fundamental disparity that permits one individual certain material choices, while denying another individual those same choices” (Ray, 1998: 170).

Related terms are: income shares, salaries (also: gender salary inequality), poverty, taxes, social classes. Poverty is different from income inequality, and can be considered a consequence of it (McKay, 2002: 1; Pickett and Wilkinson, 2015: 132) Poverty and the news is a topic deeply developed by academia, see for instance Joanna Redden’s work on it, and the methods she uses (Redden, 2011). Usually this kind of income inequality focuses, as concept that can be relatively easy to be measured, on salaries, taxes, and benefits. Pay inequality, another key concept, is measured normally on salaries from employment (not rent). Wealth inequality refers, on the other hand, to the total amount of assets, and is related to redistribution of economic resources.

According to several authors (see McCall, 2010: 47), income inequality appeared definitely as a major research concern around 1987, but this topic’s visibility has gained importance from 2008 onwards. A couple of important books and authors have placed income inequality in the middle of an intense debated, because, being works on economics, have reached a wider audience in the world. Those books are Wilkinson and Pickett, *The Spirit Level* (2009) and Thomas Piketty’s *Le Capital au XXIe siècle* (Seuil, 2013), translated into many languages after being launched in English in 2014 (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press). Precisely Pickett & Wilkinson have said that “since the global financial crash, inequality has moved rapidly up the political agenda” (Pickett & Wilkinson, 2015: 132). It is clear that people “care most about income inequality when it becomes a societal problem” (McCall, 2010: 50). As a consequence, many scholars, e.g. Duca & Saving, 2017, have wonder to what extent does inequality leads to polarization, which is an important issue to move forward in our research project.

There are some other reasons that have posed income inequality in the middle of public discussion, one of them long term in inequality: “The long-term trend in income inequality

has been driven by two main factors: a surge at the top end in income and wealth; and, at the bottom end, a combination of reduced wealth and slower income growth during good times and a fall in income during bad times” (Fisher and Smeeding, 2016: 32).

There are some other related topics, which are important but not to be fully considered in our research, such as: Health and economic growth, Education and educational performance, Violence, Social mobility, Sustainability and, most especially, poverty as a consequence of inequality (see Redden, *Poverty and the News*).

1.2. Inequality and Media

The role of media is important, as they provide people with a contact with sources of information. Even though if in these days mass media organizations are not the only one to perform that role, and the Internet (including digital social networks) can be a substitute for a more direct contact from sources to the audience, availability of information -a question to be solved, to a great extent, in our research – is crucial for economic and political decisions. Access to information is, thus, a key concept, and it is also related to a good knowledge on how mediators, i.e. media companies and journalists, play a decisive role in placing some topics on the public agenda. So that it may be worthy to conduct a previous content analysis on how influential (especially, legacy) media treat income inequality in a given time frame, and this is the reason of this modest paper.

Scholars have assumed as a matter of fact that “mass media, being the most important source of information on public affairs for the majority of population, provided a convenient means for manipulating public opinion.”, so even some researchers dare to say that “higher inequality makes the income of the median voter lower, which leads to higher popular demand for redistribution.” (Petrova, 2005: 1), but on the other hand there are reasons to believe that “the increasingly unequal distribution of income and the increasingly fragmented state of media” can explain political polarization, at least concerning this specific topic (see Duca and Saving, 2017). As a possible consequence, “higher inequality and higher accessibility of the media are associated with lower media freedom.” Some scholars have interrogated themselves on how mass media and ICTs are associated with inequality and poverty (Bandyopadhyay, 2014: 1). According to Maria Petrova, the way mass media cover inequality and distribution has an effect on the way people votes, at least in the United States of America (Ibidem: 27), an effect more visible when society has a high democratic development index, another aspect to be possibly considered in our research. Political biases and how they have been influenced by media, concretely focusing on liberalism and neoliberalism, is another aspect to be carefully considered, and has been treated by, e.g., Byrne, 2012).

Democratic maturity of political systems seems to have a clear influence on how voters and users (audiences) interact and counteract to try to change things. We have to check out whether, following Sanghamitra Bandyopadhyay “one can conjecture that higher incidence of media variables - such as newspapers, radios and televisions - and higher access to ICTs – such as higher internet usage, and deeper telecommunications' penetration – can be associated with lower levels of inequality” or not (Bandyopadhyay, 2014: 11).

The importance of digital communication and the apparent facility to have a voice (and not necessarily an influence) on the others has also been stressed by some scholars: so, Courtois and Verdegem affirm that “In today’s information society, access and mastery of

online resources are indispensable participatory prerequisites” (Courtois and Verdegem, 2016: 1509). In a recent study, they have concluded that “the usage of social support sources moderates the direct and indirect association between inequality sources (i.e. access quality, skills and motivation) and the diversity in positive outcomes.” Moreover, both researchers remind that “it shows an apparent link between both offline and online resources; it is an instance of how both offline and online inclusion go hand in hand”. The role of media in forging a social image for income inequality has been underlined by some relevant Spanish authors, such as sociologist Julio Carabaña (Carabaña, 2016).

2. News on income inequality in the Basque media

2.1. Difficult searches: a word on media’s digital archives

One of the first difficulties when trying to make a complete catalogue of news related to income inequality in the Basque digital media is the limitation of their digital archives accessible through the Internet, usually a section called *Hemeroteca* or simply a rudimentary search engine. The media we have decided to focus in are the general ones, and when a media group has more than one (it is the case of Vocento Group, which publishes *El Correo* and *Diario Vasco*, or Grupo Noticias, which publishes *Deia*, *Noticias de Álava* and *Noticias de Gipuzkoa*) we have decided to concentrate in just one of them, assuming that, except for hyperlocal news -or undeniable interest, but out of our scope- news on our topic are common for all of them. So, to *elcorreo.com* and *deia.eus*, we have added *berria.eus* (the only Basque-language daily newspaper’s website which covers the whole Basque Country) and *naiz.eus*, digital extended version of *Gara*, considered a newspaper close to the radical left-winged Basque nationalism which uses both official languages, Basque and Spanish, but with a clear predominance of the second.

Using those websites’ searchable archives, there are two different groups: the most limited ones are those of Grupo Noticias, *Berria.eus* and *Naiz.eus*, which only allow very basic, simple word-based searches, and in many cases with no filtering options to refine those searches; and the interface provided by Vocento Group. No Boolean searches are allowed, so researchers cannot combine different terms and use different connectors (i.e. “and/or”), so it is impossible, in any case, to make an accurate search using a complete specific combination of words (‘desigualdad’ + ‘económica’). This obliges the researches to check all results one by one to check to which extent such limited searches matches his or her interest, and to which extent are those items completely related to the concepts used in the research. For this reason, and until such a manual check is completed, no definitive results can be offered.

At least, the interface provided by Vocento Group permits to perform some filtering options, so searches can be, to a certain point, refined (see figure 1).

FIGURE 1. Search interface, Vocento Group

EL CORREO

Hemeroteca

Resultados para 'desigualdad económica' | 1787 entradas Ocultar filtros ^

Filtrar

Edición <input type="text"/>	Sección <input type="text"/>	Subsección <input type="text"/>	Autor <input type="text"/>	Desde <input type="text" value="dd-mm-aaaa"/>	Hasta <input type="text" value="dd-mm-aaaa"/>
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Formato

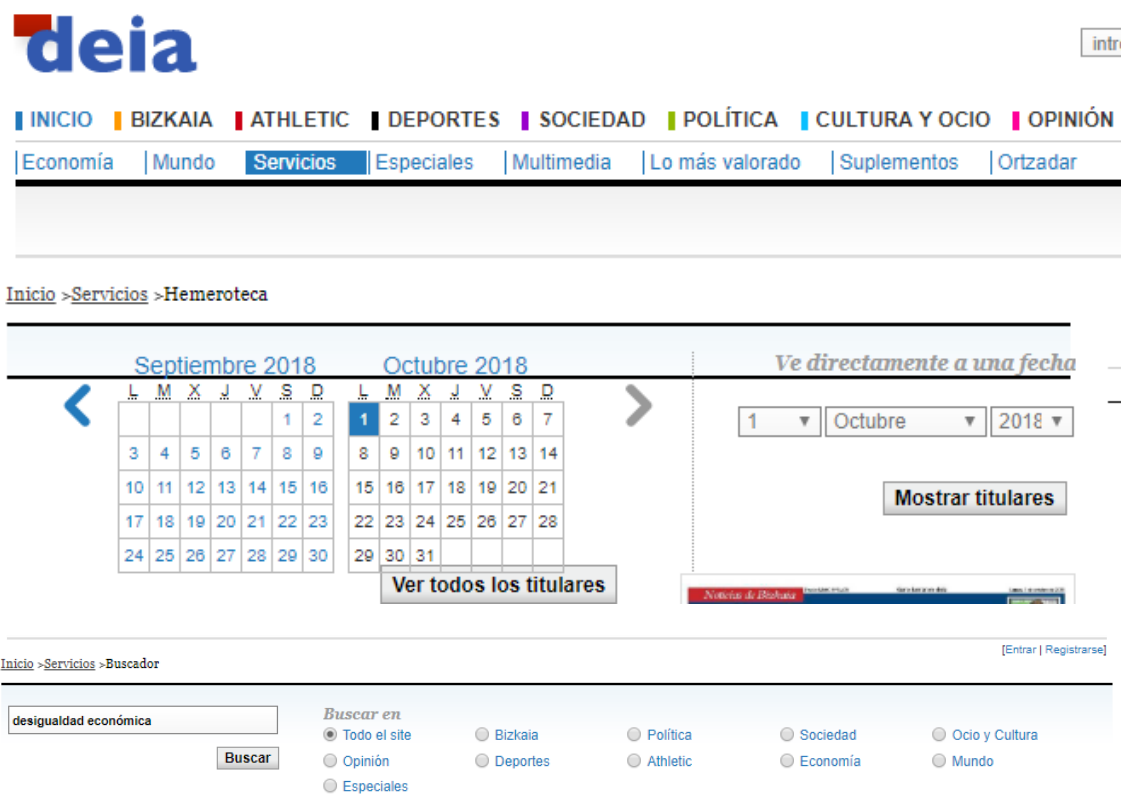
<input style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 2px 10px; text-align: center; font-size: small;" type="button" value="Noticias"/> 1736	<input style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 2px 10px; text-align: center; font-size: small;" type="button" value="Vídeos"/> 44
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Noticias | 1-10 de 1736 noticias Ordenar por: **Relevancia** Últimos Antiguos

Source: elcorreo.com

When compared with the much more limited operations allowed by other Basque media, one can conclude that such a research is compulsorily to be performed manually, with adds a further complexity to our effort. The second media group in terms of importance and audience is Grupo Noticias, whose oldest medium is *Deia*, considered a right-winged nationalist press organ, close to the dominant governing force, the Basque Nationalist Party. The interface provided by this medium, similar in alf to the other ones of the group (*Deia*'s influence is limited mainly to Biscay, whilst *Noticias de Álava* and *Noticias de Gipuzkoa* are media intended to have an influence on the provinces of Álava and Gipuzkoa, respectively) is, as can be seen in figure 2, of poor results.

FIGURE 2: Search interface, Noticias Group



Source: *Deia.eus*

When performing searches and trying to refine them by sections, a possibility the interface offers, results are repetitive (many news items appear to have been published, or erroneously tagged in more than one sections), so it is impossible to compare, until a manual, exhaustive and time-consuming refining is done, the real amount of items assigned to different informative areas. This is only possible, for the time being, in Vocento Group's media.

A similar problem happened with *naiz.eus* (see figure 3), because its interface only allows to make a search using simple terms and no filtering option is offered. Finally, *berria.eus*' search engine and interface is extremely simple, only term searches are allowed, and a combination of words (i.e., *desberdintasun + ekonomikoa*) offer no relevant results.

FIGURE 3: Search interface, *Naiz.eus*

naiz: Eguneratua: 11.31 16° Bañera

INFO IRITZIA NAIZ+ AGENDA HARPIDETZA DENDA

BILAKETAREN EMAITZA - INFO

GUZTIA ALBISTEAK ARGAZKIAK BIDEOAK

desigualdad económica

Hasi: 2008/01/01 Buk.: 2018/09/30

Bilatu

desigualdad económica-(r)en emaitzak: 1-10, 420-(e)tik

Honen arabera ordenatu: data | garrantzia Emaitzak orrialdeko: 10 | 25 | 50

Source: *Naiz.eus*

Another main problem, especially when compared with the general practice of Spanish (i.e., *elpaís.com*, *eldiario.es* or *elmundo.com*) is that no specific tag is used for our topic. On the other hand, the aforementioned media, using tags, allow the visualization of specific sections on income inequality (so do many international media as well), so, in those case, one a specific news item on our research interest is found, clicking on the tag of it leads us to many more related news. This is not possible in the Basque media we analyze in this occasion. This means much more work for a researcher team like ours and for any reader interested in such a relevant topic. It contrasts with the possibilities offered by press databases like Factiva or MyNews, on the other hand, so a researcher's work must rely better on those databases than on a direct access to the original sources.

FIGURE 4. MyNews search interface

The screenshot shows the MyNews search interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'Hasiera', 'Hemeroteka', and 'Komunikabideak'. Below this, there are three tabs: 'Oinarrizko bilatzailea', 'Bilatzaile aurreratua', and 'Bilatzailea boolearrekin'. The main section is titled 'Bilatzaile aurreratua' and contains several search filters:

- Bilaketa-hitzak:** Fields for 'hitz guztiekin', 'hitz hauetako batzuekin', 'esaldi zehatza', and 'hitz hauek gabe', each with an 'AND' button.
- Data:** Radio buttons for 'Gaur', 'noiztik' (1/1/2018), and 'eguna' (1/10/2018). A 'noiz arte' field is set to 1/10/2018.
- Informazio-iturriak:** Fields for 'Kokapena' (Artikulu guztia), 'Atala' (DENAK), 'Edizioa', 'Egilea' (Adib. Juan Pérez...), and 'Komunikabidea/Egunkaria' (Denak).
- Garrantzia:** A field set to 0% with a note: '(Zenbat eta portzentaje handiagoa, orduan eta esijentzia handiagoa emaitzen bat lortzeko)'. A 'Bilatu' button is at the bottom.

Source: MyNews

For this reason, primary searches have been performed using *income inequality* term (in Spanish and Basque languages, as mentioned), with dissimilar results, and as a consequence a delay on our research has appeared as a handicap, so a next step should be, after revising one by one all the items given as a result using such basic, limited searches, to create a database manually fed with the following register record:

Title
Author(s)
Medium
Date
Main topic
Secondary topic
Source

This simple record, which compensates the severe limitations of Basque media's search engines (or, more accurately speaking, of the clumsy interface the user is obliged to fight with), is a following step in our research.

2.2. How do Basque media deal with income inequality

Anyway, using secondary searches and combining them, when possible, with filtering options, allows us to offer some few, we guess, interesting results that should be improved in later steps. The total amount of items published on the topic by the Basque digital media is very irregular: it is about 1,000 items in Grupo Noticias, 420 in *Naiz.eus*, only 33 in *Berria.eus*, and 1,214 in Vocento Group.

At least in the case of Vocento Group, it has been possible to determine to which sections and in which year have been assigned news on income inequality during the whole decade. This is shown in Table 1:

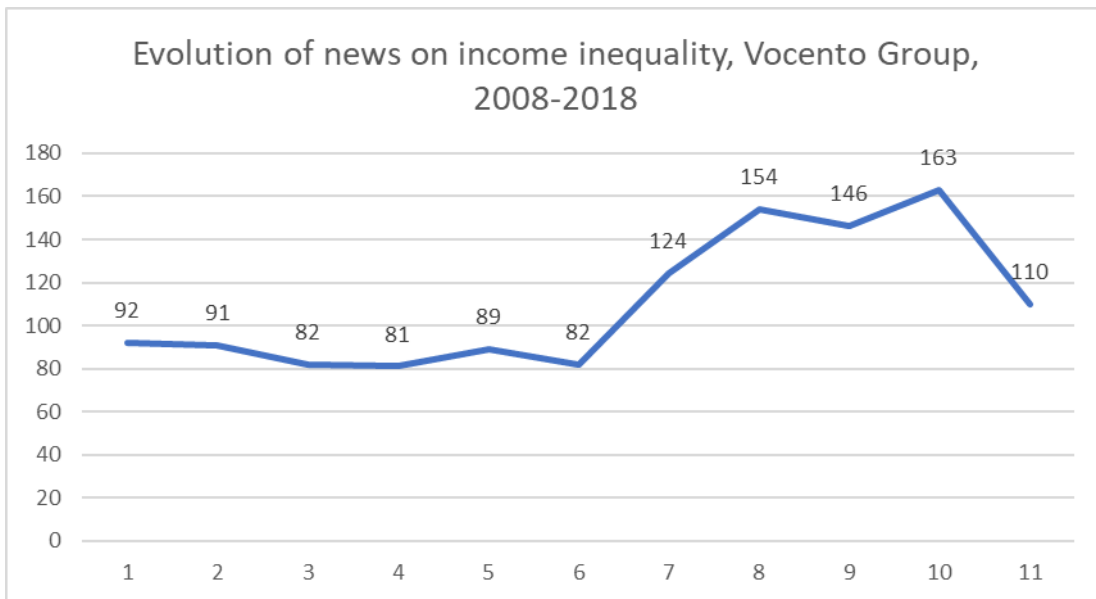
TABLE 1. News on income inequality, Vocento Group (2008-2018)

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	TOTAL
Economía	14	10	12	10	10	24	33	30	44	52	31	270
Mundo	10	15	14	23	18	20	15	20	15	6		156
Política	9	9	10	11	15	3	30	60	63	43	20	273
Sociedad	59	57	46	37	46	35	46	44	24	41	30	465
Opinión	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	21	29	50
TOTAL	92	91	82	81	89	82	124	154	146	163	110	1214

Source: Prepared by the authors

The evolution of the whole amount of news on this specific topic is shown in figure 5. Between 2015 and 2017 this group, at least its main newspaper and website, *El Correo*, reached its maximum level of attention to income inequality, with an increasing attention paid from 2013 onwards. It can be said that, during the first years of the worst economic crisis of the century, this group paid a regular attention to this topic. It is not by chance that Thomas Piketty's English translation of his most famous book was published in 2013, under the title *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, and that it has been a work that has caused a renaissance of the public interest on income inequality in Western societies.

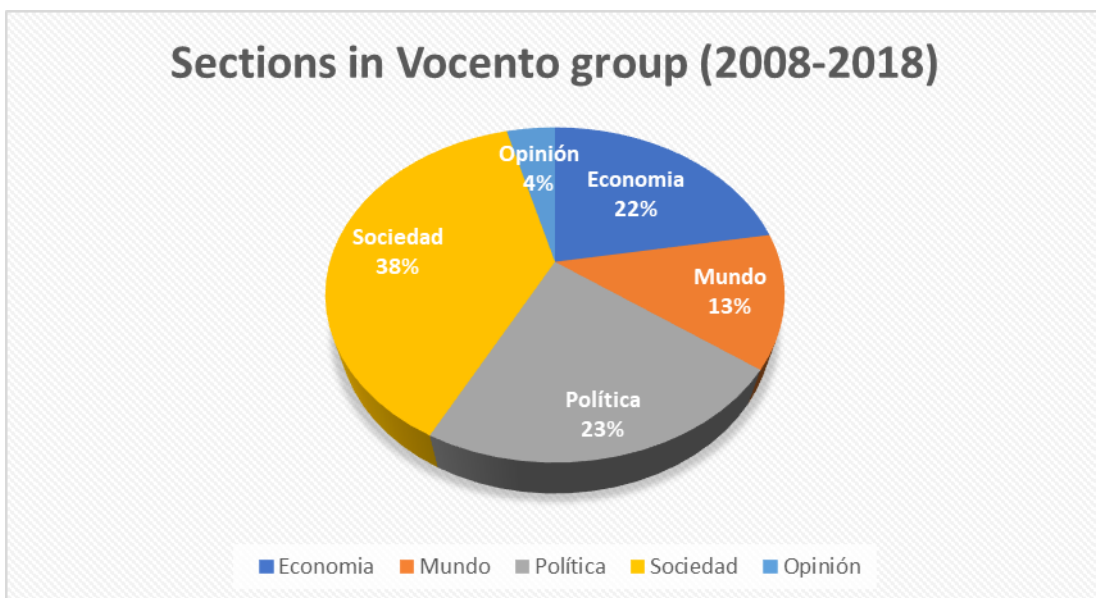
FIGURE 5. Evolution of news on income inequality, Vocento Group



Source: Prepared by the authors

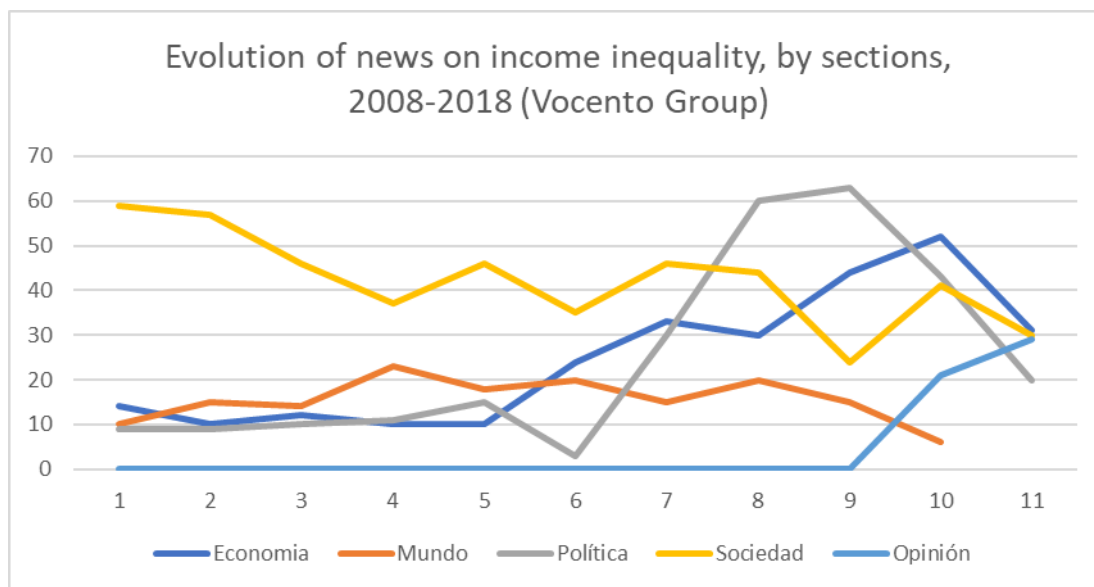
Surprisingly enough, as shown in figures 6 and 7, Vocento Group considers income inequality more a society and political issue than an economic one, since 61% of the items are assigned to both sections (and to health and education subsections), and not to economy, where only 22% of the news items on the topic are published. It is to be remarked that some items are assigned to more than one section, and that this is a common practice in online media.

FIGURE 6. News on income inequality, Vocento Group, classified by sections



Source: Prepared by the authors

FIGURE 7. Evolution of news on income inequality, Vocento Group, classified by sections



Source: Prepared by the authors

It is shown an increase of political news on the topic during the same years (2013 onwards) in which Thomas Piketty's influential book (Bradford DeLong, Boushey and Steinbaum, 2016) appeared. Moreover: op-ed pieces are only published, related to income inequality, during 2016, 2017 and 2018. One of the most relevant one, an editorial (and this is not the only one of its kind) in *El Correo*, titled "Brecha salarial y discriminación social", February 4, 2018. The importance of Piketty is shown in table 2:

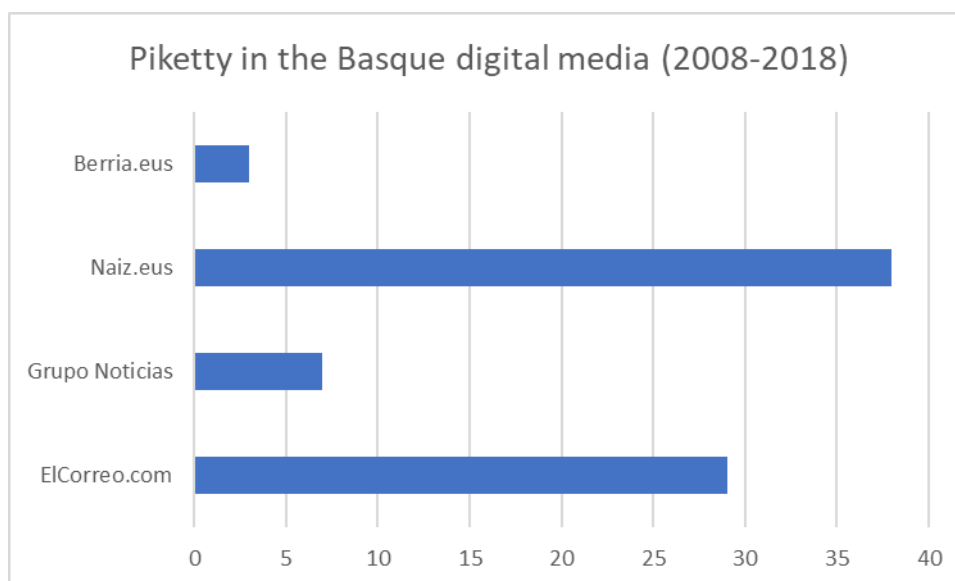
TABLE 2. News on income inequality mentioning Thomas Piketty

ElCorreo.com	29
Grupo Noticias	7
Naiz.eus	38
Berria.eus	3

Source: Prepared by the authors

This is especially evident in *Berria's* case: 10% of the total news items on the topic mentions this French economist.

FIGURE 8. Thomas Piketty in the Basque digital media (2008-2018)



Source: Prepared by the authors

Actually, and regarding to the reason which causes the publication of news items and op-ed articles, the publication of influential works and reports is clearly a main cause. Piketty's work is one; on the other hand, works on economic inequality by Stieglitz, Nobel prize, or Wilkinson and Pickett (whose *The Spirit Level* was the book which, in 2009, renewed the general public's interest on the topic, and which was translated into Spanish that same year), are scarcely mentioned. Stieglitz is actually, only mentioned related to income inequality in one news item in *naiz.eus*, and Wilkinson and Pickett's book is only mentioned in one item in *elcorreo.com*. By the way, these both authors have published in 2018 another book on the topic, not translated for the time being into Spanish (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2018). During the following months, we will check to which extent this works results in some media's interest.²

Some other works are very influential, and this is a fact we found also in our research on Twitter: the publication of reports on income inequality by OCDE, Oxfam, FMI or, once again, Thomas Piketty's group (World Inequality Report, 2017). In all these cases, the interest of media, also Basque ones, is clearly stated. This has allowed us to make a more complex search using the usual term plus the name of those sources, whose results are shown in table 3:

² These two researchers have created an influential webpage, The Equality Trust <https://www.equalitytrust.org.uk/>. Many groups are related in many countries, but there is no Spanish group.

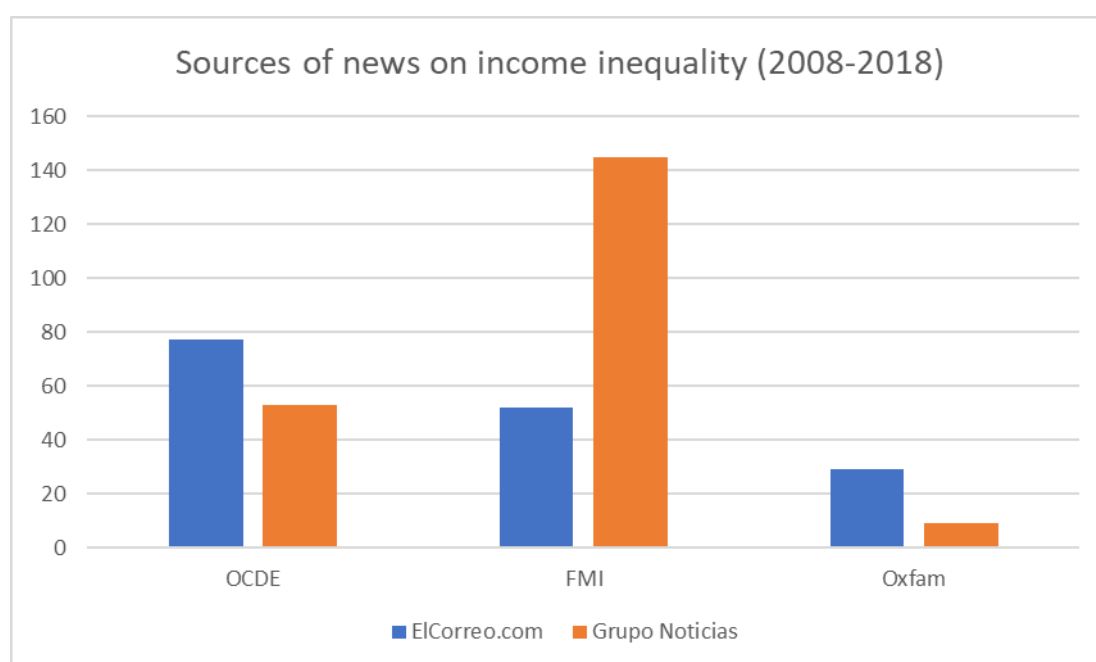
TABLE 3. Sources of news on income inequality

	OCDE	FMI	Oxfam
ElCorreo.com	77	52	29
Grupo Noticias	53	145	9

Source: Prepared by the authors

Graphically, this is shown in figure 9.

FIGURE 9. Main sources of news on income inequality in the Basque digital media (2008-2018)



Source: Prepared by the authors

2.2.2. Income inequality and the Basque fiscal regime

One of the most interesting question is to examine when examining income inequality is associated to a particularity of the Basque Country political and economic system: the so-called *concierto económico* (and the *cupo*, or calculation of how much has to be paid to the Spanish central administration once taxes have been collected by the provincial Basque administrations), a vindication claimed by other regions, like Catalonia. It is to be remembered how in 2012 the former president of Catalonia, Artur Mas, required former president of Spain, Mariano Rajoy, for a new tax agreement, but failed (it was to be asked to the Parliament, instead), and started a long series of large demonstrations in Catalonia asking not for a new tax and financial agreement, but for independence. But this is another story.

Even though if the Basque economic agreement is not the object of this research, it is to be said that it is not surprising that *concierto económico* is seen as a privilege. This is more

evident in the case of Vocento Group, which launches a series of regional newspapers (and their related websites) in the Basque country and outside this region, for instance in the neighboring La Rioja, which complains about unfair competition and unequal tax and financial treatment.

In general terms, a combined (to the extent it is possible with the aforementioned limitations) of both ‘income inequality’ and ‘economic agreement’ gives as a result the following figures:

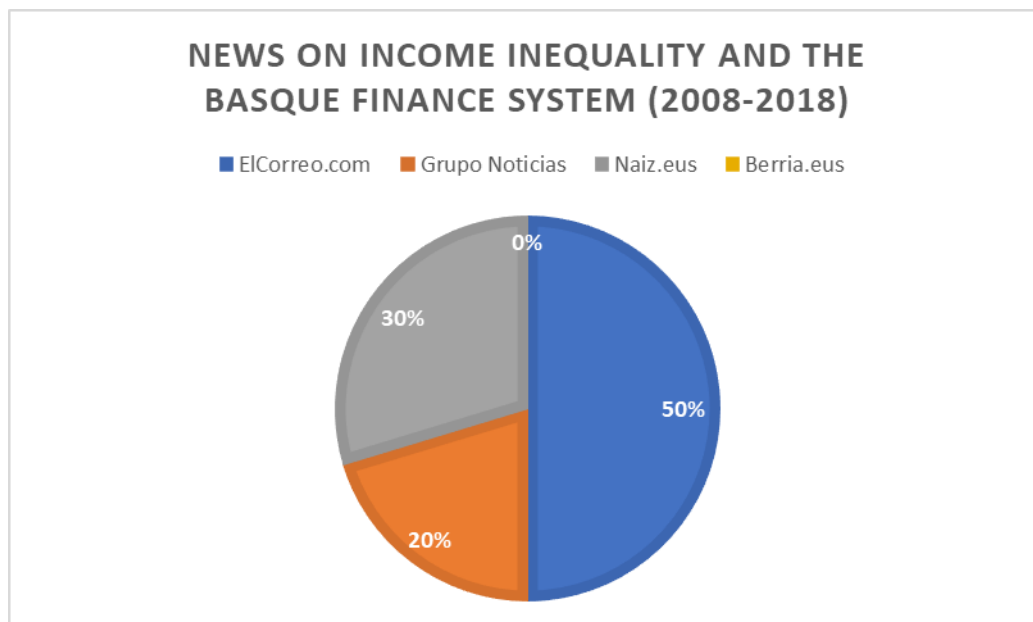
TABLE 4. News items on income inequality and the Basque economic agreement

ElCorreo.com	64
Grupo Noticias	26
Naiz.eus	38
Berria.eus	0

Source: Prepared by the authors

Otherwise expressed, 5,27% of news items on income inequality published by Vocento Group, of Basque origin, between 2008 and 2018 are directly related to the particular Basque tax and economic regime, 2,6% of news items of Noticias Group, and 9% of news items on income inequality by *Naiz.eus*, clearly the medium which concentrates more efforts on underlining the advantage of such an economic system. Further content analysis on those items, which once again need to be manually refined and selected, will shed some more light. For the time being, let us finish with one more figure. Of all news items on income inequality and the Basque economic system, exactly half of them were published by Vocento Group, whose weight and importance in the Basque media industry, and its influence on Basque people’s news consumption and formation of public opinion, is evident,

FIGURE10. News on income inequality and the Basque economic system, 2008.2018



Source: Prepared by the authors

3. Final remarks: much work to be done

This short paper has many limitations, and its constricted by handicaps in searches in primary sources like Basque online media. Anyway, it is our intention to insist on the fact that income inequality is one of the major challenges of our societies. Over the past years, there has been an increase interest and the topic has been gained importance. However, scientific investigation on this phenomenon as treated by media is still scarce. As we have noted in the introduction section, this work is a preliminary study and it will serve as a base for future studies. In this way, these findings cannot be extrapolated and, as we consider, further research is needed in order to get a better understanding of the digital knowledge production.

It is clear, that, after performing a rather manual data gathering, classification and content analysis of all news items directly related to income inequality in the Basque media -similar to the one to be performed in the Spanish online media and in the main international ones, in order to achieve an accurate comparative perspective- more definitive results could be explained. A decade is more than enough to show an evolution on the treatment of such a relevant public issue, and the particularities of the Basque society and its economic system, unique in Europe, could shed more light to explain better how it is presented to a society in times of crisis.

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