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6 European integration, cross-border cooperation and third sector mobilizations in the Basque Country¹

Xabier Itçaina

Introduction

The Basque Country constitutes an ideal site to observe the ambivalent effects of European integration at the local level, for three reasons. First, as a border zone, the Basque Country has been affected by changes in the regulation of the internal borders of the EU. Second, as the scene of the last violent ethno-nationalist conflict in Western Europe, Basque political and social actors still have to deal with a transnational identity which challenges the border itself. The Basque border has thus become the scene of a complex game between distinct (cultural, institutional and/or market-oriented) visions of cross-border cooperation. Third, civil society actors are strongly involved in cross-border relationships. This chapter investigates the role of third sector organizations in the increasing Basque cross-border mobilizations. To what extent do such mobilizations amount to an ongoing process of Europeanization? Europeanization refers to

processes of (a) construction, (b) diffusion, and (c) institutionalization of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, ‘ways of doing things’, and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the making of EU public policy and politics and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourses, identities, political structures, and public policies.

(Radaelli 2003: 30)

Europeanization needs to be measured through sub-national units, as part of the domestic response to the EU (Murphy 2007). Broadly speaking, analysis of Europeanization at the sub-national level has to take into consideration the *institutional impact* of EU norms, as well as the Europeanization of organizations and institutions in terms of *shared values* and evolving *attitudes* towards the EU.

In order to adapt this line of questioning to cross-border relationships, one can refer to a distinction drawn by O’Dowd and McCall (2008), with reference to Ireland. Cross-border relationships are conceptualized in terms of two analytically distinct processes, one internationalizing, the other transnationalizing:

The former is primarily ‘border confirming’, in that it involves interaction between organizations with territorial remits clearly demarcated by the state border and by their role within the panoply of state institutions. Such interaction has the effect of mutually recognizing and re-affirming the distinctive ‘national state’ basis of the organization involved. . . . Transnational relationships may be deemed to be ‘border transcending’, in that their approach to territoriality is more elastic as they generate networks or institutions formed to accomplish functional tasks across borders. They may involve both state and non-state organizations.

(O’Dowd and McCall 2008: 85)

In the light of this distinction, I argue in this chapter that the strong involvement of civil society and third sector organizations in the Basque cross-border collaborations fall within the transnational kind of relationships. *Third sector* refers here to an economic sector going beyond the mere *non-profit* sector, notably with the inclusion of all the ‘organisations producing goods and services which are not constituted under the principle of the maximisation of profit’ (Laville 2000: 4).² Hence they have an ambivalent relationship to Europeanization. On the one hand, cross-border relationships between Basque third sector organizations are border-transcending. Basque identity-based mobilizations have used cross-border contacts in order to set up well-structured transnational networks, which aim to bypass the state-controlled design of institutional cooperation. Some of these civil society initiatives are linked to wider transnational social movements which could be seen as part of a process of ‘Europeanisation from below’ (Della Porta 2007). On the other hand, third sector mobilization maintains ambivalent relations – from partnership to competition – with cross-border cooperation policies that function on an inter-institutional basis. Therefore, these initiatives cannot be reduced to mere social movements which would only develop alternative initiatives. These transnational third sector mobilizations possess an instrumental, rather than identity-based, relationship to European integration. Europe, in this case, is regarded as an opportunity to go further in the institutionalization from below of a cross-border Basque common identity. As Reuter (2007) has argued concerning cross-border NGO cooperation in the Baltic Sea region, Basque third sector actors are developing a cross-border regional civil society, but this ‘micro-regionalism’ has to be understood in the light of the pursuit of different interests, going from local and/or nationalist conceptions to inclusion in a wider process of civil society transnationalization.

This chapter will develop this argument in three parts. First, such cross-border relationships are made possible only thanks to a particularly dynamic civil society and to third sector organizations located on each side of the border. Second, their initiatives take place in an evolving institutional context characterized by the increasing role of cross-border policies, which give an institutional dimension to already existing civil society cross-border networks. Third, the involvement of some third sector organizations in cross-border collaboration will

illustrate this analysis, with two sectoral examples: mobilizations in favour of the Basque language and initiatives in favour of local economic development.

An organized and dynamic civil society on both sides of the border

Both the French and the Spanish Basque regions are well known for the dynamism of their respective civil societies. These dynamics have been analysed from different standpoints on each side of the border. In order to clarify the comparative framework, this first part aims to draw an analytical distinction between analysis focusing on civil society *mobilizations* and those focusing on third sector and social economy *organizations*.

A 'society of movements'

Several research projects have considered the dynamics of civil society, mostly in the Spanish Basque Country, through their relation to nationalist movements. Theories of resource mobilization were used to analyse the protest cycles closely associated with nationalist organizations, including those promoting political violence, such as ETA (Euskadi eta Askatasuna, Basque Homeland and Freedom), and other social movements. With the help of Tarrow's variables in the political structure, to which he adds the extent of consciousness-raising and the mobilization of civil society, Tejerina (2001) scrutinizes the protest cycle of ETA's violence from its origins at the beginning of the 1960s, through its consolidation in the 1970s, to its decline from the mid-1980s onwards. The interactions set up between the armed organization, social movements and civil society proved to be crucial for understanding its vicissitudes. Many observers have emphasized the extraordinary level of protest in the Basque Country since the 1970s. Casquete (2006) has analysed the integrative function of protest for the group, by analysing Basque mass protests, conceptualized here as collective rituals. Protest rituals are seen here as a way of preserving group boundaries in order to face the generalized disapproval these groups may engender in wider society.

Civil society mobilizations are not monopolized by the nationalists. In reaction to the ethno-nationalist conflict, a pacifist third sector has developed in the Basque Country since the mid-1980s, with the aim of overcoming the binary nationalist/non-nationalist division and the potential threats to the process of conflict resolution. These threats include the persistence of a culture of violence at the local level, the central government's uncompromising positions, the influence of the international context and notably the war on terror since 9/11 (Conversi 2006). In such a context, activism within the peace movements proved to be a very delicate task as these movements gathered members from various political origins, from victims of terrorism to Basque nationalists. Mansvelt Beck (2005) distinguishes six groups acting for peace, founded between 1981 and 1999, and emphasizes the handicaps to their respective initiatives. Funes (1998)

contrasts the strategies and support groups of the two main organizations, Gesto por la paz and Elkarri. Indeed the majority of Gesto members accepted the political regime after the transition, gathering a wide spectrum of political movements; Elkarri was closer to the nationalist left wing, though it rejected violence (Funes 1998: 508). Some organizations were concerned for the most part with the problem of compensation for the victims of ETA and excluded the Basque nationalist approach, while others stemmed from the critical factions within the Basque nationalist left wing. Mees highlights the fact that diverging opinions in the political sphere about the nature of the conflict may account for the differences among the peace movements (2003: 97). Contrary to Gesto por la paz, Elkarri considers that the debate is political, not ethical. The source of violence thus finds its origin in the opposition between a significant part of the population and the Spanish state on issues such as self-determination. Mees also points out that there is a risk in the openly political dimension of Elkarri's action, since its efficiency depends on the support of the parties. Third sector initiatives may also be criticized as constituting interventions of non-elected bodies. The Catholic Church has seemingly incorporated this spectrum of initiatives, thus finding itself in a delicate position within a fragmented pacifist movement, all the more so as most of these pacifist movements expected the Church to adopt a clear stance, as if they still saw the Catholic institution as a mediator *par excellence* (Itçaina 2010).

Recent research has also pointed out the emergence of new social movements in the Basque Country which are no longer directly linked to the ethno-nationalist conflict. The Parte hartuz research team (University of the Basque Country) considers Basque society as a 'society of movements' in light of the increasing number of associations and organizations favouring alternatives to the current politico-economical system. Environmental protest in the Basque Country was first characterized by its close association with Basque nationalism (Barcena *et al.* 2003). Nevertheless, over a decade (1988–1997), environmental concerns became increasingly autonomous with regard to the national question, and became more embedded in the struggles of local communities to preserve their quality of life. The majority of ecological organizations, while they appear to have distanced themselves from the protest-oriented and anti-institutional scenario and discursive frame of radical Basque nationalism, have not embarked on a process of institutionalization. Instead, they seem to have found a new ecological space, 'eco-localism', from which to continue their work (Barcena *et al.* 2003). The mobilizations against the highway in the Leizaran and Urbina-Maltzaga valleys highlight the complex nature of the relationship between nationalism and environmentalism (Zubiaga Garate 2008). Many of today's pacifist movements borrow their repertoire of action – in terms of protest *and* mediation – from the environmental mobilization movements of the early 1990s, rather than from other classical socializing institutions such as the traditional Catholic Church (Zubiaga Garate 2008).

Neither the institutional context nor the socio-demographic reality of the French Basque Country gave birth to new social movements which would have

been comparable to southern ones, with the exception of some recent environmental controversies. However, the debate about the institutionalization of the French Basque Country shed light on the dynamics emanating from very different milieux. Chaussier (1996) and Ahedo (2005) stressed the crucial role of civil society actors in the mobilization in favour of territorial institutionalization for the French Basque Country. Batera (Together) in 1999 aggregated four distinct demands: a separate department for the Basque Country; a co-official status for the Basque language; an autonomous Chamber of Agriculture for the Basque Country; and an autonomous university. These demands were endorsed by sectors of Basque society going far beyond the nationalist spectrum.

Some of these mobilizations, such as those in favour of the Basque language, are comparable to the Spanish Basque ones. Others are specific to French Basque civil society. More rural than the Spanish side, the French Basque region has been the scene of significant farmers' mobilizations since the mid-1970s. Collective action took the form of a specific trade unionism and a set of producers' initiatives in favour of a 'peasant and sustainable agriculture'. Such a mobilization was first supported by the ELB Union (Euskal Herriko Laborarien Sindikata, Union of the Farmers of the Basque Country), which constitutes the Basque branch of the French left-wing farmers' union Confédération Paysanne. Producers have also instigated many initiatives since the 1980s including quality and organic farming, and associations of transhumant shepherds. The ELB and producers' organizations alike asked for specific institutional representation for Basque agriculture, separate from the departmental official Chamber of Agriculture. The state administration and the Chamber of Agriculture of the Pyrénées-Atlantiques repeatedly rejected such a demand in the name of the principle of 'one department, one chamber'. Supporters of an alternative chamber decided in January 2005 to found an associative Chamber of Agriculture for the Basque Country (Euskal Herriko Laborantza Ganbara, EHLG) in the Lower Navarre. Its creation soon became highly controversial. Two legitimacies were at stake: state administration and the departmental chamber on one side, and supporters of farming and sustainable agriculture on the other. In this context, those standing for the alternative chamber tried to desectorialize their cause, by representing it not as the simple lobbying of farmers, but as an issue concerning all territorial actors, going far beyond the nationalist scope (Itçaina 2008).

An organized civil society: third sector and social economy actors

The literature cited above embraces a wide spectrum of actors. However, the focus is often on the more politicized mobilizations. To avoid this bias, the mobilization approach should be complemented by an organizational one, focused on third sector and social economy actors, as being more precise than civil society and more inclusive than the mere non-profit sector.

The social economy is flourishing on both sides of the border, despite legal differences. In the late 1990s, Euskadi and Navarra ranked first out of the seventeen Spanish Autonomous Communities in terms of social capital (Mota and

Subirats 2000). In terms of interest and participation in public matters, the Basque Country ranked first out of the Spanish regions, followed by Navarra and La Rioja (Mota and Subirats 2000: 139). When considering associative networks, Mota and Subirats draw a distinction between economic and professional associations (private goods producers) on the one hand, and philanthropic and care-oriented associations (public goods producers) on the other. The more 'individualistic' Autonomies, where relations of coordination are predominant, were Madrid, Catalonia and Canarias. The more 'collectivist' ones were the Basque Country and Navarra. One has to remain attentive to the political implications of such high levels of social capital. The political contextualization allows a description of social capital as either positive (strong associative involvement and a sense of community) or negative (collective mistrust due to political divisions) (Ritaine 2001: 55). The Basco-Navarrese associative network originated in the period of Francoist repression and in the uncertainties of democratic transition. These caveats do not minimize the originality of a Basco-Navarrese associative network, which originated from and contributed to cohesive associative networks *and* mutual mistrust, maintaining solidarities *and* divisions.

Apart from the associations, the Basque Country is one of the leading regions in terms of cooperatives, together with Navarra, Andalusia and Valence. It owes this position to the cooperative complex of Mondragon,³ even if the Basque social economy as a whole cannot be reduced to this highly significant experience. Cooperatives ensured 47,975 jobs in the Basque Autonomous Community in 2004 (Gobierno Vasco 2007). Euskadi is also a leader in terms of *sociedades laborales* (12,974 jobs in 2004), an original entrepreneurial status located between the cooperative and the capitalist firm. In 2005 the Basque Autonomous Community ranked second behind Andalusia in terms of the aggregated number of workers in cooperatives and *sociedades laborales*.⁴ More recently, the Basque social economy started developing new forms of multi-stakeholder cooperatives associating public and private actors, and aimed at employing people systematically excluded from local labour markets and persons with mental, physical or social disabilities (Enciso Santocildes 2004).

For obvious demographic and historical reasons, the French Basque Country cannot be systematically compared to its neighbour. However, this territory also has a very specific profile as regards its social economy, thanks to associative and cooperative dynamics. From the mid-1970s, there was a burgeoning of associations in favour of the Basque language and culture. In the economic sector, a movement of workers' cooperatives emerged in the mid-1970s, and became representative of this territory at the national level. In the 1990s–2000s, the dynamics of a social and solidarity-based economy intensified within this territory, albeit in different forms: cooperatives of service and small-sized industries, micro-finance, fair trade, social integration and local development. The French Basque Country ranked first in France in 2007 for its local micro-credit loan clubs for professional women (CLEFE, Local Club of Saving for Women Entrepreneurs). These dynamics were to be found in many sectors, particularly in agriculture, trade and services.

The ambivalent Europeanization of local cross-border policies

Third sector initiatives take place in an evolving institutional context. On both sides of the border, public policies started experiencing a strong process of Europeanization or, more exactly, a mix between ‘*ex post* communautisation’ and ‘*ex ante* Europeanisation’ (Carter and Pasquier 2006)⁵ through the development of cross-border operations from the late 1980s. As a result, an institutional design favourable to cross-border collaboration was set up in the Basque Country, which attracted third sector actors. This context of Europeanization was perceived as both an opportunity and a constraint by Basque nationalists. Increasing cross-border relations also brought to light the institutional asymmetry between the two sides of the border.

A new institutional design in favour of cross-border collaboration

The Europeanization process can be perceived first through its institutional dimensions. In his research devoted to the implementation of the INTERREG III-A France–Spain programme, Harguindéguy defines cross-border cooperation as ‘all types of negotiated actions between the public institutions of at least two neighbouring countries’ (2007: 317). Ten years earlier, Letamendia (1997) had emphasized the importance of the process of European integration as a factor encouraging cross-border cooperation in the Basque Country. According to him, European integration manifested two very different trends. On the one hand, control over the French–Spanish border was reinforced due to EU anti-terrorism and immigration policies. On the other hand, European integration encouraged a cooperative framework hitherto reserved to the nation-state because it fell within the scope of international relations.

From 1983, the Aquitaine and the Basque Autonomous Community took part, together with the other seven border regions, in the Working Community of the Pyrenees. New programmes of cooperation appeared when Spain joined the Common Market in 1986. They were supported not only by civil society actors, but also by public authorities. The cooperation between the Basque Autonomous Community and the Aquitaine region enjoyed a major boost from 1989, ‘coinciding with the Structural Funds Reform and the impulse given by the Single European Act to the Union’s regional policy’ (Letamendia 1997: 36). Identity-based cooperation was relayed through institutional cooperation, the latter being stimulated by European funds such as the INTERREG programmes from 1990. In the Basque Country, INTERREG funds, while reinforcing cross-border relations, renewed a strong tradition of collaboration between local authorities and civil society actors at the border. Several cooperative programmes were set up. Among others, the Aquitaine–Euskadi association,⁶ created in 1989, started a common fund in the domains of research, socio-economic development and training. The Bayonne–San Sebastián Eurocity, which started in 1995, strengthened cooperation on urban planning between the two urban areas. In the border

zone, the Eurodistrict Bidasoa–Txingudi (established in 1992) and the Consorcio Bidasoa–Txingudi (1998) brought together in one inter-city structure the French city of Hendaye and the Spanish cities of Fontarrabie and Irun. The Txingudi experience was seen as a successful example of inter-institutional collaboration when compared to other Pyrenean experiences (Harguindéguy 2007). The Treaty of Bayonne, signed between France and Spain in 1995, reinforced this legal framework by giving more latitude to the local authorities in terms of cross-border collaboration. These new institutional opportunities did not necessarily provoke an increase in the diffusion of ethnonationalism (Mansvelt Beck 2008) but they created a new institutional climate favouring the development of cross-border exchanges on a more regular basis.

The EU as a resource and/or a constraint for Basque nationalists

Such instruments of cross-border collaboration were likely to be promoted by Basque nationalists in order to strengthen the nation-building process. In particular, cross-border collaboration completed the international strategy of the government of Euskadi. Totoricagüena (2005) has emphasized how the Basque government has mobilized the Basque diaspora all over the world, and especially in Latin and North America, in order to elaborate a ‘paradiplomacy’ aimed at bypassing the Spanish state.⁷

The relation of the Basque nationalist parties and movements to the EU and to European integration is more complex and goes far beyond the single political instrumentalization of EU programmes. Drawing evidence from minority nationalist parties in Wales and in Galicia, Elias has argued that ‘whilst minority nationalist parties may not have turned their back completely on the idea of a Europe of the Regions, a new pragmatism drives these parties’ strategies and tactics for meeting their short- and long-term goals’ (2008: 557). Minority nationalist parties will assume one of four possible positions on European integration (Elias 2008: 562). First, Euro-enthusiast parties will combine support in principle for Europe as a framework for enhancing national autonomy. They evaluate positively the economic, political and cultural opportunities for the minority nation within the EU as it currently exists. Second, those who reject Europe will reject the notion that European integration can provide a long-term solution to the territorial autonomy question, and will be highly critical of the concrete institutional and political realities of the EU. Third, Euro-sceptic parties will accept that European integration may provide new solutions for reorganizing territorial authority in the long term, but will perceive the EU as it has developed in practice to be unsatisfactory. Fourth, Euro-pragmatists will support the EU on the basis of pragmatic or utilitarian considerations, since doing so means satisfying specific policy demands. However, such parties will reject the basic principles underlying the integration process, and will not recognize the long-term potential of European integration to meet core nationalist demands.

Taken as a whole, Basque nationalists have evolved from a very pro-European attitude towards a more qualified one. However, distinctions should be

made according to different nationalist leanings, particularly in the Spanish Basque region where nationalism is stronger. Basque radical nationalists close to Batasuna could be seen at first glance as highly critical of the policy realities of the EU. The EU was perceived first as a Europe of states, then as an economically liberal and socially regressive project. Nevertheless, radical nationalists frequently used European institutional arenas (particularly the European Parliament and the European Court of Human Rights) in their strategy of internationalization of the Basque conflict, against the Spanish state. The EU's involvement in the Irish peace process was also invoked as a precedent by Basque nationalists. This strategy had certain results, as on 13 December 2007 when the European Court of Human Rights declared partly admissible the claim of Batasuna against the Spanish government concerning the banning of parties and electoral lists within the left-wing Basque pro-independence movement since 2003 on the grounds that it had failed to condemn the ETA killings and maintained alleged ties with the violent perpetrators. However, in June 2009, the Strasbourg Court finally confirmed the ruling by the Spanish Supreme and Constitutional Courts banning Batasuna.⁸ Batasuna and, in December 2008, Acción Nacionalista Vasca and Partido Comunista de las Tierras Vascas, parties belonging to radical left-wing Basque nationalism, were also included in the EU list of terrorist persons and organizations, together with ETA and its circle of supporters.⁹

Moderate nationalists, on the other hand (PNV, Eusko Alkartasuna, Aralar, Abertzalen batasuna), which had been Euro-enthusiast were becoming more Euro-pragmatist. The Spanish Basque and Catalan autonomies tried to use the political and institutional resources of European integration in order to distance themselves from the Spanish central state (Ithurralde 2002). The strong involvement of the autonomous government in cross-border cooperation was one feature of this strategy. Nevertheless, moderate nationalists realized that the EU could be instrumentalized in order to reinforce the central state. Ithurralde (2002: 262) and Bourne (2002) have analysed several disputes between EU and Spanish Basque authorities over the permissible scope of Basque taxation prerogatives. In these episodes, the EU's market competition imperative provided a justification for the depreciation of historically and politically significant Basque taxation competencies and there were more obstacles than opportunities for forming influential strategic alliances with EU authorities (Bourne 2002).

Institutional asymmetry as an obstacle to cross-border relations?

Nevertheless, the EU offered new opportunities for developing cross-border relations between Basques. These programmes implied that collaboration should be developed between equivalent institutional entities: the counterpart of the Basque Autonomous Community in Spain was not the French Basque Country, which had no institutional representation before the mid-1990s, but the French region of Aquitaine. Letamendia (1997: 36) has stressed the gap in cooperation between equivalent institutional bodies, and the collaboration between Basques acting on the basis of a common identity. Institutional relations between Euskadi and the

Aquitaine region were also marked by an institutional asymmetry, since the budget of the Basque Autonomous Community was more than ten times greater than that of any French region. A gap also existed between the perception of interregional cooperation in a Regional Council of Aquitaine controlled by right- or left-wing French parties, and an Autonomous Basque Community controlled by moderate Basque nationalists supporting a strategy in accordance with which European integration should make nation-states redundant (Letamendia 1997: 37).

According to Letamendia, cross-border collaboration became an element for exercising pressure in favour of the institutionalization of the French Basque Country. Things changed with the partial institutionalization of the French Basque Country in the mid-1990s, when a Basque Country Development Council and a Council for Elected Representatives were set up in 1994 and 1995, respectively. These councils were conceived as new debating loci for elected officials and civil society representatives and as a compromise between nationalists, civil society actors and public authorities:

although for the time being the reality of the *Département* of Pyrénées-Atlantiques will not be questioned, a process will be initiated to proceed to a sort of 'private' institutionalization of its Basque territories ... This goes in the opposite direction of the general trend of French decentralization, which gives pre-eminence to those who are elected.

(Letamendia 1997: 39)

For the first time in the last thirty years, a convergence was seen between the sphere of civil society inspired by Northern Basque nationalism as a whole, and the cross-border initiatives coming from the moderate and institutional Southern Basque nationalism (Letamendia 1997: 38).

Letamendia's position should be qualified in light of the socio-political evolution of the French Basque Country over the last ten years. First, the *Pays Basque* did not go in the opposite direction to French decentralization. On the contrary, the Basque experience was seen as a virtuous example of local development, and inspired the national policy of the pays. Second, the territorial institutionalization of the French Basque Country, far from being controlled or inspired by Basque nationalists, was rather the result of a permanent compromise between different political tendencies (French right and centre-right, socialist, Green, Basque moderate nationalist) and socio-economic milieux. Third, the process of the institutionalization of the French Basque Country cannot be considered as a mere 'private type of institutionalization' or as compensation for the refusal to found a Basque department. Over the last ten years, new French Basque territorial institutions have had tangible effects on territorial governance. Expert work conducted by the Development Council has resulted in concrete measures, such as territorial contracts involving the state, the Regional Council of Aquitaine, the General Council of the Pyrénées-Atlantiques and local authorities. Fourth, in such a context, it is not crucial to find out whether cross-border collaboration has become a real factor in institutional change in the Northern Basque Country. It is

crucial, rather, to evaluate the terms by which the new territorial institutionalization of the French Basque Country has come to influence cross-border collaboration. Cross-border collaboration ranked among the three priorities of the Basque Country Development Council in its *Pays Basque 2020* prospective programme, together with territorial reciprocity (between the coastal zone and the inland countryside) and sustainable development.

To sum up, the recent intensification of a cross-border policy in the Basque Country presents three characteristics. First, cross-border cooperation is not monopolized by Basque nationalist parties and movements, but rather is invested in by heterogeneous coalitions of actors. Second, and despite critical voices emanating from radical nationalists, the institutionalization process of the French Basque Country from the mid-1990s onwards reinforced cross-border collaboration. Finally, the instrumental Europeanization of public policies did not automatically lead to the Europeanization of shared norms and cultural values. Relying on her fieldwork in Txingudi, Bray (2006) emphasizes that even if a 'trans-frontier Basque public sphere' is being set up, with more and more people living on one side of the border and working on the other, there is 'no clear sign of this emerging cross-frontier reality extending to a stronger identification with Europe' (Bray 2006: 540).

Third sector cross-border relations and Basque identity

The cross-border relationships between private companies and between public authorities are relatively well known, as well as the cross-border strategies implemented by political parties and trade unions. This is far from the case for initiatives coming from the third sector. Yet such initiatives deserve special attention for three reasons. First, cross-border third sector mobilizations contribute to the consolidation of a transnational Basque identity in an original way, bypassing state-controlled policies *and* Basque nationalist political apparatus. Bray is right when expressing doubts about 'the usage of the term ethnonational for describing all grassroots political mobilizations in places like the Basque Country' (Bray 2006: 534). Second, the strength of these mobilizations comes from the ability of third sector actors to draw on support from wider transnational networks. This allows them to make a connection between the Basque cause and wider transversal issues, such as the environment, sustainable agriculture and rural development or minority languages. Third, the relationship between these initiatives and local public authorities has evolved. Most of the cross-border initiatives experienced a partial institutionalization when being integrated into emerging cross-border policy networks. Examples will be taken here from two sectors: mobilizations in favour of the Basque language and economic mobilizations.

Third sector and cross-border linguistic mobilizations

The core symbolic and functional role of language in the Basque collective identity has given special relevance to those third sector mobilizations in favour of

euskera (the Basque language). A survey conducted in the mid-1990s among the projects funded by the Aquitaine–Euskadi Common Fund showed evidence that among economic, cultural and university-based projects, the cultural ones were those which attracted more actors from Euskadi and, in Aquitaine, from the French Basque Country (Itçaina *et al.* 1997). Partners from Aquitaine, and notably from Bordeaux, were involved in more research and economic projects. The importance of culture was directly linked to the shared Basque identity and language. However, several projects met with difficulties in their implementation, because of the institutional asymmetry between the two partners. Several projects related to Basque culture were endorsed by the Southern public institutions, whereas their French Basque counterparts were often associations. Identity, which had given an impetus to cross-border cooperation, was confronted with the institutional gap between third sector actors on the one hand and public institutions on the other.

These findings should probably be revised in 2009, for two reasons. First, the promotion of the Basque language was partly institutionalized in the French Basque Country with the foundation of the Council for the Basque Language in 2001, which in 2005 became the Public Office for the Basque Language. Thus, the promotion of *euskera* was no longer exclusively for the benefit of associative activists. It soon became a sector of public policy in its own right. Until then, mediation between the associative third sector and public authorities concerning Basque cultural matters was conducted by the Basque Cultural Institute (Institut Culturel Basque, ICB). The foundation of an autonomous linguistic policy induced a formal distinction between linguistic and cultural policies, which had been more or less combined until then, except as regards bilingual schools¹⁰ and Basque lessons for adults.

The recent institutionalization of a linguistic policy in the French Basque Country had consequences for cross-border relationships. Until then, cross-border linguistic relations could be seen as support coming from the South to the North. Such support took two forms: transnational associative networks, organized on a Basque ‘national’ basis; and institutional support from Southern public bodies towards Northern associations. Amado Borthayre (2006) makes a distinction between cross-border associative networks of interest groups aimed at changing public policies (Euskal Herrian Euskaraz, Kontseilua-Euskal konfederazioa)¹¹ and alternative socio-linguistic mobilizations. Far from limiting themselves to lobbying, the latter considered themselves as constituting educational and social alternatives. Significant examples are the associative schools (*ikas-tola*), the association providing Basque lessons for adults, AEK,¹² and the Basque Summer School (Udako Euskal Unibertsitatea). All of these experiences, and especially the alternative-oriented ones, share four characteristics. First, they have a transnational structure and engage in transnational activities. Second, their internal organization is based on democratic principles: collective decision-making and horizontal power relations. Third, many of these initiatives depend on Southern Basque financial resources (which reproduces at civil society level the institutional asymmetry). Fourth, Europe is used as a tool for enhancing

cross-border collaboration *and* for the promotion of *euskera*, notably via the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages.

The relationship between linguistic cross-border mobilizations and public authorities has taken at least two forms. On the one hand, cross-border social movements enhanced those public policies favouring the Basque language in the French Basque region. First, the Southern Autonomous government, controlled by the PNV until 2009, intervened in the French Basque Country from the 1990s, through subsidies to the educational network and to Basque-speaking media. Such sub-state governmental intervention, beyond its jurisdiction, was coupled with initiatives coming from cross-border associations of local municipalities (Udalbide and Udalbiltza). Second, new public policies were set up jointly by public institutions from both sides of the border. The foundation of a cross-border radio station (Antxeta irratia) in Txingudi illustrates this point. In the same vein, sociolinguistic surveys were conducted on both sides of the border from 1996 by the Basque government, in association with Navarrese and French Basque bodies. The installation of the Public Office for the Basque Language in 2005 in the French Basque region intensified the cooperation between public authorities. The Southern regional government had its institutional, even if not equivalent, counterpart in the North.

On the other hand, this process of institutionalization, however partial, generated internal controversies within the social movements. When the Basque autonomous government set up a new service (HABE) for the teaching Basque language to adults in 1981, this was perceived as a challenge by the AEK, before an agreement was reached in 1994. The AEK was then recognized as an agency of general interest in favour of the Basque language. In France, the AEK benefited from gaining the first official recognition as a vocational training body through the Specific Agreement for the Development of the French Basque Country between the state, the Aquitaine Region and the Pyrénées-Atlantiques department, signed in 2000. In the same vein, official recognition of the *ikastola* following an agreement with the French Ministry of Education in 1992 generated debates between the supporters of such institutionalization and those giving priority to the social movement dimension of the *ikastola* (Bortayrou *et al.* 2005).

Third sector and cross-border economic cooperation

At first glance, the identity dimension of cross-border relations is less obvious in the case of economic mobilizations. Nevertheless, several socio-economic organizations have been very active in cross-border relations, as illustrated here by the workers' cooperatives and the farmers' mobilization. Socio-economic and, more precisely here, *social economy* organizations seized upon the new opportunities offered by Europe to develop new transnational relations. These programmes gave an institutional frame to an existing set of relations between the cooperative movements on both sides of the frontier. The French Basque workers' cooperative had been directly inspired, in the 1970s, by the seminal

experience of Mondragón. In the 1990s–2000s, cross-border relations between French and Spanish Basque cooperatives were given a new impetus thanks to the new institutional design. Members of the French Basque cooperative movement took full advantage of such new possibilities, beyond simply commercial relations. The Hezkuntek association,¹³ whose objective is to promote the enrolment of young French Basques in Spanish Basque secondary schools for vocational training, offers an excellent illustration of the symbolic relations that can exist between a common Basque identity, cooperative values, economic development and transborder cooperation. Hezkuntek's aim is 'to further industrial development in Labourd, Basse-Navarre and Soule through the promotion of technical and vocational training in the Basque-speaking population' (Statutes of Hezkuntek). The main idea was to promote professional training *in the Basque language*, which was a way of showing the economic relevance of minority languages and of improving the image of vocational training. The programme was supported by the manager of a workers' cooperative on the French side, and by institutions that belonged to the Mondragón network in Spain. In 2003 Hezkuntek received financial support from Udalbiltza and in March 2006 it signed an agreement with the Ministry of Education of the Basque Autonomous government, in order to facilitate access to vocational training in Euskadi for French Basque-speaking students. Hezkuntek can thus be seen as a by-product of two complementary associations whose legitimacy rests on shared cultural references, and is a good example of structuring partnerships between public semi-public, and cooperative and associative bodies.

In a more direct way, European programmes also helped to reinforce cross-border links and eventually the cooperative movement itself. The ARIPTIC project, for instance, groups the Arizmendi Koop and the Institut Supérieure de Formation Permanente (INSUP). Arizmendi Koop, a Mondragón cooperative, promotes education and training programmes through a network of schools, with an emphasis on teaching in the Basque language. It is particularly active in cultural and social domains. INSUP, a training body in Aquitaine, has developed its activities since 1980 in the field of integration programmes for young people who want to go back to work. Both bodies had already been partners in a series of projects financed by INTERREG or the Aquitaine–Euskadi Common Fund, which led to the creation of a European Economic Interest grouping in March 2002, the first step towards a European Cooperative Society. The way ARINSUP has used INTERREG III (2000–2006) funding shows its desire to adopt a balanced linguistic and cultural approach, such as e-learning programmes and providing courses in Basque, French and Spanish, together with secretarial and accountancy lessons. EU policies have thus provided the opportunity for cross-border actors from distinct institutional and social backgrounds to institutionalize their relationships.

The French Basque movement in favour of sustainable farming and specific territorial institutionalization for Basque agriculture also benefited from great support from the transnational 'Basque social movement industry'. The alternative Chamber of Agriculture (EHLG), set up in 2005, was assisted by logistical

and financial resources from the Spanish Basque region. This was a way to compensate it for the lack of public resources from the French side. As a non-profit-making body (*association* in French), EHLG could not benefit from the para-fiscal taxes paid by farmers, which are the basic finances of the official Chambers of Agriculture. Moreover, local authority subsidies were allegedly illegal. The lack of resources motivated the promoters of EHLG to look for individual and collective donors. Thanks to the contribution of the Manu Robles Arangiz Foundation, created by the moderate Basque nationalist union ELA, EHLG could purchase and renovate its headquarters. EHLG could also take advantage of institutional support from the Southern regional government. On 2 November 2007, on the occasion of the agricultural fair Lurrrama, EHLG signed agreements with the cross-border association of local councillors Udalbide and with Itsasmendikoia, a public agency for rural development linked to the Basque Autonomous government. Of a total budget of 410,000 euros for EHLG in 2007, 41 per cent came from French Basque donors, 27 per cent were proper receipts, 26 per cent came from Itsasmendikoia and Udalbide, and 3.9 per cent came from Spanish Basque donors (Euskal Herriko Laborantza Ganbara 2008).

This new cross-border impetus was the continuation of an older partnership between French and Spanish Basque farmers' unions: ELB on the French side and EHNE (Euskal Herriko Nekezarien Elkartasuna, Union of Farmers from the Basque Country) on the Spanish side. They have both been active members (via the European Confédération Paysanne) of the international peasant movement Via Campesina. In 2008, EHNE leader Paul Nicholson was one of the two representatives for Europe of Via Campesina. Transnational support gave rise to cross-border projects such as the publication of a trilingual guide to the Basque countryside and a comparative study on agriculture in the French Basque Country, the Spanish Basque Autonomous Community and Navarra.

In January 2009, on the eve of the legal proceedings started by the French state against EHLG, the Spanish Basque government made official a new partnership with the SUAT Pays Basque, a branch of the official departmental Chamber of Agriculture (Taberna 2009). This partnership focused on the development of cross-border training programmes, thanks to European funds among others. Such an agreement was evidence of a strategy of institutional isomorphism, or mutual recognition between institutions, between the Basque government and the official Chamber of Agriculture. On the very sensitive issue of agriculture, the Basque government was careful not to be seen to be interfering in French – even if Basque – affairs. *Ideological proximity* (between Southern Basque nationalists and Northern supporters of EHLG) had thus to be reconciled with *institutional proximity* (between the official Chamber of Agriculture of the Pyrénées-Atlantiques and the Basque autonomous government).

Both cases (social economy and farmers' movement) show that the economic and cultural spheres are deeply interconnected. Thus, the opinion stating that, in the Basque borderland, the economic and infrastructural content of cross-border cooperation has operated to the detriment of an identity or cultural content (Mansvelt Beck 2008: 380) should be qualified. This might be true of some of

the ‘top-down’ institutional cross-border initiatives. It has not necessarily been the case for the cross-border economic mobilizations emerging from the third sector and experiencing a partial process of institutionalization. Even if the above-mentioned experiences remain marginal for the territorial economies, they constitute highly significant cases of hybridization of resources (public, private, associative) and ideas (local development and cultural identity).

Conclusion

These two examples (linguistic and socio-economic mobilizations) illustrate how the third sector’s cross-border initiatives are part of a transnational and border-transcending relationship aimed at bypassing the state-controlled design of institutional cooperation. Such initiatives fuel an ambiguous relationship with Europeanization. Indeed, third sector mobilizations convey an instrumental, rather than identity-based, relationship to Europe. At the same time, every cross-border mobilization tries to include its cause within wider transnational mobilizations at the European and international level (social economy, farmers’ movement, promotion of minority languages) in order to gain international support. Such a complex relationship between local issues and international causes, civil society actors and multi-level institutional frames, requires further research, notably from a comparative perspective, on other border-transcending dynamics.

Notes

- 1 I am grateful to the members of the GARNET Jointly Executed Research Programme ‘Civil Society and Non State Actors’, and specially to Julie Gilson for her comments and decisive help in English language editing, and to Andy Smith and Cathal McCall for their comments. The seven historical Basque provinces fall within the Basque Autonomous Community (Euskadi), the Foral Community of Navarra in Spain and the western part of the Pyrénées-Atlantiques *département* in France.
- 2 Salamon and Anheier (1995) include in the *non-profit sector* organizations presenting a formal constitution, a legally private status, a form of self-government, non-redistribution of profits and the participation of volunteers. This approach was considered to be too restrictive by supporters of the *social and solidarity-based economy* (Laville 2000). The condition of volunteering may exclude sectors of the traditional social economy, such as workers’ cooperatives and mutuals, which can redistribute benefits to their members in a limited way. Few countries use the American term ‘non-profit sector’ to describe the set of organizations located between the private, for-profit and public sectors. For comparative purposes, ‘it seems useful to adopt the term “third sector” to designate all organizations which are neither profit-oriented businesses nor governmental agencies or bureaucracies’ (Seibel and Anheier 1990: 7). Some authors reject the expression ‘third sector’, considering that social economy organizations, far from constituting a separate sector, are part of the private sector while fulfilling general interest aims (Peyre 2004). The Spanish CIRIEC makes a distinction within the social economy between (a) the market-oriented sector, including democratically organized private businesses, and (b) the non-market-oriented sector including private non-profit institutions developing activities of services. See www.observatorioeconomiasocial.es.

- 3 Located in Guipuzcoa, the cooperative consortium of Mondragón (MCC) is organized along four poles: financial, industrial, distributional and corporative. In December 2007, MCC represented 103,731 jobs all over the world. Mondragón is based on ten principles: freedom of membership, democratic organization, sovereignty of labour over capital, participative management, limited scale of wages, inter-cooperation, social transformation, universality and education.
- 4 CIREC, *Cooperativas y Sociedades Laborales: Número de empresas y trabajadores en situación de alta en la Seguridad Social. Distribución por Comunidades Autónomas a 31/12/05*, Observatorio de la Economía Social, 2005.
- 5 Carter and Pasquier (2006) suggest a need to distinguish, at the regional level, between 'ex post Communautisation' (the process by which domestic laws and rules are aligned to EU requirements in the implementation of Community laws and rules) and ex ante Europeanization (the phase of the policy cycle when domestic policies are up-loaded to the European level for negotiation).
- 6 Navarra took part in this common fund before withdrawing due to disagreements with the Basque government. Therefore, Aquitaine has separate agreements with Euskadi, Navarra and Aragon.
- 7 Most of this chapter was written before the 1 March 2009 elections for the Basque Parliament, which led to the first non-Basque nationalist autonomous government since 1980.
- 8 'El Tribunal de Estrasburgo ratifica la ilegalización de Batasuna', *El País*, 30 June 2009.
- 9 'L'Union européenne ajoute deux partis basques à sa liste terroriste', *Le Vif-L'Express*, 16 December 2008.
- 10 In France, the Basque language is taught in three educational networks: Ikastola associative total immersion schools, public (Ikasbi) and Catholic (Euskal haziak) bilingual schools.
- 11 'Speaking Basque in the Basque Country', 'the Council – the Basque confederation'.
- 12 AEK (Alfabetatze Euskalduntze Koordinakundea: Coordination for literacy in *euskera*) is also the organizer, every two years, of Korrika, a symbolic race run in one-kilometre relays in favour of the teaching of the Basque language to adults. Del Valle (1994) looks at the emergence of Korrika as a modern ritual for expressing Basque identity. This race also implies a symbolic negation of the border.
- 13 Neologism, from *hezuntza* (training) and *teknikoa* (technical).

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