

# **Basque Diaspora in Latin America: Euskal Etxeak, integration and historical tensions**

**Presented at the Workshop “PROTECTING AND INCLUDING “NEW” AND  
“OLD” MINORITIES: OPPORTUNITIES, CHALLENGES, SYNERGIES”**

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**Institute for Minority Rights, European Academy (EURAC)**

**Bozen/Bolzano**

**South Tyrol, Italy**

**Raphael Tsavkko Garcia**

**[raphael.garcia@opendeusto.es](mailto:raphael.garcia@opendeusto.es) / [tsavkko@gmail.com](mailto:tsavkko@gmail.com)**

**Universidad de Deusto/**

**Deustuko Unibertsitatea**

# General view

- Part of the thesis (working title): The Basque Digital Diaspora: The relationship between the Basque pro-independence leftist solidarity groups in Latin America and in the Basque Country and the role of the Internet
- Exploring and analyzing in depth the current ideological and political relationships between diasporas and their homelands, through the specific case-study of the Basque diaspora and its non-state homeland

# General view

- Focus on Argentina
- Role of the internet
- Focus on specific political groups:
  - Independentistak
  - Euskal Herriaren Lagunak (Friends of the Basque Country)
  - JO TA KE Rosario
  - ETA/Abertzale Left

# Theoretical frameworks

- Imagined Community and Long Distance Nationalism (Anderson)
- Deterritorialisation (Ortiz, Haesbaert),
- Diaspora studies (Cohen, Safran, Tötölyan)
- Transnationalism (Vertovec, Appadurai)
- Basque diaspora (Oiarzabal, Totoricagüena, Douglass)
- Also Renan, Billig, Connor, Smith, etc

# Diaspora (Definition)

- Diaspora can be defined as the "transnational collectivity, broken apart by, and woven together across, the borders of their own and other nation-states, maintaining cultural and political institutions;" (Tötölyan, 1991:5), also as a population dispersed from its homeland, with collective memory and idealisation or even mythical vision (Safran, 1991:83) of the homeland, as well as a strong ethnic consciousness and solidarity with co-members of the group (Cohen, 1997:180) and an exacerbation of allegedly common and ancestral traits that are periodically reinforced (Billig, 1995, Renan, 2007).

# Basque Diaspora (Definition)

- The Basque Diaspora can be understood as the community of ethnic Basques that were born - or descended from those who were born - in the historical territory of the Basque Country or *Euskal Herria*, comprising territories now divided by France (Iparralde or Northern Basque Country, part of the department of Pyrénées-Atlantiques ) and Spain (Basque Autonomous Community and Foral Community of Navarre) and migrated elsewhere from the 15th century up to today.

# Basque diaspora

- For this presentation I focus on Latin America and divide the Basque diaspora in 4 waves
- First, the so-called original Diaspora from the 16th to 18th century of Basques who were part of the Spanish colonial empire with the main characteristic of being a wave made up mostly of Basques who took part on the Spanish Empire enterprise as administrative figures or leading traders and merchants;

# Basque diaspora

- The second can be traced to the 19th century, a wave of impoverished Basque migrants seeking jobs, especially in Uruguay and in Argentina and also of refugees from the Spanish war of independence and the Carlist wars.
- The first and second waves overlap at some point during the independence of the many American countries and the borders of each wave or phase cannot be precisely defined as the process of substitution, in sort, of the migration of Basque elites for peasants and later of Basque refugees took over a century. During this period, the Euskal Etxeak, or Basque houses, started to be founded.

# Basque Diaspora

- The third wave can be described as the one of refugees from the Spanish Civil War on the 1930's and the role of the members of the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV) that brought some tension to the Diaspora while politicising it.
- The fourth wave is again a wave of refugees, but now mostly left-wing ones, during the 1960's and 1970's. Members of ETA, families of political prisoners and any left-wing nationalist persecuted back home. It is a wave with less human displacement, but with significant ideological repercussions on the years to follow.

# Euskal Etxeak

- Basques founded the Euskal Etxeak not only as sort of clubs for them to gather, but also as institutions to help those in need, specially the newcomers looking after a better life. In this sense, Basque clubs or houses - and in some places even hotels - are a place to experience home or to simulate environments of homeland and a place of sociability of the members of the Basque community).
- To some extent, they also tended to emulate homeland politics and even political disputes in political party and ideological lines, despite some local and unique characteristics.

# Debate

- The main goal of the presentation is to debate the tensions within the different diasporic waves.
- 3 major moments of tensions:
  - The 19th century *fueristas* versus the "Old Basques"
  - 20th centuries *Fueristas* versus *PNVistas* and the Spanish Civil War
  - PNV versus Abertzale Left

# The 19th century *fueristas* versus the "Old Basques"

- Old Basques – part of the Spanish empire from the 15th century up to the 19th century
- “Fueristas” – Mostly exiled Basques after the Carlist Wars (wars that opposed two different royal branches to the throne of Spain) that ended up with the abolition of the *fueros*.
- *Fueros* – Ancient law of the Basques and virtual internal independence from Spain

# The 19th century *fueristas* versus the "Old Basques"

- During the process of building a Spanish identity, there WASN'T an identity issue.
- Spanish-Civic versus Basque-Ethnic identity
- The new migrants brought a political discourse, as well as a sense of "basqueness" that was completely distant from the mostly "Latinized"
- Foundation of Euskal Etxeak: Ethnic union and protest against the abolition of the *Fueros*

# 20th centuries *Fueristas* versus *PNVistas* and the Spanish Civil War

- The arrival of members of the PNV (Basque Nationalist Party) that brought with them the nationalist *Aranist* ideology opposed to the previous *fuerista* ideology at the end of the 19th century
- [They] attempted to spread their ideology and also started taking over the direction of the Euskal Etxeak.
- The nationalist ideology of the PNV and their members will permeate most of the lives of the diaspora and of the Euskal Etxeak during the 20th century.
- There WAS an identity issue. Basque as ethnic and civic identity

# 20th centuries *Fueristas* versus *PNVistas* and the Spanish Civil War

- The idea of ethnonational and identity maintenance of the first Euskal Etxeak, centres for the dissemination of Basque culture, music, history and etc was somehow subverted by newcomers with ties to the PNV and with nationalistic/Aranist ideology that demanded more from the diaspora.
- Spanish Civil War: Final influx of PNV members and total (ideological) control over the diaspora

# 20th centuries *Fueristas* versus *PNVistas* and the Spanish Civil War

- They turned the Euskal Etxeak into political strongholds for pressuring Spain and the host countries demanding a politicisation, an ideological commitment to the independence of the Basque country that went further ahead of the simple defence of the former *status quo*, or the *Fueros*. The defence of the Basque identity was, at that point, starting to become the defence of the independence of the land of the Basques, from Araba to Lesser Navarre, from *Hegoalde* to *Iparralde* and Navarre and that would settle definitively during the Spanish Civil War on the 1930's.

# 1970's – Today: PNV versus Abertzale Left

- ETA (1958-2011 [end of armed struggle])
- Radical opposition to Franco
- Political exiles (Left wing)
- PNV lack of political action within the Basque Country
- Sympathy over the radical resistance of ETA within the Euskal Etxeak controlled by the PNV

# 1970's – Today: PNV versus Abertzale Left

- During the 1970's the wave of a consistent number of left-wing nationalists will start to if not challenge the PNV domination over the diaspora.
- On the following years conflicts will arise due to political and ideological differences on the view of the Basque path towards independence that will lead to splits within the Euskal Etxeak.
- The formation of a Basque government during the 1980's - with almost uninterrupted PNV dominion - and the internet on the 1990's and later will give a boost to the conflicts as in on hand the Basque government will fill the Euskal Etxeak with money and promises, on the other hand the internet will allow the left wing nationalist organisations to spread their ideology.

# 1970's – Today: PNV versus Abertzale Left

- During the 1970's most of the Euskal Etxeas changed their statutes to impose some "non-political" or "apolitical" status to them in other words, they kept defending to some degree the independence of the Basque Country on the lines of old Aranism sometimes, in more a "modern" way, but forbade the political activities of the newcomers, generally left-wing nationalists or *Abertzales*.

# 1970's – Today: PNV versus Abertzale Left

- After Franco's Dictatorship: Dispute between a radical process of independence (Abertzale Left) and a long and slow process (PNV)
- The then president of the Autonomous Basque government, Antonio Ardanza, asked the president of the Euskal Erria club to publically denounce ETA, to what he refused. Ardanza, then, accused the Basque club to be under the control of "a position close to ETA", a declaration that damaged relations between Uruguay Basque houses and the Basque Government (and the PNV).

# Conclusions

- As demonstrated tensions were all around the Basque clubs as they reflected to some degree the "homeland" politics and even geographical divisions of the Basque Country or Euskal Herria.
- Waves of migrants/refugees shaped the diaspora itself
- From the basic promotion/maintenance of ethnonational identity to proxies of the Basque government and spaces for the promotion of a diasporic identity and of homeland-diaspora politics, the Euskal Etxeas are not only the reflex of the homeland, but also autonomous and in constant move and evolution entities that, for sure, reflect the complicated and special relationship between homeland and diaspora.

## PROTECTING AND INCLUDING “NEW” AND “OLD” MINORITIES: OPPORTUNITIES, CHALLENGES, SYNERGIES

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**09.00 – 09.30:** Welcome and Introduction (Roberta Medda-Windischer, EURAC)

**09.30-11.00: Definitions and categories**

Discussant: William Cisilino, ARLeF

Darian Heim, Universitat Pompeu Fabra	“Old” Natives and “New” Immigrants: Against Territory and History as Kymlicka's Criteria for Granting Group-Rights
Katharina Crepaz, University of Innsbruck	‘Old’ vs. ‘New’ Minorities – An Identity-Based Approach to the Distinction Between Autochthonous and Immigrant Minorities
Tina Magazzini, University of Deusto Stefano Piemontese, INTEGRMI, Center for Policy Studies, Central European University	Changes in diversity management as a consequence of westward Roma migration in the EU

**11.00-11.30: coffee break**

**11.30-13.00: Institutions, Policies, Laws**

Discussant: Roberta Medda-Windischer, EURAC

Balázs Dobos, Centre for Social Sciences of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Institute for Minority Studies	With or without you: Integrating Migrants into the Minority Protection Regime in Hungary
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Rémi Léger, Simon Fraser University	The Institutional Completeness of Linguistic Minorities
Michael Johns, Laurentian University	From Local Communities to the European Commission: Who is responsible for the rights of the new minorities of Europe?

**13.00-14.00: lunch break**

**14.00-15.30: Language, Education and Citizenship**

Discussant: Roberta Ricucci, University of Torino

Irena Stonkuvienė, University of Vilnius	Cultural Identity, Language and Education: the Case of Lithuania
William Cislino, ARLeF	New and Old minorities in the regulations of Friuli Venezia Giulia Autonomous Region
Vicent Climent Ferrando, Universitat Pompeu Fabra	The role of language in national strategies on immigration and citizenship. France and Catalonia compared

**15.30-16.00: coffee break**

**16.00-17.30: Old and New Minorities: Diasporas, Encounters, Differences**

Discussant: Roberta Medda-Windischer, EURAC (TBC)

Raphael Tsavkko Garcia, University of Deusto	Basque diaspora in Latin America
Antonella Liuzzi	The Italian Arbëria. An historical and anthropological analysis of San Costantino Albanese (Pz)"
Frédéric Spagnoli, Université de Franche-Comté	Migrants from Trentino, old minorities inside Trentino: a common fate?

**17.30-18.00: Concluding remarks**

**19.30: Conference dinner (location TBC)**