

EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE

Department of Political and Social Sciences

**Boundaries and Identities  
in Bidasoa-Txingudi, on the Franco-Spanish frontier**

by

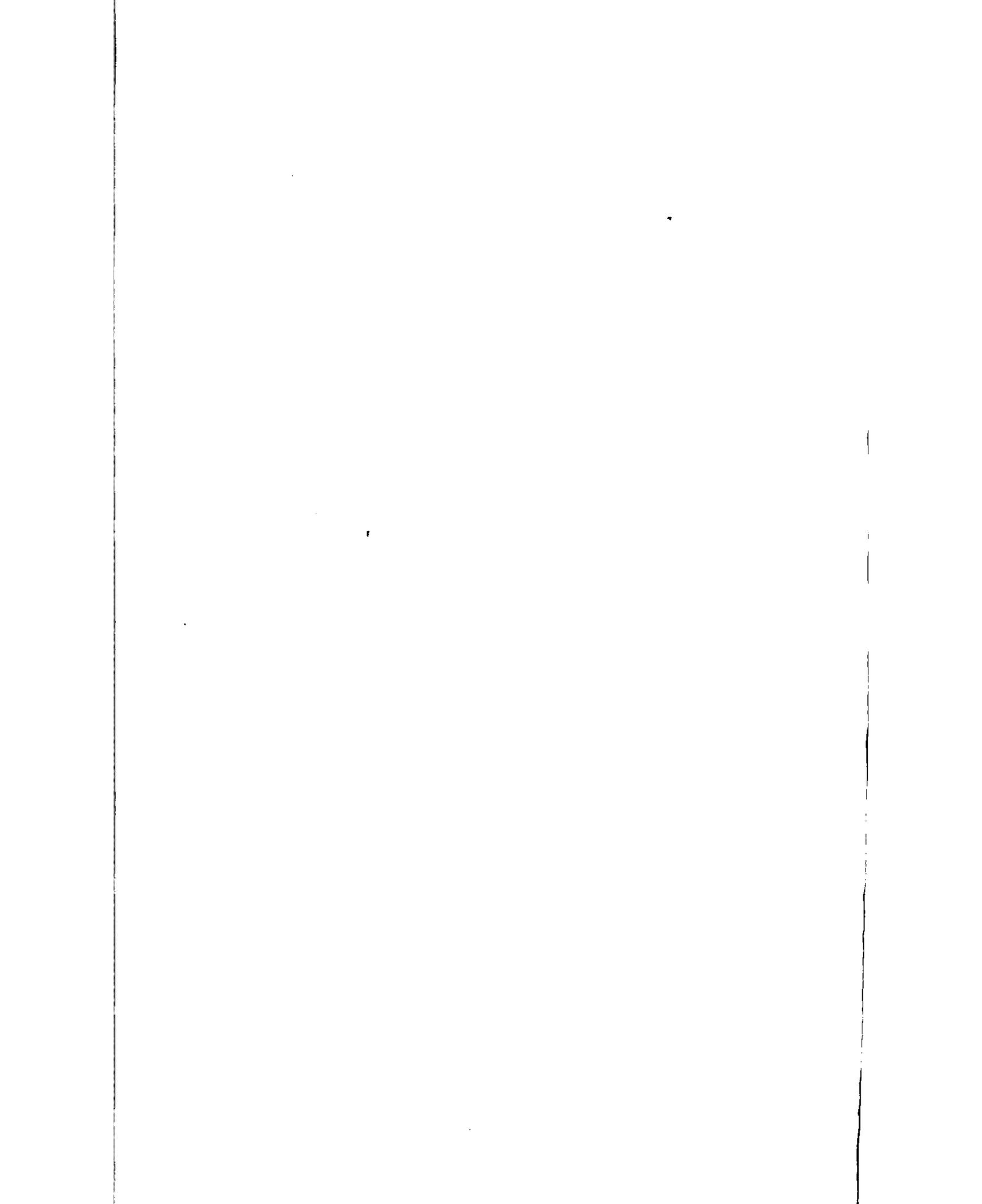
**Zoe Eray**

Thesis submitted for assessment with  
a view to obtaining the Degree of Doctor of  
the European University Institute

Florence, July 2002









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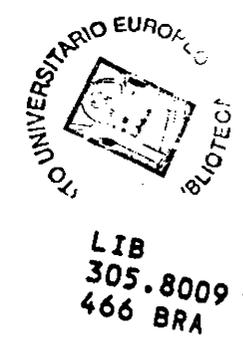
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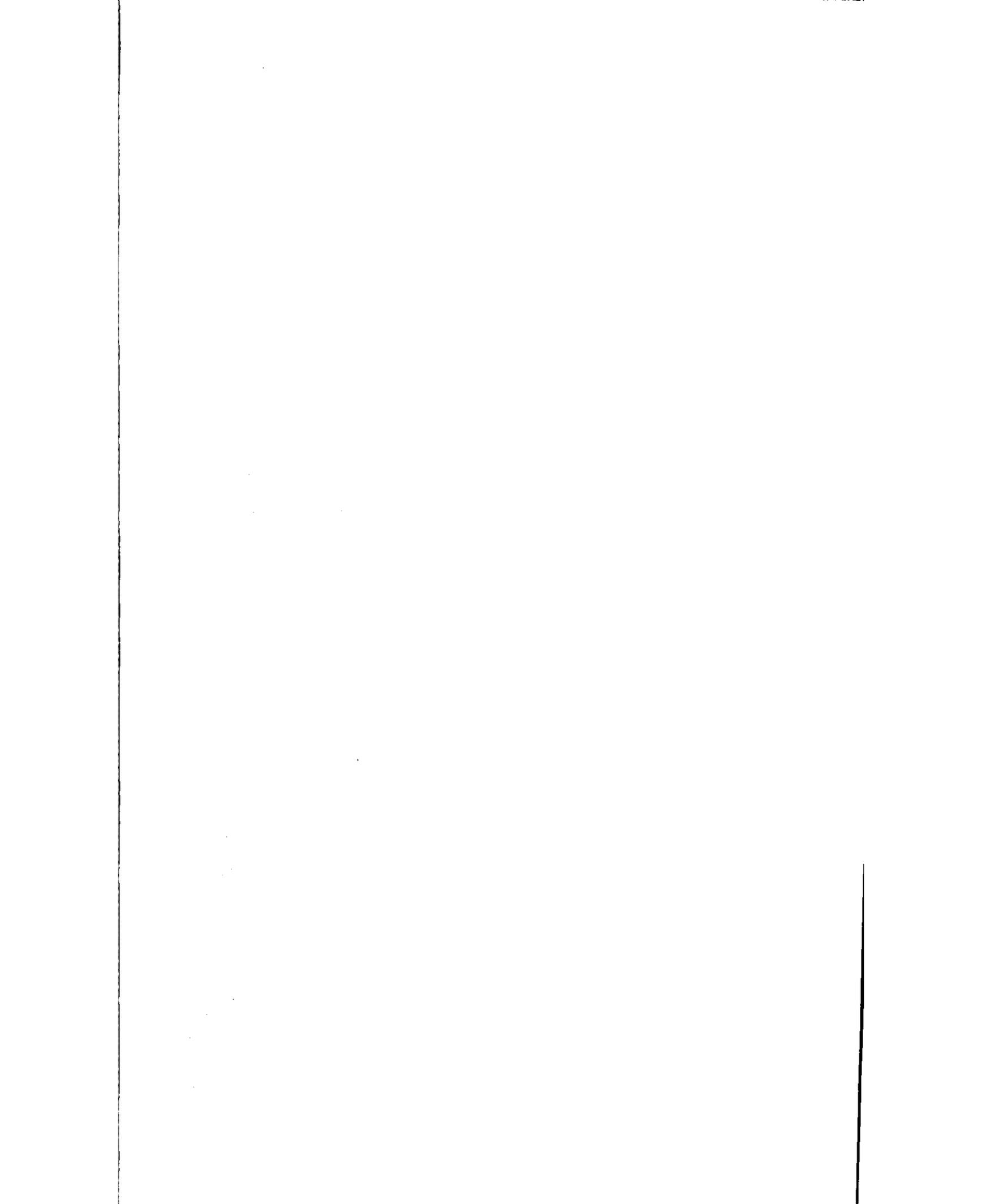
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Florence, July 2002

Examining jury:  
Prof. Michael Keating (EUI – supervisor)  
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Prof. Joseba Zulaika (University of Nevada)  
Prof. Bo Stråth (EUI)





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## Abstract

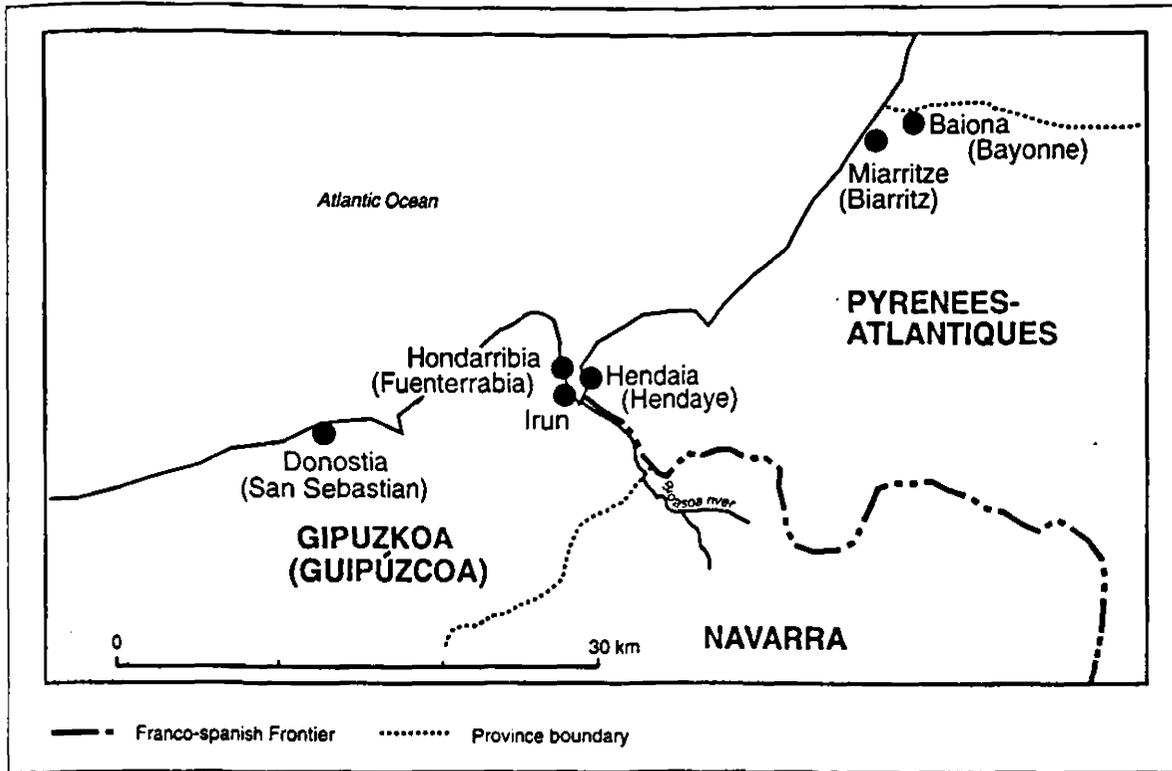
Following the dismantling of most border controls within the European Union as a consequence of the 1985 Schengen Agreement, many communities located in border zones have had to reassess their socio-cultural, economic and legal relationships with neighbouring communities on the other side of state frontiers. This has been true, among others, for the inhabitants of the towns of Irun and Hondarribia on the Spanish side of the Franco-Spanish frontier and of the nearby town of Hendaia on the French side. Since the late 1980s, Irun, Hondarribia and Hendaia have sought to strengthen their relations with each other. This led, in 1999, to the launching of the Bidasoa-Txingudi Cross-Frontier Consortium - Bidasoa-Txingudi Mugaz Gaindiko Partzuergoa in Basque - formalising at the level of their municipal administrations the ties between the three towns that form the area now known as Bidasoa-Txingudi.

For more than a decade, the promoters of cross-frontier co-operation in Bidasoa-Txingudi have been active in setting up cultural and social projects with the aim of encouraging the population of the three towns to develop a common sense of local belonging. This thesis will examine the ways in which the Bidasoa-Txingudi Cross-Frontier Consortium attempts to win legitimacy in the eyes of the local population, including a particular emphasis on 'culture'.

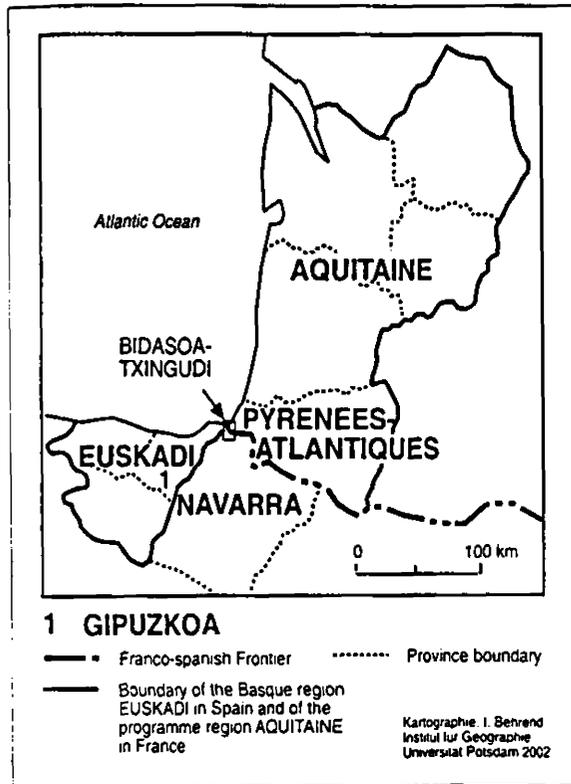
Reflecting the dominant influences of the states of which they form part, the communities on either side of the frontier operate within different social and cultural contexts. But they also share a common Basque cultural and linguistic heritage, thanks to their location in the Basque-speaking region that straddles the Franco-Spanish border at the western end of the Pyrenees. The result is an environment in which contrasting and sometimes conflicting issues of identity, nationality, language and culture mingle and interreact.

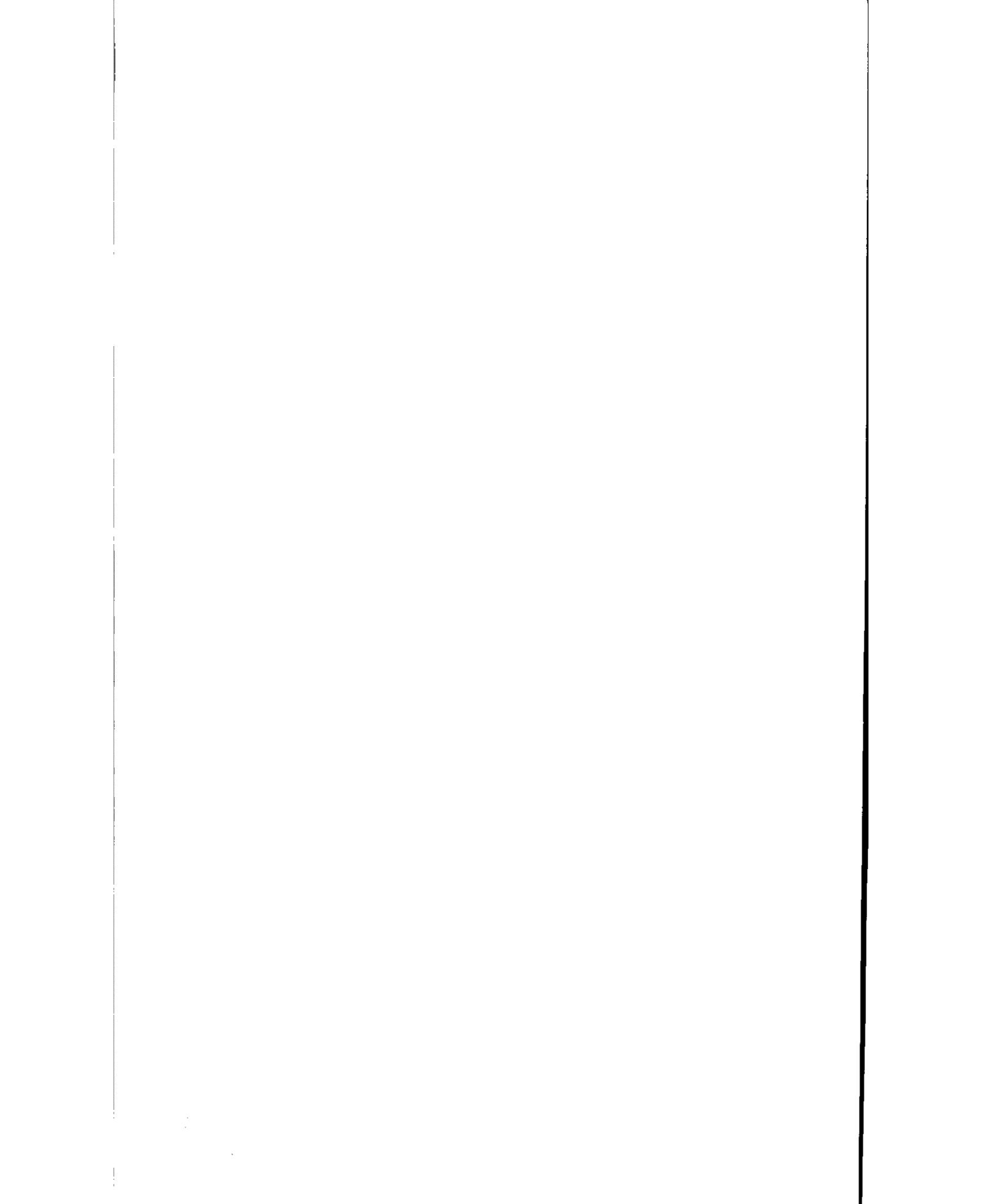
This thesis is intended as a contribution to the ongoing debate in the social sciences concerning the concepts of identity and ethnicity. It will examine the different ways in which identity, as experienced by different inhabitants of Bidasoa-Txingudi, is constructed and expressed. In doing so, it will challenge notions of fixed identity among members of groups often perceived as homogeneous. By illustrating the varying expressions of self that can be observed in the area, it will seek to build on current debates on the relationship between collective and individual identity and contribute to the analysis of relationships between culture and identity in changing border areas throughout Europe.

By way of conclusion, the thesis will point to the problems and challenges associated with attempts to forge a new sense of common belonging in the complex sociocultural and political contexts of the Basque Country. By highlighting the discrepancies between the theoretical objectives of initiatives such as the Bidasoa-Txingudi Cross-Frontier Consortium and the realities of identity formation and expression at grass-roots level, it will attempt to shed light on issues of identity and selfhood in this and other border communities whose inhabitants are subject to potentially conflicting identity allegiances.



Bidasoa-Txingudi: location of the study area





## Introduction

*"I suppose that, as an anthropologist, your interest in the Basque Country will be to look for ethnic expression here, as this is the main focus of anthropology, isn't it? Origins, customs, and now nationalism... But, you know, you must take into account that there aren't just the nationalists. This is a very plural society: there's nationalism and non-nationalism and, what's more, the nationalists, as such, are not the whole picture. And the Basque case must not be regarded as being unique. Rather, it is singular."*<sup>1</sup>

Personal conversation with a Professor of Law at the University of the Basque Country. July 2000, Donostia.<sup>2</sup>

Following the dismantling of border controls within the European Union as a consequence of the Schengen agreement, many communities located in border zones have had to reassess their socio-cultural, economic and legal relationships with neighbouring communities on the other side of state frontiers. This has been the case, among others, for the towns of Irun and Hondarribia on the Spanish side of the Franco-Spanish frontier and the neighbouring town of Hendaia on the French side. In 1999, a decade of efforts to forge closer links between these three municipalities, with a combined population of around 85,000, bore fruit in the launching of a 'consortium' set up to undertake cross-frontier projects in the area.

As in other situations where two different national cultures are involved, these communities have different characters reflecting the influences of the respective states of which they form part. But they have in common their location in the Basque Country of southwest France and northern Spain, an area of more than 20,600 square kilometres with a population of over 2,870,000, straddling the Pyrenees and stretching from Baiona in the north to Bilbo in the west and extending inland from the Atlantic coast for some 120 kilometres. The result is an intermingling of ethnic and national cultures that presents an unusually complex environment for attempts to forge cross-frontier cooperation.

The Bidasoa-Txingudi Cross-Frontier Consortium takes its name from the area in which the three towns are located. The place-name Bidasoa-Txingudi is a recent creation, combining the name of the river Bidasoa, which here provides a natural frontier between France and Spain, with that of a bay on the French side of the estuary, the Bay of Txingudi. In Basque, the consortium is known as *Bidasoa-Txingudi Mugaz Gaindiko Partzuergoa*, in French as *le Consorcio Transfrontalier Bidasoa-Txingudi* and in Spanish as *el Consorcio Transfronterizo Bidasoa-Txingudi*. The French version of the name, using the Spanish word *consorcio* rather than the French *consortium*, reflects the fact that it was set up using a Spanish legal vehicle for co-operation between local authorities.

The ascription of place-names is both a cultural and a political act. People with Basque nationalist motivations talk of the French part of the Basque Country as *Iparralde* and the Spanish part as *Hegoalde*, thereby transmitting a certain vision of Basque space transcending the state frontier in their desire to see the Basque Country as a whole. In this thesis, I shall use these terms in a neutral way to refer to the two parts of the Basque Country, in the same way as I shall use the standard

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<sup>1</sup> "Supongo que, cómo antropóloga, tu interés en el País Vasco estará en buscar la expresión étnica aquí, cómo que esto es el enfoque principal de la antropología, no? Los orígenes, las costumbres, y ahora el nacionalismo... Pero sabes, tienes que tener en cuenta... no existen sólo los nacionalistas; es una sociedad muy plural aquí. Hay nacionalismo y no-nacionalismo y, además, los nacionalistas así no son los únicos aquí. Y el caso vasco tampoco tiene porqué ser visto como único. Más bien, es singular."

<sup>2</sup> Donostia is the Basque name of the town known in Spanish as San Sebastián.

Basque, or *Batua*,<sup>3</sup> version of place names and the suffix *-k* to indicate the plural of Basque nouns.<sup>4</sup> In doing so, I am aware that these terms have particular political connotations – and are therefore one of the objects of my analysis – but equally that whatever term I choose will be open to accusations of contributing in some way or other to the particular symbolic power struggle existing in the Basque Country. In choosing these terms rather than others such as ‘French Basque Country’ and ‘Spanish Basque Country’, I aim simply to avoid lengthy circumlocutions. Irun and Hondarribia are thus in Hegoalde and Hendaia is in Iparralde. For the same reason, I shall also refer to the consortium by its Basque name, as the Partzuergo.<sup>5</sup> However, when quoting informants, I shall use their way of referring to names, in an effort to take into account the importance of names as an element in the process of self-expression. I shall also indicate the French or Spanish version of a place-name when this provides necessary information for the reader. Finally, I shall refer in neutral terms to the Basque region as the ‘Basque Country’ since this is how it is referred to in English, irrespective of political and cultural identifications, although such a concept of the Basque space is inherently debatable in Basque, French and Spanish, as I shall explain in a later chapter.<sup>6</sup>

My thesis is concerned with issues of identity. I have chosen the area which I shall henceforth refer to as Bidasoa-Txingudi as the focus for my thesis because it provides an ideal context, as a border area with specific social, cultural, linguistic, political and economic characteristics, in which to examine the role of boundaries of various kinds in the construction and expression of identity. The French and Spanish states have left their imprint on the social, cultural and linguistic landscapes on either side of the frontier, influencing the dynamics of local constructions and expressions of Basque identity. Hendaia, Irun and Hondarribia have each been marked by different development processes in a context of contrasting Spanish and French socio-economic trends. The experience of each is relevant to the wider picture of the Basque Country as a whole as it stands today. At the same time, the area of Bidasoa-Txingudi is quite distinct from the rest of the Basque Country precisely because of its location on the border. It is both a cross-roads and an economic magnet for people from other parts of Spain and France, as well as from other EU countries and beyond.

In analysing the different ways of expressing identity used by representatives of various sociocultural groups in Bidasoa-Txingudi, I shall be challenging notions of fixed identity among members of what are often perceived as homogeneous groups. I shall take as my point of departure the recognition that communities whose members share a common nationality cannot be considered simply as discrete cultural groups whose dominant characteristics are reflected and replicated in the behaviour of individuals. Instead, I shall argue that the state frontier is just one of

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<sup>3</sup> *Batua* means ‘united’ in Basque. *Batua* is the result of an attempt by Basque culturalists to find a common form of writing Basque over and above the rich variety of dialects existing in the Basque Country. The final form of *Batua* was decided in the late 1960s principally under the aegis of the Basque Academy, the *Euskaltzaindia*, made up of Basque linguists, writers and other erudites of the Basque language from both Iparralde and Hegoalde. *Batua* is principally composed of the Gipuzkoan and Nafarroan-Lapurdiian dialects (for more see for example Intxausti, 1992).

<sup>4</sup> I could resort to the ‘neutral’ English language and use place-names in English. However, from consultation of other English language works on the Basque Country, I noticed that most did not do so, choosing instead to use French, Spanish or Basque names. I am also aware of the symbolic political connotations of using the standard form of Basque, *Batua*, rather than any other dialect of Basque. While some other analysts, such as Douglass (1999), have favoured other forms of Basque, I have chosen *Batua* for the sake of homogeneity. It is furthermore the only form of Basque that has definite rules of orthography, set by *Euskaltzaindia*.

<sup>5</sup> The letter ‘a’ at the end of Basque words serves as the definite article. Since I say *the Partzuergo*, the suffix ‘a’ is not necessary.

<sup>6</sup> MacClancy sometimes uses the term ‘Basqueland’ together with the ‘Basque region’ and the ‘Basque Country’ (Eg in 1993a; 1993b; 1996; 1997a and 1997b). As I have never heard the word ‘Basqueland’ nor ‘Basque region’ used in practice, I prefer to use only the ‘Basque Country’ as the neutral term.

many boundaries present in a community and that these boundaries are permeable and changing in their nature and in the way that they are perceived by the inhabitants of the area.

By analysing these boundaries and the ways they are used by individuals in the construction and expression of their selves, I also aim to engage with current debates around the concept of identity. While primordial and instrumental conceptualizations of identity have lost currency in the face of growing understanding of the plural and multiple nature of identification, many recent attempts to grapple with the concept of identity remain restrictive in their own way, particularly when one seeks to apply them to rich empirical data. In my research, I aim to provide empirical evidence of the validity of another approach to the concept of identity, as simply the principle of organisation of identifications. I take identity as a “foyer virtuel”, to use Levi-Strauss’s term (1977:322), or as a kind of abstract notion that captures the concept’s flexible and changing state. In doing so, I wish to focus on the idea that individuals constantly engage in the erection of markers and the drawing up of boundaries in order to construct the expression of their selves.

Rather than viewing identity as a result of a fixed configuration of symbolic markers and boundaries, such as the use of one language rather than another or the choice of certain types of clothing or other attributes, I shall suggest that identity is the product of a fluid and changing application of these same symbolic markers and boundaries. Fundamental to this approach is the concept of boundaries as a tool for perceiving the way in which individuals construct and express their identity. In analyzing the use of boundaries, I shall also examine the way in which individuals engage in struggles for the control of symbolic markers in order to obtain and consolidate power. My thesis is intended as a contribution to the blossoming literature on the social anthropology, sociology and politics of culture and identity at borders in general (O’Dowd and Wilson, 1996; Donnan and Wilson, 1994, 1999; Wilson and Donnan, 1998). It will also have implications for the further understanding of the social phenomena of nationalism and ethnicity.

The issue of ‘Basque identity’ is a sensitive subject in the Basque Country, reflecting past and present political and social tensions and competing notions of territory, region and country. Different political factions claim to represent ‘Basque identity’, while often virulently opposing each other. Reflecting the contradictions between them, none of the representations of ‘Basque identity’ proposed by these factions corresponds in full to the various notions of self actually felt by the inhabitants of the Basque Country.

By going beyond emotional and political issues, my aim is to develop a disinterested analysis of how identity is constructed and expressed in a series of interwoven social contexts. One of my starting points is the realisation of the close relationship between constructions of group identity, the exercise of power, and different visions and understandings of ‘reality’. As Urla notes in her thesis on the construction of a ‘modern Basque identity’ through language policy, Basque nationalists’ claim to cultural difference “is explained primarily in terms of an underlying struggle for power and resources” (Urla, 1987:16). In addressing issues of collective identity, however, it is important to bear in mind that ‘identity’ is also an individual matter. While undeniably linked to and dependent on the collective identity of the group, individual identity is a personal construction and expression of the self. As cultural beings, individuals use the knowledge acquired from their particular cultural experiences (Spradley, 1980:6-9). How this knowledge is acted out at specific moments in time may be conditioned by collective considerations, but it remains a personal affair. My intention is to examine some of the diverse individual contributions to the making and expressing of identity in the context of a part of the Basque Country undergoing economic and social change.

It has been a general assumption, particularly on the part of political scientists and political actors, that borders are peripheral areas, due to their location on the limits of state territories. This, however, ignores the emic perspective, the experience of the people who inhabit such border areas, for whom these places are the centre of their world. As an illustration of this, I shall quote Felipe Saragueta, the director of the Partzuergo, who defines himself in terms of Basqueness. Speaking of his personal experience, he remarks: "I am and feel Basque. All my life I have known a lot of Basque people on either side of the (Franco-Spanish state) frontier. Even with the frontier closed, we still continued to live with our own sense of identity. It goes well beyond the frontier. And so you create your own space. Together, as Basques, we make our own space. You make your natural space, in which you live, have your friends, your social circle, with people, and that's it." Other local inhabitants, often with different cultural and social and political identifications, similarly experience the space around them as the centre of their world, while at the same time being aware of the frontier as a factor in their environment. How border inhabitants deal in their everyday life and in the construction and expression of their identity with the particular conditions imposed on them by the existence of a state frontier is an aspect of border studies that has been relatively little explored.<sup>7</sup>

As I have observed in Bidasoa-Txingudi, varying and sometimes conflicting ways of expressing the 'self' can be found within the Basque, French and Spanish contexts that coexist in the locality, giving the border area a particular 'multilocal' and 'multivocal' quality (Douglass, 1998, 1999). Rather than dwelling on 'nationalism', as suggested by the professor of law quoted above, I will show how cultural and political boundaries help to form different notions of identity among the local population and how these are also present at the level of the Partzuergo. In this way, I will highlight the contradictions between the theoretical and functional objectives of the Partzuergo and the realities of social life at grass-roots level.

From the point of view of the centralizing state, the areas on either side of state frontiers are peripheral to the centre. Basque nationalists, by contrast, have a different view of the border areas on either side of the Franco-Spanish state frontier. For them, this frontier is a dividing line between two parts of their 'Basque Country' - or *Euskal Herria* in Basque<sup>8</sup> - Iparralde and Hegoalde. Within the Basque Country, this frontier is also the border between the historic provinces of Lapurdi and Gipuzkoa. Seen in this light, Bidasoa-Txingudi becomes a central, rather than peripheral, location. In a broader European context, the dismantling of intra-EU frontiers has led to changing perceptions of border areas and the recognition of their quality as places of economic and cultural interchange. In places like Bidasoa-Txingudi, local inhabitants and political actors have to overcome the obsolete discourse of peripheralism in order to adopt and adapt themselves to a new discourse of dynamic centralism. In this particular area, the Partzuergo is currently the only official strategy leading this discourse.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Donnan and Wilson point out that the anthropology of borders is "also the anthropology of state power and practice" (1999:63). In the same vein, Douglass has talked about the multilocal and multivocal character of borders (1998, 1999). However, little has been done by way of research in this area.

<sup>8</sup> There are other ways of writing *Euskal Herria*: *Euskalerria* and *Eskualerria* are two of the most common alternatives. But *Euskal Herria* is the *Batua* version.

<sup>9</sup> Bidasoa-Txingudi is by no means the only border area in the EU active in cross-frontier cooperation. However the Partzuergo project is unusual in that it is concerned not just with economic cooperation but also cultural cooperation. It is particularly original in its endeavour to build on the promotion of tri-lingualism in Basque, French and Spanish. Another cross-frontier cooperation project on a slightly wider scale in the Basque Country is the Basque Euro Hiri linking the urban agglomeration of Baiona, Angelu and Miarritze in Iparralde, called BAB (abbreviations from the towns' names in French: Bayonne, Anglet and Biarritz) with Donostia (San Sebastián in Spanish) in Hegoalde. This project is concerned more with the harmonization of social services on either side of the frontier, such as accessibility to hospitals, means of transport, legal matters and urbanisation, so as to facilitate the already existing cross-border lifestyle of many local inhabitants. The Partzuergo's relation to the Euro Hiri will be referred to later.

My examination of the Partzuergo as an attempt to promote a new shared sense of local belonging across a state frontier will lead me to question the 'reality' of 'open borders' and assumptions of the consequent emergence of new forms of identification, as expressed in the concepts of 'supranational consciousness', 'postnationalism' and 'transnationalism'. My aim is to show that, despite the efforts of local politicians, different notions of self continually emerge. By reviewing the diverse meanings, interpretations and manipulations of boundaries, both physical and symbolic, I will highlight the challenges involved in current political attempts to create a new cultural identity in a recently re-conceived space located in a border area.

I hope through my thesis to contribute to the understanding of the dynamics of 'regionalism' and 'nationalism' and of the impact of 'transnationalism' and 'globalisation' at the social and cultural level. Analysis at the political and institutional level, where it has touched on cultural aspects, has remained culturally deterministic. Empirical and anthropological research on how 'transnationalism' and 'globalisation' affect people's social interaction on a local scale is only recently burgeoning.<sup>10</sup> The particular contribution of this thesis to the analytical study of these themes lies in its focus on the way in which individual constructions of identity draw on a range of potential inputs ranging from elements of local ethnographic and cultural expression to national, transnational and global modes of interaction and thought.

At the root of many human actions is the desire to exercise and retain power. There are clear elements of this in the Partzuergo project, which owes its impetus to elected officials anxious to maintain their political supremacy. From the start, those behind the Partzuergo have faced the challenge of winning and maintaining the support of the local population. They have attempted to promote a new common sense of local belonging across a state frontier, based on a combination of existing regional and cultural ties. In addition to projects designed to inject new vigour in the local economy, such as the re-development of the area around the old customs offices, they have given priority to a range of projects in the area of 'culture' designed to foster a 'Txingudi spirit' and a sense of 'Txingudi citizenship'. In reviewing some of these projects, I will examine how the Partzuergo seeks to promote itself and what are the obstacles in the way of development of a 'Txingudi spirit' in the sociocultural and political context of the Basque Country.

If the Partzuergo project is to work effectively and enjoy popular support, its backers will have to take account of the manner in which individuals constantly adapt aspects of their identity and behaviour to different contexts, company and circumstances. At a broader level, I will argue, this conclusion is valid for other cross-frontier projects in areas where issues of multiple ethnic, cultural and social allegiances exist. In the long run, projects like the Partzuergo may pave the way for the development of a European ideal of 'multiple identity' attachments or a European supranational consciousness. This is likely to prove a complex process, however, because of the ambiguities and contradictions resulting from the different uses of boundaries by individuals in contexts where identities and allegiances are highly contested. An understanding of the dynamics of identity formation and expression thus becomes relevant for many border areas in an eventual 'Europe without frontiers'.

Finally, I shall argue that the result of attempts to forge a new sense of common local belonging based on an alliance of distinct cultural expressions in a wider European setting may turn out not to be a shift from the nationalist sentiments of yesterday to a new form of regionalism and

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<sup>10</sup> See for instance the Economic and Social Research Council Research Programme on Transnational Communities at the Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Oxford which has been running since 1998 (<http://www.transcomm.ox.ac.uk>. Last consulted 7 July 2002).

European supranationalism that European idealists might hope for. Rather it may lead to the construction of new shifting symbolic boundaries in a new kind of identity formation that does not always go neatly in the direction of either regional, nationalist, national or European ideals. If that is the case, the abolition of borders may actually reinforce certain symbolic boundaries while de-constructing others. It remains an open question, however, as to whether this is true only in border areas where a conflict between different notions of local, ethnic and national identities exists, or whether it is a general phenomenon accompanying globalisation.

The twelve chapters that follow combine an account of my personal observations of social interaction in the area with theoretical considerations and analysis in relation to issues of identity. In Chapter One, I explain the relevance of anthropological theory to a study of social relations in the Basque context and elaborate on my own point of departure in terms of theory. In Chapter Two, I give an account of my empirical work as an anthropologist in the area of Bidasoa-Txingudi, with a description of how I carried out my research.

Chapter Three provides the reader with a description of Bidasoa-Txingudi as I experienced it, drawing on sensory impressions of sight, sound and smell. Its aim is to give the reader a feel for the place, highlighting both similarities and differences between the three towns and the two sides of the frontier. Chapters Four and Five focus on politics and history in relation to Bidasoa-Txingudi. In Chapter Four, I review the concept of the frontier as a social and political boundary, highlighting the different and sometimes conflicting views that individuals have of the frontier in the context of Bidasoa-Txingudi and various forms of nationalism. Chapter Five elaborates on this theme with a historical overview of the political situation of the Basque Country and an explanation of different institutional and political experiences on either side of the frontier. By shedding light on the various contrasting notions of reality experienced by individuals in the area, this overview provides the necessary background to understand the development of cross-frontier cooperation in Bidasoa-Txingudi. In Chapter Six, a brief historical description of cooperation – and non-cooperation – between communities on either side of the frontier sets the scene for an introduction of the contemporary initiative of the Partzuergo. A snapshot of a meeting of the Partzuergo's General Council presents an empirical view of the Partzuergo at work.

In Chapter Seven, the figure of the 'abertzale', or Basque patriot, and the role he or she has in the social, cultural and political context of the Basque Country are discussed. Using symbolic boundaries as an analytical tool to reveal the impact of such individuals on social interaction in the area, I demonstrate the complexity of notions of 'Basque identity' and the consequences it has for the establishment of the Partzuergo.

Subsequent chapters explore different empirical observations of boundaries at work in Bidasoa-Txingudi. Chapter Eight focuses on a ritual component of the annual town fiestas of Irun and Hondarribia whose role in the expression of local identification has been magnified in recent years by a virulent conflict over who has the right to participate. In reviewing the tensions that result from this, I explore their significance for the possible construction of a Bidasoa-Txingudi sense of belonging. Chapter Nine focuses on language as a symbolic boundary used for the construction and expression of identity in Bidasoa-Txingudi, while Chapter Ten looks at other symbolic boundaries in the context of other instances of social interaction in the locality.

Having seen how a variety of symbolic boundaries are drawn by individuals and groups in different ways and in a range of different situations in the common context of Bidasoa-Txingudi, I discuss in Chapter Eleven how the Partzuergo seeks to go beyond them in its attempt to construct a common sense of Bidasoa-Txingudi belonging. In this chapter I describe and analyse the discourse and the various social, cultural and economic projects of the Partzuergo according

to an anthropological perspective. In Chapter Twelve, I evaluate the impact of the Partzuergo, examining both the actual perspectives of those involved in its organisation and the reaction of other members of the local population to its actions. This examination, revealing as it does a number of paradoxes and contradictions, paves the way for the conclusion of this thesis, which can be briefly stated as follows: While the members of any kind of social group distinguish themselves through the drawing-up of a selection of symbolic boundaries, the usage and interpretation of these symbolic boundaries can differ according to the individual and the nature of social interaction. Reflecting such varying usage and interpretations, individuals experience notions of belonging and identification in different ways. Only when these differences are taken into account can any attempt to group people under a particular banner or category be open, flexible and harmonious - as opposed to exclusive, authoritarian and therefore potentially conflictive.

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## Chapter One: An Anthropologist in the Basque Country – Theoretical Considerations

*“Two visions of objectives and goals are well established in contemporary social and cultural anthropology. These visions might be labelled “humanistic” and “scientific”, and are perhaps better seen as poles around which researchers situate themselves, and between which they shift in one direction or another from time to time, thus shifting somewhat the tendency of the entire discipline.*

*‘In the humanistic vision, the goal of anthropology is the understanding of people’s lives, their social life, and their culture, an understanding which requires an empathetic grasp of the point of view of the people studied. Thus the anthropologist provides a qualitative account of the cultural “web of meaning” shaping the society and the lives of its members. Such an account is thought to reflect the researcher as well as those studied, the description being one of many possible interpretations...*

*‘In the scientific vision, the goal of anthropology is the discovery of descriptive generalisations and explanatory laws about the way society and culture work which can account for the commonalities and variations among societies and their trajectories over time.*

*‘To accomplish this, attention must be given to behaviour as well as ideas, and precise information is required, quantitative as well as qualitative. To maximise the value of the information, and to limit errors resulting from human subjectivity and bias, systematic forms of data collection are needed, and checks, as in repeat studies, are required...”*

P.C. Salzman quoted in Barnard, Alan and Jonathan Spencer (eds.) (1996), *Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology*. London: Routledge, p. 366.

As a social anthropologist conducting research in the area of Bidasoa-Txingudi since 1998, I have had to grapple repeatedly with the challenge of explaining what I am doing and why. Am I here to explore the alleged uniqueness of the Basque people, or to shed light on their supposedly mysterious origins? Am I compiling a catalogue of customs, linguistic peculiarities or physical types? Am I delving into the emotional roots of the Basque nationalist movement and the motives of those who continue to follow a path of violent confrontation? Such questions, from the many different people with whom I mix and interact, are entirely comprehensible in a society that has witnessed a steady stream of speculation and affirmation about the nature and essence of Basque identity.<sup>11</sup> But they mistake the wider and deeper scope of anthropological investigation. This chapter then is an attempt to go beyond such superficial understandings in order to explain the process and purpose of anthropological analysis.

Much has been written about the Basques as a centuries-old people with a singular blood type, distinctive physiognomy and a language supposedly unrelated to the other languages of Western Europe. They have even been claimed by some theorists of the late nineteenth century to be the descendants of Tubal, one of the sons of Noah in the Old Testament (Jauristi, 1986). Seen in such terms, the Basques could be regarded as an unusual pocket of separate racial/ethnic identity in an otherwise homogeneous Western European environment. It is then not surprising that the

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<sup>11</sup> For critical reviews of these in the anthropological discipline, see MacClancy (1993a), Zulaika (1996, 1998), Aranzadi (2000) and Bidart (2001).

anthropologist's interest in the Basques should be understood to be motivated in this way.<sup>12</sup> As is revealed by the professor's comment to me in the introductory chapter, anthropology often continues to be largely misconceived<sup>13</sup> amid popular reifications of 'ethnic groups' and supposed 'primordiality'. Questions that I am often asked in casual conversation about my research - such as "so what is it that the Basques want?" and "do they really think they will get independence?" - reflect this erroneously all-encompassing understanding of identity (see also Brubaker, 2002; Brubaker et al., 2002). Implicit in this approach is the dubious notion of 'authentic culture' arising from an *a priori* system of essential meanings, which for any serious social study is analytically useless.

Broadly, the aim of the anthropologist is to analyse the cultural processes through which people define themselves and behave. It is in moments of social tension and conflict that cultural expressions come out most starkly (MacClancy, 1993b:85), as individuals and groups struggle to impose their understandings of symbols over those of others. This is what makes themes such as nationalism attractive to scholars. Over the latter half of the twentieth century, nationalism, together with a modern notion of ethnicity, has become the focus of extensive sociological and anthropological research. As such, it has been a logical assumption on the part of many people to whom I spoke about my work that my interest in the Basque Country would be to study 'the nationalists'. When I explained that my interest was not specifically to look out for expressions of ethnic groupness or to focus on 'the nationalists', I often received a confused response from my interlocutors, who asked what could then be my object of study.<sup>14</sup>

An anthropological study of issues of identity in the Basque Country cannot focus solely on political claims regarding the existence and defence of a Basque nation, as this entails a neglect of actual experience and marginalises those not accepting or feeling excluded from such a notion. Nor can an anthropological study focus only on traditional manifestations of some kind of Basque community, since this would fail to recognise that expressions of group belonging are a mixture of continuously invented, reinvented<sup>15</sup> and appropriated cultural markings, achieved through continuous interaction with one's surroundings accentuated by the fast pace of the communication-intensive world in which we live. As a reflexive discipline, social anthropology has a crucial role to play in shedding light on changing modes of social interaction and attitudes to the spaces in which people live (Augé, 1994, 1995).

Contemporary anthropology is distinguished from other disciplines by its empirical approach and its attempt to avoid theoretical presuppositions. Much social science research is directed toward testing formal theories, whereby the researcher approaches the object of research with a preconception of what he or she expects to find. This method has been much criticised for its ethnocentrism. Modern anthropological research, by contrast, remains largely concerned with the small scale, reflecting the

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<sup>12</sup>Archaeological, biological anthropological, and human anthropological research was carried out extensively in the Basque Country over the course of the twentieth century (Eg Barandiaran, Aranzadi and Etcheverry, 1959; and Basabe Prado, 1985). This has been encouraged by traditional Basque nationalism in its efforts to show that the Basque people are different from their French and Spanish neighbours (see Azcona, 1984).

<sup>13</sup> Similarly, on another occasion during my fieldwork, a person involved in organising cultural projects for Bidasoa-Txingudi, understanding anthropology to be a meticulous study of kinship and traditional customs, asked if I could provide him with information on the kin relations over time of the inhabitants on either side of the frontier. I had to inform him that I had no information of that sort.

<sup>14</sup> As Brubaker has also noted, in spite of all deconstructivist attempts, "everyday talk, policy analysis, media reports, and even much ostensibly constructivist academic writing routinely frame accounts of ethnic, racial and national conflict in groupist terms as the struggles of ethnic groups, races and nations" (2002:3). In the Basque case, a similar tendency is noted by Watson (1996:3-10).

<sup>15</sup> I go along here with MacClancy in calling for the specification of invention as a *process* rather than a single occurrence or an occurrence over a brief period (1997a:184).

idea that a concentrated focus is appropriate for acquiring a full understanding of the human being in his or her social entourage. The usefulness of anthropology within the social sciences lies precisely in this speciality. Small communities and structures are linked to more encompassing social and political formations (Burawoy, 1991). Anthropology puts a human face on the various domains in which people interact, such as economics and politics, in a way that other disciplines rarely are able to do. By carrying out a microanalysis of society and politics, one can begin to understand the wider picture.

The anthropologist carries out ethnographic work involving long periods of fieldwork, with all that this entails: learning the local language, adapting to the area, carrying out interviews, getting involved in activities with local inhabitants and thereby acquiring a deeper knowledge of the local society (Spradley, 1980). Participant observation, the research method that marks anthropology from the rest of the social sciences, is a data-collecting technique, which allows the researcher to study people in their own space and time (Rabinow and Sullivan, 1987). Such a task requires complete open-mindedness on the part of the anthropologist, who has in effect to strive to become a *tabula rasa* that will take in whatever is found. This means that the anthropologist does not look for specific manifestations, following already formed ideas of what 'identity' is. Only after an adequate amount of time spent gaining familiarity with the social environment can the anthropologist decide which informants merit further analysis and which courses of investigation are worth pursuing (Spradley, 1979). Nor must the anthropologist arrive with a certain ideological state of mind, which would lead her not only to impose her own set of values, but also to favour the point of view and lifestyle of a certain group of people within the field, while neglecting the consideration of others and remaining insensitive to the power games being played out. Such an approach would only stunt the scope of interpretation and produce excessively biased results. Unfortunately, however, cases of such political bias are not rare, particularly in the study of the Basque Country.

Rather than supporting or criticising notions of Basque uniqueness and difference, my interest lies in looking beyond and beneath them to discover how such notions are used in the context of social interaction. This is the task of the social anthropologist, to probe into the construction by the group of individuals that form and live a culture of the essential elements that go into the formation of this culture. In so doing, I suggest a different approach to the concept of identity, involving perceiving it as the principle of organisation of identifications. By identifications I mean the use of symbolic boundaries by social individuals. I shall explain my approach in greater detail at a later stage in this chapter.

Let us focus first on the misperceptions of the role of the anthropological discipline. Taking as my starting point the remark by the professor of law whom I quote at the outset, I shall briefly explore the basis for his assumptions regarding both the nature of anthropological research and the preconceptions that he feared I might have about the Basque Country. I shall build on this to review the perceptions of both outsiders and insiders of 'nationalism' and the consequences of this for an understanding of ethnic identity in the Basque context, and analyse their effect in the broader context of social interaction.

I will show how 'nationalism' is one of a number of elements that determine how people interact, construct and express their sense of self. In order to build and maintain these elements, the individual must adapt, amongst other things, his or her use of space in an appropriate manner. Reflecting this, the use of space will be shown to be a symbolic manifestation of what a person wants to say about himself or herself. The pleasurable sensation associated with the use of space in conformity with one's identity can turn into 'discomfort' when individuals find themselves in spatial situations that do not correspond to their view of themselves (Eg Ardener, 1993:1-3; MacClancy, 1993b:85). Such negative space connotations can result in self-imposed restrictions on

individuals' social interaction, creating one of the many symbolic boundaries used by a person as part of their expression of who they are.

Anthropology is above all the study of people as social beings, how they interact and give meaning to their world. As such, anthropologists are concerned with providing a qualitative account, stressing the importance of the particular in the search for descriptive explanatory generalisations about the way a society works. Anthropology aims to achieve a fuller understanding of the individual as a social being. It looks at its object of study as a whole, seeking to understand how individuals make their own place within the social context through their relationships with each other.

Nonetheless, despite the evolution of the discipline over the hundred and fifty years, misunderstandings persist regarding anthropology's nature and objectives. This is partly due to its origins in the colonialist era, as the study of those peoples 'discovered' and brought under European authority. Focusing on 'other civilisations' of peoples different from the largely white European 'us', early anthropologists set out to analyse customs, rituals, kinship systems and other organisational structures with a view to gaining a systematic understanding of the make-up and functioning of other cultures. Culture was largely understood along the lines of Tyler's definition as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and many other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (1871:1). Such a definition made it possible to generalize about large configurations of people, such as 'the Samoans', 'the Hottentots', 'the Inuit' and 'the Javanese', all united by their "webs of shared significance" (Geertz, 1973:5).

In the post-colonial era, the self-assertion of peoples previously dominated by European colonial powers led to a reassessment among social anthropologists of their methods and objectives. This took place against a background of soul-searching among social scientists about the possible contribution of academics to the essentialisation of the peoples under study, who by being viewed as 'different' to members of the society to which the academics belonged were fashioned into some exotic 'Other', detached from the 'normal' and 'civilised' 'us' of the world of the academics. Anthropology, in particular, was criticised for its tendency to maintain an egocentric and ethnocentric approach to its object of study. In response, and recognising the redundancy in a rapidly changing modern world of classifying peoples and cultures into neat units and structures, anthropologists engaged in a re-thinking of their discipline, focusing on their own notions of self in their relationship with the traditional object of study. Fredrik Barth's *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (1969) marked a major new approach in anthropology, with his introduction of the concept of ethnic boundaries as a tool for analysing ethnicity. Rejecting the idea of ethnic groups being containers of particular homogeneous cultures and histories, Barth instead drew attention to them as socially constructed phenomena, developing the idea that identities and ethnic groups are a fruit of social organisations rather than of cultural content.

During the same period, amid the crumbling of European colonialism and resulting proliferation of nation-states, 'Western' and 'non-Western' societies acquired equal status as objects of research. Cultures in Southern Europe and the Mediterranean area became a focus of anthropological interest, which then spread to the rest of the continent. This process contributed to the growth of an anthropology of 'complex societies', within which an appreciation of the intricacy of cultural formations challenged a unitary view of culture that stressed boundedness, continuity and homogeneity (Werbner and Modood, 1997:91). In parallel, anthropological theory was marked by a shift in focus from 'system' to 'practice', accompanied by an interest in agency and in the actors' point of view. This resulted in a further dismantling of the notion of the 'cultural whole', associated with a distrust of unifying, homogenising forms of anthropological writing, forcefully expressed in such critical texts as James Clifford's and George Marcus's *Writing Culture* (1986).

In this context, the concept of culture came to be re-defined as a web of shared but continuously negotiated and contested meanings. Central to this contested environment are such elements as language and power, ideology and consciousness. Culture is the result of social interaction, since it is people, in their relations with each other, who produce and negotiate meaning. Understood in this way, the concept recognises that social groups are themselves 'culturally' constructed. Thus Turner saw culture as "collective forms of social consciousness arising in the context of historical social processes" (1993:417). Culture is a "political process" (Wright, 1994:26), in which some meanings are always imposed at the expense of others (Bourdieu, 1991). Culture then is necessarily studied in interaction, whereby human beings, as members of society are not only influenced by each other but individually interpret and manipulate cultural symbols in their social and material context. In this vein, Barth has been criticized for not going far enough in taking into account the individual interpretation of boundaries and the context in which it takes place (Martiniello, 1995; A.P. Cohen, 1994a).

Such a shift in anthropological focus has gone hand in hand with a revised approach to the 'object of study',<sup>16</sup> which now becomes a reflection of ourselves and how we define who we and others are. More recently, the concept of 'Europe' and its construction in the minds of the inhabitants of the continent and within the institutions of the EU have become a focus of interest.<sup>17</sup> So, while still concentrating on ground-level research, anthropology moved "beyond the community" (Boissevain, 1975) to become concerned with larger issues such as centre-periphery relations, economic development and the formation of the state and the nation.<sup>18</sup>

#### Anthropology in the Basque Country

The development of anthropological studies in the Basque Country reflects these trends. Douglass's *Death in Murelaga* (1973) and Bidart's *Le Pouvoir Politique à Baigorri* (1977) are each concerned in their own way with the local and its wider implications for the exploration of issues of identity and nationalism in an economically developing and politically polarising environment. Ott's *The Circle of the Mountains* (1981), focusing on a rural community in the isolated hinterland of Iparralde, is a classic example of anthropological interest in a small community in what was then seen as one of the backwaters of ethnic and traditional Europe. Against the background of the advent of democracy in Spain, Heiberg looks at expressions of Basque nationalism in a small town in Hegoalde and their consequences for an understanding of the processes of constructing a modern notion of the Basque nation (*The Making of the Basque Nation*, 1989). Although her work has since been criticized for its oversimplification of complex relations between inhabitants of the Basque Country on ethnic lines, it is an example of the kind of anthropological work produced in the 1970s when nationalism and political violence had captured the attention of anthropologists and social and political theorists as part of a general context of change in the configuration of nation-states following the independence of ex-colonial societies and the self-affirmation of so-called minority ethnic groups. Zulaika's *Death and Sacrament* (1989) is another milestone in the development of this approach, focusing on local cultural processes in an effort to understand violence in the name of nationalism.

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<sup>16</sup> Bourdieu has since gone further by insisting that social scientists rethink the idea of subjectivity versus objectivity (Eg 1991:224-227). Science, he argues, is not a neutral 'field' but yet another context of symbolic struggle which results in social scientists' construction of a particular version of the 'reality'.

<sup>17</sup> Eg Shore 2000; Bellier and Wilson 2000; Bellier 1994; Goddard, Llobera and Shore 1994; Wilson and Estellie-Smith 1993; Shore and Black 1992; Abelès 1990.

<sup>18</sup> Eg Grillo 1980 and MacDonald 1993.

Urla's *Being Basque, Speaking Basque...* (1987), dealing with the role in the construction of a modern Basque identity of the language policy of the Basque government in the early 1980s, introduces a different set of socio-political debates to those of the anthropologists just mentioned. The establishment of a Basque Country government as part of Spain's transition to democracy following the death of Franco led to a process of Basque institutionalisation with a view to 'remedying' the past and constructing a firm sense of Basqueness – or cultural sovereignty – through language planning. Such a process has had consequences for self-understanding in a Basque context and the modern formation of Basque identity/identities. Urla's work demonstrates how politics of language and politics of identity can become one.

However, in order to portray a clear and accurate picture of a social situation, it is crucial to look at all the actors within this context. This is what I feel has been lacking in much of the social anthropological research carried out in the Basque Country, where the tendency towards categorization and homogenization of people into groups is still observable. For example, Laborde (1996), describing a *bertsolari*<sup>19</sup> championship in the stadium of Tolosa in Hegoalde in 1995, identifies this event in ritual terms as an expression of Basque identity. While those attending may well share a certain view of their Basque identity and culture, I question whether the 'Basqueness' being celebrated at this event can be equated with a reified 'Basque identity', as such an assumption fails to take account of those who may not identify with this event but do identify with other symbols which they consider to be Basque.

Taking the approach of a political scientist, Itçaina (2002) has sought to find a pattern in the experience of Basque identity over time based on his interpretation of four so-called configurations of identity. His first configuration consists of what he describes as a traditional sense of identity, characterized by a strong attachment to the Basque language and to Catholic values (*euskaldun fededun*),<sup>20</sup> an identity "which is not questioned" (2002:3). His second involves a political understanding of Basque identity that moves away from an attachment to Catholic values and towards Basque nationalist values, personified by individuals who, though not native Basque-speakers, deliberately set out to learn the language (*euskaldun berri*),<sup>21</sup> and by the so-called Basque patriot (*abertzale*). His third configuration involves a kind of compromise between the first two configurations in which 'Basque identity' accommodates itself to other less absolute values. Finally, his fourth configuration attempts to explain the nature of identification with Basqueness today among people not caught up in a nationalist discourse by citing a combination of utilitarianism with an emotive attachment to Basque symbols unconnected with nationalist projects. Despite stating that any notion of Basqueness exists only thanks to individual and collective interaction with other notions of identity (2002:1), however, he approaches his analysis of 'Basque identity' exclusively from the *outside*.

In taking these approaches, both Laborde and Itçaina fail to go beyond generalities to examine individual and interpersonal interpretations of the significance of Basque symbols and expressions of identification with them. Thus, they participate in the reification of the ethnic group by treating it as a natural and fixed reality of central importance in social life. The same approach is evident in the symbolic struggle between members of the Basque community over 'Basqueness'. Rather than addressing individual issues of identity and belonging, many participants in this symbolic struggle resort to commonplaces and platitudes in their analysis of who qualifies as 'Basque'.

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<sup>19</sup> A traditional skill of improvised singing in rhyming verse in Basque on the theme of a specific topic selected in many cases by someone other than the singer as a challenge or test of his or her ability.

<sup>20</sup> This literally translates as 'a person who has Basque and religious faith'.

<sup>21</sup> Meaning 'new Basque-speaker' or literally, a 'person who newly has Basque'.

## Defining concepts: Identity and Boundaries

My work in the border area of Bidasoa-Txingudi focuses on the politically and symbolically rich social setting of a community adapting to change caused by the dismantling of frontiers within the EU and by broader trends of so-called transnationalism. These developments are in turn leading to the emergence of new issues of identity and notions of belonging and new interpretations of familiar symbolic boundaries. By treating identity as the result of an agglomeration of different shifting boundaries, my objective is to go beyond past primordial and essentialist notions of identity that prevent any effective, sympathetic and all-encompassing understanding of identity expression in real-life settings. Building on existing work relating to the conceptualisation of identity in the social sciences, I will focus on the use of markers and boundaries as tools for the formation and the analysis of individual expressions of identity and social interaction. In order to put my approach into context, I shall present a brief overview of how the term identity has been used in past academic research in the discipline of social anthropology. While not an exhaustive review of all the relevant literature, this outline is intended to give an idea of the theoretical foundations on which my approach to identity in this thesis is based.<sup>22</sup>

Although identity is widely understood in the social sciences today as a construction that evolves out of a sense of social belonging (Barnard and Spencer, 1996:292), different theoretical approaches still continue to affect the way in which the concept is understood and used, not only by social scientists but also by politicians and ordinary people. In everyday communication for instance, we generally tend to talk about identity as that which defines who we are as individuals and as members of certain social groups adhering to certain values and customs. At a group level, identity is often seen as being linked to nationality or ethnicity. On the interpersonal level, we talk of identity in relation to all sorts of different statuses, as a teenager, for example, or as a mother or painter. On the cultural/value level, we use the word to refer to our way of perceiving the world and living in a certain way. This can relate to a religious creed, for example, or simply to personal experiences and interests. Altogether, these different 'identities' define a person individually, with some assuming more importance in some situations and contexts than in others, as for example when a Muslim journalist assumes his identity as a parent in going to his children's school to talk about their progress. However, these different 'identities' presuppose fixity, imposing the notion of immutability. Used in this way, the word 'identity' fails to encompass all the different 'identities' of a person or to question the possibility of individual interpretation of these. It also fails to make a difference between how the person is viewed by others in contrast to how the person views himself.

The term identity has become imprecise in academia too, varying in its meaning according to discipline, subject and context. This has led some social scientists to go so far as to declare it undefineable (Eg Mackenzie, 1978; Gleason, 1983). According to Brubaker and Cooper, it has been used in so many different ways for different interests and purposes that it has become too ambiguous, torn between "hard" and "soft" (2000:2) meanings and between essentialist connotations and constructivist qualifiers, to usefully serve the requirements of social analysis. Brubaker points out the need "to break with vernacular categories and common-sense understandings" (2002:5) of both identity and ethnicity. In shifting my focus towards markers and boundaries, I do not discard the term identity entirely but simply seek to avoid being dragged into the misunderstandings and confusions that arise from its widespread misuse.

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<sup>22</sup> As I discovered at a fairly advanced stage in my research, my own emerging stand is paralleled in many respects in Cuche's analysis of issues of culture and identity (1996).

The concept of identity has a long history in Western philosophy. Ancient Greek philosophers were among the first to address the dilemmas of permanence amidst manifest change and of unity amidst diversity. The word identity has its origins in the Latin *idemitas*, an abstract concept which conveyed the notion of 'being the same thing'. Rousseau, in the eighteenth century, regarded memory as a fundamental part of identity. Gradually the concept acquired a sense of 'something permanent', referring to individual sameness and yet distinctiveness within the collectivity. Such a view enabled the categorization of people within a social context, in which they were held to fit specific roles. Notions of the self were assumed to emerge from the range of social 'types' inherent in the social structure.

At the turn of the twentieth century, Freud defined identity in a psychoanalytical context, as the sum of a particular person's psychological development. Identity was seen as the resulting product of the identification processes of the narcissistic 'I'. Social theory approached identity in terms of symbolic interactionism, whereby the self, emerging from its encounter with the social world, can be understood by examining its place in the social context (Mead, 1934). Social interaction was deemed a key aspect in the analysis of individual and collective identity (Heider, 1958). Weber, one of the fathers of modern (and interpretative) sociology was equally concerned with the issue of identity in the modern world, although he talked of *Persoenlichkeit* (personality) rather than identity (1968). For Weber, an understanding of modern identity involved a coherent and measured acceptance and assumption of social stimuli.

Building on Freud, the anthropologist cum psychoanalyst Erikson is attributed with introducing the concept of identity in the social sciences. He pinpointed three features that he regarded as being central to 'identity': unity, distinctiveness and continuity (1972:14). He saw individuals as conceivers of the self according to the cognitive models of personality or moral character available within the range of their experience. Identity, in its sense of sameness, referred to commonalities associated with the group. In a social and cultural world held to be composed of different segments, groups were accorded significant cognitive content and individuals' identities were seen as emergent properties of their categorical memberships. Building on this, Devereux, also an anthropologist with a psychoanalytical approach, insisted further on the importance of the influence of reified culture on the individual's sense of self (1970). Such a thesis succeeded in shifting academic focus onto 'culture', leading the way for the emergence of a reflexive anthropology. It is Goffman especially who contributed to the conceptualisation of the notion of the representation of the self on the basis of social role playing in interactionist theory. His work is particularly significant in terms of putting the stress on how and why people behave the way they do in company of others and what that means for the understanding of their identity.

Anthropologists have most frequently employed the term 'identity' to refer to this idea of selfhood in a loosely Eriksonian way, properties based on the uniqueness and individuality which makes a person distinct from others. Identity became of more interest to anthropologists with the emergence of modern concerns with ethnicity and social movements in the 1970s. This was reinforced by an appreciation, following the trend in sociological thought, of the manner in which the individual is affected by and contributes to the overall social context. At the same time, the Eriksonian approach to identity remained in force, with the result that identity has continued until recently to be used in a largely socio-historical way to refer to qualities of sameness in relation to a person's connection to others and to a particular group of people.

This ambiguous and confusing approach to identity has led on occasion to rather restrictive interpretations of the concept, following two more or less opposite tendencies. The first favours a primordialist approach which takes the sense of self and belonging to a collective group as a fixed thing, defined by objective criteria such as common ancestry and common biological

characteristics. The second, rooted in social constructionist theory, takes the view that identity is formed by a predominantly political choice of certain characteristics. In so doing, it questions the idea that identity is a natural given, characterised by fixed, supposedly objective criteria. Both approaches need to be understood in their respective political and historical contexts, characterised by debate on issues of class, race and ethnicity. While they have been criticized, they continue to exert an influence on approaches to the conceptualisation of identity today.

The first approach treats identity as fundamentally a group phenomenon, binding group members together on a basis of exclusive common characteristics. Identity here is understood as denoting a fundamental and consequential sameness among members of a group. Viewed in this context, identity is invoked as something allegedly deep, basic and foundational. This has led to certain conceptualisations of ethnic identity, such as Herder's influential neo-romantic concept of the *Volk* as a unity of blood and soil. While it has been severely criticised (Eg Thompson, 1989:21-48) it has remained an element of theoretical discourse.

To most proponents of modernisation in the 1960s, assertions of ethnic identity feeling were seen as backward and anachronistically attached to traditional values. Ethnic groupness continued to be associated with objective sociobiological criteria. With the emergence of political conflicts in which issues of ethnicity played a central role, this approach led to an acceptance of objective and perceived differences between social groups as a basis for the construction of group distinction and consequently of political mobilisation. Ethnic groups were seen as the product of political myths. In this vein, Smith has defined them as made up "of people whose members share a common name and elements of culture, possess a myth of common origin and common historical memory, who associate themselves with a particular territory and possess a feeling of solidarity" (1986:15).

While moving towards a subjective approach to ethnic identity, as a politicised cultural identity, these so-called instrumentalist theories still gave ethnic groupness an essentialist quality. By associating it with political strategy-making, overflowing sometimes into violence, ethnic groupness was also often given negative connotations. This has caused in many cases a return to a rather primordialist view of ethnic groupness (Eg Terradas, 1993), as the ethnic group is understood to be fighting for its distinctive values. This has also been in spite of Weber's own clear distinction between the race and ethnicity, whereby the former is taken to be unconscious belonging to a biological group, and the latter subjective and consciously defined. Ethnic identity often continues to be confused with ideas of race and general biological criteria, maintaining the understanding of individual identity as something permanent and fixed.<sup>23</sup>

Another approach to identity, and consequently to ethnicity, which I call subjective, interprets the concepts as deriving from a sense of self formed out of an awareness of distinctiveness, of difference to Others. The anthropologist Barth was a pioneer in this approach in his analysis of ethnic identity (1969). By introducing the concept of ethnic boundaries as an analytical tool for

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<sup>23</sup> Based on my personal experience, the fact that we are often asked in everyday social interaction: 'Where are you from?' is quite telling. This question presupposes an answer along the national line, a question about which country one is from, which is supposed to equal one's nationality. This supposes territorial origins and national adherence to be the most fundamental aspects of who a person is. This belonging is essentially 'proved' by our possession of a passport or 'identity card'. The popularised discourse of ethnicity and identity linked together also explains why saying that one has several nationalities or does not speak the language of the nationality often causes so much confusion. Often, in the attempt to make some sense of this confusion, interlocutors ask, 'well, where were you born?' as if this will help to provide an answer. For the past two centuries, nationalism has had a great influence on how we define ourselves, associating personal identity closely with nationality. Likewise, confusion is sometimes caused when one expresses attachment to an ethnic identity instead, but does not stereotypically look like this ethnic group or was not born in its particular area.

looking at ethnicity, Barth helped to de-essentialise ethnicity and ethnic identity and to challenge their *a priori* existence or continuity. He drew attention to the ethnic group as a socially constructed phenomenon. Analyses of ethnic groups, he suggested, should focus on their use of symbolic boundaries to mark the limits of group belonging. Ethnic groups were thus seen to be active creators of their groupness, a process which he described as involving three stages: self-ascription, mutual recognition and mutual ascription. In this way, ethnic identity could be understood as formed on the basis of what is chosen and agreed (we want to be like this, we feel different to them on the basis of things we believe we have in common) rather than as a collection of fixed types (blood, language, history, character). This notion of ethnic boundaries provides a way of understanding how a sense of organisation and order in a social environment and a sense of group membership is developed and sustained amidst surrounding change. They assist people in their creation of bonds based on shared ideas and emotions as part of a group in contrast to others, to such an extent that it is not necessary for them to know each other personally (Anderson, 1983).

Some anthropologists of the 1970s concentrated on the social and political role of symbols. Abner Cohen, for example, defined symbols as "objects, acts, relationships or linguistic formations that stand *ambiguously* for a multiplicity of meanings, evoke emotions, and impel men to action" (1974:23). He and others saw culture as made up of symbols interpreted by individuals and used for their expression of the self. Geertz (1973) worked on the idea of culture as a particular symbolic system promoted by a social group, assisting the group in its way of thinking and looking at the world. As a set of symbolic statements, culture shapes and gives meaning to human perceptions and behaviour. And rather than the meanings of symbols being fixed or given, they are inter-subjectively created by the members of the group together. As such, they are a source of group negotiation. Geertz views this negotiation of meaning as fundamentally a social process which occurs, "not in the head, but in that public world where people talk together, name things, make assertions, and to a degree understand each other" (1973:213).

Over the following decades, identity came to be seen as an object of personal struggle in social and political studies (Eg Calhoun, 1994). Hall (1995) maintained that the challenges of the modern world result in making identity a central concern in people's lives, and the need to find one's roots becomes indispensable (Beck, 1992). What occurs then, Hall and Calhoun have argued, is a politics of difference, whereby group identities assert themselves in opposition to perceived pressures of homogenisation and, in doing so, assume roles in the political arena.

Following this line of thought, new social movements and minority nationalism were seen as an attempt by small social groups to regain control of their destinies. Likewise, identity came to be understood as a potential ideological construct for political mobilisation, thereby causing the concept to be brought alongside that of ethnicity and nationalism. Horowitz, for example, examined how ethnic identity becomes reinforced when competing with other identities (1985). Similarly, Wallman suggests that differences between social groups become ethnic boundaries "only when heated into significance by the identity investments of the other side" (1986:230). Hechter (1975), more specifically, looked at ethnic identity in the context of internal colonialism and perceived suppression by a dominant identity. Glazer and Moynihan have treated identity as a politicised social fact, whereby social change and new political challenges are seen to bring about self-consciousness (1975:7). Their concern with boundaries then was between communities, and how these are considered as necessarily oppositional, occurring as a reaction between one social system and another (Wallman, 1978:205).

While this approach helps us to understand how some groups manage to construct and maintain a sense of identity particular to the group as a whole, it fails to recognise the possibility of different interpretations of this group identity amongst its members. This, as I mentioned before, has led

many scholars to assume that nationalist movements were the main representatives of the ethnic group and, as a result of this, to concentrate their studies solely on such movements. Despite attempts since Barth to de-essentialise the notion of the ethnic category, it still often remains understood as characterised by primordial criteria and as a politicised cultural homogeneous group. The concept of ethnicity remains bound up with tradition, folklore and nationalist ideology.

But if the anthropologist treats the ethnic group as a politicised cultural group, as A.P. Cohen does (1994a, 1998), how does the anthropologist fit in those people who feel, in the case of the Basque Country, for example, Basque, but do not have any political awareness of their 'Basqueness'? Or is the socio-cultural group to be regarded as an ethnic group of its own? This is how Shore (1993) for example analysed the Italian Communist Party and its members: as an ethnic group with its own web of shared meanings, special customs, ways of speaking, behaving, and choosing and using symbols. The same can be said about the various political groupings which claim to be the 'real' Basques.

But the concept of the ethnic group is problematic because it is too restrictive. It sustains a reification of personal identity as bound to the 'ethnic' group. By treating the ethnic group as a social organisation, maintained thanks to the drawing up of boundaries between it and other groups, Barth denied the interpretive power and individual consciousness of the ethnic group members. As Calhoun noted, "there are always internal tensions and inconsistencies among the various identities and group memberships of individuals." (1994:28). Terms like 'group', 'category' and 'boundary' still connote fixed identity and the ability of individuals to express their own notions of the self is ignored.

Cohen, as one of the most outspoken critics of the idea that ethnic identity can be generalised to all members of the group, argued that ethnicity is continually reconstructed on the collective level thanks to the individual members of the group (1994a, 1994b). He pointed to the need to be aware of the individual variations that can exist within an ethnic group, talking of boundaries as things that acquire meaning in the minds of individuals (1985:12, 1994a, 1994b, 1998).<sup>24</sup> While Barth suggested that the boundaries between groups are of primary definitional importance, Cohen drew attention to the risk of erroneously thinking that the understanding of these boundaries is equally shared by all members of the group (1998). Members have their own ways of defining their membership and understanding their ethnic group and they express this through their own use of symbolic boundaries. They may share many common characteristics of a prototypical ethnic identity, but not all (Mahmood and Armstrong, 1992). Ethnicity thus becomes a construct conditioned not only by inclusive/exclusive external boundaries but also by the existence of internal boundaries drawn up by members of the ethnic group in relation to each other, and thus is perpetuated by the different visions and experiences of both members and outsiders, whether they are in agreement or not.

While Cohen called for a focus on individual consciousness in the use of ethnic boundaries, Douglass, Lyman and Zulaika (1994) also pointed to the possibility of a lack of internal cohesion in the ethnic group, drawing attention to the internal problems of minority groups such as Chicanos, Asians and American Indians in the United States. These groups use categories to define who is a 'faithful' member and who is not, talking in disparaging terms of those who show too much willingness to integrate into the dominant culture (1994:70-2). Douglass, Lyman and Zulaika thus showed that boundary-drawing also takes place within the ethnic group and not just

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<sup>24</sup> Cohen also talks in terms of identity, which he defines as "the way(s) in which a person is, or wishes to be known by certain others" (1994a:22).

in relations with outsiders. The same thing has been noted in the case of the Basques, where attitudes to the notion of a Basque 'ethnic identity' are far from consensual. There are tensions between nationalist and non-nationalist Basques (Heiberg, 1980, 1989; Douglass et al., 1994), as well as between different kinds of Basque nationalists, with some believing they are more 'genuine' than others (see Chapter Six in this thesis).

In a broader context, social scientists are confronted with the challenge of dealing with the multitude of social and cultural experiences acquired today in the context of globalisation. As Said points out, "no one today is purely one thing" (1993:407). Caglar has also noted that since the 1980s at least, the world has been marked by what she called "unprecedented translocal flows" of people, capital and technology (1997:169), whereby people of different cultures mingle and mix, producing a whole new set of values and reference points. Responding to the questions regarding the self and identity in an age of 'globalisation', 'homogenisation', 'mass culture' and 'extensive communication' have caused a renewed questioning of the self, social scientists have made numerous attempts to break with tendencies to define identity as something fixed and functional and to move away from reifications of group identity. In an attempt to accommodate those people who increasingly define themselves in terms of multiple national attachments and who feel at ease with different subjectivities, Kershner (1998), Caglar (1997), Modood (1997) and others, rather than questioning the use of the word 'identity', have sought to adapt their analytical approach by presenting identity as something fluid, changing and multi-dimensional. Pieterse (1995) for example, described 'hybridisation' as "the ways in which forms become separated from existing practices and recombine with new forms in new practices" (Pieterse, 1995:84) and, as such, offering "revolutionary antidotes to essentialist notions of culture, identity and ethnicity" (Caglar, 1997:172). Other scholars have talked about 'hyphenated' (Caglar, 1997), 'creolised' (Hannerz, 1987) and 'diasporic' identities in similar ways. In using such adjectives, these analysts aimed to capture the complexity of the practices, cultural configurations, and 'identity' formations of trans-local and culturally 'nomadic' people. Identity formations are understood as "products of cultures and histories in collision and dialogue" (Clifford, 1994:319).

Reflecting the increased mobility of people across state and national territories, the concept of the 'transnational' has been developed to describe the 'identity' of these people whose experience of self is affected by their high mobility and consequent intake of a great variety of cultural symbols. It seems to me, however, that these alternative definitions continue to be based precisely on those foundations from which they claim to move away. The ideas of hybridity or creolisation continue to presuppose some kind of 'cross-over', or accommodation of various whole and fixed parts.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, experiences of 'transnationalism' entail different things for different people, such that the term, in my opinion, ceases to have analytical value.

Among others, Werbner, Modood et al. (1997) put forward the idea of 'multiple identity', whereby an individual builds up and expresses a range of identities based on personal experience. Examining the idea that a person can have more than one group allegiance at the same time, Sangrador (1996) and Moreno (1997) discussed the ability of regional populations in Spain to feel a sense of 'national identity' in some cases and of more narrow collective identities in other cases. In the Basque context, respondents were asked about the 'possibility' of feeling Basque and something else, such as 'also' or 'equally' 'Spanish' or 'also' or 'equally' 'European'. While demonstrating the possible compatibility of several social, cultural and political attachments at the same time, these accounts, however, shed no light on the formation and everyday expression of identity. In evoking the concept of 'multiple identity', they continue to assume that 'identity' is a root base and that the various identifications are fixed and uniform in their nature rather than fluid

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<sup>25</sup> This has also been remarked on briefly by MacClancy (1997:15).

and eclectic. Again, these new concepts of identity appear to me as mere covers for an understanding of identity as a mish-mash of different fixed identities.

These different explorations of 'identity' demonstrate how difficult a concept it is to pin down. Since identity is a virtual thing, it is impossible to define it empirically.<sup>26</sup> Discussions of identity use the term with different meanings, from fundamental and abiding sameness, to fluidity, contingency, negotiated and so on. Brubaker and Cooper note a tendency in many scholars to confuse identity as a category of practice and as a category of analysis (2000:5). Indeed, many scholars demonstrate a tendency to follow their own preconceptions of identity, following more or less the frameworks listed above, rather than taking into account the mechanisms by which the concept is crystallised as reality. In this environment, some analysts, such as Brubaker and Cooper, have suggested doing away with the concept completely (2000:1). Others, by contrast, have sought to introduce alternative concepts in an attempt to capture the dynamic and fluid qualities of human social self-expression. Hall (1992, 1996), for example, suggests treating identity as a process, to take into account the reality of diverse and ever-changing social experience. Cuche (1996), Guibernau and Rex (1997) and Passerini (1998, 2000) introduce the idea of identification, whereby identity is perceived as made up of different components that are 'identified' and interpreted by individuals. The construction of an individual sense of self is achieved by personal choices regarding who and what to associate with.

Such approaches are liberating in their recognition of the role of the individual in social interaction and the construction of identity. Despite growing acknowledgement that individuals can differ in their interpretations and experiences of their 'ethnic' identity, there have been few empirical studies of such individual experience. It is to the bridging of this gap that I wish to contribute.

#### Shifting the focus: Symbolic Boundaries

One of the first challenges for the researcher wishing to carry out empirical research in this area is to identify an appropriate analytical tool. It is in response to this requirement that I have chosen in my fieldwork to use the concept of boundaries for demonstrating identity. In the same way as Barth, in his approach to ethnicity, advocated the critical focus for investigation as being "the ethnic boundary that defines the group rather than the cultural stuff that it encloses" (1969:15), I wish to shift the focus of analytical study from identity to the boundaries that are used for purposes of identification. If identity is a kind of virtual site in which the dynamic processes and markers used for identification are made apparent, boundaries provide the framework on which this virtual site is built.

While the term 'boundary' is familiar in the social sciences, particularly as used by Barth and his followers in the domain of social anthropology, it has largely been employed in the context of attempts to understand group definition (Eg Kershen, 1998; Lamont, 1992). So for example Heiberg (1980:45), for her analysis of Basque society, draws on Barth's concept of social boundaries which she describes as providing "the interfaces for the necessary process of social classification and ordering. They are the means by which those who are perceived as 'similar' are separated from those who are perceived as significantly 'different'". She notes that "a system of social boundaries is as complex, fluid and, at points, contradictory as the social structure of which it forms part" (1980:45). However, once again, it turns out that what she is concerned with is

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<sup>26</sup> I believe that the reason there is so much confusion in the Social and Political Sciences with regard to the analysis of identity is the attempt, erroneous in my opinion, to *look for* identity and to seek to apply a fixed definition to it.

groups within Basque society,<sup>27</sup> when she says "the nature of this boundary and the *cultures* which it marks and separates have altered radically over the last 100 years or so" (1980:46. My italics).

Cohen (1992, 1994a, 1994b, 1996, 1998) went beyond Barth and his followers such as Heiberg by concentrating on how the idea of community belonging is differently constructed by individual members, how individuals within the group conceive ethnic boundaries. My approach to boundaries differs from both Barth's and Cohen's approaches in that my concern is with how individuals express a sense of self in social interaction.<sup>28</sup> Sökefeld (1999) proposes a similar approach in his account of personal construction of self in an area of northern Pakistan characterised by a plurality of conflicting identities.

As a non-directive and flexible analytical tool, the concept of boundaries helps both to map and to define the changeability and mutability that are characteristic of people's experiences of the self in society. I take as my point of departure the idea that, while identity is a volatile, flexible and abstract 'thing', its manifestations and the ways in which it is exercised are often open to view. Identity is made evident through the use of markers such as language, dress, behaviour and choice of space, whose effect depends on their recognition by other social beings. This is something long recognised in the social sciences (Eg MacClancy, 1993b). I wish to go further by pointing out that, while markers help to create the boundaries that define similarities or differences between the marker wearer and the marker perceivers, their effectiveness depends on a shared understanding of their meaning. In a social context, misunderstandings can arise due to a misinterpretation of the significance of specific markers. Equally, an individual can use markers of identity to exert influence on other people without necessarily fulfilling all the criteria that an external observer might typically associate with such an abstract identity.

To give an example, a person wearing a policeman's uniform may not be a policeman but simply be dressed up as such for a fancy dress party. In order to capture the deeper meaning of the dress marker, and its consequences for the wearer's identity, it is necessary to see how it is used by the wearer and how it is interpreted by other people. Were the wearer to stand in the street directing traffic, the marker would become a clear boundary between him and other people, defining him as a policeman and eliciting a corresponding response from drivers. If, on the other hand, he is seen dancing at a party, his policeman's uniform will not be taken as part of an exclusive boundary defining him as a policeman, but rather as part of an inclusive boundary placing him in the same group as other people at the party wearing fancy dress. That isn't necessarily the end of the matter, however. Reactions to this person's choice of fancy dress may vary among the other people at the party. Another person might assume, for instance, that the man dressed as a policeman feels an affinity for the police force. On this basis, if this second person has an antipathy for the police, he may act aggressively towards the man dressed as a policeman: the dress marker creates a boundary separating two people who otherwise might have been united by

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<sup>27</sup> As noted in Chapter Four, she distinguishes between 'Basques' and 'Basques anti-Basques', following the terminology of her informants in the Basque Country (1980, 1989).

<sup>28</sup> Other scholars have come close to my idea by talking of personal symbolic interpretation and strategy-making for the expression of personal identity (Lévi-Strauss, 1977; Camilleri, Kastarsztein, Lipiansky et al., 1988; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992a and 1992b). They acknowledge that people employ different 'strategies' in order to display their notions of self, in such a way as to enable the process of identity formation and affirmation to be observed. MacClancy (1993b), for example, illustrates this in his study of Basque identity in Nafarroa, where he shows how expressions of selfhood and identification come out in everyday actions through the use of markers such as the way a person dresses or his or her choice of language. Douglass and Lyman (1994:11) put forward the idea that, consciously or unconsciously, a person 'activates or disactivates' different aspects of his or her public sense of self, in accordance with the situation of the moment, creating and expressing identity through association, resistance or rejection of other people and symbols. This, however, remains to be demonstrated empirically, and that is what I aim to do in this thesis.

it, even if the second person's assumption is not a true reflection of the first person's intention or attitude. Still further permutations can be considered, if for example the wearer of the policeman's uniform has adopted it deliberately to mislead people around him, for example to conduct a robbery.

In this way, we see that identity becomes merged with, and depends on, identification. Boundaries can be inclusive or exclusive depending on how they are perceived by other people. An exclusive boundary arises, for example, when a person adopts a marker that imposes restrictions on the behaviour of others. An inclusive boundary is created, by contrast, by the use of a marker with which other people are ready and able to associate. At the same time, however, an inclusive boundary will also impose restrictions on the people it has included by limiting their inclusion within other boundaries. An example of this is the use of a particular language by a newcomer in a room full of people speaking various languages. Some people may understand the language used by this person while others may not. Those who do not understand it might take the newcomer's use of this particular language merely as a neutral sign of identity. But they might also perceive it as imposing an exclusive boundary that is meant to mark them off from her. On the other hand, those who do understand the newcomer's language could take it as an inclusive boundary, through which the newcomer associates herself with them to the exclusion of the other people present. Equally, however, it is possible that people who do understand the newcomer but who also speak another language may not want to speak the newcomer's language and so see her marker as an imposition and a negative boundary. It is possible that the newcomer is either aware or unaware of this, depending on whether she herself knows other languages or is conscious of the plurilingual quality of the people there and is respectful of it or not.

Anthropologists have already noted how symbols can be appropriated by individuals in ways that have meanings different from those originally or conventionally intended (Eg Willis, 1977; Douglas and Isherwood, 1979; Müller, 1995; Appadurai, 1996). The symbolic and social context in which individuals find themselves is used and interpreted differently by them for the construction of their uniquely personal sense of identity. At the same time, the individual's sense of self is influenced by his or her surroundings. And as the symbolic and social context changes, so do the person's sense of self and his or her desires of how to be understood by others (Cohen, 1998:23-33; Douglass, 1999:38-9). People can manipulate boundaries to their own individual advantage and refashion their selves in a variety of ways at different moments in time.

My observation of this in my field research leads me to consider the possibility that, contrary to conventional views of identity as homogeneous within a given social or ethnic community, people may be selective in their appropriations of different aspects of identity according to circumstances. For example, a person with minimal knowledge of the Basque language and little interest in Basque politics may choose in a social situation to pepper her speech with Basque words, thereby appropriating for her own purposes some 'Basque identity' markers. By using certain words, or by code-switching, a person can raise a boundary that distinguishes him or her from another person or group.<sup>29</sup>

This is not a new discovery in the social sciences. However, this basic recognition is essential for beginning to understand how people with different notions of the self and different views and attitudes and categorisations of others can interact with relative harmony in otherwise sometimes tense socio-political situations. As Goffman (1967:43) pointed out, "social life is an uncluttered,

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<sup>29</sup> This has been noted by anthropologists and sociologists in certain cases, such as the particular linguistic codes invented and used by youth communities in big city suburbs. An example is the case of adolescents of non-Rom speaking gypsy communities in Hungary who employ Rom words (Jaroka, 2000).

orderly thing because the person voluntarily stays away from the places and topics and times where he is not wanted and where he might be disparaged from going. He co-operates to save his face, finding that there is much to be gained from venturing nothing". So people make their own personal niches within society through a careful choice of interactions with others and public presentations of their selves.

I suggest that an individual's identity is a reflection of the ability consciously or unconsciously to apply a multiplicity of boundaries, with the adoption of any one boundary at any particular time implying belonging to a social group or idea within that particular boundary and distance from or rejection of those outside it. A person may use different boundaries at different moments, depending on the situation and the objectives of social interaction. Some boundaries, I propose, are more easily moved, or 'switched', than others. In the case of language, for example, a person who knows Basque may choose to speak it with other Basque-speakers in one context but not in another. A person who does not know Basque may choose to learn it, thereby adding a potential new marker to the range of possible boundary choices available to him. Alternatively, such a person can choose to demonstrate his sense of Basqueness by adopting other boundary markers, such as style of dress or taste in music. In addition, some people may adopt and apply the same boundaries for different purposes and with different results in a range of different contexts.

The exploration of individual expressions of the self through the use of symbolic boundaries in social interaction is particularly interesting in the context of Bidasoa-Txingudi, a border area in which a range of political and cultural discourses seek to dominate issues of group identity. The inhabitants of this area are faced not only with various statist, nationalist, regionalist, localist and other culturalist discourses, as in some other social settings, but also with a concerted attempt to harmonise all of these together through a new discourse, that of the Partzuergo. Under the image of Bidasoa-Txingudi belonging, the Partzuergo seeks to establish a set of markers which can be commonly perceived by local inhabitants as inclusive boundaries. As I plan to demonstrate in this thesis, the challenge to this is precisely that local inhabitants, through their own individual use and understanding of markers and boundaries in social interaction, may not interpret the Partzuergo's markers and boundaries in precisely the way that the organisers of the Partzuergo would like.

Finally, by laying out this theoretical basis, I wish to explore how the concept of boundary can be applied to the understanding of social relations in the border area of Bidasoa-Txingudi given its general context of Spanish, French and Basque markers. By exploring the significance of boundaries in individuals' formation and expression of personal identity, I aim to shed light on the different ways in which Basque identity can be experienced and expressed. I will also show how a state frontier can be re-constructed by border inhabitants as a symbolic boundary in the mind. In this way, frontiers will be shown to influence the lives and sense of self of local inhabitants, not only as physical barriers but as boundaries engrained in the mind, even as their impact on individuals in their daily lives is progressively diminished in an 'open Europe'. What form of boundary the frontier assumes in individual inhabitants' consciousness depends on their personal notions of identity.

My focus on the individual is justified by the need to appreciate that each individual contributes to the collectivity. By taking identity as made up of an infinite variety of symbolic boundaries played out by individuals at different times and under differing circumstances within society, we can begin to answer the question of what is identity. By examining the operations of the Partzuergo and life in Bidasoa-Txingudi and how both affect each other, I shall empirically explore the process of boundary construction and how this is influenced by borders and, in turn, how it assists in their pervasiveness or reconfiguration. The examination of boundaries for self-expression also becomes relevant to issues of belonging, on the part both of long-time inhabitants

of a place such as Bidasoa-Txingudi who identify strongly with the general cultural character of the area and of newcomers wishing to do so too.

## Chapter Two: An Anthropologist in Bidasoa-Txingudi: Methodology

Inevitably, the qualitative account of the anthropologist reflects her own "consciousness" (Cohen, 1994b:230). The researcher's culture and upbringing will affect her relationship with her informants, the treatment of the issues at stake and her interpretation of behaviour and events. It is necessary then for the anthropologist to consider her own understanding of herself before engaging in this sort of research and finally, in the analysis, to take into account the potential influence on other people of her presence (Touraine, 1981:37; Van Maarnen, 1988).

The anthropologist cannot escape being identified by the cultural and historical contexts of the groups to which she belongs any more than the individuals studied can separate themselves from their groups. "Understanding," wrote Gadamer, "always implies a pre-understanding which is in turn pre-figured by the determinate tradition in which the interpreter lives and shapes his prejudices" (1979:158). "The history of the individual is never," asserts Bourdieu, "anything other than a certain specification of the collective history of his group or class" (1977:86).

My own upbringing has enabled me to experience different lifestyles and witness different ways of thinking and behaving, thereby facilitating my adaptation to different cultural environments and varying ways of social interaction. Born of an English father and a French mother, I have lived as a child with my family and as an adult on my own in six different countries. As a result, in addition to English and French, I am fluent in Spanish. While moving around, however, I have regularly returned to the home of my maternal grandmother in Iparralde during the holidays. As an undergraduate student of anthropology at Edinburgh University, I focused on the Basque Country, carrying out exploratory fieldwork in Hegoalde and eventually focusing on local political relations in a village in a rural part of Iparralde. Around this time, I also began taking lessons in Basque, initially following a summer course in Hegoalde and then other courses in Iparralde.

Through these activities, I became conscious of a world of Basque social and political life of which I had been unaware as a French-speaking child and teenager on holiday, not paying much attention to the fact that Basque people switched to French to include me in their conversations. I gradually came to form part of a network of people active around the issues of modern Basque culture and politics, while at the same time remaining slightly detached due to my personal life abroad. These experiences have helped me to acquire a sensitive appreciation of the local culture in all its facets, including not only Basque cultural and political movements but also the experiences of those inhabitants not so engaged in these trends. This I believe puts me in a good position to approach this study in its most just light (Marcus, 1998).

A certain detachment is necessary in order to ensure an unbiased recording of events and unemotional and strictly scientific analysis. It is fundamental for the researcher to remain neutral, avoiding the temptation to identify too much with the actors under study (Touraine, 1981:37; Hastrup and Hervik, 1994). The anthropologist must be able to understand issues from the inside and empathise with people's experiences and points of view. By taking part in social interaction, the researcher is able to make sense of it. At the same time, however, a balance between subjectivity and objectivity is required (Bourdieu, 1977).<sup>30</sup> From my own personal experience and sense of self, I believe I have been able to empathise with the various experiences and visions of

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<sup>30</sup> Building on Bourdieu's work, Kearney has described anthropology as a scientific field of struggle, rather than a mere field of study. This involves a different perception of the actual process of doing anthropology where, instead of treating the community under study as the other, the anthropologist is *part* of the community.

the different people with whom I have dealt without becoming too deeply involved or judgemental. I believe that this has been crucial in my attempt to produce an unbiased and objective interpretation of events in the field.

As someone coming into the area from outside, I became aware of the need felt by the people whom I met to situate me within a context. My ability to draw on possession of a wide range of markers and boundaries assisted me in my own identity construction in relation to people around me. So I also engaged in the play of identity. For instance, I realised that both my Basque roots and non-Basque origins served me as markers and potential boundaries. Knowing that my grandmother was Basque helped some people to place me in a familiar context. Often I found it opened doors more easily. When introducing me to people, some individuals would mention the fact that my grandmother came from a village close to their own, a piece of information that served for them as an important reference point, helping me to gain access to some kind of common 'club'. A municipal councillor of Hendaia, for instance, introduced me to a colleague of his in this way, helping to personalise me more than if I were a mere foreign anthropologist wandering about the area. While we had not previously known each other, the discovery of this common link meant automatic inclusion. Another time, when I was chatting to the owner of a bar in Hendaia who also came from the rural hinterland of Iparralde, the discovery that we shared connections with this area provided an important bond. I learnt from these experiences to exploit this characteristic of mine, and to drop it propitiously into preliminary conversations with some informants to gain the necessary further openness on their part. This happened, for example, when I went to interview another municipal councillor of Hendaia at his home. Sensing his reserve after I had introduced myself simply as a researcher with an unusual name from a foreign university, I switched to Basque and explained my own family attachments to the rural hinterland after I had heard him chat to his son in Basque on the phone and mention in passing that his father was born in a village not far from my own. From that moment on, the formality of the interview was thawed.

In Hegoalde, where many people are not familiar with the rural parts of Iparralde, I noticed that mentioning my Basque roots often gave me an exotic aura. It seemed to many people that there was something 'authentic' about being from this rather secluded area of the Basque Country, which appeared to many to evoke serenity and simplicity, compared to the more stressful urban and nationalistic ambience of the coastal area of Hegoalde where they lived. When conversing with Basque-speakers, my French Basque accent was welcomed by many in Hegoalde as 'much softer' than their own. It appears to me that this image was again related to their idea of 'authenticity', of a Basque ideal devoid of the political connotations which they felt the Basque language had now acquired in Hegoalde amid political debates and the spread of Batua, the standardised Basque language developed from the 1960s onwards in response to nationalist concerns in Hegoalde about the survival of Basque. With hindsight, I recognise now that if I did not make much effort during this fieldwork period to adapt my way of speaking to those around me, it was precisely because I noticed these often positive reactions.

In general, I also noticed that mentioning my Basque connections helped people to understand better my interest in carrying out research in the Basque Country. It appeared that such connections provided a legitimate justification for my research interest. When I sometimes introduced myself simply as an English researcher, I encountered perplexity and reserve. I suspect that many people, particularly those without nationalist affiliations, thought that my academic interest in the Basque Country was most likely to lie, as assumed by the law professor quoted at the outset, in a fascination for the somewhat trendy subject of 'nationalism', and that I therefore had no interest in looking at 'ordinary', less sensational, experiences. As a result, some people living peacefully on what they believed to be the margins of Basque politics could not understand

why I should want to talk to them. In such situations, I had to explain clearly my personal background and my status as an academic researcher aiming to approach local issues in a neutral and apolitical way, with 'nationalism' far from being my sole or primary research interest.

At other times, by contrast, to present myself as English first had its own advantages. It gave me a completely different 'identity' from others around me and exempted me, as an outsider, from political categorisation. Only on one occasion did the fact of saying I was English have an adverse effect, when it prompted some particularly extreme supporters of the 'minority' discourse to express their dislike of the English, both in relation to the situation in Northern Ireland and as the embodiment of everything to do with globalisation, anglicisation, dominating discourses and the hierarchisation of languages.

Since language plays a central role in the formation, interaction and expression of identity, it was valuable for me as a researcher, to be able to shift between the different languages. I am fluent in French and Spanish, and have a fair knowledge of Basque. Speaking Basque enabled me to gain access to a part of the Basque world from which I would otherwise have been excluded. For elderly *euskaldun zaharrak*,<sup>31</sup> or mother tongue Basque-speakers, not involved in politics, the fact that I could speak Basque was often both welcome and surprising, prompting many to open up to me more easily as they felt there was a common bond between us both in our ability and enjoyment of speaking Basque and desire to understand each other in this language.

My ability to speak Basque won positive reactions from Basque-speakers in the nationalist community, amongst whom the discovery that I, as an outsider, had made the effort to learn Basque, often helped to win respect. On numerous occasions, it even gained me a form of honorary membership of local Basque society. So, for instance, some newly made friends in the left-wing nationalist circle in Hondarribia categorically declared me 'euskaldun', stating that "although you are English, you are from here".

But my efforts to learn Basque sometimes had an adverse effect, notably amongst local inhabitants who had no interest in Basque nationalism or who were actively opposed to it and who took my interest in learning Basque as a sign that I must have different attitudes to them and perhaps even that I had nationalist sympathies. In such circumstances, I had once again to explain my personal background and scientific interest in learning the language, at times arousing in response an attempt on the part of my interlocutors to justify their own lack of interest.

With other people, by contrast, I often found it best to stick to French or Spanish, rather than to speak Basque, which might be taken as a politically motivated move on my part. In situations of this sort, the national language provides a relatively neutral mode of communication compared to Basque. It does not impose on the informant any seemingly Basque nationalist insinuations. Furthermore, in Iparralde, it is relatively uncommon still to hear people of my age speaking Basque. It would therefore be considered much more 'normal' for me to initiate the conversation in the state national language. This need to alter my mode of communication according to the speakers and the context also shows how, as the ethnographer, I am an element within the social interaction I am examining.

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<sup>31</sup> This literally translates as "old Basque-speaker". It refers to people whose first language is or was Basque, as opposed to those who learnt it at school or took lessons to learn it later in their lives. Some *euskaldun zaharrak* still speak Basque better than French or Spanish (or English in the case of those who left for North America to find work over the course of the twentieth century. These are known as *Amerikanuak* by the Basque people back in the Basque Country).

While by definition present within the context of what I saw and heard in the course of my field observations, I nonetheless sought in accordance with anthropological practice to neutralise the impact of my own presence as far as possible in order to avoid influencing the interaction of the subjects of my study. Through participant-observation, the anthropologist can also acquire a deeper knowledge and thorough understanding of the social group under study. Directed interviews and the gathering of statistics provide only a partial picture. In order to acquire 'scientific' (Pérez-Agote, 1986, 1999) understanding of the social being, the researcher needs to take time to go beyond initial impressions and misleading findings.

Through experience, I learned to avoid asking direct questions such as "Do you feel Basque? How? What are your political views?" Because of the delicate nature of the issues at stake, such questions were likely to be unproductive or even counter-productive. Instead, I let people react to me in their own way, revealing in the process many interesting expressions of boundaries. Thereby, I avoided frustrating situations in which, were I to ask a direct question which seemed obvious and unproblematic to me, I would only receive a vague and ambiguous answer.

Both Heiberg (1989:x) and Urla (1987:5) mentioned finding their social mingling restricted to a large extent to a certain segment of the population; in Heiberg's case to the Basque nationalists (whether she means Basque nationalists in general or sympathists of a certain branch is unclear) and in Urla's case to those 'traditionally' Basque (as opposed to the Spanish immigrants). Heiberg noted that during her fieldwork in the mid to late 1970s, it was difficult to be acquainted with both "nationalists" and "non-nationalists" at the same time: "Free movement from the nationalist camp to the non-nationalist one was permitted," she says, but not so easily the other way round (1989:x). Heiberg carried out her research at a politically extremely tense moment when distrust between different political camps was particularly acute. Urla, carrying out her research at the turn of the 1980s, explains that "Castellanos<sup>32</sup> and Basques are strongly polarised in the community", which meant that she found it difficult to establish a similar relationship with both of them (1987).

My experiences have been rather different. Two decades after Urla and Heiberg's research, I found the social and political divide in Bidasoa-Txingudi to be less clear-cut. I found it not uncommon, even in seemingly very 'traditional' Basque families proud of a long list of Basque surnames and residence in the same house over several generations, to find family members married with people coming from outside the Basque Country. Even in such families, too, the political affiliations may be starkly opposed. Some of the members may be supporters of the moderate and traditionalist Basque nationalist party *EAJ (Eusko Alderdi Jeltzalea)*,<sup>33</sup> others more radical Basque independentists, while still others may proclaim themselves supporters of Spanish or French parties, or even reject any involvement in "all this political stuff".<sup>34</sup> So while social relations between people do follow certain patterns according to place of origin, time lived in the area and local experiences, I found evidence of at least some basic mingling which makes suggestions of polarised ethnic categorisation difficult to accept. Secondly, despite the tensions caused by ETA's<sup>35</sup> continued violence and the differences in the reactions and interpretations of political parties in relation to nationalism and violence, I found it possible to mingle with different kinds of people whose political allegiances, if any, were not always clear. In my own activities in the area, I found myself mingling in different social circles, many of which were interconnected. In doing so, I was able to

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<sup>32</sup> Castellano literally means Castilian. Heiberg uses it to refer both to a person who speaks 'Castilian', or Spanish, as a mother tongue, and who does not have Basque ancestors. In my field research, I did not hear the word used in this way. Rather, I only heard it used as an alternative name to Spanish for the language.

<sup>33</sup> Meaning Basque Nationalist Party. EAJ is the oldest Basque nationalist party, founded by its leader Sabino Arana Goiri at the end of the nineteenth century.

<sup>34</sup> Statement picked up from various informants in the field.

<sup>35</sup> ETA stands for Euskadi ta Askatasuna, meaning Basque Homeland and Freedom.

observe friendships between people of varying political tendencies. For instance, when I took Basque lessons with AEK,<sup>36</sup> an association which provides Basque lessons to adults, in Hendaia, I was introduced to a certain social circle of people of more or less Basque militant tendency. I met some of these people again in other circles that were more 'French' in the local political and cultural sense of the word.

My personal appearance and style of dress also helped me to integrate in different social circles. The way I dressed was broadly neutral in relation to trends in the Basque Country. Going to Basque festivities, I could have dressed in a similar way to other participants, for example by wearing one of the various t-shirts adorned with Basque logos sold there, in an attempt to fit in. That would have been appreciated by Basque nationalists, but it would have been inconvenient for me if I had then encountered someone from a different social and political circle. Amongst members of left-wing nationalist circles in Hegoalde, I think that my different style of dressing was simply taken as part of my personal 'identity' as a young woman coming from outside the Basque Country.

On some occasions in Hegoalde, when people with whom I conversed in Spanish did not know who I was, many simply assumed I was French. This in itself was interesting since it came out that French was the immediate 'other' thought about. It also permitted me to experience what it must be like to be treated as a French person by some of these people. It made me the butt of many jokes about '*gabachos*' or '*gabatxoak*',<sup>37</sup> the derogatory name given to 'French people', even when the people knew that I was not just, or not entirely French, but something more complicated than that. In other cases, some people remained rather reserved with me until they found out that I was not exactly 'French', when the comments about French people which they had until then abstained from making would come out. So I inadvertently found myself participating in the play of identity, using some boundaries rather than others depending on their possible value to me as a researcher. In this way, I was able to function both as an insider and as an outsider.

Since it was important for me in my research to witness different social situations and take part in all sorts of different activities, I mingled in all sorts of circles, becoming a kind of social chameleon present in different social interactions. To some people, my presence in different situations, say at a late-night bar frequented by left-wing nationalist sympathists in Irun after having been in a tranquil tea-room earlier in the day with local people not involved in Basque politics at all, may have appeared rather peculiar. Even some people to whom I had already explained what I was here to do would appear surprised at seeing me in different contexts, indicating the degree to which identity is polarized by the political situation in the Basque Country. Reactions to my presence varied. A left-wing nationalist militant of Hendaia, for instance, with whom I had become quite friendly after a few interviews to the point where our frequent bumping into each other at various events became a running joke for him, once mentioned that he wondered whether I was not some kind of spy. Other less direct and initially more reserved people would inquire about me to other people who had more information about me.

It is seldom easy to explain clearly to people in the field what one's research is about (Rose, 1990; Davies, 1999:47-9). I attempted to make my explanations basic. As is evident from some of the observations made above, people had different interpretations of what my research study could be about. Usually, in casual conversations, I simply said my research was about "life in the

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<sup>36</sup> This stands for *Alfabetatze Euskaldunitze Koordinakundea*, meaning Coordination for Basque Language and Literacy.

<sup>37</sup> "Gabatxo" is the Basque version of this Spanish term which is also used in other parts of the Spanish peninsula.

area, relations between the inhabitants of the three towns since the existence of the cross-border cooperation agreement, issues of identity, behaviour, what the Partzuergo is doing, what do people think about it and how are they affected by it". As I gradually became an accepted member of some social circles, some people came to forget what I was actually there for. This was often very convenient since it meant that they were not on their guard as to how they behaved and expressed themselves in front of me. At other times, however, it was less advantageous as people I came to know well sometimes forgot that inviting me to certain events or introducing me to certain people would be of interest to me. Again, this may have reflected a misconception of the nature of my anthropological interest.

Many people active in the Basque left-wing nationalist movement gave me an exceptionally warm welcome on hearing about my research interests, reflecting what I found was a general enthusiasm among Basque militants at any expression of interest in the Basque Country. So, many took it upon themselves to introduce me to their friends and contacts, to show me around and to bring me to their various social events. Many also took pains to give me their version of the history of the Basque Country, an important subject for Basque culturalists and nationalists given what they believe to be the indispensability of knowing 'one's own history', particularly in opposition to the versions predominantly provided by Spanish and French intellectuals. I was often invited to visit small villages in the rural hinterland, homes with collections of ancient artefacts and the workshops of people who practised a traditional craft or some eminent Basque scholar of local history. In addition to demonstrating the important role that 'tradition' plays in Basque identity, such invitations say something about the local understanding of anthropology and the supposed nature of the anthropologist's interests. Zulaika noted a similar phenomenon, observing that "even today, when asked about their mysterious origins, queer language or terrorist separatism, Basques are likely to feel compelled to enact the ethnographic person as created by anthropology" (1998:95).

I always felt welcomed into people's social lives and sometimes invited to share intimate aspects of their existence. Most of the time, there were no questions about who I knew and associated with at other times, since discretion seemed to be a general unspoken rule in the area. It was possible for me then to appear in a place and hang out with people there without being asked what I had been doing earlier in the day. This felt rather strange to me at first, but soon I realised that I was not going to be asked and so often there was no point in telling people since when I did, it was rarely taken as a cue for further conversation.

While at times there were clear limits to the extent to which some of my informants really confided in me, others were very open, in a manner for which I am extremely grateful, as such relationships, in addition to maturing into strong friendships, provided me with additional insights. In selecting certain incidents as examples of emblematic significance, I have endeavoured to respect the privacy of individuals concerned by preserving their anonymity (Davies, 1999:51-3).

#### Defining the field:

Choosing a fieldsite was relatively easy. Having decided that my interest lay in covering a border area where I could observe the interaction of different notions of identities among the inhabitants of Iparralde and Hegoalde, I wanted to find a modern urban community that reflected the cosmopolitan lifestyle common across Europe today. I was not looking for an 'authentic' Basque community that had somehow managed to survive, like a museum artefact, preserving intact a language, culture and social structure that is foreign to most Basques today. On the border, the most obvious place was the area formed by Irun, Hondarribia and Hendaia, since the rest of the border area in the Basque Country consists of mountains with only small towns or villages.

I had no preliminary knowledge of the area, having only been through it a few times on my way from a place on one side of the frontier to somewhere else on the other. Like many passing visitors and tourists, I knew Irun only as a point of transit, getting off one train and onto another, and as a place providing the last opportunity to purchase Spanish products before entering French territory, just as I knew Hendaia for its beach and Hondarribia for its picturesque old fishing quarter and medieval centre.

In order to become familiar with the area, I lived between two and three months in each town. I carried out my fieldwork in several stages, suspending it at regular intervals in order to return to my academic base and so to shift from practice to theory and back again (Briggs, 1986). This helped me to reflect on the observations made in the area in an appropriately objective-subjective fashion. Coming back to the field at regular intervals also made me notice change (Wengle, 1988). I became aware of the Partzuergo and its relevance to local life when I first arrived in the field. Soon, it became evident that the Partzuergo had a particular role in the locality, both reflecting local life and having a certain impact on it. My regular returns to the field over a space of three years allowed me to notice changes in the elaboration of the Partzuergo's activities and in the evolution of people's behaviour and attitudes.

My first period of fieldwork lasted three months, during the autumn of 1999. During this time, my aim was simply to get a good general understanding and impression of life in the area (Briggs, 1986). Arriving in the field at the beginning of October 1999, I based myself in Hendaia, where I rented a flat by the beach area. In order to facilitate my integration in the area, I began my fieldwork by doing an internship in a local, medium-sized business. I chose Sokoa, a Hendaia-based firm specialising in the assembling of office chairs, for two main reasons.

Firstly, I knew that Sokoa held an important though ambivalent position in Hendaia and Iparralde as a beacon for Basque nationalist aspirations. Set up in 1971 by a group of Basque militants to encourage local economic development, it employed many people who had come to Iparralde fleeing repression in Hegoalde.<sup>38</sup> As Sokoa grew, it in turn encouraged the emergence of other businesses in Iparralde. In line with its nationalist aspirations, Sokoa gives financial assistance to local Basque cultural initiatives, such as the *ikastola*, or Basque language school, AEK and various associations supporting the families of Basque prisoners.

Secondly, Sokoa is a good example of cross-frontier business cooperation and of a kind of border living. It has partnerships with businesses in Hegoalde<sup>39</sup> and employs in its factory people from Irun, Hondarribia and other towns in Hegoalde who cross the frontier daily to work. Spanish, as well as French and Basque, is often spoken within the firm, and some employees from Hegoalde have little knowledge of French, since it is possible for them to communicate in Spanish or in Basque with their colleagues. Many of the employees from Iparralde have a good understanding of Spanish, some actually learning it at work by talking with their Spanish-speaking colleagues. Sokoa then is a veritable tri-lingual setting, bringing together a mixture of people from different cultural and political backgrounds and from both sides of the frontier.

Late in 1986, the French police discovered a cache of arms in the basement of Sokoa's office building. This brought Sokoa's business to an abrupt stop, with more than a third of its personnel arrested on the grounds of dealings with terrorist organisations. The managers of Sokoa denied

<sup>38</sup> Between 1971 and 1986, according to estimates given to me by various informants closely acquainted with Sokoa, more than one in six of its employees were so-called Basque political refugees.

<sup>39</sup> In Irun, Sokoa works in collaboration with Algon, a producer of steel parts, and in Hondarribia with Biok, a supplier of spare parts.

any involvement in the affair, claiming that the arms had been hidden without their knowledge. The director of Sokoa underwent trial and was eventually cleared in 1989. This episode however was a serious blow to Sokoa's business, causing it to lose a significant number of its clients and business partners, particularly in France.

Nonetheless, Sokoa managed to recover and even to increase its business on the international market. At the turn of the 1990s, in order to meet demand and increase its productivity, Sokoa expanded its premises by acquiring two warehouses in Hendaia's industrial zone on the banks of the Bidasoa. It recruited more employees from a range of social and political backgrounds, fulfilling its objective of providing more local employment. By the time I came to do my internship, Sokoa employed just over 200 people. In the words of Sokoa's head of communications and personnel, Gilles Chaudière, "Sokoa seeks to be appreciated first and foremost as a company like any other".

Even so, while primarily focusing on economic success, Sokoa continues to stand out amongst most other local businesses by its concern with Basque nationalist issues, its financial donations to a selection of Basque associations and its openness to employing so-called Basque political refugees. Over the 1990s, there was a new wave of these people coming to Iparralde. Many were people who had previously fled both Hegoalde and Iparralde during a spate of violent anti-Basque nationalist attacks by a secret Spanish organisation known as GAL or *Grupo Antiterrorista de Liberación*<sup>40</sup> in the early 1980s and had taken refuge in Latin America either of their own accord or sent there by the French government. Sokoa provided employment to a few of these. While fluency in Basque has never been part of Sokoa's criteria for employment, in 1998 the company favoured the recruitment of a new receptionist from Irun who could speak Basque, in addition to Spanish, French and English. "It was an extra advantage", explained Mr. Chaudière, "so that people calling Sokoa from either side of the frontier could speak Basque if they so wished".

In April 2000, one of the employees with whom I had been working in the factory was arrested by the French police, on the grounds of not having his identity documents in order and on suspicion of having taken part in a kidnapping plot in Brittany during the mid 1980s. For lack of proof, he was eventually released on bail. In February 2001, one of the managers in the factory was arrested as he was having lunch in a restaurant with an ETA militant suspected by the Spanish and French police of being one of the organisation's main operatives in Iparralde. Charged with collaboration with ETA, he is now in prison. Such occurrences have helped to maintain the view among some non-Basque nationalists people that Sokoa is a Basque nationalist haven. Some employees who have no political opinions mentioned to me that their friends referred to Sokoa as "the factory of the Basques"<sup>41</sup> and believed that only Basque was spoken there.

My internship in Sokoa lasted three weeks. I spent the first week and a half in the office building, helping out with administrative work and generally observing interaction around me, how people related to each other and the languages they used. At lunch time, most of the staff would go and eat in the general canteen open to the workers of all the other businesses and factories in Les Joncaux. This was then an opportunity to observe the employees of these other businesses, most of which were transport agencies or small production companies. As I spoke Basque, however, I found myself being invited to go to lunch by a particular group of four people who enjoyed speaking Basque to each other and shared certain Basque nationalist reference points.

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<sup>40</sup> This translates as the Freedom group of anti-terrorism.

<sup>41</sup> Here, to say "the Basques" has particular political connotations.

I then moved on to the factory, where I assisted employees unloading material from lorries, assembling spare parts on conveyor belts and packaging office chairs for shipping. I also took part in a few union meetings. As I went about this work, I was able to build friendly relationships with employees. Many of my conversations with people took place informally as we went about our work. My time at Sokoa also helped me to get to know people whom I was later to meet in other contexts, in Hendaia, Irun and Hondarribia. I also became friends with Elisa, the receptionist, who introduced me to some of the nightlife of Irun, and with Sébastien, a factory worker, who showed me the more tranquil social life of Hendaia.

During this first period of fieldwork, I took part in a variety of activities in the area, which helped me to access different social circles in the three towns. Three times a week, I took evening classes in Basque at the Hendaia branch of AEK. This brought together people living in Hendaia, some of whom had come there from Hegoalde, of different ages from late teens to early sixties, all eager to learn Basque, many having forgotten it at an early age. Our teacher was a young native Basque speaker, whose parents were originally from Hegoalde but lived near Hendaia and who had been educated in French schools. She lived with her partner in his hometown of Irun. This experience with AEK, besides improving my Basque, enabled me to access the local social circle of supporters of new, modern notions of Basque culture and language revival.

I also took part in community initiatives in Irun. Twice a week, I attended pottery classes in a centre funded by the municipality of Irun. There, I encountered a very different group of people, mainly women from middle-class backgrounds who worked part-time or not at all. Only two of the group of twenty could speak Basque or French. From our informal chats, and my observations, as we went about our activities, I gathered that most of them spent the bulk of their time in and around Irun and Hondarribia, rarely crossing the frontier into Iparralde. This experience opened up yet another aspect of local society, more Spanish-speaking, hardly motivated by Basque politics and with a more Spain-centred lifestyle. Many of the people had relatives from other regions of Spain, and significantly referred to place names in the Basque Country in different ways. For example, they referred to Donostia, as the capital of Gipuzkoa is known in Basque, as "SanSe", short for San Sebastián, as the city is known in Spanish.<sup>42</sup>

In December 1999, I took an internship in one of Hendaia's two supermarkets, Stoc.<sup>43</sup> I worked there for two weeks, stacking shelves and serving customers from behind the counter. Stoc and the other local supermarket, Champion, 500 metres down the road, are branches of supermarket chains present throughout France. They are also regular meeting-places for local people, who come to shop and chat with each other and with the supermarket employees. Old people, in particular, came every day to purchase their daily requirements. Employees were often acquainted with many of the regular customers in other ways, as neighbours, relatives, or childhood friends. Working at Stoc provided me with a framework in which to study Hendaia's inhabitants and to witness their interaction with Spanish-speaking people, as the supermarket also attracted customers from Irun, Hondarribia and other places in Hegoalde. It also provided me with an absolute contrast, culturally and linguistically, to Sokoa.

At the time I worked there, Stoc employed over thirty people. Two thirds lived in Hendaia and the rest in nearby villages in Iparralde. Six originally came from other parts of France and had settled in the locality for economic or family reasons. The manager came from northeast France and had been at this store for over two years, having previously worked in a supermarket in another town

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<sup>42</sup> This, however, is also found amongst Basque-speakers in Iparralde. I heard some people in Hendaia for example talk about "Saint Sé" when speaking in French.

<sup>43</sup> In 2000, it joined with the franchise of another supermarket chain called Champion.

in the rural interior of Iparralde. Only three members of staff spoke a little Basque. By contrast, about twenty spoke Spanish more or less fluently, in some cases because their parents were from Hegoalde and in some cases as a result of speaking to Spanish customers. Two years earlier, the management of Stoc had organised Spanish lessons for its employees in order to be able to deal more effectively with the great number of Spanish customers, but only a few took them.<sup>44</sup> By contrast, the management had shown no interest in promoting the use of Basque among its staff. When AEK launched a campaign in 1998 to encourage the use of Basque in commercial establishments, helping shopkeepers to translate their advertisements and signs into Basque and supplying them with stickers saying "in this establishment, we speak Basque",<sup>45</sup> Stoc did not participate.<sup>46</sup> During the time that I was at the store, I observed how some people who came from Hegoalde tried to speak French to the staff, but others spoke in Spanish or sometimes Basque. Some of those who spoke Spanish admitted to me that if they had known that the supermarket employees could speak Basque, they would have opted for Basque instead.

My internship at Stoc took place a few weeks before Christmas. This meant that there was a particularly high influx of people from Hegoalde. On two days that were public holidays in Spain but not in France, Stoc extended its opening hours in order to take advantage of an expected increase in business. Many more people from Hegoalde came to shop on those days, stocking up on French cheeses, yoghurts and especially 'chatka', a Russian delicacy of crabmeat that was being sold at a greatly reduced price.

During my first period of fieldwork in Hendaia, I noticed that articles in the local papers often mentioned the Partzuergo and its cultural activities. At that time, the Partzuergo had just been officially approved by the French state and a ceremony celebrating the formalisation of the cross-border cooperation agreement between the three towns was held on a boat in the middle of the river Bidasoa. Realising the relevance of the Partzuergo's aspirations and activities for my research, I got in touch with members of its staff, interviewing some of them, and began finding out more about its activities. A few weeks after my arrival in Hendaia, the fourth annual *Txingudi Eguna*, or Txingudi Day, the big fiesta organised by the Partzuergo, provided an opportunity to observe the Partzuergo in action. Through the contacts I had made with some of the people working for it, I was able to take part in two meetings held to discuss the themes and content of the Partzuergo's official magazine, called Bidasoa-Txingudi. Participants in these meetings included two Partzuergo technicians, an employee from Adebisa,<sup>47</sup> a development agency in Irun set up by the municipalities of Irun and Hondarribia, and the director of Txingudi Telebista,<sup>48</sup> which had been contracted to produce the magazine for the Partzuergo. In these meetings I was able to observe how the conceptualisation of the magazine took place and how the participants present interacted in the process. The meetings took place in Spanish, as all the participants were mother tongue Spanish speakers.

I also made contact with Maîtres du Rêve, a cultural consultancy based in the southern French town of Aix en Provence, which had been commissioned by the Partzuergo to carry out studies for the creation of a 'cultural itinerary' which would go through Irun, Hondarribia and Hendaia. Their work involved contacting a range of cultural associations and public figures in the three towns in order to gather information about the history of the area. I joined them on three of their interviews, with the president of the association of shopkeepers in Hendaia and representatives of

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<sup>44</sup> Interview with secretary of Stoc, Hendaye, 17 December 1999.

<sup>45</sup> *Euskara badakigu*.

<sup>46</sup> Interview with teacher of AEK in Hendaia, 21 December 1999. When I asked the secretary of Stoc about this campaign, she replied that she had not known about it.

<sup>47</sup> Adebisa stands for Agencia de Desarrollo del Bidasoa, meaning development agency of the Bidasoa.

<sup>48</sup> In April 2001, it was bought by a big Spanish media enterprise and changed its name to Localia Txingudi.

two environmentalist associations of Hendaia, Txingudi Ecologie and Hendaye Environnement. By being present during these interviews, I was able to observe how Maîtres du Rêve went about obtaining its information for the eventual writing up of a history of Bidasoa-Txingudi and laying out of a cultural itinerary. It was also interesting for me to observe how the interviewees responded to Maîtres du Rêve.

I returned to my academic base in January 2000 to work on the data I had obtained so far, going back briefly to the field during the Easter holidays in order to carry out interviews with the mayors of Irun and Hondarribia, municipal councillors, technicians of the Partzuergo and a selection of ordinary inhabitants. Planning my next period of fieldwork for the following summer, I obtained permission from the director of Txingudi Telebista to work as a volunteer journalist during the summer months. Before returning to Florence, I also got in touch with officials from the DATAR,<sup>49</sup> a French government-run agency dealing with territorial management which was involved in the monitoring of cross-frontier initiatives such as the Partzuergo. This I did in order to find out more about French government policies with regard to local and regional initiatives of cross-frontier cooperation. I also got in touch with the French Ministry of Culture in order to get more information on the government's views on regional language development.

I returned to the field in June 2000 for my second phase of fieldwork. With the aim of getting to know each of the three towns by living a few months in each, I settled this time in Irun and, as agreed with the director of Txingudi Telebista, I began working as a volunteer journalist. Since I was the only available member of the team who could speak French, I was placed in charge of covering news in Hendaia. I also covered news in Irun and Hondarribia.

Through my news coverage and interviews, I was able to glimpse the wide range of social, cultural and political goings-on in the area (Davies, 1999:53-7). At the same time, from the inside of Txingudi Telebista, I was able to observe how this television enterprise functioned, how its employees interacted and, through their work, contributed in their own way to the construction of new local spatial concepts and notions of local identity. My greatest contribution to the television's work was in extending news coverage in Hendaia. In doing so, I helped Txingudi Telebista to give more substance to its name as the television of Txingudi.

As a member of the television team, I was also able to experience at first hand situations which I would not otherwise have been able to witness. I encountered hostility to Txingudi Telebista on the part of some sections of the local population, such as left-wing Basque separatists who dislike most non left-wing Basque nationalist media, or people in Hondarribia who despised Txingudi Telebista as one of the media organisations perceived as meddling in their local fiestas (a particular conflict I shall expound on in Chapter Seven) and specifically as an Irun organisation. So boundaries were drawn up between Txingudi Telebista and some local inhabitants despite its Irun, Hondarribia and Hendaia-englobing name.

Through my work in Txingudi Telebista, I became closely acquainted with Ana Grijalba Martinez, the wife of the director, and ended up living with her parents, with whom I became very close. Ana, having learnt Basque in her youth, is fluent in this language, but she is indifferent to Basque and Spanish politics and has no sense of Basque nationalist identity. As a journalist for the local television channel, she and her husband occasionally suffered harsh criticism from some radical Basque nationalists. At the same time, in Hondarribia, a local representative of the left-wing Basque

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<sup>49</sup> Abbreviation for *Délégation à l'aménagement du territoire et à l'action régionale*.

nationalist party, *EH (Euskal Herritarrok)*<sup>50</sup> whom I had interviewed, gave me much hospitality, inviting me to her house and to meet her children of a similar age to me. Thanks to them, I was introduced to their social circle. Many of their friends were closely linked to or members of the left-wing Basque separatist youth group, *Haika*.<sup>51</sup>

While I shifted easily from one context to the other, meeting various people in different contexts throughout the day, it became clear to me that there were clear boundaries between these different worlds. In February 2001, Ana Grijalba and another journalist colleague from Txingudi Telebista were featured on a list produced by the Irun branch of Haika, of people whom they proclaimed to be 'enemies of the Basque people'. One evening, when I was having a drink in the social club of the left-wing Basque nationalist movement in Hondarribia, I asked someone who I knew to be an active member of this youth circle why this list had been drawn up. He answered that he had not been aware of it. He knew that I had worked at Txingudi Telebista and that I lived with the parents of Ana. The conversation on this subject simply did not go any further. Another example is illustrated by my encounter at a *bertsolari* competition (a Basque improvised recital context) organised by AEK in Hondarribia. I was invited to go by a member of the Hondarribia town council representing EH. Sitting beside her and her friends, I recognised a few rows below me a close friend of mine who happened also to be a municipal councillor in Hondarribia, but representing the moderate independentist Basque nationalist party, *Eusko Alkartasuna*.<sup>52</sup> I went up to him to greet him and have a chat. When I answered his question about who I had come with, the expression on his face turned stony and he made no comment. When I went back to my seat, the person who had invited me made no reference to my acquaintance with the other councillor.

I remained in the field until October 2000, thus witnessing how inhabitants of Irun, Hondarribia and Hendaia adapted their lifestyle to the summer. Many people took holidays during August but remained in the area, adapting to the arrival of tourists and enjoying the numerous local fiestas, the beaches of Hendaia and Hondarribia and leisure activities in the area.

I returned again to the field in January 2001, this time to live in Hondarribia for three months. I rented a room from a woman who came from a family of Hondarribian fishermen and lived alone in a small flat in an old neighbourhood near the fishing port of Hondarribia. This enabled me to integrate better into community life in Hondarribia than I had been able to do until then. During this period, I carried out numerous interviews with people living and working there, getting to know the perspective of people in Hondarribia with regard to the area of Bidasoa-Txingudi. Every day, I took coffee in a café called Gaxen, where local women and young families came for brunch or an afternoon snack. This café contrasted to another more bar-style place where I also occasionally went, called Muara,<sup>53</sup> the *herriko taberna*<sup>54</sup> of Hondarribia funded and run by the left-wing separatist Basque nationalist network of associations. In contrast to Gaxen, which is decorated with framed posters of sea- and landscapes and watercolours on whitewashed walls in an ambience of new age and folk music, Muara is decorated with posters and stickers with

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<sup>50</sup> Meaning We the people of the Basque Country. It replaced Herri Batasuna, the political wing of ETA created in 1979, when the heads of HB were arrested by the Spanish state for alleged links with ETA in September 1998. In June 2001, the party changed its name to Batasuna, meaning Unity, after a sharp fall in electoral support for the party in regional parliamentary elections earlier in the year.

<sup>51</sup> Meaning Be active, be dynamic. In April 2001, the group was outlawed by the Spanish government for alleged relations with ETA and reformed under the name *Segi*, meaning Continue.

<sup>52</sup> Meaning Basque Solidarity. This party was formed following secession from EAJ in 1986. Since the late 1990s, it occasionally allies itself with EAJ in elections. It is different to EAJ by claiming to be more committed to obtaining Basque independence and by being social democrat (EAJ on the other hand is traditionalist and Christian democrat).

<sup>53</sup> Muara is the name of a kind of wind sought by fishermen when out at sea.

<sup>54</sup> In Basque, *herriko taberna* means the bar of the people, nation, country or village, terms perceived as intimately related in left-wing Basque nationalism.

political slogans and pictures of Basque prisoners and is frequented mainly by left-wing nationalist sympathists. As a result, in Hondarribia as in the other places where I lived, I moved within different socio-cultural, political and linguistic milieus.

During this period, I stopped taking Basque lessons at AEK in Hendaia and carried on instead with the Basque government's own Basque language teaching system, HABA,<sup>55</sup> provided by the municipality of Hondarribia (there was no AEK branch in Hondarribia). My aim was to see how different HABA was to AEK and who in Hondarribia would attend Basque lessons and for what motivations. Attending these lessons served also as a way of meeting more residents of Hondarribia. As in Hendaia, the age of the pupils ranged between seventeen and seventy-five. Most participants lived in Hondarribia but originally came from other parts of Hegoalde. All of the pupils I talked to mentioned speaking Basque as an important factor in community feeling in Hondarribia citing this as one of their prime motivations for learning it. In this way they sought to acquire a marker which would favour their inclusion in the Basque language boundary of Hondarribia.

In order to observe how the Partzuergo worked from the inside, I arranged in February to carry out voluntary work in its offices for a month. At the time, the Partzuergo's technicians were located in different places, with two in offices in Irun and one in Hendaia. For reasons of practicality for the Partzuergo, I worked with the technician in Hendaia. I took part in various meetings between technicians of the Partzuergo and local councillors and association representatives. Again, as a temporary member of the Partzuergo technical team, I was able to assume a different status from that of anthropologist. My work for the Partzuergo required me to make contact with local people and introduce myself as a representative of the Partzuergo. It was interesting then to observe people's behaviour towards me as such.

Every day I would cycle from Hondarribia, through Irun, to the office in Hendaia. Every morning and evening, along this route, I was faced with the opposite flow of traffic of people driving to work from Hendaia to Irun or Hondarribia, or from Hondarribia to Irun. Because of the change in my working hours, I was obliged to stop taking my Basque lessons in Hondarribia, which had been in the mornings. Instead, I took evening classes with AEK in Irun, which opened to me yet another social context.

In February 2001, the campaign began for municipal elections in France, due to take place in March. I was able to witness many heated discussions and debates in Hendaia between candidates and between Hendaians. All around me the various issues of concern to Hendaia's inhabitants were being voiced, leading sometimes to tensions and conflicts I would not have been able to observe otherwise. I attended public debates, political rallies and press conferences, interviewed candidates in their homes and generally took part in gossip with inhabitants in various contexts. Through my continued contact with Txingudi Telebista, I was also able to organise a television programme where, every night, we invited a candidate to explain his or her electoral programme.

Five groups, or lists, of candidates were competing in the elections. Raphael Lassalette, a member of the PS<sup>56</sup> who had served as mayor since 1981, had chosen not to stand again. He designated his deputy, José-Luís Ecenarro, also a Socialist, to take his place as leader of a list

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<sup>55</sup> Abbreviation for *Helduen Alfabetatze Euskalduntza*, meaning Adults' Literalisation and Basquisition.

<sup>56</sup> Abbreviation for *Parti Socialiste*. This centre left party was led at the time by Lionel Jospin who was French Prime Minister. Over the course of 2000 and 2001, a section of the PS expressed willingness to bring about a process of devolution for regions like Iparralde and Corsica. The PS has also shown itself to be more open with reference to the integration of minority language schools within the French educational system and the relaxing of punitive measures with regard to nationalist militants incarcerated for links with violent groupings.

called *Hendaye Plurielle*, a group of candidates made up of a mixture of Socialists, French Communists,<sup>57</sup> moderate Basque nationalists, and a few non-aligned people such as one ex-member of the UDF,<sup>58</sup> and several once-PS members. Most of them had stood with Mr. Lassalette before. The other three lists included *Biharko Hendaia*,<sup>59</sup> a group of left-wing Basque nationalists, headed by Robert Arrambide; two non-aligned groupings, one led by local entrepreneur Jean-Baptiste Sallaberry<sup>60</sup> and the other, with a more right-wing tendency, by local businesswoman Carmen Hiribarren;<sup>61</sup> and finally the Green party, led by a French teacher at the Hendaia ikastola, Serge Lonca. With the exception of Ms. Hiribarren, the leaders of these lists had already served on the municipal council in the minority. After the first round of two-stage elections,<sup>62</sup> a Socialist councillor who was initially on Mr. Ecenarro's list, Christian Butori, broke away to form his own list which he claimed would be genuinely 'left-wing'.<sup>63</sup> He joined forces with the local Green Party, which was also dissatisfied with its negotiations to take part in Mr. Ecenarro's list,<sup>64</sup> to form *Agir pour Hendaye* together with a few more individuals with Communist sympathies. What was particularly interesting for me to note was that his new list did not appear to me to be any more plural or left-wing than Mr. Ecenarro's. While it included the Green party, together with members of the PS, there were no PCF members or left-wing Basque nationalists.

In France, 2001 was the first year that residents not of French nationality but from another country of the EU could vote in municipal elections. It was interesting to note then how all of the lists in these elections included at least one person of Spanish nationality, in an effort to show open-mindedness to the changing demographic character of Hendaia and the increased numbers of residents of Spanish nationality.

Also noteworthy was the fact that all the lists mentioned the Partzuergo in their manifestos, though with varying degrees of frequency. The two non-aligned groupings mentioned it only briefly, saying that "it is something that must be approached very slowly. Little by little." What exactly was meant by that remained rather vague, even after I asked for elaboration. The head of one of these lists, Mr. Sallaberry, explained to me that "for many Hendaians, the Partzuergo can be quite scary. Hendaians are still concerned about the particular sociocultural character of their

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<sup>57</sup> Parti Communiste Français or PCF.

<sup>58</sup> Meaning Union Démocrate pour la France. This party is made up a grouping of small centre-right parties.

<sup>59</sup> Meaning "the Hendaia of tomorrow" in Basque.

<sup>60</sup> His list is called *Cap Alternance*.

<sup>61</sup> Her list is called *Vivre Hendaye*. (For more on the political profile of these lists, see for instance *Sud Ouest* 13 March 2001).

<sup>62</sup> There are two rounds in French municipal elections. After the first round, all those parties or lists which have not obtained more than a certain minimum of votes are excluded from the second and decisive round. This minimum changes according to the size of the locality's population. In the case of Hendaia, the minimum is 5%.

<sup>63</sup> Mr. Butori explained his breakaway as being due to disagreement with the composition of Mr. Ecenarro's list which was not really as "plurielle" – plural – and Socialist as he claimed. He reproached Mr. Ecenarro and some of his colleagues of not being true socialists since many of them had only recently become members of the PS and that the list included a right-winger, ex UDF member Jean-Francois Durandean. Personal conflicts were also at play however. Some people on Mr. Butori's side reckoned that Mr. Butori's mécontentement with fellow councillors was due to the fact that he is not Hendaian by birth and that he is more involved in grassroots PS politics. (While Mr. Butori is a member of the local branch of the Socialist party, Mr. Ecenarro is a member of the regional branch. Mr. Butori has accused Mr. Ecenarro and other members of the council of obtaining membership only in order to get the backing for his list from the Socialist Party. In an interview, Mr. Ecenarro contested this, arguing that he has always been a Socialist even though not always a card-holding party member (he comes from a strongly socialist militant family in Hegoalde)). Meanwhile, Mr. Ecenarro's supporters believed Mr. Butori was disappointed by Mr. Ecenarro's failure to give him an important position on his list. (For more on this conflict see for instance *Sud Ouest* 5 March 2001).

<sup>64</sup> The Green Party had asked for a minimum of three members on Mr. Ecenarro's list, which Mr. Ecenarro refused. The main representative of the Green Party in Hendaia is Serge Lonca, a French teacher at the ikastola of Hendaia. Under Mr. Lassalette's previous mandate, he served as councillor in the majority.

town and find the idea of Hendaia being more open to people from the other side of the frontier quite daunting." As for Biharko Hendaia, it reiterated its demands for a popular referendum on the Partzuergo and for it to be open to all political parties in the locality, effectively proposing the Partzuergo as some sort of cross-frontier parliament.

When the elections finally took place, the counting of votes at the town hall was an exciting moment, with many Hendaians waiting to hear the results in an atmosphere of apprehension and suspense. Never had I seen the main square, the Place de la Republique, so lively. Mr. Ecenarro's list ended up winning with a majority, with the lists of Ms. Hiribarren, Mr. Sallaberry and Mr. Butori in the minority. Biharko Hendaia did not receive enough votes to have even one representative on the municipal council. Discussing afterwards with various local inhabitants the reasons for its demise, I was told that some people who usually voted for Biharko Hendaia had not appreciated the fact that, in the particularly tense period at the time, one of its candidates should be a Basque political refugee from Hegoalde. After counting, many people, irrespective of their support for different lists – apart from supporters of Biharko Hendaia, whom I did not see present – went off to one of the two main bars nearby, Café de la Poste and Café de la Bidassoa.

A month later, the next big excitement in the area was the coming through of the *Korrika*,<sup>65</sup> AEK's marathon around the Basque Country. Taking part in the local organisation of the event with AEK, I was able to experience it from the inside, running with other supporters as it entered Hendaia, traversed Irun and went out through Hondarribia.

Towards the end of April, I returned to Florence to resume writing up my thesis. However, since this time, I have regularly returned to Bidasoa-Txingudi in order to check facts and to attend specific events. So in September 2001, I was present for the fiestas of Hondarribia, in October for some of the Partzuergo's events, and again in November 2001 and January 2002 for interviews. I was able to see what Bidasoa-Txingudi 'looked like' now that the Euro was established as the common currency of both France and Spain. For local inhabitants going regularly back and forth across the frontier, life was made much less complicated in terms of carrying money around. In January 2002, I met Alain Lamassoure, member of the European Parliament<sup>66</sup> and former Minister of Foreign Affairs who has been a pioneer of cross-frontier relations between the region of Aquitaine and Nafarroa and Euskadi, and Pablo Barros, Spanish Consul in Baiona, to find out more about the point of view of the French and Spanish governments on the Partzuergo. I returned to Bidasoa-Txingudi in April 2002 for the Easter celebration in Hondarribia and in order to check a few details mentioned in the thesis. Finally, my last visit to the area was in May, when I carried out a few more interviews with local figures with whom I had not yet had the opportunity of speaking. This helped to clarify some of the issues tackled in the thesis and ensure their accuracy.

### Interviewing

Interviewing forms an important part of doing ethnography because of the valuable, culturally significant information that it provides. It serves as an ideal complement to participant observation since it enables the interviewer to check what people say they do against what they actually do do (Burawoy, 1991:20). Both interviewing and participation are essential for obtaining a thorough grasp of the role of the individual informant as social actor (Crapanzano, 1992; Fowler and Hardesty, 1994).

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<sup>65</sup> Meaning "the race or run" in Basque.

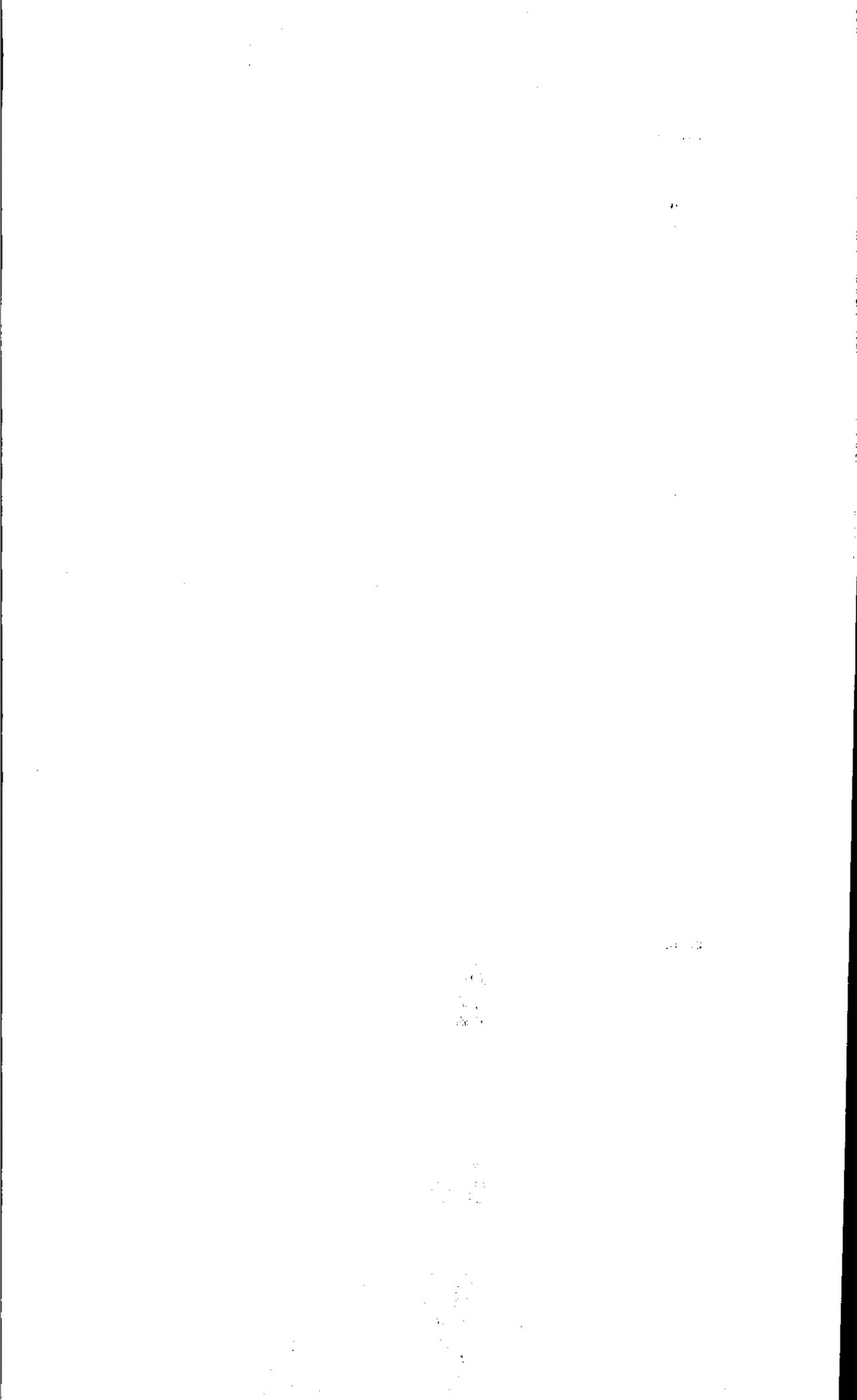
<sup>66</sup> At the time of writing, he is also vice-president of the *communauté d'agglomération du BAB* (Bayonne-Anglet-Biarritz).

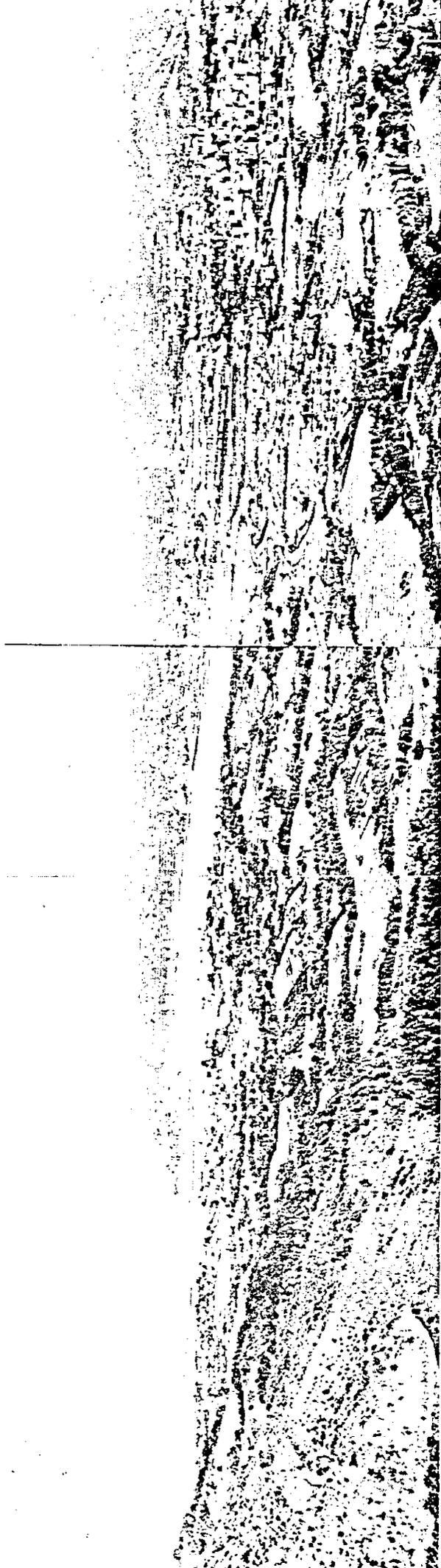
I interviewed a large and varied selection of people in Bidasoa-Txingudi, including key players in regional and governmental institutions, and studied the political, social and economic visions of people in the locality at a wider level. Amongst local inhabitants, I interviewed people aged from 20 to 85 who understood and lived out the local space and their sense of self in different ways. The aims of these interviews varied. Sometimes, they were purely to obtain factual information about a specific subject, be it a political group, an organisation, or some activities. On other occasions, they were to obtain the opinion of informants on certain issues which affected them. I asked them to explain certain things to me, according to how they understood and defined them, and to recount to me certain experiences and situations. My interview techniques varied accordingly. Above all, I was concerned that informants feel free to express what they saw as important to them. My interviews were therefore largely open-ended and semi-directed.

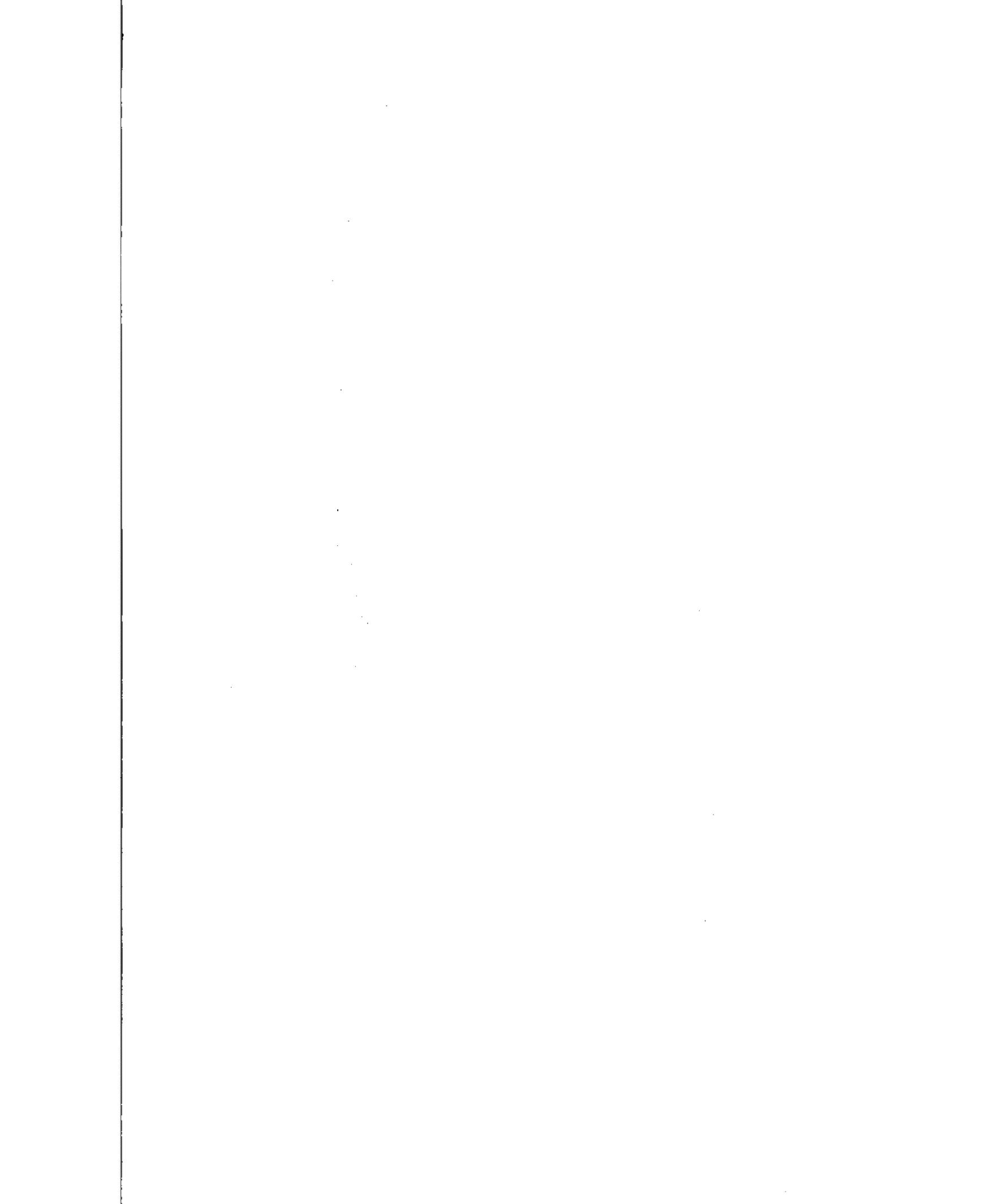
When possible, I also did informal interviews in order to allow the informant to feel more at ease and less self-conscious. These 'interviews' took place while carrying out daily activities, such as taking a drink in a bar, helping with household chores, serving behind the counter at the local supermarket, or assembling bits of ironwork in the factory. This helped to create a closer relationship with the people concerned (Kvale, 1996).

I used a tape recorder only when doing formal interviews. Sometimes, judging from the situation that the tape recorder could have a negative effect on the informant's ability to relax and open up, I refrained from taping and instead took notes from the conversation as precisely as possible, which I later wrote up, always striving to record as closely as possible what I remembered my informants saying, how and in which context (Agar, 1986; Briggs, 1986). Many of my informants' quotes are verbatim, while others are the product of my notes and memory. I shall quote all my informants in English. However, if they use a particular word of expression that appears significant to me in their process of self-expression, then I shall leave these in the original language, with an English translation in the footnote (Rubin and Rubin, 1995).

Not all of my informants' names are real. When describing the private, intimate life of some of my informants, I felt it necessary to preserve their anonymity by using invented names. These invented names nonetheless aim to reflect the cultural aspect of the person. So for example, if the person had a Basque name common to Iparralde, then I would replace it with another one common to that side of the frontier.







### Chapter Three: Bidasoa-Txingudi - Periphery and Cross-roads

The topography of Bidasoa-Txingudi is clearly displayed in an aerial photograph of Irun, Hondarribia and Hendaia commissioned by the Partzuergo. The river Bidasoa winds down out of the Pyrenean mountains into an estuary around which are grouped Irun and Hondarribia on the south side and Hendaia on the north side. Irun sprawls along the river bank while Hondarribia, at the tip of the estuary, looks over to Hendaia and out to the Atlantic Ocean. Hendaia, meanwhile, covers an area stretching from the river to an extensive beach area.

In geopolitical terms, Hondarribia and Irun are in Gipuzkoa, one of the three provinces that form Spain's Autonomous Basque Community, known in Spanish as the *Comunidad Autónoma Vasca* and in Basque as *Euskadi*. North of the Bidasoa, which here forms the Franco-Spanish frontier,<sup>67</sup> Hendaia is located in Lapurdi, one of the three historic Basque provinces that form part of France's *département des Pyrénées Atlantiques* and the larger region of Aquitaine. In the middle of the Bidasoa are several uninhabited islands, one of which was the site of the signing of the Treaty of the Pyrenees in 1659 to delimit Spanish and French territory. Over the centuries, ownership of this island, known today as the Island of the Pheasants (in Basque *Faisaien Uhartea*, in French *Ile des Faisans* and in Spanish *Isla de los Faisanes*),<sup>68</sup> switched between the French and Spanish states. Since 1902, the island has changed jurisdiction between the two states every six months, on February 1 and August 1, under the authority of the two countries' navies.<sup>69</sup>

Disparities in the administrative status of the Basque areas on either side of the Franco-Spanish frontier are one of a number of factors complicating the issue of local identity formation. In France, the three Basque provinces of Lapurdi, Behe Nafarroa and Siberoa have no officially recognized status. On the Spanish side of the frontier, the historic territories, as they are called by many inhabitants of Hegoalde, that make up Euskadi – Gipuzkoa, Bizkaia and Araba – are clearly defined provinces with their own provincial governments. Bordering on them, Nafarroa, a fourth 'historic territory', forms a separate autonomous region, known in Spanish as the *Comunidad Foral de Navarra*.

Independently of geopolitical distinctions, the peculiar topography of Bidasoa-Txingudi supports a notion of distinct space. "If you look closely on the map, and just look around, you can see," points out Serge Peyrelongue, the general secretary of the municipality of Hendaia in an interview. "It is obvious that we form a *bassin de vie*<sup>70</sup> geographically...natural basically." This is borne out, on the ground, by changes in the terrain. Driving by car in a southerly direction along the *Route National 10*, one leaves the village of Urruña and descends a steep hill to a built-up area where road signs point left to the *frontière d'Espagne*, while to the right a road leads along the bank of the Bidasoa to Hendaia. Across the river are Irun and Hondarribia, separated from the rest of Euskadi and Spanish territory by more mountains, the *Aiako Harriak*, or *Peñas de Harria* in Spanish, and *Jaizkibel*. Hendaia, meanwhile, is cut off from its hinterland to the north by hills rising to a high plateau.

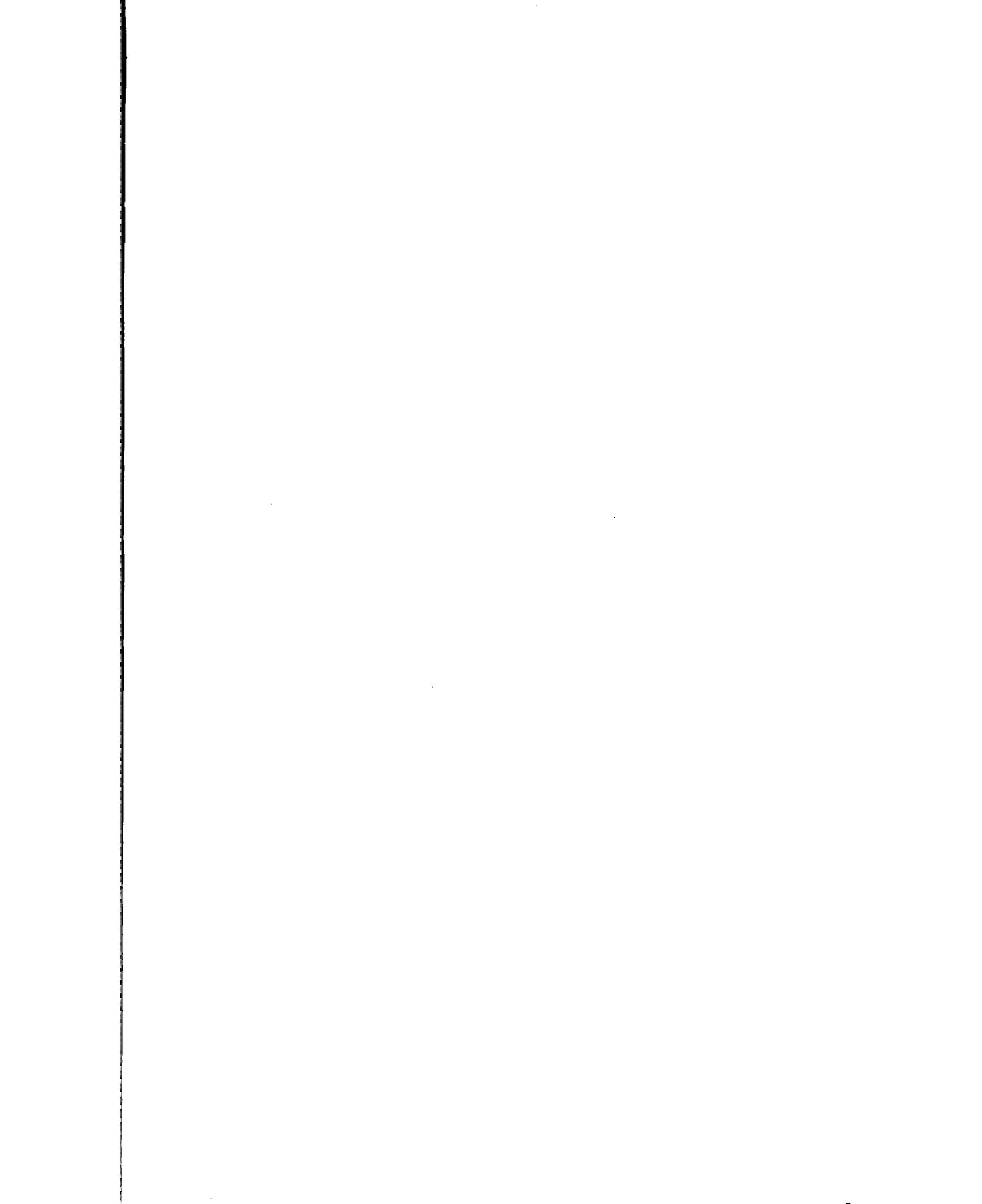
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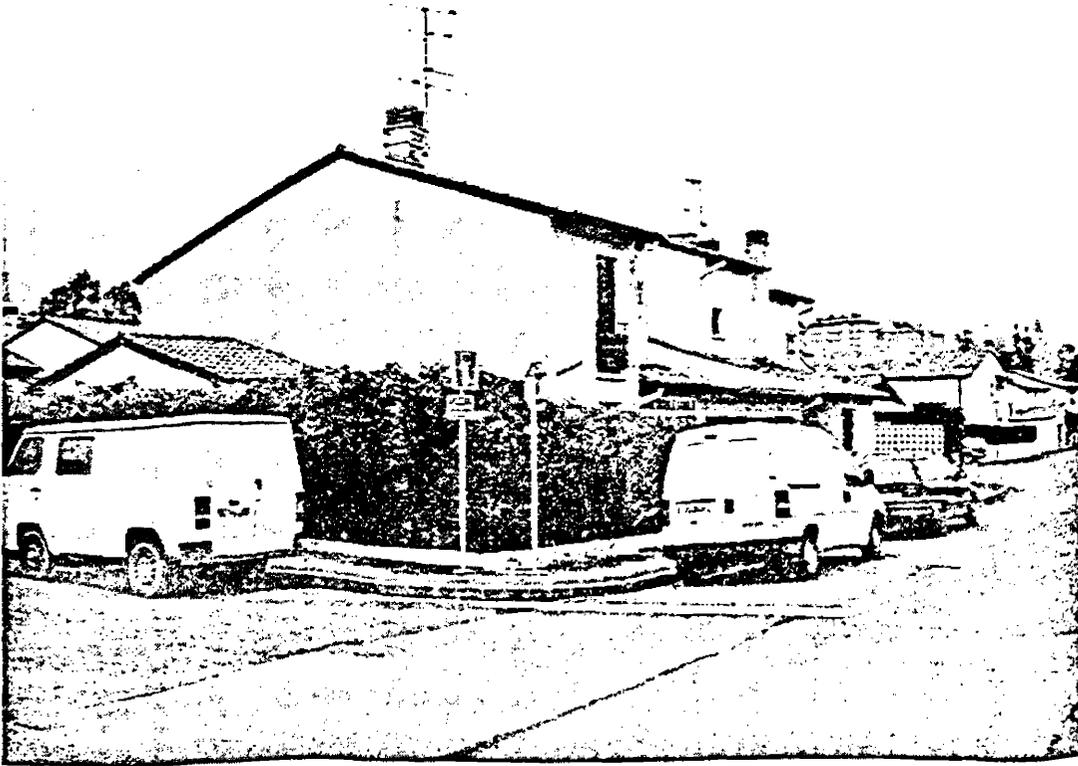
<sup>67</sup> The Pyrenees frontier has been considered by some as the first modern frontier between states (Anderson, 2001:91).

<sup>68</sup> This island, once known as the Island of the Hospital, came to be known in 1659 as the Island of the Conference. It was then confused with another small island, called the Island of the Pheasants, which belonged to Hendaia but which later disappeared, eroded by the river currents (Michelena, 1997).

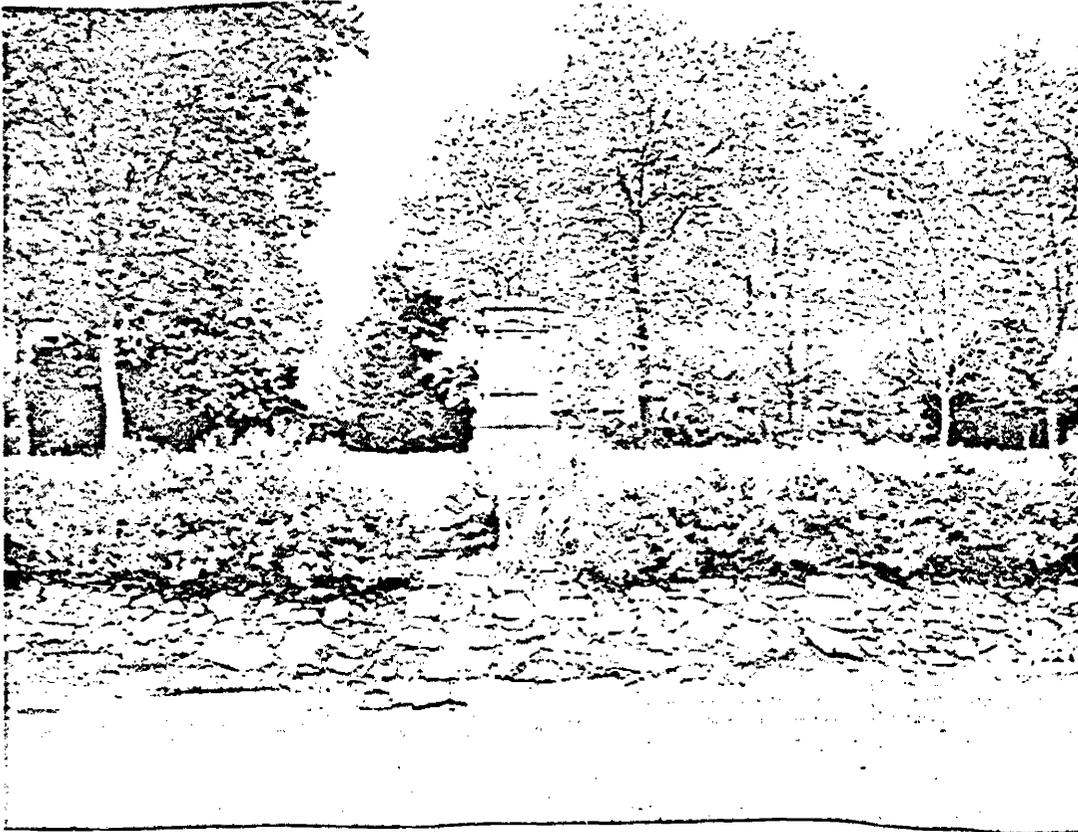
<sup>69</sup> Since the late nineteenth century, a Spanish naval station has been located in Hondarribia and a French naval station in Hendaia. These were initially set up due to the conflicts and tensions between the inhabitants of either side of the Bidasoa, particularly the fishermen of Hendaia and Hondarribia (Michelena, 1997:186-198). Today, one of their main roles is taking responsibility for the change-over of the island's jurisdiction.

<sup>70</sup> *Bassin de vie* is a French expression which evokes an idea of habitus.

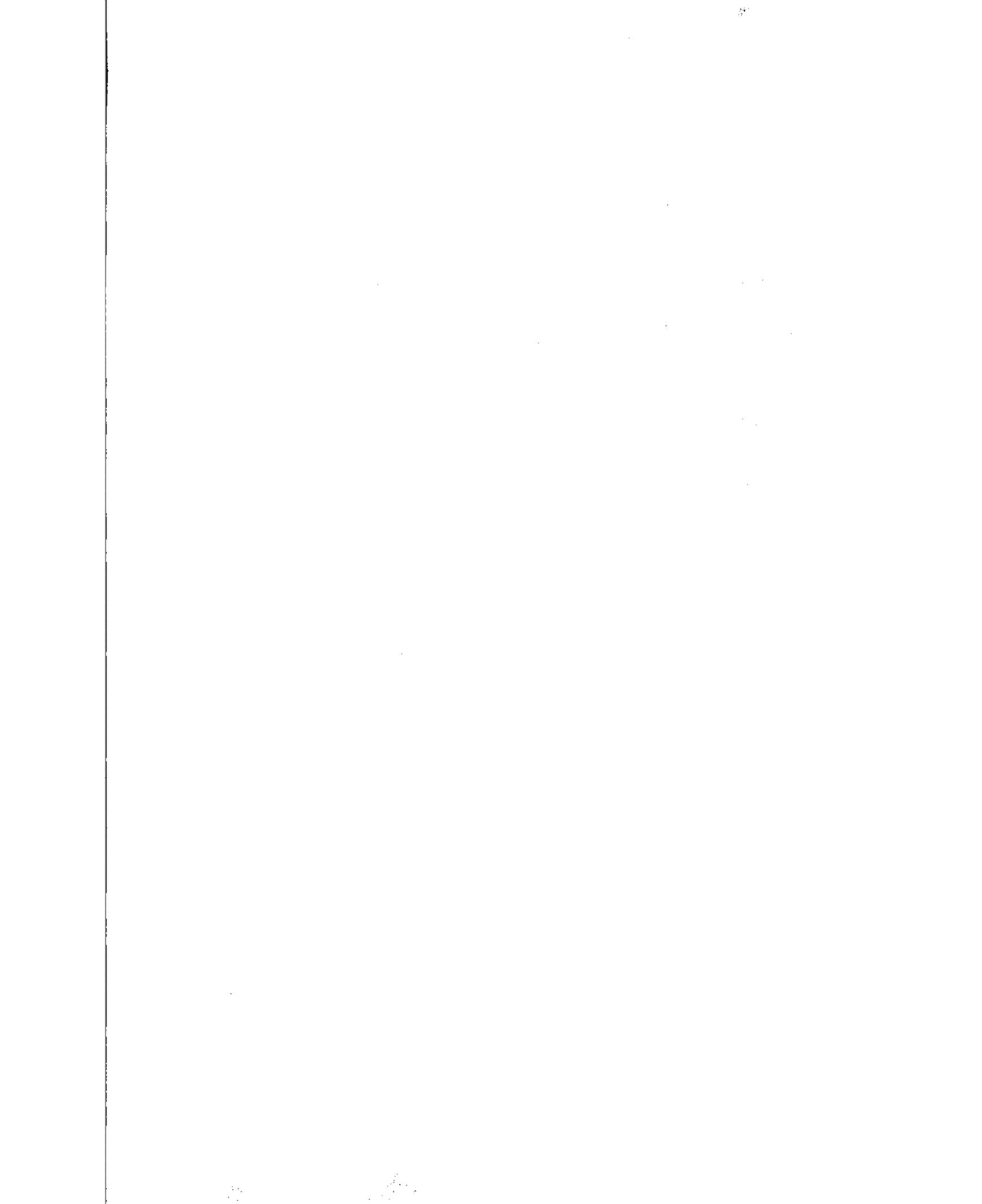




Residential area of Hendaia (Les Joncaux) with cars with Spanish number plates.



View of the Island of the Pheasants and the Treaty of the Pyrenees memorial, from Irun at low tide.



From vantage points around the area – the clifftop by the *chateau d'Abbadie*, a mansion on the coast to the north of Hendaia, the chapel of the Virgin of Guadalupe at the top of Jaizkibel near Hondarribia, and the chapel of San Marcial near Irun – one can see all around the bay and beyond. To the north, on a clear day, one can see up beyond Miarritze,<sup>71</sup> twenty-five kilometers away, to the *département des Landes*. To the east, one can see the mountain of *Ruña*, or *La Rhune* in French, an impressive peak on the French side of the Franco-Spanish frontier. To the west, from the other side of Jaizkibel, the rocky cliffs of the coastline stretch out into the distance, with the port of Pasaia visible ten kilometers away, and, on a clear day, Donostia a further fifteen kilometers away. Along some of these small mountains, can be spotted watchtowers, built in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to watch out for the enemy coming from France and out at sea.

As the only open, flat area on the Franco-Spanish border in these parts, Bidasoa-Txingudi has been an important transit point for centuries (Rodríguez, 1975; Michelena, 1997). Railway lines linking Hendaia to Paris and Irun to Madrid were laid in the late 1860s, and by the end of the nineteenth century the railway lines also linked Hendaia to Irun. In the late 1970s, a motorway was constructed a kilometer away from Irun to link Gasteiz with Bordeaux. The frontier crossing is one of two main transit points for road freight traffic between France and the Iberian Peninsula. So, although the customs offices are now redundant and most of them have been pulled down in the last two years, transport agencies continue to thrive in the area and lorries continue to park on the frontier in order to sleep and a last opportunity to purchase Spanish goods at lower prices. Conceptualisation of the area as a particular space has been further stressed since the late 1990s by Spanish and Basque road signs saying “welcome to Txingudi” and “Bidasoa-Txingudi” as one approaches Irun and Hondarribia on the motorway or the *Carretera Nacional 1* highway from Donostia.

But while the three towns together share a geographical space, many differences divide them. As a transit point between France and Spain, Bidasoa-Txingudi was a site of confrontations between the French and Spanish armies until the nineteenth century. Irun, Hondarribia and Hendaia<sup>72</sup> were fortified towns and were often partially destroyed by the passing of the French and Spanish armies (Rodríguez, 1975; Michelena, 1997). Victories against the French army involving the militias of Irun and Hondarribia in 1522 and 1638 continue to be celebrated today in each town in an annual parade, known in both Spanish and Basque as the *Alarde*.<sup>73</sup> In 1793, Hendaia was reduced to ruins by the Spanish army in its confrontation with the French revolutionary army. Its population did not begin to grow again till the mid nineteenth century, boosted a few years later with the establishment of the railway line.

Disputes were also rife at a more local level over resources, enhancing the importance of the river as a dividing line marking a social and cultural boundary as well as a political frontier, despite cross-border family ties and a common Basque culture. Conflict was particularly heated between the fishermen of Hondarribia and Hendaia for control of fishing rights in the Bidasoa. Records of quarrels between the two camps date back to the fifteenth century, and in the late nineteenth century they led to the installation of the French and Spanish armies in Hendaia and Hondarribia respectively. Disputes continued well into the twentieth century, with the Hondarribians

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<sup>71</sup> Miarritze is the Basque name of the town known in French as Biarritz.

<sup>72</sup> Until 1655, Hendaia was a neighbourhood of Urruña, a village further inland in Iparralde. That year it acquired its independence as an autonomous municipality. In the wake of its destruction in fighting between France and Spain at the end of the eighteenth century, it was returned to the jurisdiction of Urruña, finally recovering its municipal autonomy in the early nineteenth century (Michelena, 1997:89 and 119).

<sup>73</sup> Irun was a neighbourhood of Hondarribia until, after numerous conflicts, it acquired its independence and status as an autonomous municipality in 1766 (Loidi, 1992:188).

complaining of their neighbours' intensive fishing methods and use of large nets.<sup>74</sup> Only in 1999 was fishing finally abandoned in Hendaia, due to the exhaustion of fish stocks. The few people in Hendaia still involved in the fishing industry mainly work in Donibane Lohitzune or have professional relations with ports in Hegoalde including Hondarribia.

Today, Irun, with a population of around 56,000 inhabitants,<sup>75</sup> is an active industrial and commercial center. Much local activity has focused on rail and lorry transport services and on light industry, capitalising on cross-border trade. In the past, the economy of Irun thrived as a result of its position by the border. As the railway terminus, Irun was a central location for much human and economic movement. Irun had big *Guardia Civil*<sup>76</sup> barracks, which meant that, together with the numerous job opportunities in the customs control and the railway, the town attracted an influx of people from other parts of Spain. Irun experienced great economic development particularly in the late 1950s, which led to the near-quadrupling of its population in the space of two decades.<sup>77</sup>

Hendaia has a population of over 13,000.<sup>78</sup> It also has some light industry. The transport sector, represented both by a number of trucking firms and the French state rail service, is a major employer. Until the 1980s, it and the customs service were factors in attracting people from the rest of France to Hendaia over the years. Nowadays, by contrast, Hendaia's extensive beach and its recently re-constructed sophisticated marina are magnets for tourism and residential investment.<sup>79</sup> Within the town's municipal territory, an area of tidal marshes alongside the Bay of Hendaia on the estuary of the Bidasoa, traditionally known in French as Chingoudy, has given its name by extension and in its Basque-icized version as Txingudi to the bay and subsequently the entire area around it.

As for Hondarribia, it has a more traditional character, in part reflecting its peripheral position relative to the hinterland. Thanks to its picturesque fishing port and medieval fortress, Hondarribia, with a population of nearly 16,000,<sup>80</sup> draws significant revenues from tourism.<sup>81</sup> In 2001, in an effort to increase Hondarribia's touristic profile, the beach was refashioned to include a big leisure port and a big multi-sport complex. The town's traditional small-scale fishing industry, although less attractive than in the past for young Hondarribians,<sup>82</sup> plays an important socio-cultural role in the locality.<sup>83</sup> Hondarribia also has some light industry. However, it is much less developed than Irun, where many of its inhabitants work. So Hondarribia has kept a more Basque character, and indeed more Basque can be heard spoken in the streets there than in Irun.

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<sup>74</sup> For several years now, the Hondarribian Brotherhood of Fishermen is in close contact with an association of fishermen also concerned with campaigning for a more environmentally friendly approach to fishing, *Itsas Geroa*, which means the "future of the sea" and is based in Donibane Lohitzune.

<sup>75</sup> <http://www.irun.org/caste/estadisticas.html>. Last consulted 4 April 2002.

<sup>76</sup> The Spanish paramilitary police force.

<sup>77</sup> In 1950, Irun had a population of 12000. By 1970, its population had grown to 45000 ([www.irun.org/caste/historia.html](http://www.irun.org/caste/historia.html)). Last consulted 4 April 2002).

<sup>78</sup> Municipality of Hendaia.

<sup>79</sup> The beach of Hendaia has been a fashionable place since the turn of the twentieth century.

<sup>80</sup> Estimate published in the newspaper *Diario Vasco*, 20 April 2001.

<sup>81</sup> For an anthropological study of how the socio-cultural character of Hondarribia was affected by a shift in economic activities from agriculture to the tourist industry in the middle of the twentieth century, see Davydd Greenwood (1976a, 1976b, 1978).

<sup>82</sup> Today, due to the reluctance of local youths to go into the profession, *Hondarribiko Arrantzaleen Kofradia*, or Confraternity of Fishermen of Hondarribia, has suffered from a lack of labour. As a result, since late 2000, it has begun employing men of Peruvian, Rumanian and Senegalese nationality (see also *El Mundo* 19 March 2001 and *Diario Vasco* 19 April 2001).

<sup>83</sup> In 1998, *Hondarribiko Arrantzaleen Kofradia* was provided with a brand new port and auction facility beyond the beach area and close to the tip of the bay, with the financial help of the Basque government.

Since the late 1980s, the residential population of Hondarribia has grown significantly due to the increasing number of people from other parts of Gipuzkoa who use it as a residential base from which to commute to nearby towns such as Donostia for work.

### Hendaia

Entering Hendaia from the road that branches off the main Route Nationale 10, the visitor is greeted by a sign announcing the town's winning arrangements with Peebles in Scotland and Viana do Castelo in Portugal. No mention, however, is made of the Partzuergo and Hendaia's links with Irun and Hondarribia. In visual terms, first impressions of Hendaia clearly demonstrate its Basque character, with red-roofed, white-walled houses and Basque names on shops and road signs. But it is also very clearly a French town. At its centre, the Place de la République is lined by neatly pollarded plane trees and parked cars. Around this square, as in many other towns in France, are grouped the town hall, the church and the state tax office, as well as a café and a few shops. As in other small towns across France, most shops in Hendaia are open from 9.00 a.m. until noon, when they close for lunch, and from 3.00 p.m. until 6.30 p.m.

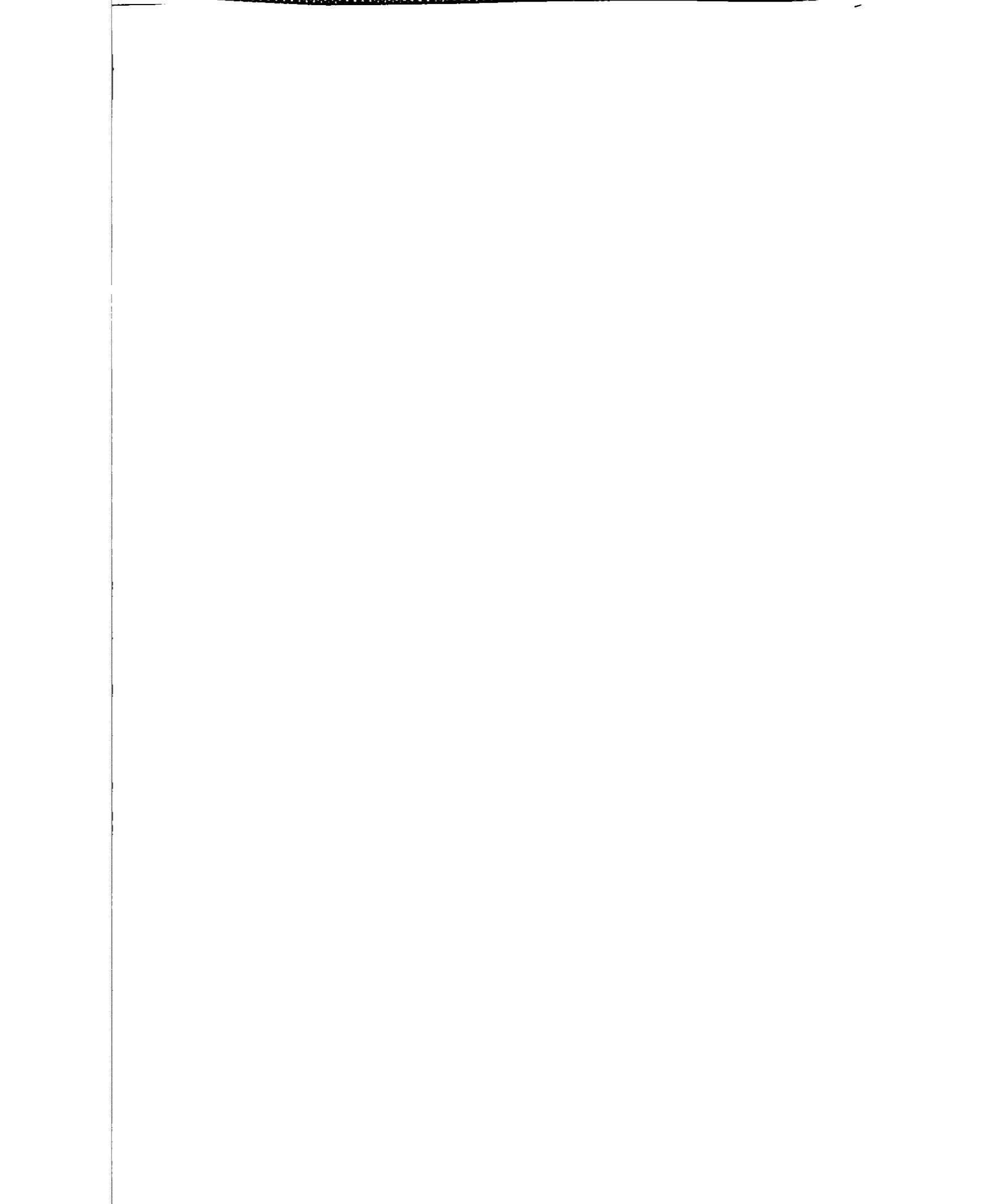
Built in the early 1960s, Hendaia's town hall is a two storey rectangular building with white walls, red-painted doors and window ledges, a balcony and a red-tiled roof, in keeping with an architectural and decorative style typical of Iparralde. On either side, tidily kept flowerbeds provide an additional touch of colour. In accordance with French safety norms, the stairs going up to the entrance are accompanied by a sloping side passage for wheelchairs. Past automatic sliding doors, open to the public between 8 a.m. and noon and 1 p.m. and 5 p.m., visitors are greeted on the day of my visit by a receptionist in French. Fluent in Spanish, she can also deal with Spanish speaking visitors. She does not, however, speak Basque.

Apart from Wednesday mornings, when market stalls are set up in the square, things are fairly quiet. In fine weather, a few people sit having a drink outside the Café de la Bidassoa.<sup>84</sup> Inside, French television and the Spanish Basque Radio Euskadi blare out simultaneously and customers can often be heard chatting in French, Spanish and Basque. Next door, La Petite Pause, a restaurant quaintly decorated with pine panelling and red-checked curtains and tablemats, advertises home cooking from the French Alpine region of Savoie. Further down the street, on the Rue du Port leading down to the Bidassoa estuary where fishermen worked until the 1950s, another recently opened shop, Au Petit Paris, sells books, incense and semi-precious stones. Opposite, the Pharmacie Franco-Espagnole advertises its beauty and medical products only in French, despite its name. Nearby, a branch of the French bank Crédit Agricole stands alongside a branch of the Hegoalde bank Kutxa Donostia Gipuzkoa. Next door, the patisserie-glacier-chocolatier Alonso sells a variety of delicate French pastries, chocolates and "gâteau Basque", a crumbly cake with a custard filling typical of Iparralde.

At the other end of the square, the Boucherie Arruabarrena is named after the family that has owned it for over half a century and are often open, filling this part of the square with smells of roast beef and other French meat dishes. Beside it stands the main church of Hendaia, a small early eighteenth century building with a rectangular steeple dedicated to Saint Vincent, or San Bixente in Basque, the patron saint of Hendaia. In nearby streets are two other buildings of central importance to the spatial organisation of any French town, the post office and the municipal library, the Médiathèque François Mitterrand, named after the late Socialist president of France. Opened in 1998, this building is of a minimalist and spacious architectural style, with typical French Basque features in its clean white walls and red-tiled roof. Following the more varied

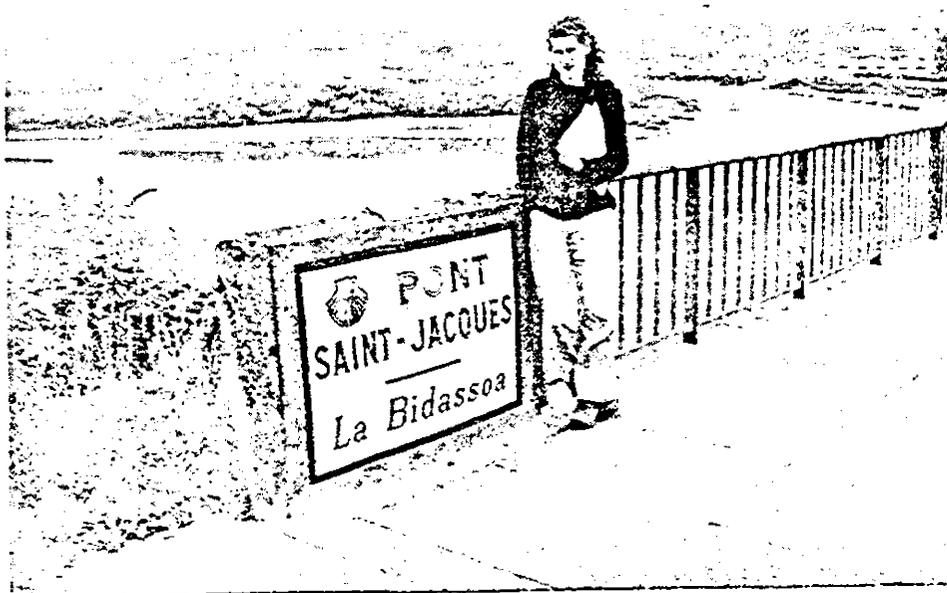
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<sup>84</sup> Note here the French way of spelling Bidassoa.





Road sign welcoming drivers to Hendaia with details of Hendaia's twinning arrangements with towns in Portugal and Scotland.



On the Hendaia side of the Bridge of Santiago.  
View of Irun and the Aiako Peñak in the horizon.



colour scheme of the "nouveau Basque" style, the balcony and windows are painted dark blue. Above its entrance, big blue letters spell out the library's name in French. The médiathèque is open from 2.00 p.m. to 6.00 p.m. on weekdays and from 11.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. on Saturdays. Its staff address visitors in French but are ready to answer in Spanish if necessary, though not in Basque, having no knowledge of the language. The library offers a selection of mainly French books and newspapers, but it also has the Spanish language Hegoalde newspapers *Diario Vasco*<sup>85</sup> and *Gara*.<sup>86</sup> It does not, however, have the French language Iparralde left-wing nationalist weekly, *Enbata*.<sup>87</sup>

The Boulevard Charles de Gaulle, named after another French president, leads from the town centre to the beach area, road signs, sometimes in both French and Basque, sometimes just in French, indicating the way. Past a few commercial establishments, including a newsagent's shop called *Horrialde*,<sup>88</sup> a bar called *Maitena* owned by a Basque-speaking man originally from a rural part of Iparralde which is a regular rendez-vous for local supporters of the Basque left-wing nationalist movement, and a women's prêt à porter shop called *Carmen*, is one of the six schools in Hendaia, a nineteenth century building which still bears inscriptions designating what were formerly separate sections for girls (*filles*) and boys (*garçons*). The boulevard then runs along the side of the estuary, across which can be seen Hondarribia and people walking along the bank on the other side. A small covered stadium and a green pedestrian area with a skateboard ring and a children's playground are on one side of the boulevard, while on the other are a line of Basque-style villas with names in Basque, in some cases following the Gallicised orthography customary in Iparralde.<sup>89</sup> Halfway along the boulevard, a small roundabout is decorated with flowers arranged to spell "Txingudi", an innovation that dates from 1999.

The beach area, a mile long stretch of yellow sand with numerous villas and apartment buildings, has been a touristic site for most of the last century. Recent development has made it a second, and for many people more attractive, centre of Hendaia. Only a short distance from Hondarribia on the other side of the estuary, the most sophisticated part, Sokoburu, has a few smart hotels and a conference centre. Nearby, the fishing port has recently been redeveloped to provide mooring facilities for yacht-owners. Further inland, still close to the beach, a street is lined with a series of bars, such as the rustic looking *Txirimirri*,<sup>90</sup> from which Basque rock music is blaring out, the *Ouf!*<sup>91</sup> with its decorations of old French rock stars, the *Océanic*, with its minimalist glass interior décor and series of rugby trophies behind the counter, and the more psychedelic *Krypton* with its bright colours and techno music.

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<sup>85</sup> *Diario Vasco* means the "daily Basque newspaper" in Spanish. It is an all Spanish language paper widely read in Euskadi.

<sup>86</sup> *Gara* means "We are" in Basque. It is also an all Spanish language paper widely read in Euskadi. However, while the *Diario Vasco* is more of a Basque traditional conservative paper, *Gara* has more Basque left-wing nationalist sympathies.

Both *Gara* and *Diario Vasco* have a few articles in Basque.

<sup>87</sup> The director of the Médiathèque, who is French-speaking, explained to me that he did not stock *Enbata* because he believed it was "too political", seemingly overlooking the fact that the other newspapers there could be said to be political as well. In addition, he applied different criteria for Iparralde papers and for Hegoalde papers. *Gara*, for instance, is arguably just as "political" as *Enbata*. In noting this change in the director's criteria when it comes to Hegoalde matters, I venture to say that Basque political issues are tolerated precisely because they are from Hegoalde. And this goes hand in hand with the idea of Hegoalde as foreign, different to Iparralde.

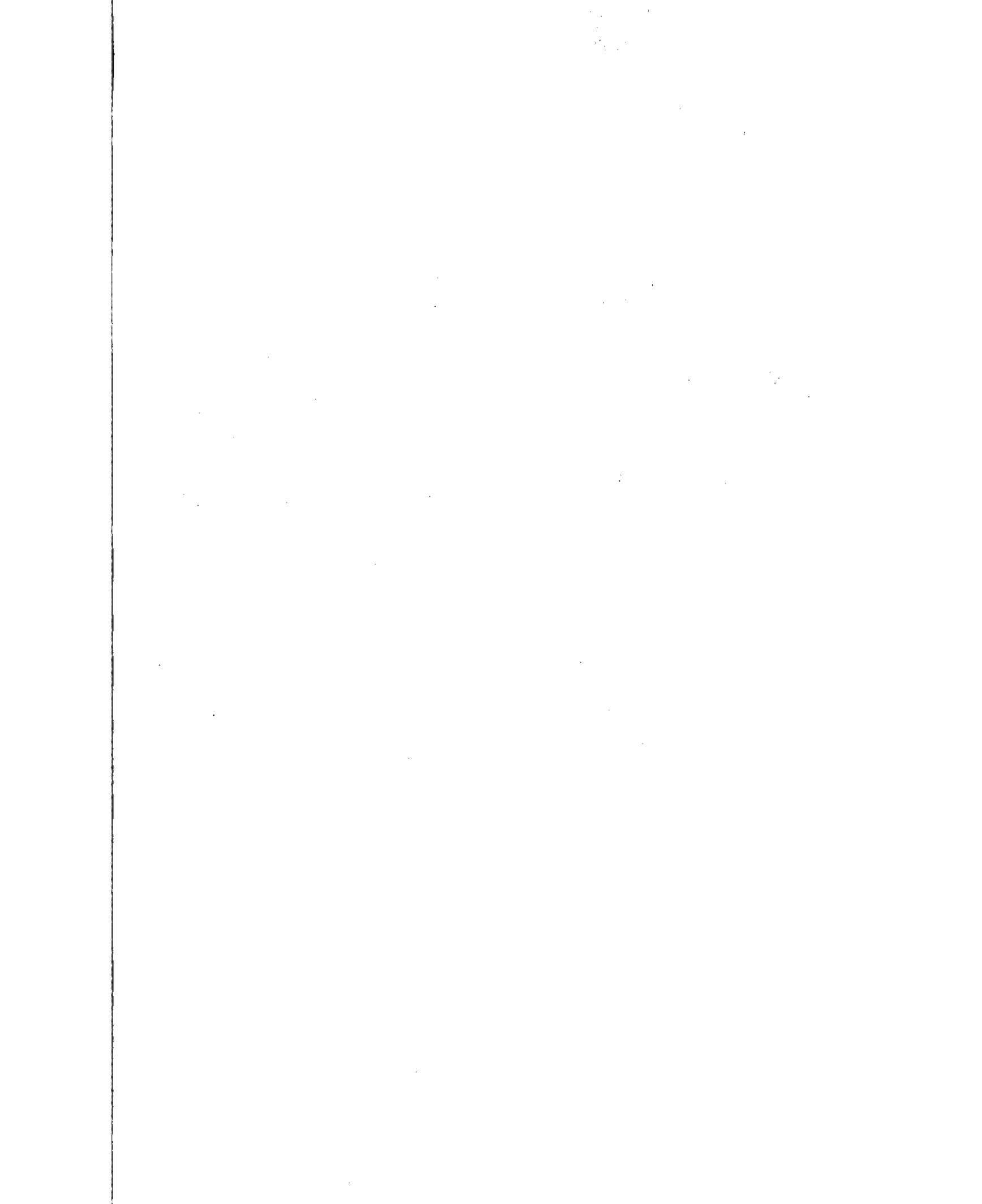
*Enbata* means "the wind before the storm" in Basque, a highly evocative name for its militant adherents. The magazine sometimes has a few articles in Basque.

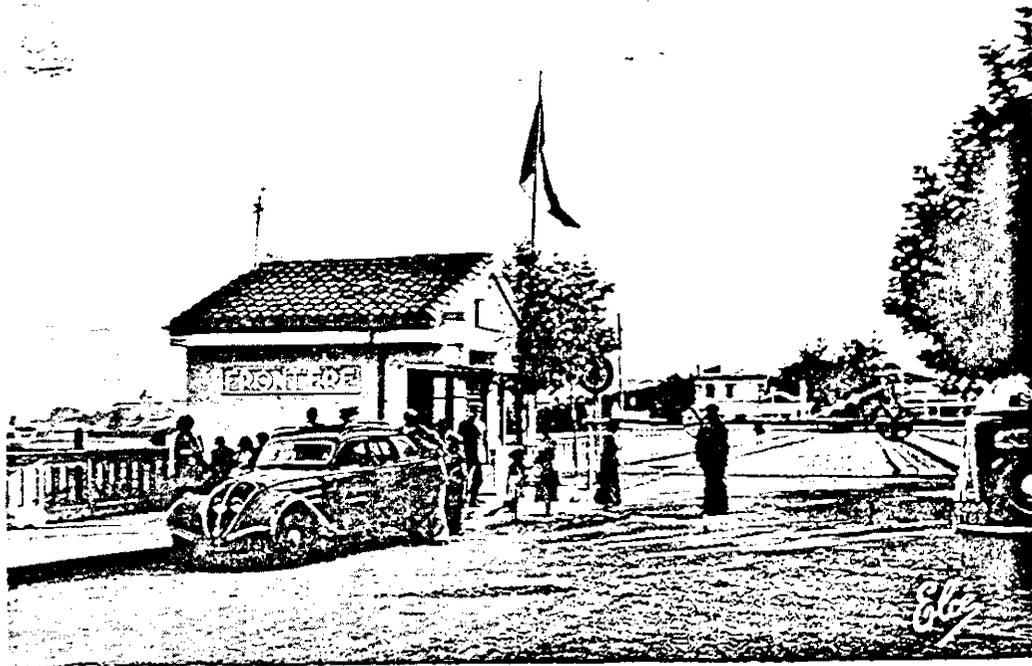
<sup>88</sup> Literally meaning "On the side of the pages" in Basque.

<sup>89</sup> Eg *Ongui Ethorri*, *Eiche Ona*, *Gure Ametza*, and *Bista Eder* (meaning Welcome, Good house, Our dream and Beautiful view).

<sup>90</sup> *Txirimirri* is Basque for a light but persistent kind of rain typical of these parts of the Basque Country.

<sup>91</sup> *Ouf!* is a French expression whose equivalent in English would be "Phew!"





French border controls booth on the Hendai side of the International Bridge, in the early 1950s.



View from the International Bridge of the same customs booth, now derelict and graffiti-covered.



At the other end of town, road signs indicate the way past a few old and once grand-looking shops to the SNCF<sup>92</sup> railway station. The old-style boutique Le Palais du Crystal, a gem of turn of the nineteenth century architecture, is a reminder of more prosperous days when Spanish shoppers flocked here to buy French goods. It continues to sell odd bits and pieces to a now much diminished clientèle. Further down, a small toyshop with a dilapidated façade advertises 'petardos', Spanish for fireworks. Its main business is with young Spaniards who come to Hendaia especially to purchase fireworks and bangers, banned under Spanish law. The station itself is a typical French turn of the nineteenth century style building, with white walls, a dark slate roof and a big clock in the middle. Although some of the staff speak Basque, there is no public indication of this fact. Inside, notices and loudspeaker announcements advertise the train times in French, Spanish and English.

To the left of the station is the terminus of the EuskoTren, a narrow-gauge rail service, nicknamed the topo,<sup>93</sup> which means mole in Spanish, and which transports people from Hendaia all the way to Donostia, stopping on the way in Irun and other towns. A bus service also stops at the station, linking Hendaia to Baiona. Since the early 1990s, the company running this service and another bus company from Irun have also provided a summer-time service between Irun and the beach of Hendaia. Beside the station, a small building on which are written the words "Centre d'Accueil", French for Welcome Centre, provides shelter for homeless people, many of whom come from the Spanish side and who, during the day, wander back and forth across the frontier. This building was formerly an office to welcome immigrants from Spain, Portugal and Northern Africa who entered France in great numbers during the 1960s and 1970s to work.

Opposite the station are a number of cafés with names like Bar du Midi, Bar Le Terminus, Café International and Café de la Frontière. The frontier is only a stone's throw away, and road signs with 'Irun' and 'frontière' written on them show the way. A few more shops line this street, called Avenue d'Espagne, including a so-called American shop which once sold jeans and other American-style clothes popular in Spain but at that time difficult to find in Hegoalde. This shop is now shut down. Beside it is a branch of the Banque Franco-Portugaise. Beyond it, in front of some recently built houses, a sign advertises newly built residential flats and villas in Spanish on behalf of a Hendaian estate agency.

Past the station, the Avenue d'Espagne crosses the Bidasoa via the so-called International Bridge, an example of late nineteenth century architecture. Halfway across, an iron post on one side bears the red and yellow colours of Spain with the insignia of Isabel II who reigned as Queen of Spain from 1843 to 1870, while opposite another has the blue, white and red colours of France and the insignia of Napoleon III, Emperor of France from 1852 to 1870. Now closed to traffic, the bridge is a haven for anglers and tramps. At either end, the old turn of the century customs booths stand derelict and covered with graffiti.

Across from the station, the Route de Béhobie leads inland to the neighbourhood of Pausu<sup>94</sup> and the junction to the Route National 10, while another road takes traffic across the Bidasoa via a more modern bridge, the Bridge of Santiago - the Pont Saint Jacques in French and Santiago Zubia in Basque - to Irun. On the right-hand side of the Route de Béhobie, just beyond the road leading to the Bridge of Santiago an imposing three-storey building, similar in style to an old Basque farmhouse with a wooden front door and red-painted shutters, is the home of Sokoia, the

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<sup>92</sup> Abbreviation for *Société Nationale des Chemins de Fers*.

<sup>93</sup> The bridge for the topo was built in 1912.

<sup>94</sup> Béhobie is the French name of Pausu.

company which produces office furniture. Further along, a residential area backing onto the Bidasoa, is composed of villas with red-tiled roofs and red or green shutters, and white-walled apartment buildings with tidy gardens. The cars parked in its streets have French or Spanish numberplates showing that they are registered in the Pyrénées Atlantiques departement, with the number 64, or in Gipuzkoa, with the letters SS.<sup>95</sup> Back on the Pont St. Jacques, at mid-point, a Spanish flag flies from a flagpole. On the other side, an open area is filled with trucks and a few shops sell souvenirs and alcohol. Beyond this area, the Avenida de Iparralde, or Iparraldeko Ibilbidea in Basque, formerly known as the Avenida de Francia, leads up a gentle slope to the buzzing centre of Irun.

### Irun

Irun, although directly across the Bidasoa from Hendaia, to which it is linked by four bridges<sup>96</sup> catering for rail, motor and pedestrian traffic,<sup>97</sup> is markedly different in character and appearance. Its formal centre is San Juan Plaza in Basque or Plaza San Juan in Spanish, dominated by the town hall at one end, with a pedestrian area in front of it and a car park, bus stops and shops and bars at the other end. The town hall, dating from 1763, is typical of Hegoalde, built in stone with arcades at ground level and above them a balcony and the foral crest. A flag with the arms of Irun, composed of a castle with a helmet on top and flanked by feathers and two storks,<sup>98</sup> flutters above the façade. Since May 2001, black and white banners declaring “ETA no. ETA ez”, meaning “No to ETA” in Spanish and Basque, have hung from the balcony. The entrance, open to the public from 8.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. every weekday, is guarded by the municipal police who ask in Basque and Spanish to see visitors’ identity cards before allowing them through. Inside, a red carpet leads up a grand central wooden staircase to rooms on the first floor adorned with paintings by nineteenth century Hegoalde artists.

On one side of the square in front of the town hall, the gozotegia/okindegia- Basque for pastry shop and bakery - Gaztelu Mendi serves Spanish-style white bread and creamy Spanish-style buns. Alongside it are bars and a variety of shops. In contrast to Iparralde, shops in Irun open at 9.00 or 10.00 a.m. and shut for lunch at 1.00 p.m., opening again at 4.00 p.m. and closing at 7.30 p.m. or 8.00 p.m.

Behind apartment blocks with dirty beige facades, brown shutters and roofs, the main church of Irun is of imposing size and appearance, contrasting with the 1990s urban park installation around it. Built in local sixteenth century Gothic style, it is dedicated to Our Lady of Juncal, the patron saint of Irun. Nearby, the nineteenth century apartment buildings around the Plaza de Urdanibia/Urdanibia Plaza are among the few surviving remnants of pre-Spanish Civil War Irun.

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<sup>95</sup> Since the summer 2000, it is possible to have number plates in Spain with a special code that no longer makes it possible to tell in which province the car is registered. When these were first issued, I interviewed people in Irun and Hondarribia who had different viewpoints about this change. Some expressed nostalgia, saying they enjoyed being able to tell where a car and its driver come from and they were proud to be able to show that they come from Gipuzkoa. Others, meanwhile, were indifferent. Yet others saw its advantages: some mentioned the fact that there was a risk of being aggressed in other parts of Spain, where some people have a negative image of the Basque Country with its nationalist issues and ETA.

<sup>96</sup> The main rail bridge was built in 1864 and also carries the insignias of Napoleon III and Isabel II. The International Bridge currently used for road traffic was built by Irun in the 1960s, and so until the early 1970s, the municipality had a toll booth charging incoming traffic from Hendaia. These bridges are located alongside each other. A fifth bridge for traffic and pedestrians links Behobia, a neighbourhood of Irun further to the east with Pausu, a neighbourhood of Urruña.

<sup>97</sup> A motorway linking Bilbo to Baiona, built in the 1970s, crosses the frontier less than a kilometer away from Irun, diverting much of the traffic that formerly passed through Irun and Hendaia.

<sup>98</sup> The castle is meant to symbolise defence against enemies, the storks represent vigilance and prudence, while the helmet symbolises nobility in battle and the feathers the trophies of war (Ayuntamiento de Irun, 1991:7).

A few have their names painted in Basque on their façades, using the orthography of *Batua*, the unified version of the Basque language that is nowadays taught in schools throughout Euskadi.<sup>99</sup> On Saturdays, the square is home to a lively market where vendors from the nearby Gipuzkoan and Nafarroan countryside sell fruit, vegetables, prepared meat products and cheeses. In the evenings, the numerous bars on this plaza, decorated in rustic Basque style, provide a meeting place for Basque-speaking young people identifying with the Basque nationalist cause.

Beyond the square, the *Calle de Santa Elena/Santa Elena Karrika* leads on through residential areas dating from the 1970s and out into the countryside, eventually ending up at the chapel of San Marcial, which overlooks Irun and Hendaia and Iparralde beyond. At the other end of San Juan Plaza, another pastry shop, named Aguirre after the family who has been running it for most of the last century, is a popular place for old ladies taking coffee and pastries together throughout the day in a cackle of Spanish. At another extremity of the square, which has also managed to preserve nineteenth century narrow three storeyed houses with the woodwork showing and small balconies, the *calle Mayor*, or *Karrika Nagusia* in Basque, meaning Main Street, leads past the municipal library. Open on weekdays from 8.30 a.m. until 7.30 p.m. and on Saturdays from 8.30 a.m. until 1.00 p.m., it has a wide selection of books and a rich array of newspapers in Spanish and Basque. The only newspaper from Iparralde, however, is the French-language *Sud-Ouest*, which when I came to consult it, I often found untouched.

The street at this end of the square becomes the busy *Kolon Ibilbidea*, or *Paseo Colon* in Spanish, named after Christopher Columbus, lined with late 1950s style apartment blocks, shops selling clothes with Spanish labels, Spanish and Hegoalde banks, and a supermarket with a Basque name, *Eroski*, and another called *Consumer*. There, as in most public places in Irun, customers often get addressed in Spanish unless they take the initiative to speak in Basque. Billboards at bus stops advertise the *Centro Commercial Txingudi*,<sup>100</sup> a shopping centre built in 1996 just outside Irun on the road to Donostia, popular with people from Hendaia because of its wide array of choice and lower prices.

A short distance along the avenue, a square called the *Ensantxe Plaza*, or *Plaza de Ensanche* in Spanish and formerly known as the *Plaza de España*, lined with pollarded plane trees and with a band-stand in the middle, is another popular meeting place for old people and families with young children. At one corner, a stand sells sweets and lottery tickets and a kiosk beside it sells newspapers, including *Sud Ouest*. Alongside a café and bars serving Spanish Basque style *pinchos*,<sup>101</sup> or *pintxos* in Basque, to the sound of the *Ser Radio Irun*, the Spanish national radio broadcasting from its local branch in Irun, are the offices of the Spanish postal service. Round the corner is the town's municipal information point, a modern style office with automatic sliding doors and the letters *SAC*<sup>102</sup> written in red and blue glass. Off this part of the square is a street of apartment buildings and trendy modern bars.

The *Kolon Ibilbidea* carries on with more shops, cafés and an *EuskoTren* stop. One of the streets off it is the *Aduanak Karrika*, or *Calle de Aduanas*, which once housed numerous customs control booths where freight to be transported into France first had to be checked. Now, the 1960s style apartment blocks have been housed with numerous offices of transport agencies. Further down that road, one comes upon the now abandoned building for Immigration belonging to the French state stationed in Irun. The *Kolon Ibilbidea* continues over the railway line and, before becoming

<sup>99</sup> For example *Gure Etxea* and *Ongi Etorri*, meaning "Our house" and "Welcome".

<sup>100</sup> This shopping centre is a franchise of the French supermarket chain Auchan. For this particular commercial centre, its name is translated into Spanish as *Alcampo*.

<sup>101</sup> *Pintxos* are small prettily assembled bits of food. Another more Spanish word is *tapas*.

<sup>102</sup> *Servicio de Asistencia al Ciudadano*.

the Hondarribia Karrika heading towards Hondarribia, another street turns to the left, past two hotels called Bidasoa and Los Fronterizos, named after those numerous locals who crossed the frontier into Iparralde every day for work, where road signs indicate in Spanish and Basque the train station- estación RENFE<sup>103</sup> or geltokia in Basque.

Down the hill, the street reaches a roundabout leading into the municipal territory of Hondarribia. Also joining the roundabout are the road to Irun's main ikastola, called Txingudi, housed in a 1980s concrete building, and the National 1 highway from Behobia, bypassing the center of Irun. Along the National 1, brown and white signboards welcome visitors to Bidasoa Txingudi. One of the buildings along the road is the Villa Ducourau, the former French consulate, now undergoing restoration in order to house the offices of the Partzuergo. Further back, road signs indicate the way along the avenue of Iparralde – Avenida Iparralde in Spanish and Iparralde Hiribidea in Basque – to the frontier and Hendaia, saying Francia and Frantzia. Close to the frontier, a commercial exhibition area is being built as a project of the municipality of Irun, with the financial backing of the Basque government, the provincial government of Gipuzkoa and the Partzuergo. Opposite it, cars with French and Spanish registrations and lorries from various countries queue at a Repsol petrol station which advertises its prices in Basque and Spanish. As customers replace the petrol pump nozzles in their holders, a recorded voice says "Muchas gracias y buen viaje. Eskerrik asko eta bidai on bat" – Spanish and Basque for "Thank you very much and have a good journey". Beyond, opposite are an open area formerly occupied by the Spanish customs authorities and now used as a parking area for lorries, a couple of small hotels, some restaurants and shops selling alcohol, tobacco and Spanish products, many of their wares advertised exclusively in French. The last of the customs control booths which once dominated this area was pulled down in November 2001. Vehicles now drive freely back and forth across the frontier.

### Hondarribia

As a fortified medieval town, Hondarribia has two centres - one within the city walls and another just outside. The town hall is located within the medieval part of the town, on a narrow cobbled street called the Calle Mayor/Kale Nagusia that leads from a medieval gateway into the town up to the main square, the Plaza de las Armas/Armak Plaza, where small fortified castle has been converted into a parador, a sophisticated hotel. The town hall is a sixteenth century stone building with arcades on the ground floor and the municipal and foral crests emblazoned above. The reception, marked in Basque above the door, is located on a side entrance under the arcades, where a woman greets visitors in Basque, switching to Spanish if necessary.

All the buildings on this street are of a similar period and style to the town hall, tall narrow houses of brown stone. Some have quaint looking shops on their ground floor, including a small tea-shop, a butchers, an old-fashioned shoe shop, an art gallery and a newsagent, most have signs in both Basque and Spanish. Further up on the left, a building called Zuloaga Etxea, after a famous painter of the early twentieth century, houses the municipal library. This is open from 10 a.m., when most other shops in Hondarribia also open, until 7.30 p.m. The librarians most often address visitors in Basque, unless they first speak in Spanish. A wide selection of books and newspapers is on offer but, unlike in Irun, no French papers are available.

The main church of Hondarribia, a seventeenth century building dedicated to Our Lady of the Assumption is situated further up the street, just before the square. A few small bars, restaurants and hotels surround it, all also of antique appearance. The streets off the Kale Nagusia and the

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<sup>103</sup> Abbreviation for Red Nacional de Ferrovía Española.



Teenagers by the sweet shop on San Pedro Kalea, Hondarribia.



Adults and children socialising outside the bar Enbata, belonging to the family of the mayor of Hondarribia, on San Pedro Kalea.



Armak Plaza are narrow and cobbled, lined by stone-faced buildings divided into small and dark appartments, with the big beams typical of the seventeenth and eighteenth century architecture. Sections of the old part of town, in ruins until recently, are now undergoing restoration.

Beyond the city walls, the fishing port, or marina area, provides the main social point of both Hondarribians and visitors. This is reached by walking down the small cobbled streets off the other side of the Armak Plaza. In one of these, the Calle Santiago in Spanish and Kompostela Kalea in Basque, is located Muara, a bar run by the left-wing Basque nationalist movement, whose entrance is marked by a black eagle<sup>104</sup> in metal on the wall and a big Basque flag, the *ikurriña* hanging above it. Further down, the tourist office, opened in 1999, displays in its window a big aerial photo of Irun, Hondarribia and Hendaia. The designation "tourist office" is written beside it Spanish, Basque, French, English, German, Portuguese and Italian, in that order. Pamphlets at the desk advertise touristic and cultural events taking place in Hondarribia, Irun and Hendaia and other parts of Iparralde and Hegoalde. But a map provided by the assistant only features Irun and Hondarribia.

The marina consists of a main street called Calle San Pedro/San Pedro Kalea, lined three storeyed buildings constructed and decorated in the Basque style with white-washed walls, green, red or blue-painted woodwork and red-tiled roofs. Originally made for the families of fishermen, they are mostly now divided into small apartments. Poplar trees line the street, along with a series of bars- *ostatuak* in Basque – and cafés, groceries, bakers, sweet shops, newsagents and a couple of clothes and paper shops, many with Basque names. There are also numerous fish restaurants, frequented by both locals and visitors. On a wall in one corner of the street, the words "Hemen Zabala hil zuten"<sup>105</sup> scrawled in fading red paint commemorate the death of JesuMari Zabala, a man from Irun killed by the Spanish police in 1976 during a demonstration in favour of an amnesty for Basque prisoners. People walking up and down the street, partially closed to traffic, stop to chat to friends and relatives and, depending on the time of day, take a drink or a pintxo at the various bars. Children and teenagers, hang out around the two sweet shops at either end of the street.

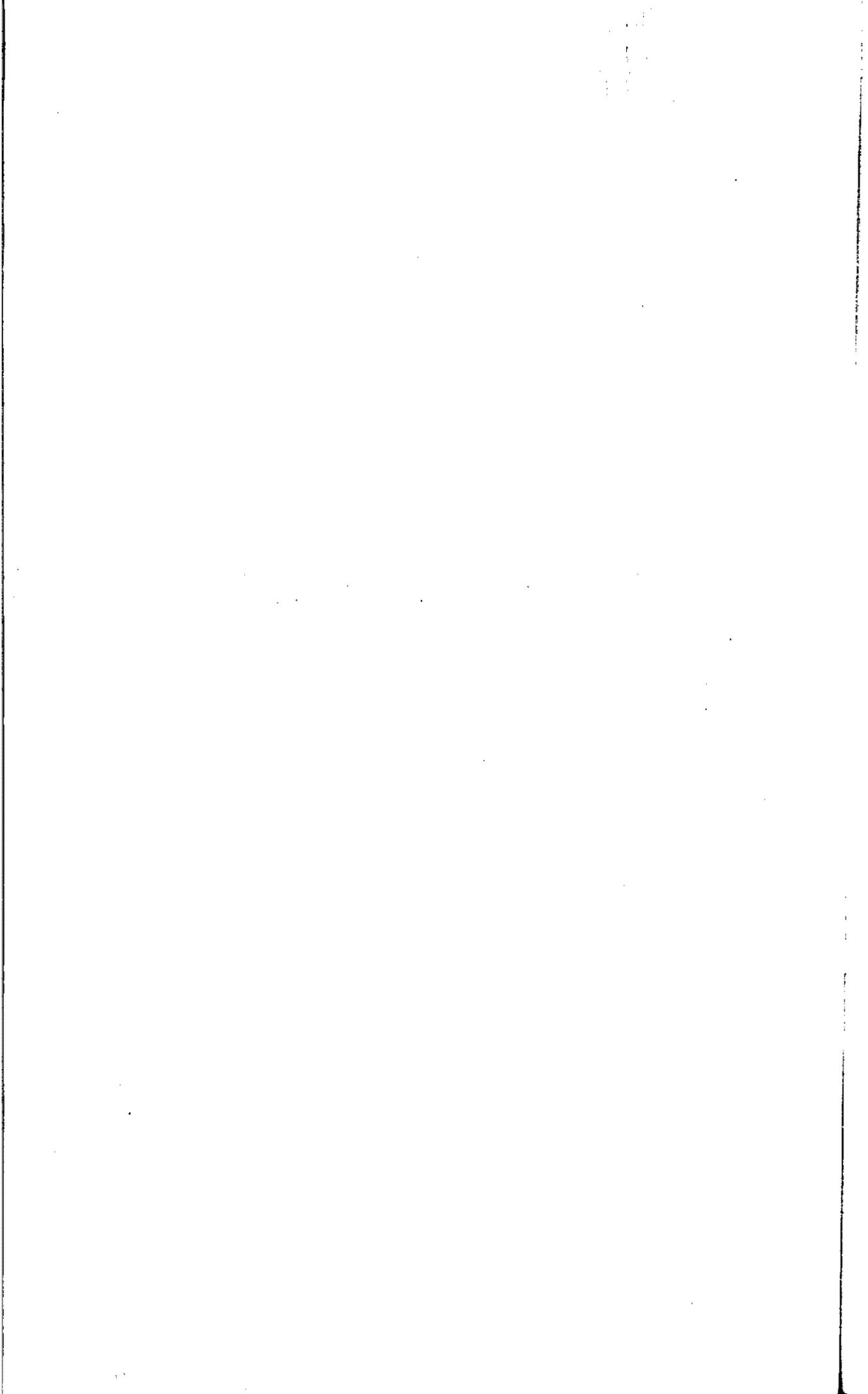
A few streets away is the old fishing port area or Benta, from where one has a good view of Hendaia. Here, until 1997, fishing boats unloaded their catch for sale. A few fishing boats are parked on the cement beside the port and close to the small early nineteenth century church dedicated to the fishermen. In 1998, the fishing port, together with the offices of the local confraternity of fishermen, the Hondarribiko Arrantzaleen Kofradia, moved to a new site beyond the mouth of the estuary and the beach area at the other end of the marina. Since this date, the jetty of the old fishing port is now used by two small local firms, one from Hondarribia, and another from Hendaia, providing a ferry service across the estuary between the two towns.

Further along the estuary towards the sea, is a walkway, the Paseo Butrón/Butron Pasalekua, lined with sophisticated cafés and bars. One of these also sells icecream and advertises its prices in French. The Calle Martxin Arzu/Martxin Arzu Kalea and Calle Almirante Alonso/Almirante Alonso Kalea, between the San Pedro Kalea and Butron Pasalekua, also have shops and trendy bars. Two businesses on this street, a veterinary clinic and a driving school, have the word Txingudi as part of their name. Close to the beach is a large residential area of villas and apartment blocks, which has grown steadily since the 1970s. Some of them, built in the late 1990s, have classic Basque names such as BistaEder, Eguzkian and Lau Haize.<sup>106</sup> This residential

<sup>104</sup> The black eagle is the symbol of the medieval king of Nafarroa Sancho the Great. It is used in Basque left-wing nationalist circles as an aspiration to Basque unity and sovereignty which is believed to have existed under his rule.

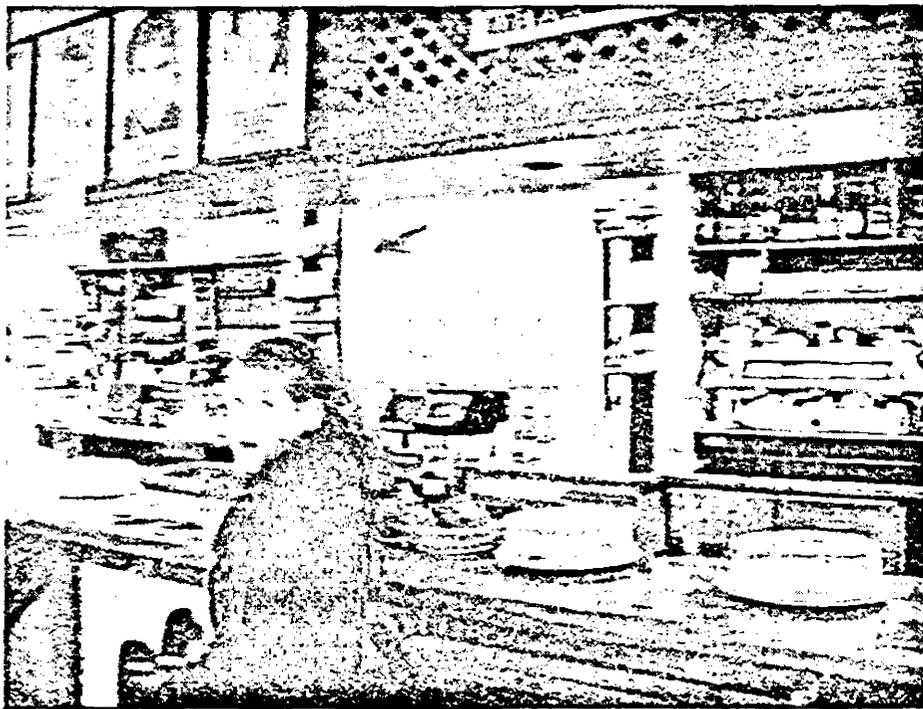
<sup>105</sup> Meaning in Basque "Here they killed Zabala".

<sup>106</sup> Meaning "Beautiful view", "In the sun" and "The four winds".

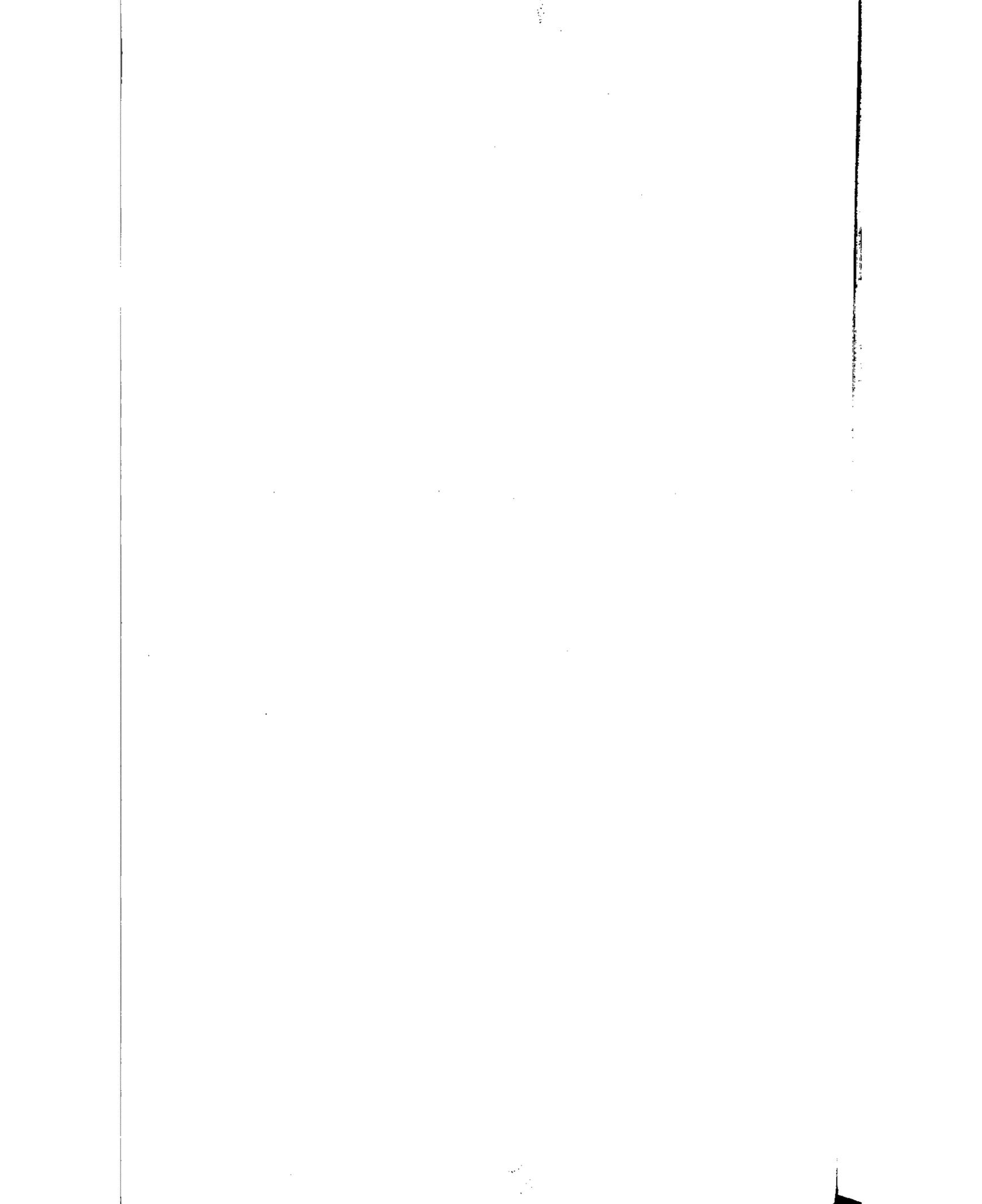




Entrance to Muara bar, Hondarribia, with the black eagle and ikurriña



Having a drink in Muara. Note decorations, with portraits of Basque 'political prisoners' and a poster calling for 'Independence'.



area is fast developing, encroaching upon the green fields that were once farmland. Amongst these houses, are the two buildings making up the ikastola of Hondarribia, called Talaia. One of the roads leads into a range of hills called Jaizkibel, on one of whose tops is a chapel dedicated to the Virgin of Guadalupe, the patron of Hondarribia.

Going back in the direction of Irun, banners bearing the text "Euskal Presoak Euskal Herrira", calling for the return home of Basque prisoners, hang from the lampposts. The roundabout of San Kristobal, adorned with a small fountain and a flagpole bearing an ikurriña, leads into Arana Goiri Kalea, the main road along the estuary. On the left, beyond the old town of Hondarribia, is the airport, sign-posted aeropuerto/aireportua in both Spanish and Basque, and beyond it are industrial warehouses and stores selling building materials. A pet shop nearby advertises its name Txingudi in small green and black letters. Until 2001, much of the land to the right of the road was marshland interspersed with small vegetable patches, providing a visible break between the towns of Irun and Hondarribia. More recently, however, the area has been made over to the construction of a series of low-rent apartment blocks, as part of a social plan of the municipal council of Hondarribia and Basque government social legislation requirements. As a result, the delimitation between Hondarribia and Irun is becoming less and less clear.

As our tour of the three towns has shown, each has its own character, but each is also very much marked both by features relating to the state of which it is part and by expressions of Basque identity. In Hendaia, for example, the town's French character is visually very evident but many street names and road signs are in both French and Basque. Although French is the only officially recognized language in France, municipalities are free to put up road signs in both French and Basque if they wish, and Hendaia has done so. Things have not gone so far as in Irun and Hondarribia, however, where most roadsigns have been bilingual since the 1980s, reflecting the fact that both Basque and Spanish are official languages in Euskadi. In the same vein, while in Iparralde the names of streets and public buildings continue to be named after French public figures, in Hegoalde, many places once called after Spanish public figures have been rebaptised with Basque names.

Differences reflecting Hendaia's location on the French side of the frontier and the location of Irun and Hondarribia on the Spanish side are also evident in many other respects, from the opening and closing times of shops and bars, to differences in aesthetics, social behaviour and taste in food and drink. All five senses come into play when experiencing these differences. In the streets of Irun and Hondarribia, one's nose may be assailed by the scent of eau de cologne worn by many people, an unfamiliar smell in Hendaia. The bakery smells in a Hendaian bakery are different from those in an Irunian one. Lunchtime smells in Irun and Hondarribia tend to be dominated by the odour of frying olive oil, while in Hendaia, it is often the distinct smell of *steak-frites*, beef steak and chips, that fills the air.

Sounds are also markedly different. Hendaia remains quiet most of the day, with little noise other than the sound of traffic on the Avenue Charles de Gaulle. As from 7.00 p.m., the time to start preparing the evening meal, even this noise dies down. Meanwhile, Irun and Hondarribia, having been lively all day with the sound of people chatting in the streets and cars and motorbikes driving around, carries on being active in the evening. People take pre-dinner drinks and, on the weekend, the bars carry on being lively till well into the early morning.

While French Basque cooking has its own specialities, I often heard people from both Iparralde and Hegoalde comment that if one wants a 'real' eating experience, one is better off in Hegoalde.

Spanish Basque food is often evoked as more attractive than the food on offer in Iparralde. Going out for *tapas*, for example, involving standing in a bar picking at small intricately prepared dishes, is a ritual fundamental to the concept of eating in Hegoalde and unmatched in Iparralde. Hendaians, when thinking about a meal out, often think of Spanish Basque food, attracted by the experience of being in a lively Spanish Basque restaurant. Likewise, inhabitants of Hegoalde, rather than considering eating out in Iparralde, often prefer enjoying the liveliness of their own bars and restaurants. Indeed, something often remarked in the area is that if you want peace and quiet, you are best advised to go to Iparralde.

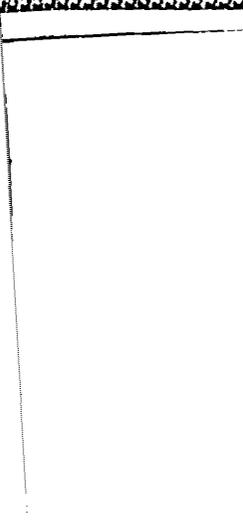
Differences between Hegoalde and Iparralde are also evident locally in the way people dress and present themselves. In Hendaia, clothes shops focus on American-style sweaters, jeans and anoraks, while in Irun and Hondarribia they vary between a rather conservative homogenous style, with dark greens, brown, black, burgundy and purple, and funky surf wear. During my fieldwork, the fashion among many young people in Hegoalde was large bell-bottomed trousers and tight surftops for girls and baggy surf trousers and sweatshirts with the label showing - either made in Hegoalde or in classic Australian or American styles - for boys. Amongst the slightly older generations, the darker and more sober dress stand out. To match these clothes, many women wear plentiful makeup, consisting of much foundation, eyeshadow and lipstick. Many also wear their hair long, and older women have it permed. In Iparralde, by contrast, the sense of fashion is not so distinct, although young people are equally keen on surfwear.



Old man with beret on market day in Urdanibia Plaza, Irun.

Members of an association supporting Basque 'political' prisoners' setting up their stall in preparation of the festivities in Hondarria. Blown up pictures of some of these prisoners hang from the old fish market.





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## Chapter Four: Frontier and Boundaries - a Segmented Community

*A burly man of about sixty years of age walks into the town hall of Hendaia and, looking both confused and amused, goes up to the desk of the "état civil", the civil register officer. There, he addresses himself to Claude Urrutia, one of the employees, standing behind the desk. "Hey, I need you to tell me..." the man exclaims in Spanish: "What in God's name do I do with this?" He brandishes a French identity card and, then, still laughing, pulls out another identity card, which is Spanish. Mr. Urrutia, visibly accustomed to this kind of situation, patiently explains to the man his rights as a holder of French nationality.*

*Once the man has gone, Mr. Urrutia tells me: "We get a lot of these cases. People who for some reason or other, marriage, born in one country or another etc, have dual nationality. And some just get completely confused over it. Others, of course, know it is an advantage. I remember a cousin of mine who has both and lives in Hendaye... when, over twenty years ago, we would cross the frontier to go out in the bars there, on the way there and on the way back, the Spanish police and then the French police would stop us to check our papers, and my cousin, in order to avoid complications, would always show his French I.D. And they would just let us pass. Easy. Showing your Spanish I.D. would cause an endless list of problems, what with checks for terrorists and so on."*

*"There is a lot of playing around here with such legal documents," Mr. Urrutia continues, "When you have a residence card in another EU country of which you don't have the nationality, you can vote in the elections for the European Parliament. Some people, although normally it is illegal, have two residence cards, because they live here and also across the frontier... things like that. And they vote twice in the parliamentary elections. Which is illegal of course..!" Mr. Urrutia proceeds to explain to me the various other advantages in living in a frontier area for tax paying and social service benefits. Depending on one's income, assets and whether one has more than one child,<sup>107</sup> it may be worthwhile for a person to obtain residence by buying or renting a home on one or other side of the frontier so as to be taxed less or to benefit from cheaper and better social services. It is not uncommon in Bidasoa-Txingudi to find people living in Irun or Hondarribia and paying taxes there but holding an extra bank account in Hendaia or having a car with a French number plate.*

### The Muga

Leizaola, in her study of how the frontier between Iparralde and Hegoalde is interpreted in the minds of the Basque population (1999), highlights the phenomenon of dual nationality in the area, and in particular the strategy of *frantses egin*, literally 'making oneself French', in which some inhabitants of Hegoalde through marriage or for some other reason, such as having parents with Spanish and French nationality, acquire French nationality. This strategy is not exclusively one way however, as some people from the French side of the frontier also acquire Spanish nationality though this is not so common, due to the general attraction to France over the years for political refuge, employment and better social services. Describing "a people used to juggling between two states without ceasing to feel belonging to a community and identifying themselves as such"<sup>108</sup> (1999:116), Leizaola suggests that the people's sense of border identity enables them

<sup>107</sup> France has more interesting social benefits for people with two children or more or who are invalid.

<sup>108</sup> "una gente habituada a hacer malabares entre dos estados sin que por ello deje de sentirse una comunidad y a identificarse como tal" (the English text is my translation).

to feel at ease with both state contexts, without necessarily feeling any strong state national identity.

That is not to say that the notion of the frontier, or *muga* in Basque, is diminished or ignored. On the contrary, it plays an important role in Basque consciousness in a number of distinctive ways. By dividing the Basque Country between two states, the state frontier is the political and administrative reality that formalises a dis-united Basque Country or Euskal Herria. For Basque nationalists, it is the ultimate obstacle to their goals of a united Euskal Herria. Its existence is evoked in many songs and poems of the last two centuries harking back to a romantic and legendary past when the Basques were a free people. This is well illustrated in the poems of 'Orixe', an early twentieth century poet who was commissioned by the Basque government in 1934 to produce what became the 'epic' (Urla, 1987:79) of Basque traditional nationalist aspirations, *Euskaldunak Poema* (1972). An extract, for example, goes,

"Let us call the Basque language a neckerchief and the river Bidasoa a pair of scissors. The latter is only a small stream. Imagine were it the sea. The seven (provinces) are close to each other. They call the frontier the Pass. Why can we not be one complete family? ... Everyone knows that Euskal Herria is one and whole. The part on that side of the frontier is not Spain, nor is the other part France. The frontier is like a neckerchief, which hardly touches the skin. Even though one has it on one's shoulders, one's body remains the same. Nor are the frontiers between each sister marked, because of the unity of the language"<sup>109</sup> (1972:195).

More recently, a popular rock band from Hendaia, Skunk, continues to emphasise this lack of difference between either side of the frontier. The chorus of one of their songs goes: "This is not France, this is not Spain. This is Euskal Herria."<sup>110</sup>

But the *muga* also has positive connotations of centrality within the context of perceptions of the Basque Country as a whole. In conversation, many people, whether of nationalist leanings or merely as a matter of 'political correctness' in the local environment, avoid references to the French and Spanish states by using the terms *Iparralde* and *Hegoalde*. In this alternative definition of geopolitical space, the word *muga* fulfils a function in the delimitation of the provinces, here marking the meeting point of *Lapurdi* and *Gipuzkoa*. So for example, the left-wing nationalist newspaper *Gara* makes a distinction between the frontier, as a boundary imposed by the two states, and Euskal Herria's 'natural boundaries', those of the provinces.

As Descheemaeker has pointed out (1950:150), the word *muga* is also used to refer to boundaries negotiated and agreed upon by local populations. Indeed, several scholars including Descheemaeker have noted that, before the establishment of the frontier between French and Spanish territory, the word *muga* was used to refer to the demarcation lines, marked by landmarks or by natural frontiers such as rivers, that defined the areas in which local inhabitants enjoyed rights to pasture, fishing and hunting (Zubiaur Carreño, 1977; Gomez-Ibáñez, 1975:44-5). They were also known in Spanish as *facerías*, contracts between neighbouring villages sharing land and various natural resources (Fairén-Guillén, 1955:507; Descheemaeker, 1950). One such accepted frontier was formed by the river Bidasoa, long before it was identified in 1659 as part of the state frontier between French and Spanish territory. Many of these *facerías* still exist today, even

<sup>109</sup> The original version of this extract of the poem: "Oso ta bakar Euskalerrria dela edozeinek daki; mugaz angoa Espani ez da, emengo au ere ez Prantzi. Lepoan zapi duela, doi uki dio axala; gorputza lengo ber-bera dula zur denak esan dezala. Aizpa banaren mugarik ere ez, izkuntza batago dala: izketa-muga ezin ebaki guraizeekin bezala." My translation into English.

<sup>110</sup> "Hau ez da Frantzia, hau ez da Espania, Euskal Herria da".

across the Franco-Spanish frontier (Fernández de Casadevante, 1989). So, for example, the inhabitants of the valley of Aldude in Behe Nafarroa continue to be allowed to have their cattle graze in a mountain pasture area a few kilometres away on the other side of the frontier in Nafarroa.

These mugak have occupied a central role in Basque tradition, featuring in folk tales that recount instances of mutual assistance, reciprocity and negotiation over the use of common land by a local population. In some cases, the inhabitants of Basque villages refused to bear arms in the service of the Spanish or French states, citing their allegiance to ancient territorial entities circumscribed by a locally accepted muga (Descheemaeker, 1950:136, Gomez-Ibáñez, 1975:44-5). Boundary stones, known as mugariak, maintained over generations, have come to form an essential part of the Basque cultural landscape. In Basque folk tales, they are given an important symbolic value, respected as references of Basque cultural space and imbued with a magic character of their own as they stand undisturbed in their natural landscape (Barandiarán, 1972a:174). In this same way, the river Bidasoa, as explained by Mr. Arrambide, representative of the Hendaian left-wing Basque nationalist group Biharko Hendaia, "for us, is not a frontier. Rather, it is a place that unites two sides."<sup>111</sup> In this same way, the boundary that marks Nafarroa from Gipuzkoa in Hegoalde, approximately ten kilometres west of Bidasoa-Txingudi, is regarded by Basque nationalists simply as an internal marker between two parts of Euskal Herria.<sup>112</sup>

So the muga has an ambiguous nature, simultaneously uniting and dividing the inhabitants of neighbouring Basque areas. This can be seen in the competition for control of natural resources in Bidasoa-Txingudi. Until the early twentieth century, the activities of Spanish and French militias during skirmishes and military campaigns in the area further polarised local relations. Fortresses were built along each side of the Bidasoa, with cannons facing each other (Lafourcade, 1998:6). Right up until the mid 1990s, the towns of Irun and Hondarribia, on the south bank, and Hendaia, on the north bank, quarrelled over fishing and transportation rights in the Bidasoa. Spanish territory ended at the north bank and Hondarribia claimed supremacy over the river. Hendaians were required to ask Hondarribia for permission to use the jetties on the north bank (Michelena, 1997). Despite a common language, shared traditions and the fact that many families had close relatives living on the other side of the muga – in this case the Bidasoa – a sense of difference between the two communities was formed well before any demarcation of Spanish and French territory (Lefèbvre, 1933).

### The Frontier

Indeed, it was not until 1856-66, with the Treaty of Limits and the Treaty of Bayonne, that a formal demarcation line was agreed between the two states. These treaties fixed the position of the border in the middle of the Bidasoa's current at low tide, simultaneously demarcating the fishing zones of either side and rights to control passage up and down the river. With these treaties came border guards. From 1861 onwards, it was no longer legal for people to take goods across the border without paying some kind of tax. Smuggling began to thrive as an extra economic activity among many of the border population.

Throughout the nineteenth century, and particularly during the two Carlist Wars, not just goods but arms and people were smuggled across the muga (Peillen, 1998:116-18). During the First and Second World Wars, men with French nationality crossed into Spain from Iparralde to avoid military conscription or to join the flow of refugees from Nazi persecution. In the opposite

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<sup>111</sup> Interview November 1999.

<sup>112</sup> Based on interviews.

direction, during and after the Spanish civil war of 1936-39, thousands of people fled from Spain to France, many settling just beyond the frontier in Iparralde. Although many were Basques, they were not always welcomed, but rather regarded with mistrust as poor, politically dubious and undesirable newcomers.<sup>113</sup>

During the 1960s and 1970s, as Iparralde became a destination for people on the Spanish side of the frontier seeking to share in the greater economic prosperity enjoyed by France, the frontier delimited two very different socioeconomic contexts, with France perceived as a more developed and democratically emancipated country than Spain. The frontier also provided a shield for Basque nationalists from Hegoalde seeking political refuge in Iparralde. Among them were militant members of ETA who, during the Franco régime, were commonly granted refugee status by the French state, which defended them as victims of a dictatorial régime. With Spain's return to democracy in the late 1970s, however, official French attitudes began to change, and from the early 1980s onwards cooperation between the French and Spanish states in combating ETA resulted in the tracking down and killing or arrest of numerous militants and the extradition of some of these to Spain. Along with Spanish right-wing and ultra Christian groups, the GAL operated on French soil.

Different political and social conditions on either side of the frontier continue to sustain a degree of support for its existence among many people, particularly in Iparralde. Basque nationalists of Iparralde have been particularly loath to see Basque nationalists from Hegoalde interfere in their affairs, claiming that their struggle against the French state must be understood as different. They complain that Basque nationalists from Hegoalde who blindly assume Iparralde to be part of "their territory" are insensitive to the "historical and cultural differences".<sup>114</sup> As for non-nationalists, particularly in Iparralde, the frontier has a very different significance, serving as a rampart against political, social and economic pressures from the other side. During the 1980s, when ETA's war against the Spanish state spilled over into Iparralde and incidents took place in Hendaia, many inhabitants of Iparralde saw the frontier as reifying the dichotomy between the peaceful "French Basques" and the troublesome "Spanish Basques", complementing other cultural stereotypes contrasting the populations of either side.

During the period leading up to France's 1992 referendum on the Maastricht Treaty, debate in Iparralde focused on the risks posed for its inhabitants by disappearing frontiers with Hegoalde. If the direst predictions were to be believed, Iparralde risked succumbing both to the economic domination of ambitious entrepreneurs from Hegoalde<sup>115</sup> and to 'nationalist extremism' imported from Hegoalde (Letamendia, 1994:260). Basque nationalists in Iparralde were also divided on the subject of the Maastricht Treaty. While some saw in it at last a chance to free the Basque Country from French and Spanish strongholds, others were sceptical as to its actual benefits for the Basque Country, as they saw in the EU yet another potential form of capitalist and imperialist control. Different kinds of fears affected contemplation of an 'open Europe'.

Finally, while 53.4% of voters in the département des Pyrénées Atlantiques voted in favour of the Maastricht Treaty, support was lower in the Basque municipalities close to the frontier (Darré, 1994:201), reflecting the extra vulnerability felt by border inhabitants. In the village of Biriatu, on the French side of the frontier at the point where it is crossed by the motorway linking France to northern Spain, 55.9% of voters opposed the Maastricht Treaty. In nearby Hendaia, by contrast,

<sup>113</sup> Based on interviews with people who experienced this change.

<sup>114</sup> *Enbata* 19 October 2000 No. 1648 P. 2.

<sup>115</sup> A phrase famously uttered by the ex-mayor of Miaritze, Henri Grenet, member of the more conservative section of UDF, in the early 1990s, "ils vont nous bouffer" (they will gobble us up) sums up the suspicion felt by many inhabitants of Iparralde.

mayor Raphael Lassalette saw the Maastricht Treaty in a positive light, in spite of recognising the great economic shock it would have on the local economy which largely depended on the activity generated by frontier controls, and urged voters to say yes to it, with the result that the 'no' vote was lower, at 49.2% (Darré, 1994:201). This suggests a more widespread recognition on the part of Hendaïans of the benefits that opening of the frontier could eventually have on the local economy.

However, even today, many people in Iparralde continue to regard people in Hegoalde and further afield in Spain as the "raucous" and "brutish" "Spanish people",<sup>116</sup> in line with the once widespread French perception of Spain as an archaic, politically and economically weak and isolated place, reflecting its outflow of immigrants into France during the 1960s. So, in spite of the Basque culture common to either side of the frontier, reserve vis-à-vis the 'other' continues to affect political and economic relations between them.

### Frontiers and borders

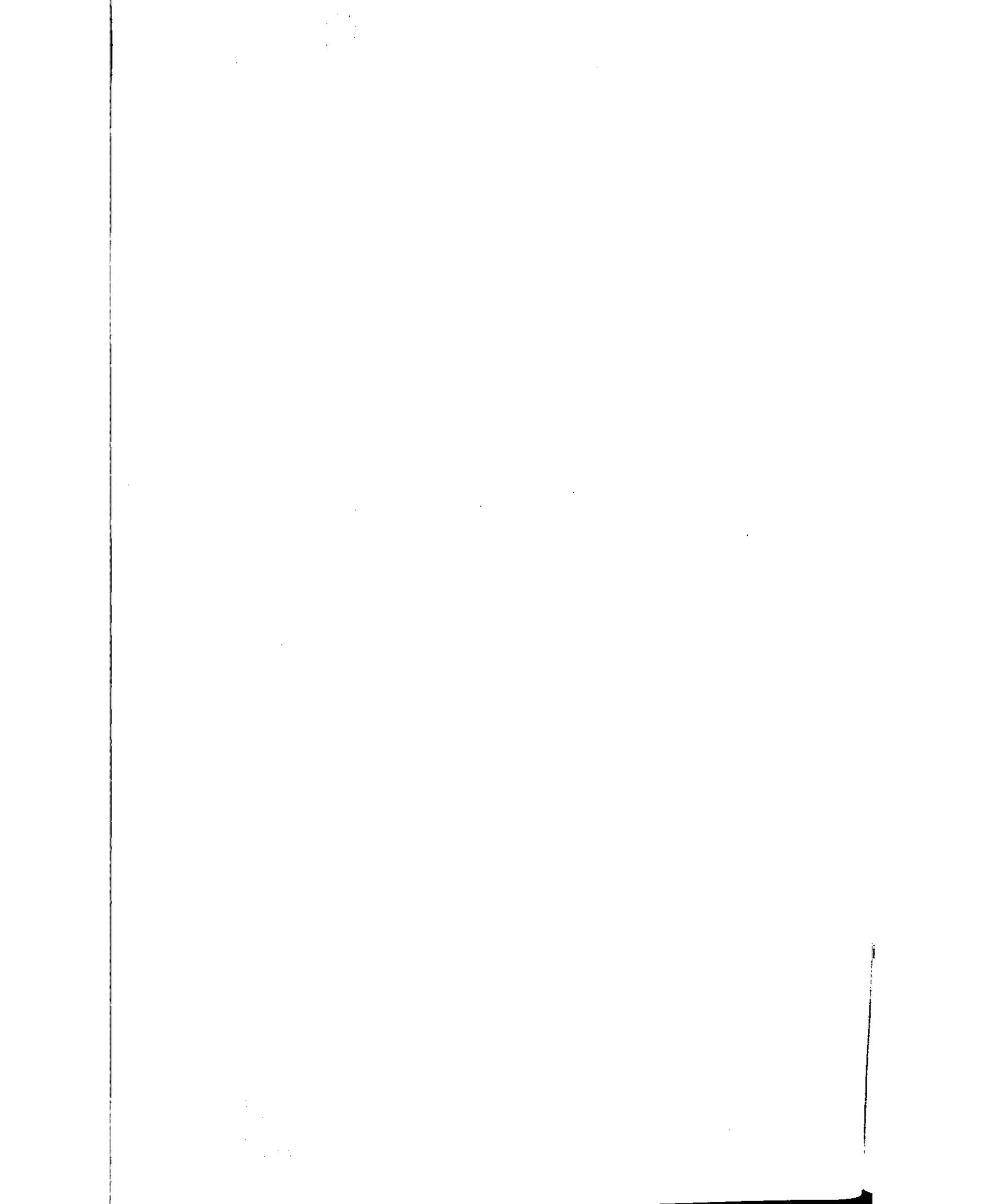
Frontiers are classically associated with the notion of the modern nation-state. The frontier is generally regarded as a physical demarcation, defining where the territory of one state ends and that of another begins (Anderson, 1996:1-3). They are, according to political scientist Malcolm Anderson, "the basic political institution: no rule-bound economic, social or political life in advanced societies could be organised without them" (Anderson, 1998:4). As a representation of the territorial limits of the state, the frontier has also conventionally been understood as the circumscription of the territory within which the residing population feels identified with the state and shares in a 'national' identity. Geographers have played an important role in opening the way for this appreciation of border areas as locations with a social and political dynamic very different from that of non-frontier zones (Prescott, 1987). Their analysis has helped political and social scientists to appreciate the frontier as having a particular role in the formation of a sense of difference between populations on either side of it and in the creation of the 'nation' in line with the state of which either side forms part.

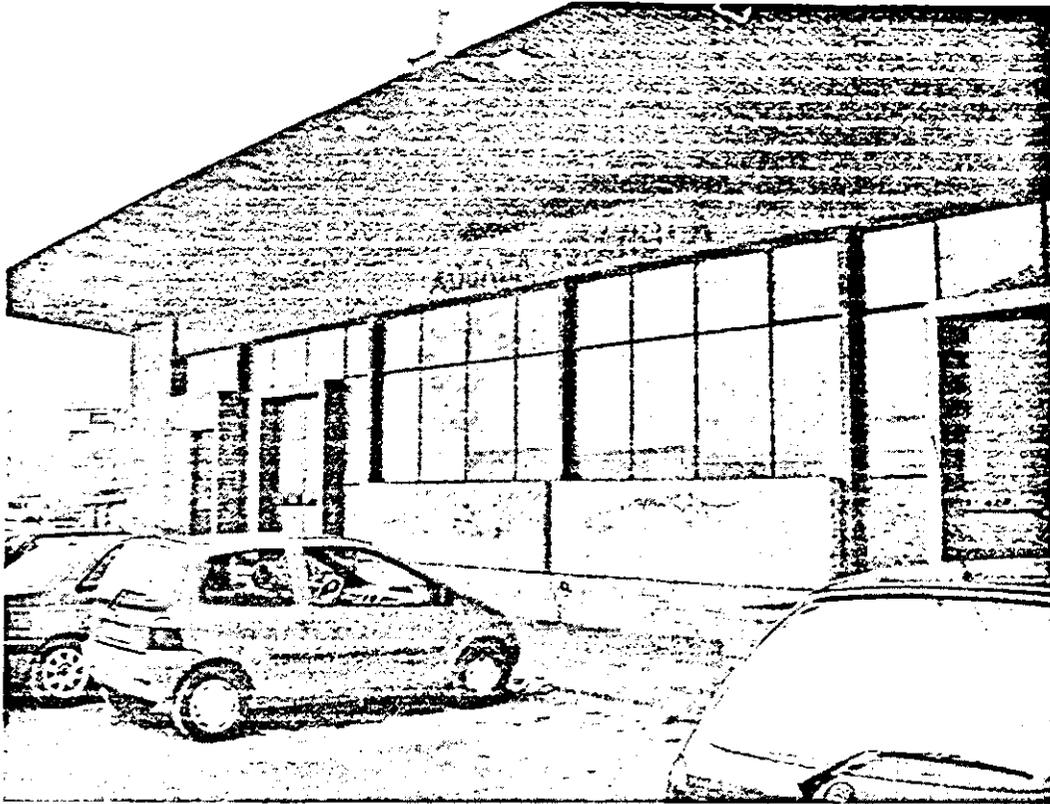
The area on the other side of an international border often has a peculiar quality of no-man's land. It is a space that is 'betwixt and between' two distinctly culturally marked territories. The frontier, as a mere transit point, presents itself as, what Augé (1995) has called, a *non-lieu*, a non-place that is not culturally defined (1995:34) but rather a social space of its own (1995:82). Lavie and Swedenbourg see in border zones sites of "creative cultural creolization, places where criss-crossed identities are forged out of the debris of corroded, formerly (would-be) homogenous identities" and where one experiences the "feeling of being trapped in an impossible in-between" (1996:15).

Indeed, a particular characteristic of borders as social spaces is the way in which local populations live with the state frontier as a factor in their daily existence. This has led to the concept of 'border identity' as some kind of unique sense of self found amongst inhabitants of border areas (Wilson and Donnan, 1998).<sup>117</sup> As a space where two or more states meet and end, the border is an area in which the presence of the state in the human landscape is particularly evident. Elements that identify the state, from the language of road signs and advertisements to the style of urban architecture and the uniforms of state officialdom, are visible in abundance until they suddenly cease at the frontier. This makes it starkly evident to the person crossing that he or she is going from one particular space to another. Just as in ritual passages, this change in context obliges the

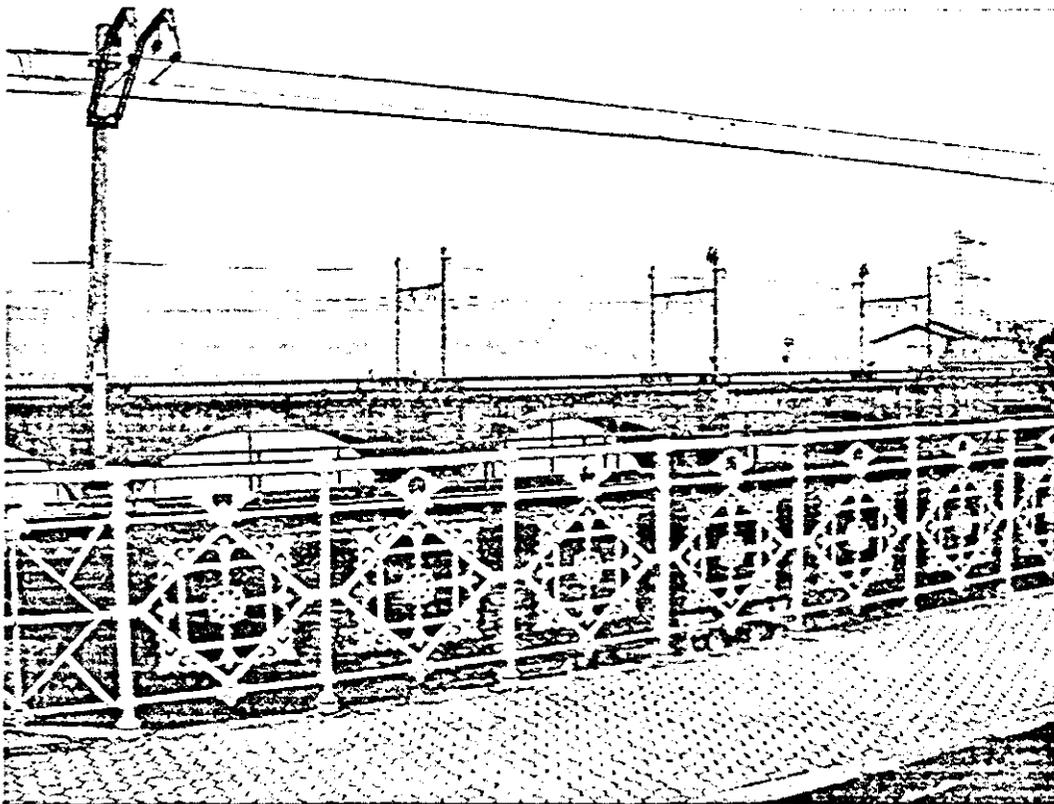
<sup>116</sup> Based from observation. I gathered comments from French speakers in Hendaïa such as "ces espagnols, qui font pleins de bruit tout le temps", "des brutes", "impolis" and "extrovertis".

<sup>117</sup> See also project consortium on 'Changing Identities, Changing Nations, Changing Stories in European Border Communities' on <http://www.borderidentities.com> funded by the EU Fifth Framework Programme

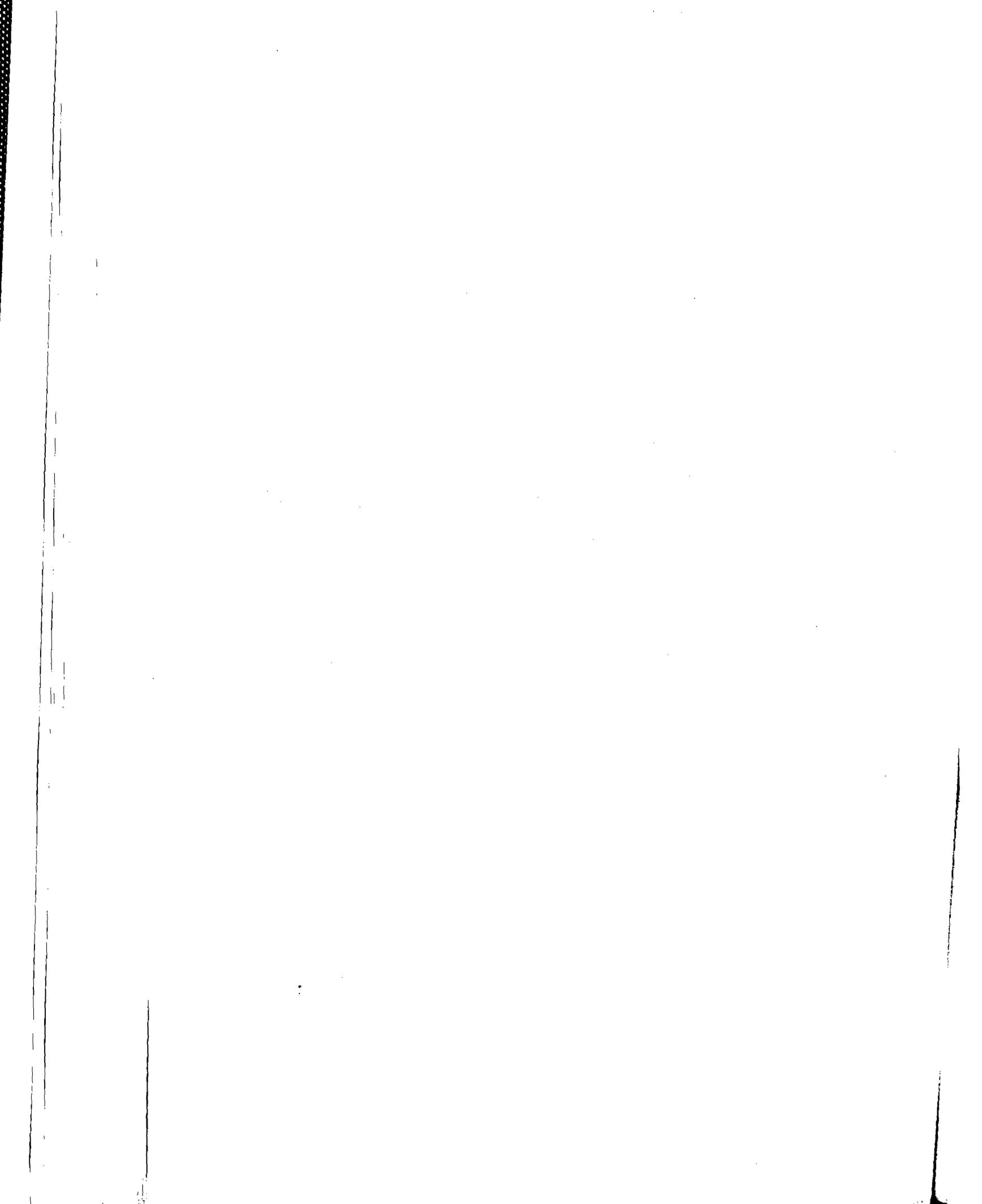




Derelict customs booth by the frontier in Irun with graffiti in support of ETA.



View over the railway bridge and topo bridge of Hondarribia from the International Bridge between Irun and Hendaia.



individual to reflect on his or her position in relation to the changing environment (Van Gennep, 1960).<sup>118</sup>

In the political sciences, concerned as they are more with the larger political and institutional consequences of frontiers, borders in Europe have traditionally been regarded as mere peripheral zones, assumed to have a 'static' or 'frozen' quality (Anderson, 1996:3). As from the late 1980s, however, the Schengen Agreement of the EU brought about a change in the nature and perception of borders. Many border areas have become sites of active economic and cultural interchange (Eg Ricq, 1992; Leresche, 1995). This has aroused new interest among both state and institutional political theorists and policy makers. With the breakdown of border controls, local institutions and organisations on either side of frontiers have begun forging stronger links of cross-border cooperation. This trend has been particularly encouraged by financial assistance from the EU, in the form of the INTERREG programme specifically geared in the economic development of peripheral regions and border areas (O'Dowd and Wilson, 1996:12-3). This new dynamism of border areas has prompted some theorists to talk of an erosion of the sovereignty of the modern nation-state, from above by the construction of Europe, and from below by the greater self-assertion of localities and other sub-national authorities (Loughlin, 1994). As discrete socio-economic areas providing fertile ground for different cultural, economic and political discourses and as potentially new dynamic areas in the wider context of the EU, European borders have lately attracted increasing interest on the part of researchers in the political and economic sciences and legal studies.<sup>119</sup>

Borders are interesting not just as sites permitting the construction and interplay of competing national identities but as contexts in which to explore both the multivocality and the multilocality of place. Place after all, is given meaning by human interpretation (Eg Lavie and Swedenbourg, 1996:18; Douglass, 1998:90; Rodman, 1998). It acquires a multiplicity of meanings through diverse and often competing views of the geographical landscape, which, at the end of the day, is inherently social. While the frontier is and remains a real dividing line in political and social terms, it also has significance in symbolic terms as a boundary relevant to individuals in their construction and expression of personal identity. Crossing the frontier means different things to different people (Cohen, 1998:28). While some people are very much aware of moving from one context to another, others can remain largely unaware of it. In some cases, this can be a source of frustration for people who regard the frontier as an important line of demarcation. Cohen, for example, comments on how he would wish English people to be more conscious of the fact that they have crossed some kind of boundary and entered another social context when they come from England to Scotland. This remark is illustrative of the different and often competing use of symbols. I add to Cohen's remark that it may not be so much a question of English people being unaware of their crossing the border but rather of actually not wanting to recognise it, as part of their self assertion in what they believe to be their space.

Stereotypes referring to the people originating from either side of the border also persist amongst the general population, irrespective of Basque consciousness or familiarity with inhabitants of the other side of the border. As I mentioned earlier, in Irun and Hondarribia, it is common to hear people refer in a derogatory manner to people from Iparralde as gabachos, generalising about the arrogant and imperialistic attitude of 'the French'. In Hendaia, I have often heard long-time inhabitants complain about the way in which recently established 'Spanish' residents treat the town as a mere extension of their own territory. Their persistence in codes of behaviour typical of Hegoalde rather than Iparralde and their failure to make any effort to speak French amount to a

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<sup>118</sup> Following Van Gennep's description of a three part structure of the rites of passage, transition and incorporation, the individual leaves his familiar 'habitus' to go through a process of liminality and finally to be reincorporated into a new or different social world as a renewed self.

<sup>119</sup> Examples for the Basque Country: Letamendia et al. (1994); Cambot (1998); Jáuregui et al. (1997).

refusal, deliberate or unconscious, to acknowledge that they have crossed not only a state border but a socio-cultural border.

At the same time, however, many Irunians and Hondarribians complained to me about a similar failure on the part of 'French people' to adapt to local customs when they came onto 'their side'. I was also able to witness instances myself, for example in the case of a group of French-speaking middle-aged men and women in a popular bar in Irun behaving in a noisy manner which made them stand out from the rest of the crowd. The act of crossing the frontier can be taken by some as an opportunity to change or shed one's disguise, so to say, in order to behave in a way that one would not habitually. Influenced by a popular image of romantic, hot-blooded Spain, many French people may also think this is the way to behave, or to feel more liberated, when on the other side of the frontier and separated from their habitual sociocultural references.

However, a distinction can also be drawn between 'French people' and those people who are of French nationality but who identify with Basque markers. Such a possibility of difference in behaviour on the part of 'real' French people – gabachos – and French Basques has also been seized upon as part of the nostalgic Basque nationalist discourse. So, for example, Koldo Barros, an EH representative on the municipal council of Irun, during a working group of which the Partzuergo was one of the co-hosts,<sup>120</sup> brought up the subject of the gabacho stereotype and pointed out that "we must be careful in Hegoalde when we use the word gabatxo, complaining about them coming to invade us in the summer etc. Just take a minute to look at the number plates of most of their cars – indeed they are French, the majority of them have 33 (for the département de la Gironde whose capital is Bordeaux) or 40 (for the département des Landes) on them." "Most then," he concluded, "are not from Iparralde." So Mr. Barros drew a boundary between the French and the Basques of Iparralde in an effort to group all Basques together.

The role of the state frontier as a boundary in determining issues of identity is more complex for the inhabitants of border areas than it is for people from other parts of the state territory, and examples of local multi-layered uses of the frontier as boundary can be found even amongst Basque nationalists. For example, the destructive street violence, or *kale borroka*, of some young Basque nationalist militants from Hegoalde during the October 2000 demonstrations against a European Council summit meeting in Miarritze sparked criticism among Iparralde nationalists who expressed their concern that this could prove harmful to their cause and their regret at the lack of sensitivity of their Hegoalde counterparts to the different nature of nationalist politics on the French side of the muga.<sup>121</sup> In another example, I witnessed a surprising change of behaviour in relation to myself and some friends on the part of some left-wing nationalist youths from Hegoalde whom we encountered in Iparralde. After having taken no notice of us in the bars of Hondarribia and Irun, where we had seen them on numerous occasions, they suddenly adopted an attitude of friendly familiarity with us on seeing us in similar bars in Iparralde. As one of my friends remarked with some cynicism, "they completely ignore us when they see us in Hondarribia, and now that we find ourselves across the border, they suddenly think we are the best of friends". In spite of these youths' fervent Basque nationalist discourse and their insistence on treating either side of Euskal Herria as their home, crossing the border evidently produced a particular effect on them. Their lack of identification with Iparralde and their perception of it as a different space were revealed by the alteration in their behaviour. This is also revealed in other instances by the ignorance and clichéd attitudes concerning Iparralde of some Hegoalde nationalists. Despite comments are about how 'sweet' and 'pretty' and 'simple' Iparralde is, their knowledge of the area often goes no further than

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<sup>120</sup> July 2000, Salle Antoine d'Abbadie, Hendaia.

<sup>121</sup> See for example article in *Enbata* "Editorial: Nous sommes sinistrés" 19 October 2000, No. 1648, p. 2.

the main coastal towns, in spite of their commitment to knowing all that is 'necessary' about the history of Euskal Herria in its entirety.

As these examples illustrate, while frontiers and borders define the limits of contiguous societies, boundaries are abstract divisions which appear routinely not just between cultures but between individuals who, despite sharing similar cultural markers, interpret these abstract divisions differently. By looking at how boundaries are transformed by individuals, we can begin to understand the qualitative and diverse nature of collective boundaries. While frontiers are political spaces objectively marking which state the areas on either side belong to, boundaries are subjective referents of the frontiers. As a 'social fact', the frontier is given meaning when a person consciously or unconsciously makes it into a symbolic boundary for his or her own strategies (Cohen, 1998:28-9). How the individual interprets and uses the frontier as a symbolic boundary will depend on how that person feels in the particular context of his or her social interaction, the nature of the situation, and the interests and objectives he or she seeks. A personal symbolic struggle is taken on by the individual in his or her attempt to identify with or disassociate from a certain 'reality' or social group.

Anderson (1996), in a review of the changing use of the concepts of frontier, border and boundary in the political sciences, makes a clear distinction between the three. In his definition, the frontier applies not only to the precise demarcation line where two State jurisdictions meet, but to the area around it (1996:8-9). In this way, he understands the frontier as a zone of contact in which neighbouring populations maintain relations of contiguity. The border, by contrast, is taken by Anderson to mean both the demarcation line and the zone around it, marked by the changing presence of the relevant states, while the boundary is used to refer to the actual line of delimitation (1996:8-9).

These definitions stand in stark contrast to the definitions attributed in the anthropological discipline. Anthropology makes a distinction between frontiers and borders as matters of physical political fact and boundaries as matters of consciousness and experience. I shall follow Cohen (1994a, 1994b, 1998) in my use of the terms frontier, border and boundary as conceptual tools, limiting the term frontier strictly to its geographical and legal applications as a delimitation of state jurisdictions and using border to refer to the area on and close to the frontier whose landscape is affected by the presence of man in all its different ways. As for the term 'boundary', following Cohen, I will use it as a basis for social differentiation. Contrary to the other terms, which are specific and geographical, a boundary is abstract and symbolic and individually interpretable (Cohen, 1998:25-6). As such, boundaries are differently interpretable and manipulable, by both social groups and individuals. Using this concept of boundaries as symbolic manifestations of difference, we can analyse how certain people see and act within a certain reality of space, such as that of the frontier or the border and their social world in general.

#### Borders in anthropological study

In the social sciences, the study of borders in Europe has only recently attracted the attention of researchers.<sup>122</sup> This can largely be related to the broader debate about globalisation and the demise of the nation-state as the preeminent political structure of modernity. As the realms of society, culture, politics and economics become increasingly boundless and translocal, the analysis of notions of the self in the context of discrete cultural units and neatly identifiable socio-political groupings has been brought into question. Nonetheless, the physical structures of territory and government remain an everyday reality, continuing to influence and assist in people's construction

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<sup>122</sup> For a review of border studies in the social sciences see Donnan and Wilson (1994 & 1999).

of the self. Borders are key vantage points from which to view the processes of building and redefining the states, nations and transnational networks, which comprise the new Europe. Anthropologists' concern with the study of the human being in society inevitably leads them to focus on these particular and singular spaces.

The anthropologists Cole and Wolf (1974) and the historian Sahlins (1989) played a pioneering role in the appreciation of borders as sites of interest for the social sciences. Their work served to underline the importance of borders as instrumental in the construction and expression of identity. In the Italian region of Alto Adige, Cole and Wolf (1974) noted how the inhabitants of the two neighbouring villages, one traditionally German-speaking and the other Romance-speaking, had retained their sense of different identity despite being affected by the repeated shifting of the Austrian-Italian frontier during the two World Wars. Long after the political boundaries of the Austro-Hungarian Empire had disappeared, cultural boundaries continued to divide the two villages in spite of the fact that they are now both situated within the territory of the Italian state. In everyday encounters, Cole and Wolf noted, the inhabitants of the two villages played down their differences. Yet, once in the company of their own cultural group, those of each village were quick to resort to stereotypes to explain the actions of their neighbours.

Sahlins (1989), in his study of the construction of state national identity in the Cerdanya, straddling the Franco-Spanish frontier to the East of the Pyrenees, noted how the existence of the frontier served to reinforce the formation of separate French and Spanish identities by providing a boundary across which to view the people on the other side. He observed how the inhabitants used the frontier for their own convenience, sneaking across it in order to avoid conscription and other civic obligations. This shows that the border is not just an imposer of difference, but can be used by the local inhabitants to their own advantage. From this, Sahlins proposed a model of national identity based on instrumental manipulation. When it was in their interest to associate themselves with their cross-border neighbours, local inhabitants asserted their common Cerdans identity. When it was in their interest to deny any involvement with their neighbours, for instance in situations of rivalry or political divisions, or when comparing the lifestyle, economic progress and cultural 'openness' of the contrasting state contexts, they emphasised their state national identity. With this case, Sahlins demonstrated how state national identity develops not only through the nationalisation projects of the state, but also through the interests of the local inhabitants. By incorporating the border into their social psychology over the centuries, they came to see each other as French or Spanish first and Cerdans and Catalan-speaking second; "their national disguises ended up sticking to their skin" (1989:269). From this, Sahlins has suggested a bottom-up approach to the construction of state national identity which remains relevant to analyses of identity in many border areas today.

With the recent transformation of frontiers, particularly in the EU, borders are recognised today as "meaning-making and meaning-carrying entities, parts of cultural landscapes which often transcend the physical limits of the state and defy the power of state institutions" (Donnan and Wilson, 1994:4).<sup>123</sup> Following this line of thought, recent academic analysis has focused on the "porosity", "permeability" and "ambiguity" of state borders, and on the consequences that these imply for a unified sense of state national identity (Eg Douglass, 1998, 1999; Donnan and Wilson, 1999; Wilson and Donnan, 1998). By stressing the 'blurred' quality of borders, these anthropological accounts highlight borders as particular contexts in which people of theoretically opposed notions of identity can cohabit in many domains of daily living, thereby making the distinction between state national identities redundant. Moncusí (1999), for example, in his anthropological research in the

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<sup>123</sup> In his study of the influence of the frontier in a borderland village in Nafarroa, anthropologist Douglass had already pointed out how local inhabitants had a utilitarian concept of the frontier. Not only did they use the frontier to their own advantage, for smuggling, shelter from state authorities and the like, but also, in other circumstances, ignored its existence, going back and forth and entertaining family, friendly and professional relations across it (Douglass, 1977).

Cerdanya, identified a unique kind of "reciprocal" relationship between the population on either side of the frontier in a symbiotic relationship that led to ambivalent attitudes towards French and Spanish identity (1999:127). In a similar vein, Leizaola (1999) focused on the phenomenon of dual nationality in the rural Basque border area to demonstrate the 'ambiguity' of French and Spanish national identity for some of its inhabitants and who, with such an ambiguity, claim to feel at home on either side of the frontier.

Common to the accounts of both Moncusí and Leizaola is the idea that when a common ethnic culture straddles a frontier, border inhabitants enjoy a special bond among themselves that overrides any state boundary. It remains for me to point out however that this 'sense of community' regardless of the border depends on the other processes of political and cultural boundary-drawing of the people's identity. Some people who, despite meeting the so-called ethnic criteria that make them automatically part of the 'Basque community', may not identify with Leizaola's understanding of what this is. Such differences and disparities - and political tensions thereof - will become evident throughout the ethnographic accounts in this thesis.

Over recent years, the word *muga* has come to stretch its meanings in line with the recent political and socioeconomic changes. In Basque dictionaries today it is translated to mean any kind of boundary or frontier in general, not just in the Basque context. So, in Basque, *Mugaz Gaindiko Partzuergo* literally means 'cross-frontier cooperation agreement'. The use in this case of the word *muga* is far from that understood by a Basque tradition and Basque nationalist ideas. It brings the word to the level of inter state relations in the context of the EU. While Basque nationalists are happy with the projection of *Euskal Herria* on the European scene and the rapprochement between *Iparralde* and *Hegoalde* that the *Partzuergo* entails, they criticise the use of the word as part of the name of the cooperation agreement, arguing that it is a contradiction in terms; just when the *Partzuergo* is supposed to be talking about union, it maintains the existence of a frontier through the use of the word in its name.<sup>124</sup>

I shall look beyond the political connotations of the *muga* in order to assess its importance, along with other boundaries, in the context of local identity formation. In the Basque Country, the *muga* is a focus for border-crossing rituals on the part of Basque nationalist movements. Road signs by the border marking French and Spanish territory are often painted out. On the bridge between Irun and Hendaia for example, these are often 'corrected' with the marking of "Gipuzkoa" and "Lapurdi". In early 2001, the restoration of a stone by famous Basque sculptor Jorge Oteiza on the part of the municipality of Irun on the Santiago bridge joining onto Hendaia caused much polemic because of the words 'España' and 'France' engraved on it. The annual day of the Basque homeland, *Aberri Eguna*, involving a big gathering of Basque nationalist supporters from both *Hegoalde* and *Iparralde*, has often deliberately been held close to the border. In April 1996, this celebration began in Hendaia and ended across the *muga* in Irun.<sup>125</sup> In October 2000, the EAJ, whose headquarters are in *Hegoalde*, organised a gathering for its supporters in Hendaia in parallel to a European Council summit meeting that was taking place in *Miarritze*. By holding this meeting in *Iparralde*, the chairman of the EAJ, Xabier Arzallus, was making a symbolic statement on the right of the Basque people as a nation to be represented at such a European summit, and of support for this objective in both *Iparralde* and *Hegoalde*.

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<sup>124</sup> Interviews with Robert Arrambide, representative of *Biharko Hendaia*, Koldo Barros and Joxean Elosegi, EH councillors in Irun and Ion Elizalde and Marije Zapirain, EA and EH councillors in *Hondarribia* respectively.

<sup>125</sup> It is important - and rather amusing - to note that this conveniently worked that way round rather than vice-versa *Irun-Hendaia*. By ending in Irun, the participants were able to happily end the day eating and drinking out in the lively bar area of the *Urdanibia Plaza*, an area of Irun particularly frequented by left-wing Basque nationalist sympathists.

Another example of this ritualisation of border-crossing can be found in the Korrika, the marathon relay race organised by AEK. Weaving its way through both Hegoalde and Iparralde, the Korrika mobilises crowds of supporters on its way. As I was able to witness myself on the occasion of the Korrika on 6 April 2001, crossing the state frontier is a moment of great excitement, expressing a defiance of state division and a sign of Basque communication and unity. The baton is passed on to the next person waiting on the other side of the frontier. This moment is often particularly emotive as some participants of Hegoalde origin but living in Iparralde, because of their militant past, risk arrest by the Spanish police if they cross the frontier from Iparralde into Hegoalde. As they approach the muga, they abandon the Korrika, unable to go any further. In her book on the Korrika, anthropologist Del Valle (1988:122) recalls one tense scene when, during the fourth version of this event in 1986, a young woman from Irun was waiting in the 'no-man's land' – the area between the Spanish and the French control booths - to take the baton and run back with it into Hegoalde. Just as she crossed the demarcation line to re-enter Hegoalde, the Spanish police stopped her again to check her papers (*Egin* June 2 1986:29 in Del Valle, 1988:122). In 2001 the crossing of the Korrika was also tinged with comedy. As they ran across the international bridge linking Hendaia to Irun, all participants had to disinfect their feet by wiping them on a mat placed there by the ertzaintza, the police force of Euskadi, in order to prevent the foot-and-mouth disease that had affected parts of the French countryside from entering the territory of Hegoalde.

Such incidents explain why, despite the ending of frontier controls in 1993, the frontier retains its symbolic status in Basque nationalist discourse. Indeed, the ending of border controls has given rise to new opportunities for using the frontier as a focus for protest, as was exemplified in July 2000 when an association advocating the liberation of imprisoned Basque nationalist militants organised an impressive silent demonstration spanning the border. For an entire afternoon, supporters of the association stood at approximately fifteen metre intervals from each other along the road from Hendaia across the frontier to Irun and Hondarribia, wearing white masks and holding up flags with the slogan "Euskal Presoak Etxera".<sup>126</sup>

In the context of two days of 'civil disobedience' organised by several left-wing Basque nationalist groups from Iparralde and Hegoalde in October 2001, members of these groups crossed the Bidasoa and occupied the Island of the Pheasants for an afternoon. The aim, according to one of the participants was to "show that Euskal Herria well and truly does exist. We occupy this island as Basques and, in this process, reject the denial of the existence of Euskal Herria by the French and Spanish states which claim to be its owners."<sup>127</sup>

While free circulation is now permitted across the frontier, state authorities on either side continue to have the power to close the frontier in the case of an 'emergency'. In March 2000, the French authorities closed the frontier in order to prevent a large group of Basque nationalist organisations from Hegoalde from crossing it in order to join a demonstration in Baiona. French police squads were deployed along the frontier crossings to block passage into Iparralde. Representatives of the demonstrators subsequently made an official complaint, stating that the French authorities had violated the rights of EU citizens to freely cross the frontiers, as provided for under the Schengen agreement.<sup>128</sup> In October 2000, on the occasion of the EU summit in Miarritze, the French state briefly contemplated closing the frontier to keep out demonstrators from Hegoalde, largely made up of a large contingent of members of the Basque left-wing youth movement Haika. In the end, the frontier was kept open, though heavily patrolled by both Spanish

<sup>126</sup> Meaning "Bring the Basque prisoners back home".

<sup>127</sup> Interview with Gorka Torre, representative of the Iparralde passive resistance group *Demos*, and organiser of the event, 17 October 2001.

<sup>128</sup> *Enbata* 23 March 2000, No. 1620, P. 7.

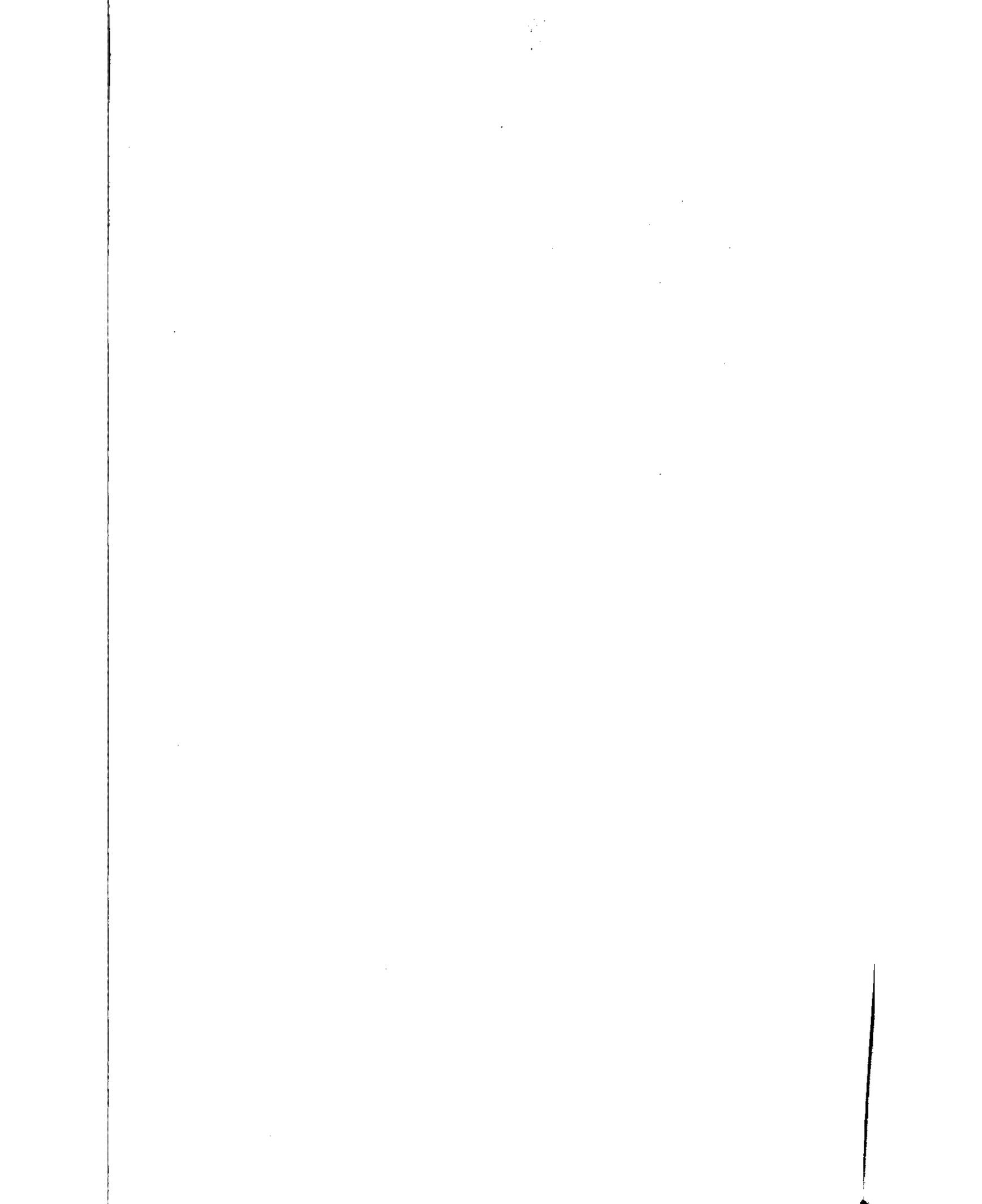
and French police. Such events provide Basque nationalists with a continued justification for using the muga as the symbolic obstacle to a united Euskal Herria. It has also led anthropologist Leizaola (1996) to contest the actual 'openness' of the frontier in Euskal Herria as claimed by the EU and its member states.

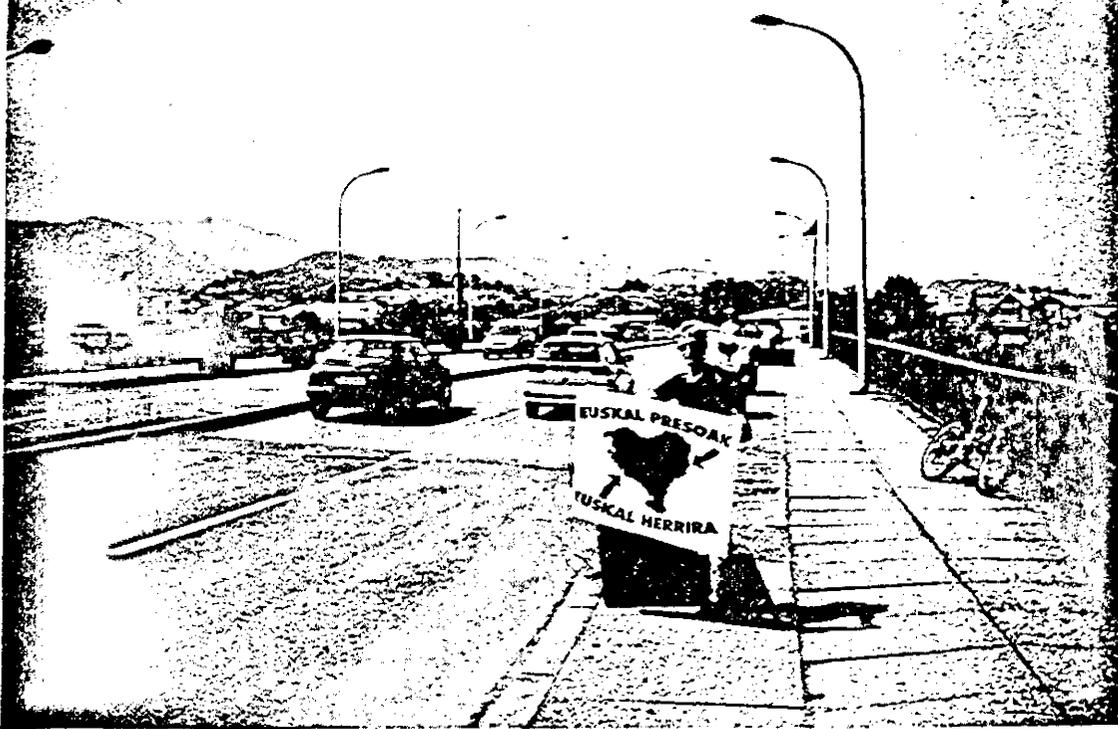
Indeed, as such incidents demonstrate, control of the frontier continues to lie in the hands of the state authorities on either side. The French police and the ertzaintza are often seen patrolling their respective sides of the frontier on the bridge between Irun and Hendaia. In March and April 2001, the anti foot-and-mouth mats positioned on the Spanish side of the frontier provided a further reminder of the frontier's continued existence. Particular events involving some kind of competition between the populations of the two sides also serve to revive these stereotypes more explicitly. In September 2000, for example, a sharp rise in French petrol prices temporarily reinforced the border as a social boundary between the local populations. The possibility of purchasing petrol at much lower prices in Spain became even more attractive than usual for inhabitants of Iparralde, prompting queues at petrol stations in Irun as car owners from the French side of the frontier nipped across the border to fill their tanks. For inhabitants of Irun and Hondarribia, this prompted much criticism of the "French" coming "to nick our petrol."

As one of the main points of transit across the frontier, Irun and Hendaia retain a strong border character. The numerous lorries that drive through on the motorway continue to stop in Irun and Hendaia for a break before continuing their journey. Traffic rules on either side of the frontier also prevent lorries from crossing the frontier on public holidays. As these are often different in Spain and France, they regularly result in long lines of waiting trucks along the roads connecting to the motorway.

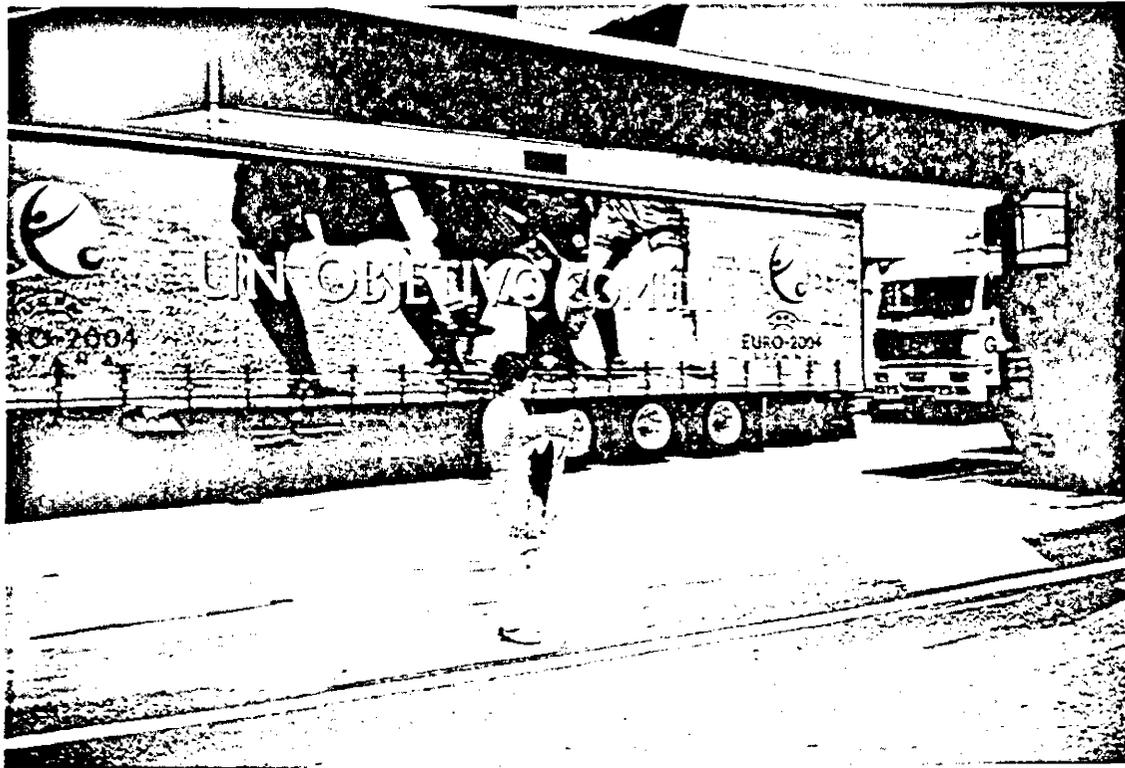
Smuggling also continues, though now on a more international level, with the circulation of precious stones, drugs and arms. So the French and Spanish customs controls based on the motorway going through Irun and Biriatu continues to operate, sporadically stopping vehicles especially those with Dutch or non EU number plates. In mid April 2002, when French customs officers staged a strike in demand for more concessions from the French state, they blocked passage on the motorway through the frontier for a whole day, reminding drivers forcefully of the continuing existence of the frontier.

The frontier in the Basque Country then is a source of much contestation: on one level, it is understood as a fixed limit in spite of talk of 'a Europe without frontiers', both by adherents to the nation-state idea who understand it as certifiers of the national enclave and by Basque nationalists who regard it as the obstacle for Basque national unity. This is indeed lived out by the population who, depending on their various socio-political backgrounds, identify with Spanish, French or Basque nationalist 'identity'. The frontier also continues to be a fundamental barrier when it comes to state administration- the powers of the Spanish administration stop at the frontier, just as those of the French administration stop on its side. Moreover, non-EU citizens continue to be targeted by spot controls at the frontier, evoking the actuality of the EU as a "fortress Europe" (Lavie and Swedenburg, 1996). However, on another level, it is indisputable that general local mobility back and forth has been greatly facilitated since 1993. As it is no longer necessary to carry one's passport or to choose a particular time for crossing (in the interior of the Basque Country, the frontier closed at midnight and would not re-open until six o'clock the following morning), human traffic back and forth across the frontier has increased to such an extent that for many local inhabitants, the areas on either side of the border have come to be seen as one space.





Members of associations supporting Basque 'political prisoners' and their families demonstrating at the frontier either side of the frontier. Above, on the Hendaia side of the Bridge of Santiago facing Irun.



By the old customs booth and parked lorries on the Irun side of the frontier.

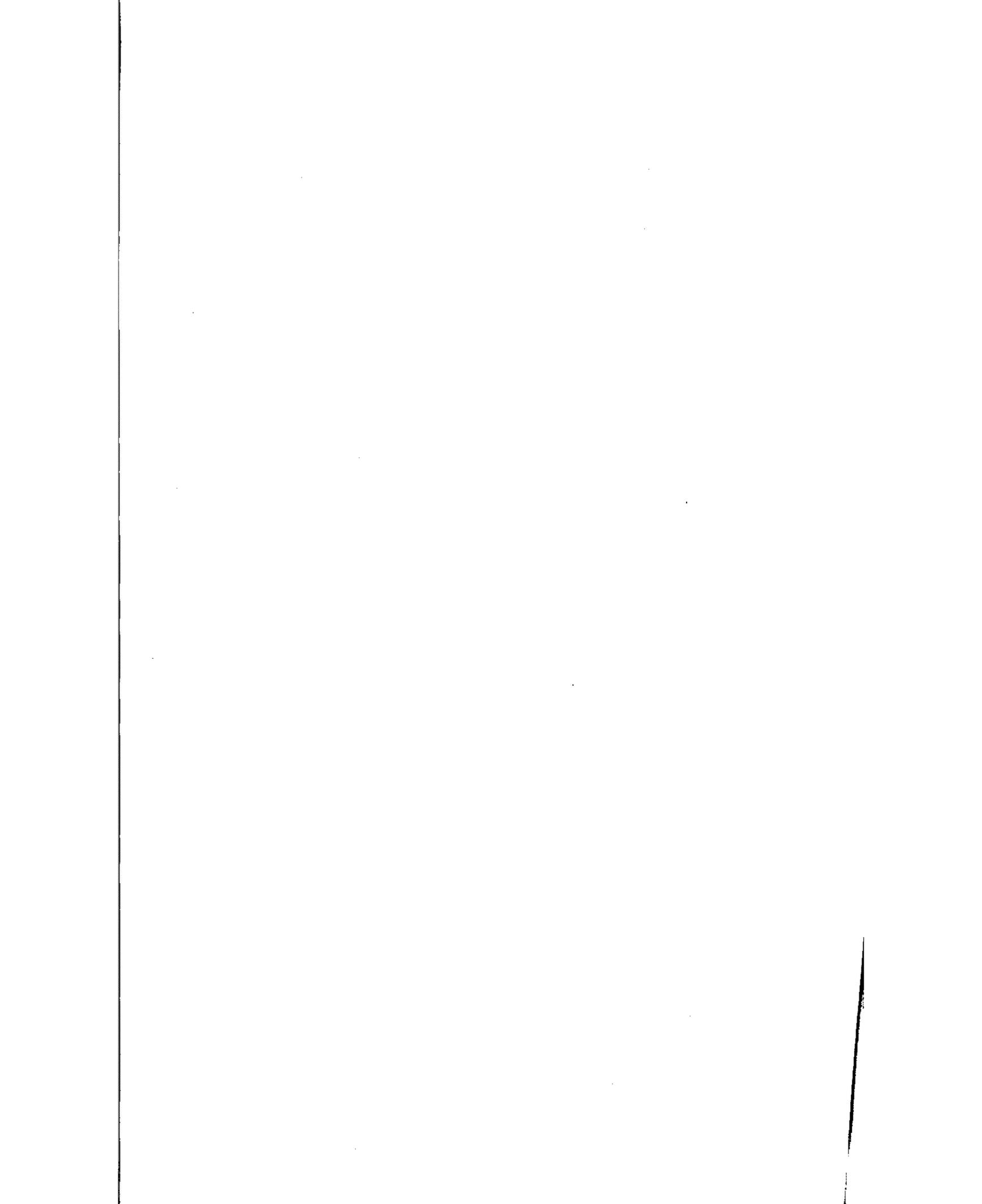




Sculptor Jorge Oteiza's mugaria marking the beginning of French territory. Beyond, members of the French paramilitary police effecting random controls on the Hendaian side of Bridge of Santiago.



Building in the medieval part of Hondarribia being repainted by a firm from Hendaia.



## Chapter Five: Bidasoa-Txingudi in the context of Basque politics

*When Carles Pons i Altes decided to organise a ceremony in honour of the former president of the Generalitat of Catalonia, Lluís Companys, assassinated by Franco's government in 1940, he had little idea of the commotion his plan would cause. A teacher of classical guitar at the Conservatory of Irun since the mid 1990s, Mr. Pons i Altes's idea was to commemorate a historical incident that took place in the area, with a view to paying homage, not just to the Catalan politician, but to all Spaniards, including those from the Basque Country, who had been forced to flee into exile during the Civil War.*

*The specific event on which he wanted to focus took place on 29 August 1940. Companys had taken refuge in France along with the president of the Basque government, José Antonio Aguirre, but had been captured by the Gestapo. On 29 August 1940, he was handed over to the troops of Franco on the bridge of Santiago between Hendaia and Irun. A few months later, he was taken to Barcelona, where he was tried by a military court, sentenced to death and shot. Mr. Pons i Altes planned to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the event, in a ceremony on the bridge linking Hendaia to Irun at 10.30 p.m. on 29 August 2000.*

*But few things are simple in the Basque Country, and least of all a ceremony with historical references and political overtones. What Mr. Pons i Altes had intended as a ceremony in favour of peace and reconciliation rapidly turned into a confrontation reflecting the conflict and symbolic struggle still taking place in the Basque Country. A few days before the ceremony was scheduled to take place, police defused a bomb connected to the car of the boyfriend of Cristina Laborda, a Socialist member of the Irun town council. At about the same time, Borja Semper, the senior representative of the PP (Partido Popular)<sup>129</sup> in the Irun town council, announced that he would not attend the ceremony on the grounds that representatives of the left-wing Basque nationalist party EH, would also be present. "It is indecent," he declared in a letter to the *Diario Vasco* newspaper,<sup>130</sup> "that those who today give support to shooting someone in the back of the head for the mere fact of his having different ideological ideas, should be shameless enough to give homage to a person who was killed for defending freedom."*

*Then, on the very day of the ceremony, Manuel Indiano, a PP town councillor in the nearby town of Zumarraga, was assassinated by ETA. In spite of this, the organisers of the ceremony decided to go ahead. At 8.00 p.m., the mayor of Irun and most members of the town council – with the sole exception of the councillors representing the radical Basque nationalist party EH – met outside the town hall. With them were the mayors of Hondarribia and Hendaia, as well as representatives of the Basque and Catalan parliaments representatives of Basque and Catalan moderate nationalist parties. Instead of going straight in for a reception, as had been planned, they stood outside the building in silence for 15 minutes, in mourning for Mr. Indiano and in protest against his assassination. In front of them, a small crowd of journalists and other onlookers stood watching.*

*Amongst them were a group of people who had come in buses from Catalonia for the event. While the politicians stood in silence, a man in a t-shirt and baggy trousers broke out of the crowd. Going up to the politicians and looking them in the face, he laid out a Catalan flag on the ground in front*

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<sup>129</sup> Meaning "Popular Party". The PP is the right-wing Spanish party of which Spanish Prime Minister José-María Aznar is a member.

<sup>130</sup> *Diario Vasco* 26 August 2000.

*of them. Throughout his performance, none of the politicians flinched and all remained looking straight ahead. Eventually, uniformed Basque policemen took him and his flag away.*

*The fifteen minutes of silence over, the politicians proceeded into the town hall where the EH representatives were waiting for the reception to begin. Then at 10.30 p.m., on the bridge, several hundred people gathered to watch the ceremony. Graded benches had been set up on the bridge, for people with reserved seats to sit behind the politicians in the front row. Further away, in the old customs area, a bigger crowd gathered around a screen on which were projected the scenes taking place on the bridge. Amongst them were people carrying Basque and Catalan flags and others with banners bearing the legend "Euskal Presoak Etxera".*

*At 10.30 p.m., the ceremony began as planned with a series of speeches by political representatives. The mayor of Irun declared: "We are here today to give homage to Lluís Companys, a man who fought for freedom and who was killed in its name. And to our sorrow, we have to mention another death. Another person to whom they did exactly the same as to Companys, whose life was taken away by a group of fascists who are incapable of resolving their problems with dialogue." At this point, the sound of whistling and shouts of "Euskal Presoak Etxera" and "Amnistia" rang out from a few people in the audience behind the politicians and in the crowd around the screen. The ceremony continued but each time a politician made a reference to the dead councillor of Zumarraga, the shouting and whistling resumed.*

*At one point an argument broke out in the crowd by the big screen between a young woman holding a banner with the text "Euskal Presoak Etxera" and an old man who had been a refugee in France during the Civil War. But things calmed down at last when the speeches ended and a play followed in which actors dressed in 1930s clothes re-enacted scenes of people fleeing the war in Spain and trying to cross the bridge to safety in Hendaia. Other actors, dressed up as Gestapo and Francoist officers, re-enacted the handing over of Companys. The main part of the performance ended with his shooting, his corpse lying on the ground on the bridge in a pool of blood.*

As this anecdote shows, the past continues to condition attitudes and reactions among the inhabitants of Bidasoa-Txingudi today. The commemoration of an incident that took place in the early days of the Franco dictatorship at a time when France was under Nazi occupation is capable of re-igniting passions and antagonisms sixty years later almost as if it had happened yesterday. Violence and bloodshed exacerbate the tensions created by political rivalries, highlighting a struggle between opposing forces that dominates life in Bidasoa-Txingudi and in much of the rest of the Basque Country. In terms of boundary-drawing, political violence contributes to and becomes an integral part of a process of polarization, forcing people to one side or the other and compelling them to reflect on their identity in relation to it. More than just a competition for political power, we witness here a contest between different intellectual constructions of reality, in a world in which historical truth is simply the reflection of partisan interpretations of the past and the present.

This re-enactment of this historic event, although anchored in the history of the Spanish state, had particular local resonance. Among the participants and onlookers, a number were personally concerned, either as former refugees themselves or as the descendants of refugees from the Spanish Civil War. Among local politicians from Hendaia taking part, for example, was José-Luís Ecenarro, the deputy and subsequent successor of the town's then mayor, Raphael Lasalette, whose parents had fled from Gipuzkoa to France during the Civil War.

Beyond such local aspects, however, the roots of the antagonisms played out in this incident go much deeper. Central to them is the issue of who has the right to claim Basque identity,

illustrated, for example, in the EH councillors' refusal to join the other politicians in their 15 minutes of silence in protest against ETA. Despite the three towns' geographical proximity, differing attitudes to the state, differing individual ways of experiencing Basqueness, and strong local allegiances all stand in the way of a sense of common identity. Such oppositions are evident not just in the context of public commemorations of historical events such as this one, but in the normal pattern of everyday life.

Just as the social, cultural, political and economic landscape of Bidasoa-Txingudi clearly displays French and Spanish, as well as Basque, influences, so the process of modern nation-building in Spain and France has exerted differing impacts on the social and political structures of the administrative areas to which Irun, Hondarribia and Hendaia belong. In France, a statist, assimilationist model of nationalism leaves little room for officially sanctioned expressions of diversity. In Spain, by contrast, a fragmentary and disjointed process of nation-building has led to a patchwork of official identities (Mar-Molinero and Smith, 1996; Alvarez Junco, 1996), within which expressions of Basque identity are rooted in a context of historical, political and legal experience very different from that in France.

It is against this complex background that the Partzuergo is seeking to create a sense of Bidasoa-Txingudi identity. As in any such local political initiative, a thorough understanding of the dialectics of this process requires taking the broader social and political context into account.<sup>131</sup> In the next section, I shall briefly explain the historical and political context of the Basque Country, within which these three towns are located.

#### A historical overview of the Basque Country

The incorporation of historical materials is a difficult challenge for the anthropologist (Heiberg, 1989:x). Like any social phenomenon, history is a construct, often influenced by political interests. Furthermore, just as people fashion history, history fashions people, conditioning the development and maintenance of notions of the personal and collective self. Bearing in mind the inter-connection between the use of symbols and the exercise of political power, we must recognise that it is virtually impossible to have any one 'true' version of history. Rather, all socially accepted versions have some degree of validity. There is no one objective historical basis from which contemporary anthropological research can proceed.

This is particularly evident in relation to attempts to understand and relate Basque history. Perceptions in the Basque Country are conditioned by political partisanship and propaganda. While the French and Spanish states have constructed their own versions of 'national' history, Basque nationalists accuse Spanish and French authorities of imposing their versions of history on 'the Basque people' (Urla, 1987:50; Keating, 2001). In demanding the right to interpret their own history themselves (Eg Haritschelar, 1983, 2001:8), they claim legitimacy for their attempts to construct and represent their view of the past.<sup>132</sup> Much Basque historical research has in fact been conducted with explicitly political aims in mind. This can make discussions of historical matters highly emotive affairs, in which participants are frequently accused of some bias or other. For the purposes of this thesis, rather than getting embroiled in the politics of history, I shall endeavour to situate Bidasoa-Txingudi within a wider Basque, French and Spanish historical and socio-political context, while restricting my historical references to dates and events which cannot be denied by any partisan camp and have come to acquire popular importance (Foucault, 1977).

<sup>131</sup> Also noted by Cole and Wolf (1974) in their research.

<sup>132</sup> This is epitomised in the statement made by the anthropologist Eguren: "the Basques are what they are and not what others want them to be" ("los vascos son lo que son, y no lo que se quiere que sean" in his monography on the Basque people (1918:328).

In a way reminiscent of ideas of territorialisation by ethnicity (Smith, 1986:162), Basque nationalism has played an important role in the delineation of the Basque Country as a territory (De La Granja, 1998). According to Basque nationalists, the Basque Country covers the territory occupied by the seven historic territories of Gipuzkoa, Bizkaia, Araba, Nafarroa, Behe Nafarroa, Lapurdi and Siberoa.<sup>133</sup> Paradoxically, however, this territory has no unanimously accepted name. The terms used by different people with different cultural and political identifications to describe the region – Basque Country in English, Eskualherria, Eskualerria or Euskal Herria and Euskadi or *Euzkadi* in Basque, *País Vasco* in Spanish, and *Pays Basque* in French – all have different connotations. Not all of the area supposedly forming the Basque territory is clearly identifiable as Basque. Apart from the mountainous area close to Iparralde and Gipuzkoa, much of Nafarroa is Spanish-speaking, rather than Basque-speaking, and with little that is obviously Basque about it. Baiona, the main town of Lapurdi,<sup>134</sup> has Gascon, as well as Basque, cultural roots. In both Baiona and Bilbo, as well as in the province of Araba, only a small portion of the population is Basque-speaking (Euskal Kultur Erakundea, 1996).

Eskualherria, Eskualerria or Euskal Herria, a term with nostalgic Basque nationalistic connotations, refers to the Basque Country as a linguistic and cultural territory, ignoring political and administrative frontiers. As such, it is often used by Basque nationalist sympathists to avoid Spanish and French political conceptualizations of the Basque space. The phrase *Zazpiak Bat*, meaning “the seven (provinces are) one”, which first appeared towards the end of the nineteenth century with the emergence of traditional Basque nationalism, refers to this whole Euskal Herria. As for the term Euzkadi, this was invented by the founder of EAJ, Sabino Arana, in the late nineteenth century, to refer to a notional Basque homeland. This term has since been dropped in favour of Euskadi, with an “s” rather than a “z”, to conform to the standardized Basque word for the Basque language, Euskara. According to Letamendia (1976) and Conversi (1997), this orthographical shift reflects both a desire to mark distance from Arana’s racial vision of a Basque homeland and the political context in which the Basque government was born in 1978.

The Spanish term País Vasco, on the other hand, has come to be accepted by Spanish people as a reference to the Comunidad Autónoma Vasca, or Autonomous Basque Community, known in Basque as Euskadi, which covers only Araba, Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa. For French people, meanwhile, the term Pays Basque is often taken as referring to the part of the Basque Country in French territory, that is Lapurdi, Behe Nafarroa and Siberoa.<sup>135</sup> As for the English ‘Basque Country’, although it is a literal translation of Euskal Herria, País Vasco and Pays Basque, it does not refer to a clearly defined territory. As mentioned earlier, I have chosen in this thesis generally to refer in neutral terms to the Basque Country in English, while using the Basque translation Euskal Herria when referring to the Basque nationalists’ idea of their territory.

The different usages of these various conceptualizations of the Basque space are evident in the regional media. In Euskadi, the *Diario Vasco*, a Spanish-language, rather conservative paper focuses its news primarily on Euskadi. It has relatively little news from Iparralde, which it refers to as the *País Vasco Francés* - or French Basque Country. By contrast, *Egunkaria*,<sup>136</sup> a newspaper principally funded by the regional government of Euskadi and written wholly in Basque, and *Gara*, which has links to the left-wing Basque nationalist movement but is written mainly in

<sup>133</sup> Although archaeological, biological anthropological and linguistic researchers claim to have found evidence of a former larger expansion of Basque characteristics (MacClancy, 1993a).

<sup>134</sup> Baiona is often confused as being the capital of Iparralde. The small and more inland town of Ustaritze is in effect the capital.

<sup>135</sup> When referring to Euskadi, ‘Pays Basque espagnol’ is often used.

<sup>136</sup> Meaning the ‘Daily journal’ in Basque.

Spanish in order to include non-Basque speaking Basque-nationalist supporters, report news from all seven historic provinces, although their main focus is Euskadi. The Basque television station, *Euskal Telebista*, principally funded by the regional government of Euskadi, has two channels, one wholly in Basque and the other wholly in Spanish. Both stations' weather reports show a map of Euskal Herria, incorporating all seven historic provinces.

A defined notion of 'Basque identity' in a modern sense is only a fairly recent phenomenon (MacClancy, 1993b). Anthropological research has produced evidence of commonalities among the inhabitants of the region in terms of cranial features and blood type. Traces of Basque roots have been found in place names across a much wider area than that covered by today's Basque Country, which suggests the existence of a distinct group of people apart from the speakers of Indo-European (Latin or Celtic) languages that surrounded them. But the only time the Basque Country formed anything close to a united administrative entity was during a brief period at the beginning of the eleventh century under the king of Nafarroa, Sancho the Great.

At a less formal level, the seven provinces share a memory of a particular set of codified privileges, known in Spanish as *fueros*, which they enjoyed in the larger configuration of the French and Spanish kingdoms between the eleventh and the nineteenth centuries (Jacob, 1994:2; Collins, 1986a; Brighty, 1999). By the twelfth century, it was not uncommon for cities and provinces of the Iberian peninsula to enjoy some kind of foral status. This meant above all a defence of common lands and, later, an exemption from state taxes. By the sixteenth century, the foral system was particularly useful to the Spanish monarchy at a time when national energies remained largely focused on overseas discoveries since the late fifteenth century, with little emphasis on nation-building at home (Mar-Molinero, 1996). Faced with the threat of Moorish encroachment, the Spanish monarchy was preoccupied with the preservation of a Christian dominion in the Iberian peninsula. In this context, the Basque people were recognised as the best of Spanish subjects, due to their legendary pure, non-Moorish blood (Artola, 1999; Haristoy, 1977:125). The foral status granted to the Basque provinces explicitly underlined the noble character conferred by the distinctive linguistic and racial characteristics of its inhabitants (Greenwood, 1977). In exchange for political and economic autonomy, the Basque provinces owed allegiance to the monarchy in times of war, a relationship that helped to consolidate a sense of Spanish unity. The combination of the foral system with an image of a Golden Age for Spain in the Americas provided a source of common Spanish national pride (Alvarez Junco, 1996).

Equally, however, the Basque provinces retained their individuality and a sense of difference amongst themselves, occasionally to the point of conflict as the shape of alliances with French and Spanish monarchs shifted over the centuries. Provincial government ordinances made no mention of such a thing as a Basque identity, and the kingdom of Nafarroa never saw itself as a 'Basque' monarchy. Indeed, the institutional differences of this kingdom and its closer relations with the kingdom of Castille (Letamendia, 1987; Fusi, 1989) have often been used by today's regional government to explain the distance between Nafarroa and the other Basque historic territories.

The presence in the region of a Castilian-speaking elite from the twelfth century deprived the Basque language of support from an established upper social stratum. Differences between the various Basque dialects were so marked that, in some cases, speakers had great difficulty in understanding each other (Payne, 1993). The development of overseas trade during the Middle Ages brought increased urbanisation and a stronger Spanish presence, increasing the differences between cities, inhabited by a predominantly Spanish-speaking population, and Basque-speaking rural areas. As from the Middle Ages, the distinction was made between those who were speakers

of some kind of Basque dialect, known as *euskara*<sup>137</sup> or *euskaldun*, and those who spoke a foreign tongue, *erdara*, and who were known as *erdaldun* (Peillen, 1998:96).

North of the Pyrenees, shifting feudal allegiances and dynastic changes brought Lapurdi, Siberoa and eventually Behe Nafarroa into the orbit of the French Crown during the sixteenth century. The consolidation of state borders nonetheless progressed slowly. The Edict of Pau, signed in 1629, was intended as a step towards the delineation of the border between Spain and France. However, twenty years of war between the two kingdoms ensued, making the border delineation ineffective. This situation was finally resolved in 1659 with the Treaty of the Pyrenees, signed by Cardinal Mazarin on behalf of the French Crown, and Luís de Haro on behalf of the Spanish monarchy, on the island now known as the Island of the Pheasants in the middle of the Bidasoa. This was further sealed by the marriage of the French king Louis XIV to the Infanta Maria-Teresa, daughter of Philip IV of Spain, under a contract signed on the same island in 1660. However actual demarcation of the border did not come about till the nineteenth century.

Following the French Revolution in 1789, French republican zeal for *égalité* did away with the historic privileges of the provinces of Siberoa, Lapurdi and Behe Nafarroa. The inhabitants of these provinces reacted conservatively to the republican ideals of the Revolution, which threatened the fundamental essence of their Basque catholic identity as *euskaldun fededun* (Jacob, 1985:39-45). Despite the efforts of the brothers Dominique and Dominique-Joseph Garat, both lawyers and the latter a deputy in the local parliament of Lapurdi, to rally the local institutions of the three French Basque provinces in defence of their special privileges in a republican France, the French National Assembly went ahead with the administrative reorganisation of France into *départements*. In 1790, the National Assembly voted to set up a new *département* including Behe Nafarroa, Lapurdi, Siberoa and the linguistically and culturally distinct province of Béarn, stripped of their respective provincial privileges. Iparralde has since then been part of this wider *département des Pyrénées Atlantiques* (previously it was called *Basses Pyrénées*).

One of the goals of this re-organisation was to combat the persistence of provincial loyalties and localism (Weber, 1977). Language began to play a role in the process of French nation building when Francien replaced Latin in higher education following the expulsion of the Jesuits from France in 1762. Under the French republic, this trend was reinforced: an official of Jacobin persuasion expressed his prejudice against Basque people with the words "fanaticism speaks Basque" (Gazier in Jacob, 1985:32). During Robespierre's reign of terror, the revolutionary Abbé Grégoire produced a survey of language use in France, with the ultimate objective of setting up a homogeneous 'French' nation. He considered that a plurilingual France would mean "a tower of Babel" (Gazier in Jacob, 1985:32), and preached instead the universalism of French. The attitudes generated during this period with regards to ethnic cultures in France continue to exist today, not only at a political level, but among the general French population. Thus, it is not uncommon to hear negative reactions from many French people when they are informed that some people with French nationality actually feel more attached to an identity such as Basque or Breton or Corsican and continue to speak these languages. Attempts to explain away these 'anomalies' within the French Republican model are apparent, for instance, in a description I have often heard of "*les Basques*" as "*spéciaux*" – 'special' in the sense of 'peculiar', in that they are rather different and so excessive and fiery in character, to the point sometimes of 'extremism'.

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<sup>137</sup> Today the word *euskara* is used in the Batua version of Basque to signify the Basque language. However, according to Peillen (1998:96) until the late Middle Ages, the word *euskara* or *uskara* was also used to refer in Basque to a Basque person.

South of the Pyrenees, Castilian was made the official language of the Kingdom of Spain in 1716. This coincided with a period during which Spain began to look inwards again, in an attempt to consolidate a Spanish national identity. From then on, the existence of other languages than Castilian, such as Basque, Catalan and Galician, and the maintenance of the foral system began to be seen by Spanish centralists as obstacles to the forging of a Spanish national identity (Mar-Molinero, 1996).

Further decrees in the eighteenth century established Castilian as the language of education, trade and business transactions. As the Spanish state began to reflect more on itself and its role in European politics, political tensions grew between supporters of the Spanish Crown, who interpreted the *fueros* as concessions of privilege granted by the monarchy which could be modified or withdrawn, and many in the Basque provinces who viewed the codification of the *fueros* as a written attestation confirming the ancient common-law bases of Basque society. Tensions between different understandings of the *fueros* and the allegiances that they gave rise to became a major point of conflict in the first Carlist War which broke out in 1832 and lasted seven years. Carlism took its name from Don Carlos, the brother of King Fernando VII, who fought for the Spanish throne against the King's widow, Maria-Cristina of Naples, who was defending the right to succession of her daughter Isabel. Championed by the Basque provinces and the rural populations of Nafarroa in particular, Carlism was made up of two major strands, one composed of people with emotional attachments to the *fueros* as a tradition, and the other composed of people characterized more by political and ideological ambitions. Carlism implied a conception of the state based on the divine right of the monarchy and Catholic supremacy, combined with the protection of traditional social order and local autonomies, in a manner totally opposed to Spanish liberalism, influenced by the ideas of the French Revolution. The first Carlist war finally ended with the victory of Queen Isabel, with the Treaty of Vergara in 1839 as an attempt to offer a compromise allowing for the minimal preservation of the *fueros*. While it was accepted by Gipuzkoa and Bizkaia, it was rejected by Nafarroa and Araba.

It was against this background that the border demarcating French and Spanish territory came under review in the early 1850s for the first time since the Treaty of the Pyrenees. A commission made up of officials appointed by the French and Spanish states traced out the frontier "from the estuary of the Bidasoa to the point where the *département des Basses-Pyrénées*, Aragon and Nafarroa converge" (Michelena, 1997:184). In 1856, the Treaty of Limits, also known as the Treaty of Baiona, included clauses defining the limits of French and Spanish territory (Descheemaeker, 1950:158). These were amended several times over the next few years, leading finally to the definitive establishment of the Franco-Spanish frontier.

Meanwhile, the *fueros* continued to be eroded in spite of the Treaty of Vergara, and customs controls between the provinces were removed. The chronic instability and renewed anti-clericalism of the First Spanish Republic gave Carlism, centred again in Nafarroa, a new opportunity to show its face, leading in 1872 to the Second Carlist War between partisans of Queen Isabel and the followers of Don Carlos. The final defeat of Carlism in 1876 led to the abolition of the foral system in all of the Spanish Basque provinces except Nafarroa. The Spanish government's acceptance of a special fiscal and administrative régime - the *conciertos económicos* - for the Basque provinces satisfied Basque urban liberals who were mainly concerned with fiscal autonomy. But the abolition of the *fueros* set the stage for the explicitly regional conflicts with the Spanish state which continue today (Greenwood, 1977). Since the late nineteenth century, the *fueros* have been considered by Basque nationalists as the symbol of the collective and historic rights of the Basques. Fundamental differences in interpretation of the origins and significance of the foral charters lie at the heart of today's political debate over Basque autonomy and sovereignty.

### The Rise of Basque Nationalism in Hegoalde:

Hegoalde today has no official or administrative status, nor any clearly defined geographical boundaries. Rather, it is a loosely defined conceptual area of Basqueness, covering Euskadi and the autonomous region of Nafarroa. In Euskadi, which has its own parliament and a bi-lingual Basque-Spanish administrative structure, the regional government is at present in the hands of the Basque nationalist party EAJ, which represents the conservative wing of modern Basque nationalist politics. Basque language teaching is obligatory in schools in Euskadi, a policy, which has helped to revive the language particularly among the younger generation. Internal tensions remain, however, due to the commitment of a sizeable minority to independence from Spain and union with Nafarroa and Iparralde. Nafarroa has its own historical traditions and regional identity and a large part of its population is fully Hispanicised and has no wish to link into a Basque nationalist political construction.<sup>138</sup> It is governed by the conservative party of *Unión del Pueblo Navarro*,<sup>139</sup> or *UPN*, which gives very little support to Basque language and cultural issues. Because of the different political and cultural aspirations of the government of Nafarroa and that of Euskadi, relations between them are often very tense. The organisation ETA, which claims to be fighting for Basque independence, operates as a violent network in Hegoalde, drawing political support from the radical left-wing Basque nationalist party Batasuna and logistical support from a clandestine network of sympathisers on both sides of the frontier.

Events over the last two centuries have resulted today in a much stronger sense of Basque political identity in Hegoalde than in Iparralde. During the late nineteenth century, while the seat of political power in Spain remained in Madrid, industrial wealth developed in Catalonia and the Basque provinces of Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa. It was during this period that modern Basque nationalism emerged in Bilbo. Industrialisation, resulting in mass migration from the rest of Spain to these areas, accentuated local concerns about territorial and ethnic identity. These were translated into a perception that Basque traditional social values, equated with some primordially defined form of Basque identity, were under siege. Developing nationalist sentiments led in 1895 to the formation of the Basque nationalist party EAJ as a means of defending these values. Although EAJ began by attracting people of lower middle-class backgrounds and anti-industrial sentiment, it gradually expanded its reach to attract members of the grande bourgeoisie and liberal segments of Bizkaia society as a Christian Democrat party (Larronde, 1977; Letamendia, 1987:77-80).

Faced with increasing numbers of immigrants who did not speak Basque, looked physically different and led different lifestyles, EAJ explicitly emphasized a Basque ethnic distinctiveness. EAJ's founder, Sabino Arana Goiri, regarded Basques and Spaniards as members of different races (Arana, 1895), a distinction to be preserved.<sup>140</sup> At this time, the Basque language was regarded by the bourgeoisie as a language of the lower orders and was in decline in many urban areas. Reflecting that, nascent Basque nationalism initially focused on ethnic attributes, such as Basque surnames, in its search for a distinguishing feature of identity for the Basque people. Arana and his followers were principally concerned with the preservation of the purity of the Basque race, along the lines first stated in the foral charter. Reflecting such concerns, the Basque

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<sup>138</sup> The Basque nationalist movement in Nafarroa is a small minority (in 1999 only 27 municipalities out of 272 had Basque nationalist councillors (Le Monde 10 February 1999)). The most euskaldun parts of the province are in the mountainous and rural area close to the border with Iparralde and Gipuzkoa.

<sup>139</sup> Meaning the "Union of the people of Nafarroa". The UPN is allied with the Spanish party Partido Popular currently at the head of the Spanish government. For an anthropological analysis of Carlism today in Nafarroa see MacClancy (2000).

<sup>140</sup> Larronde has insisted on looking at the Basque Nationalist Party as a xenophobic rather than racist movement (1979:102). See also Urla (1987:38). I take this observation into consideration by opting for the use of the word racial rather than racist.

nationalist movement drew on and encouraged archaeological, anthropological and linguistic studies, which could shed light on the origins of the Basque people (Azcona, 1984; Urla, 1987:44-7; MacClancy, 1993a). The early twentieth century saw the emergence of anthropological and archaeological research in the rural areas of the Basque Country, and the veneration of figures such as the archaeologists and anthropologists José-Miguel Barandiaran, Telesforo Aranzadi and José-María Basabe Prado. Basque nationalism has also relied heavily on folklore (Watson, 1996a) and symbols, such as the *ikurriña*, invented by Arana to represent the Basque homeland (Letamendia, 1976), to bolster and propagate its ideology.

While the initial emphasis of EAJ on explicitly racial criteria became attenuated in the following decades, archaeological and anthropological interest in the Basques' supposedly unique origins has persisted. Despite the emergence of other approaches to the definition of identity, the image of the Basque people, with their fiery, independent character, strange tongue and distinctive physical features, remains strong. The status of Basque as one of the few non-Indo-European languages spoken in Europe, along with Finnish and Hungarian, and the scientific evidence of distinctive blood types among the region's inhabitants are often taken as proof of the supposed antiquity of the 'Basque people'. The international media, by drawing on this myth-ridden traditionalism as a partial explanation for the political conflict that persists in the region, help to sustain this image (Watson, 1996b:1-10). The Basques continue to be popularly presented as a racially distinct people with ancient roots in the Western Pyrenean soil.

In the early twentieth century, a process of Spanish nation-building fueled the emergence of peripheral nationalism in the regions (Keating, 1988). Spain's first modern dictator, José Primo de Rivera, ruled between 1923 and 1931. Under the short-lived Spanish Republic that succeeded him, a left-wing government promised Catalonia and the Basque provinces the status of autonomous regions. This plan, however, was thwarted by the outbreak of civil war in 1936. The EAJ leadership went into exile to Paris. The subsequent military dictatorship of General Francisco Franco ruthlessly repressed regionalist sentiments. In the Basque provinces, the Basque language, already reduced to a low status as a language spoken only by a mainly rural and 'backward' section of society, suffered even more. Banned from use in public places, it was confined to the family domain. Gradually, it became less and less taught to children. Reactions to this repression made the Basque language a rallying point. It raised the Basque language to the status of a symbol of resistance amongst anti-Franco movements. The Basque language has since remained a rallying point in the dialectics of Basque nationalism today.

The 1950s and 1960s were a period of resurgent interest in Basque culture. Basque language academies gradually reopened and associations devoted to the study and safeguarding of local customs and folklore underwent a revival. Clandestine newsletters called for the rediscovery of Basque culture. For example, the magazine *Aberri*, meaning "Fatherland", told its readers: "if we are an oppressed people and want to be free, in short if we want a free Euzkadi, we should first know it".<sup>141</sup> Another magazine of nationalist character, *Zeruko Argia*, meaning "the light of the sky", featured articles with titles like "Who is a Basque?" and "What is the Basque language for?" Much self-questioning was thus taking place.<sup>142</sup> Concerns with survival of Basqueness constantly involved facing up to the strength of Spanish power but also the universal ideas favoured by numerous Basque intellectuals, such as Miguel de Unamuno who believed that "the Basque

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<sup>141</sup> *Aberri* Caracas 1 September 1958 p.1.

<sup>142</sup> There comes to mind here a comment made to me by a friend of Spanish nationality when I told him my thesis concerned issues of identity in the Basque Country. Not without a slight jeer at his Basque compatriots, as is sometimes characteristic of Spanish people concerned with current events in their most troublesome region, he said: "What it is to be Basque is a very Basque question."

language... constitutes a grave obstacle for the diffusion of European culture in my country" and so suggested it was best to be done away with (Unamuno in Ugalde, 1966:24).

It is in this atmosphere of political and cultural repression that the emergence of violent activism can be understood (Zulaika, 1989). In 1953, a youth faction of EAJ seceded to create ETA, following a more left-wing ideological, independence-seeking strategy. Described by Collins (1986b:12) as "a practically exclusively urban phenomenon,"<sup>143</sup> it reflected the particular situation in Bizkaia, where industrial development during the 1950s prompted new soul-searching about what it meant to be Basque. Images of traditional country folk as the 'authentic' Basque people provided an idealised model for the many youths who led urban and industrial lifestyles but who claimed to feel Basque too. Stressing the importance of language as a tool for recreating Basque identity, ETA set out to develop a broad-based working-class constituency, including the descendants of immigrant workers in industrial communities. Whereas previously these people had been excluded from participating in traditional conservative Basque nationalist aspirations, they were now able, by learning Basque, even if only superficially, to gain entry into the less narrowly defined community of the left-wing Basque nationalists.

ETA was concerned with the political, cultural and linguistic dynamics of Basque identity in a modern context: "it is clear that the immigrant worker is at least as exploited as the native of the (Basque) country. For that reason, in our revolutionary struggle we ask for the participation of all the workers who today live in our soil, without distinction of origin. Moreover, the interest taken in social liberation can be even greater in an immigrant than in a locally-born Basque with a higher standard of living," (ETA, 1979:509).<sup>144</sup> To be Basque, according to the left-wing nationalist creed of ETA and *Herri Batasuna*,<sup>145</sup> or HB, the political party formed in 1979 in support of the same objectives,<sup>146</sup> was to be active in the political struggle for an independent Basque nation with its own distinctive culture. This, rather than birth, was the criterion for recognition as a Basque patriot, or *abertzale*. In this way, language became a political tool for differentiating those who supported the Basque 'cause' and those who did not. These radical nationalists defined true 'Basques' in exclusive terms of their commitment to the Basque cause, politically and linguistically. All others were consigned to the category of "anti-Basque" (Heiberg, 1980:58).

Zulaika (1989), in his anthropological research on the cultural context of political violence, notes how the traditional and religious values of rural parts of the Basque Country, such as honour, physical strength and Christian and pagan mysticism, played a central part in the birth of ETA and the support that it initially enjoyed. Cultural references to *Ama Birjina*, or the Virgin Mary, and *Ama Lur*, or Mother Earth, provided a basis for the constitution of a front against outsiders occupying the Basques' 'homeland', such as government officials and members of the paramilitary Guardia Civil with no cultural or kin relations to the community, categorized as "non Basques" (Heiberg, 1980:47). Watson, in an article on the way in which Basque nationalists draw on folk culture for political purposes, remarks how Basque folklore becomes a source of 'Basque truth', whose basis is "namely an essentialist difference from that which is Spanish" (1996a:29).

As a strongly Catholic area,<sup>147</sup> the Basque Country produced numerous priests. For many young men, unable to inherit property in the village due to strict inheritance laws favouring the eldest

<sup>143</sup> "Un phénomène presque exclusivement urbain" (my translation).

<sup>144</sup> Translation by MacClancy (1993b).

<sup>145</sup> *Herri Batasuna* means the "Unity of the People".

<sup>146</sup> Following the arrest of its leaders on the grounds of their alleged links with ETA, the group was reformed with the name of Euskal Herritarrok. EH was reformed again in June 2001 to become Batasuna.

<sup>147</sup> To the extent that the Basque Country has jokingly been called in the past "the second Vatican".

child, and unable to find other work, a career in priesthood was a honourable solution and way of serving the community. It was not uncommon that, in many of these seminaries across the Basque Country, the priests should sympathise with strong feelings of Basqueness. The idea of religion and Basqueness went hand in hand in the traditional sense of the *euskaldun fededun*. Together with their theological training, students felt a strong attachment to their local community, which it was their duty to guide. Under the dictatorship of Franco, repressive to Basque expression, many of these became involved with ETA in its early years.

During the 1950s, a clandestine movement in favour of Basque language education, provided by *ikastolak* or Basque-language schools, emerged as an alternative to Spanish education, with the aim of 'euskaldun-izing' children. By ensuring their fluency in Basque, the promoters of this movement aimed to give them a sense of Basque identity, which it was believed they could not otherwise acquire in the socio-political climate of the time (Urla, 1987:90). The movement eventually became tolerated by the Franco régime and was able to operate within a legal framework applicable to private initiatives (*Ikastoleen Elkartea*, 1989). In order to revive the use of the Basque language amongst the adult population, AEK was set up in 1965. AEK largely depends financially on fund-raising and private benefactors, and on subsidies from local municipalities that sympathise with its endeavour.<sup>148</sup>

After the death of Franco in 1975, Spain emerged from a period of political uncertainty as a parliamentary democracy and constitutional monarchy. In the Basque Country, one of the most immediate concerns of HB, created to represent the political interests of ETA in local and regional elections, was to oppose a referendum held in 1978 for a new constitution for Spain, aimed both at setting the foundations for democracy and at addressing the demands of various separatist movements in Catalonia, Galicia, Nafarroa and the Basque historic provinces. Avoiding the notion of a unified national identity as the basis for the modern Spanish nation-state, proponents of the new constitution used the term 'nation' to refer both to the Spanish nation as a whole and to the 'historic nationalities' of its major non-Castilian populations in Catalonia, Euskadi and Galicia (Fusi, 1989:39-40). Seeing that Euskadi was entering a new democratic phase, some ETA militants put their arms aside and entered politics with the founding of *Euskadiko Eskerra*, meaning the Basque Left. This eventually joined up with the Basque socialist party, the PSE<sup>149</sup> in 1993 to become the PSE-EE.

Some regional representatives, however, expressed dissatisfaction with the constitution. In Euskadi, the Basque nationalist parties complained that it did not go far enough in terms of autonomy and ignored their demand for the incorporation of Nafarroa, believed to be the cradle of the Basque people (Wastell, 1994), as part of an autonomous Basque Country.<sup>150</sup> Basque nationalist parties encouraged voters in the Basque Country to abstain, with the result that, while the referendum won a majority of "yes" votes at both a national level and in the Basque Country, the electoral turnout in the latter was very low.<sup>151</sup> This subsequently allowed Basque nationalist leaders to claim that the Basques had "rejected" the new constitution.

Under the new constitution, Spain became a State of Autonomous Regions, decentralised as seventeen autonomous communities and two autonomous cities. Each autonomous community has its own government, parliament and administrative system. These are regulated under the respective basic institutional rules of the autonomous community statutes (Morata, 1995; Ministerio de la

<sup>148</sup> AEK first established itself in Iparralde in 1980.

<sup>149</sup> Abbreviation for *Partido Socialista de Euskadi*.

<sup>150</sup> The Constitution does in fact allow Nafarroa to join the Basque Autonomous Community should Nafarroa's citizens so wish (Fusi, 1989:147).

<sup>151</sup> 55.35% of the population of Euskadi abstained (<http://www.elecciones.net>. Last consulted 15 July 2002).

Presidencia, 2000:69). Statutes of autonomy fall into two main categories: special and general. The former concerns Euskadi, Galicia and Andalucía which have full autonomy statutes. Because of the constitutional recognition of its 'traditional rights', Nafarroa also enjoys a full autonomy regime.

In Euskadi, the Gernika Statute of Autonomy, voted by popular referendum in October 1979,<sup>152</sup> established the territory of the Autonomous Basque Community as the provinces of Araba, Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa, each with their own administrative system known as the *diputación foral* in Spanish and the *foru aldundi* in Basque. Basque and Spanish were declared its official languages. EAJ, as the leading party in the regional parliament, took on the leadership of the new regional government, which it continues to lead today.

Fiscal relations with the central government in Madrid are governed by a law of 1980, which attributes key sources of finance to the regional government. In Euskadi and Nafarroa, the special provision of the so-called *concierto económico* enables the regions to control almost all taxes. They are only constrained to pass on a contribution to Madrid known as the *cupo*, which is negotiated every five years. So far, the Spanish system has been gradually evolving towards further fiscal autonomy for regional governments (Keating, 1998:121; Brighty, 1999:2).<sup>153</sup>

A regional police force, known in Basque as *Ertzaintza*, has taken over from the Spanish national police force in all but the highest-level functions. Regional government-funded television and radio stations, Euskal Telebista and Euskal Irratia, broadcast in Basque and Spanish. The Basque government also enjoys authority in the domain of education. Bilingual teaching is now a norm. The *ikastolak* form part of the public system and, in 1980, the University of the Basque Country was formerly established.

With the creation of Euskadi, many militants left ETA, believing that it had lost its *raison d'être*. However, others continued to believe that ETA should continue its military strategy until full independence for Euskadi and the incorporation of Nafarroa and Iparralde were obtained. In accepting the constitution and assuming leadership of the new Basque government following elections, EAJ was seen by these supporters of ETA as having betrayed the Basque cause. As a result, a faction of ETA chose to continue in clandestinity. While it lost much of the popular support on which it had thrived during the repressive years of Franco,<sup>154</sup> ETA still maintained the backing of a significant segment of the population who continued to believe that little had changed since the period of Franco. Thus began what Letamendia has aptly called the "*front du refus*" (1997:57), a movement of 'counter-power' or anti-establishmentarianism embodied by a Basque movement for national liberation grouping a range of anti-establishment associations

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<sup>152</sup> 41.14% of the population of Gipuzkoa, Araba and Bizkaia abstained, while 53.13% of voters of the population voted "yes" to the Statute of Gernika. All of the political parties, with the exception of HB participated in the negotiation of the Statute. HB recommended abstention during the referendum, considering the Statute to be flawed (Elkarri, n.d.).

<sup>153</sup> Since the late 1990s, the areas of responsibility of the Spanish autonomous regions have grown steadily, reflected in the increasing share of total public expenditure over which they have control. After 1994, all the autonomies were allowed to keep 15% of the direct income tax revenues attributable to their region (Brighty, 1999). In 1996, a further modification to the system was agreed, giving regional governments significant new responsibilities in raising tax revenues. For the first time, regional governments were empowered to levy a component of personal income tax applicable to their own region and to modify some indirect taxes. These changes also foresaw that once all the regions had taken on responsibility for the basic provision of education, they would receive 30% rather than 15% of the income tax revenues levied in their region by the central government (Brighty, 1999).

<sup>154</sup> Whereas in 1978 approximately 48% of the population in Euskadi considered ETA militants positively as either "patriots" and "idealists" and only 18% as "terrorists" and "criminals", in 1996 24% of the population still considered them "patriots" or "idealists" and 53% "terrorists" and "criminals" (Euskobarometro, 1996). In Euskobarometro's latest survey (2001), 53% of Euskadi's population are recorded as rejecting ETA outright. Those who continue to give total support to ETA are now only 1% of Euskadi's population, while 8% claim to support ETA's aims but not its means.

under the banner of left-wing Basque nationalism. The result has been a political and identity crisis in the Basque Country, publicised and fed by the local media, which continues today.

In 1986, Spain joined the European Community, opening the way for significant socio-economic development. As well as asserting its autonomy within Spain, Euskadi has sought to play a role at the heart of the EU. The Basque government has set up an office in Brussels to lobby and monitor the European Commission directly, and a network of overseas offices to promote trade and Basque culture. In the early 1990s a common fund was set up between the region of Aquitaine and Euskadi, which aims to develop harmonious relationships between the two regions and cooperate on local development projects. In 1997, the Basque government set up the Institut France-Euskadi in Paris, whose aim is to further promote relations between businesses in Euskadi and France.

In line with these powers, a strong sense of identification with the region has grown amongst the population (Euskobarometro, 2001b). That is partly a function of habit and experience, and partly the result of emerging vested interests. In 1996, after fourteen years of socialist government, the right-wing PP, won the Spanish parliamentary elections and José-María Aznar replaced Felipe González as prime minister. According to the former British ambassador to Spain Christopher Brighty, the view of the main parties in Madrid is that none of this threatens the existence of Spain as a nation, but that the autonomous regions have now been given virtually all they need to administer effective services to the local citizens (Brighty, 1999:4). In the devolution process, there are nonetheless also pressures for the regional governments to devolve more to the next levels down. In February 1999, the Spanish government called on the regional governments to transfer more of their powers to the municipalities.<sup>155</sup> Regional parties argue that an effective regional system is still lacking and that bigger regional budgets are necessary, with further reductions in tax transfers to the central government. In Euskadi, both the moderate nationalist parties EAJ and EA and the left-wing nationalist party Batasuna persist in demanding, though with different degrees of intensity, that the Spanish government grant Euskadi a referendum on independence.<sup>156</sup>

#### The Development of Basque Nationalism in Iparralde:

The three historic provinces that make up Iparralde, with a combined population of 258,000 inhabitants,<sup>157</sup> have no self-standing regional administrative structure. The Basque language has no official status in France, and its use has waned over the past century to the benefit of French and what has been perceived by many people as the more prestigious French identity. Since the late 1970s, Basque nationalists in Iparralde have sought unsuccessfully to obtain the creation of a Basque département as a step towards recognition of Basque identity. This would involve dividing the Pyrénées Atlantiques département, which combines the three historic provinces of Iparralde with the non-Basque speaking historic province of Béarn, into two new départements. Successive French governments have rejected such a plan, however.

France, during the nineteenth century, saw the emergence of a modern model of nationalism that was essentially state-centred and assimilationist. French citizenship was founded on the 'belonging to the territorial community', or "*ius solis*" (Brubaker, 1992). The state preceded the nation, in the sense that nation-building largely depended on state effort. As late as 1863, by official estimates, only about a quarter of the French population spoke the 'national language' (Weber, 1977:67). Under the Third Republic, improved communications and governmental

<sup>155</sup> *El País* 19 February 1999.

<sup>156</sup> *El Correo* 27 April 2000.

<sup>157</sup> *Le Monde* 2000 *Bilan du Monde: L'analyse de 174 pays et des 26 régions françaises*. P.150.

subsidies helped to generate a sense of belonging to the centralised state among local populations. A national educational system, supplanting the Catholic Church in the provision of basic literacy, and military conscription underpinned a state in which virtually all citizens were obliged to speak French and see themselves as members of a common nation. As Laitin has put it, linguistic conformity helped to structure a nation through policies of rationalisation (1992:12), while the use of regional minority languages waned dramatically.

The French model of nationalism fits well with Gellner's definition of nationalism as an ideology diffused from the state centre to its geopolitical boundaries (1983). Centralised national educational and social services, as well as a series of wars, have contributed to a common sense of state national identity (Weber, 1977). In 1951, the French state officially recognised the existence of the six minority languages within its territory: Occitan, Basque, Catalan, Alsatian, Corsican and Breton. However, these enjoyed no official status and did not detract from the general image of French as the language of a prestigious French identity.

The combination of French centralizing policies and rural economic decline led to the decline of the Basque language in Iparralde during the twentieth century. Modernity was associated with a French-speaking elite, while Basque was largely confined to the rural and traditional world and the private sphere. There was no concept of Basque modernity under which Basque could compete with French as a modern means of communication. Figures such as the village priest and the local notary, who typically spoke both French and Basque, acted as intermediaries between the two worlds (Jaureguiberry, 1993:7). Following the decision of Vatican II to end the use of Latin in church services, in favour of vernacular language, the Catholic Church promoted the use of Basque. While this helped to preserve the Basque language in written texts, it accentuated the schism between the category 'French/modernity/laicity- universal reason', on one side, and that of 'Basque/tradition/Catholic- communitarian morality' on the other. The Basque language came to be seen not only by many French people but by Basque people too as a '*patois*',<sup>158</sup> lacking the status of a proper language, an attitude that continues today particularly amongst the older generations.

In contrast with Euskadi's predominantly industrial economy, Iparralde remains very much dependent on tourism on the coastline and on agriculture in the interior. Farming in Iparralde is mostly small scale and family-run. In order to continue with this activity, farmers depend heavily on EU and French government subsidies. Many young people leave the area in search of better opportunities in the cities. Iparralde has only a small pluridisciplinary faculty, dependent on the university of Pau, as a tertiary education establishment. The next closest universities in France are in Bordeaux and Toulouse.

At a political level, calls from Basque nationalists on the Spanish side of the frontier for union of the two parts of the Basque Country find little support among the population of Iparralde. Basque nationalist sentiment emerged as a social and political force in Iparralde only in the late 1960s. Much of its inspiration came from Hegoalde, as a result of active cooperation between nationalist organisations on both sides of the border with the support of militant Basque nationalists who had fled Franco's Spain to live in Iparralde. Under the protection of the French state as political refugees, these militants often played a central role in the cultural dynamism of local villages. "In sum," recalls José Itzáina, a Hendaian school teacher, looking back on a period which was both fun and exciting, while also politically tense, "they continued with the lifestyle to which they were accustomed on their side of the frontier: socializing in bars, doing the rounds. Basically they

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<sup>158</sup> This is a French term to refer to a way of speaking that is not standard French. As such, the term connotes the inferior status of this language or form of communication.

gave a lot of life to our streets which, if it weren't for them, would be dull and lifeless- the way we, with our French mentality, live..."

The presence and ideas of these refugees influenced the political development of militants in Iparralde. As a largely rural area whose economy was based on small-scale farming, commerce and light industry as well as tourism, particularly on the coast, Iparralde was markedly different to Hegoalde. A lack of educational infrastructures and job opportunities meant that a significant proportion of young people had to leave Iparralde to study and find employment. Reflecting on their situation in a culturally and linguistically distinct area marginalised from the rest of France and following a Marxist-Leninist discourse on the inequality of classes and economic oppression, some young people began to see the French government as deliberately keeping Iparralde in a state of "third worldishness" (Collins, 1986b:212). The first organised group of modern Basque nationalists in Iparralde was created in 1960 under the name of *Enbata*. Presenting themselves as a political group in the legislative elections of 1967, they received 4.63% of the votes (Jacob, 1994).<sup>159</sup>

In 1969, following initiatives already begun in Hegoalde over a decade earlier, a group of Basque nationalists and culturalists in Iparralde opened their first *ikastola* for small children in Arangoitze. Parents formed an association known as *Seaska* to provide funding and administrative support for the *ikastola*, since they received no support from the French government. In 1975, a group of Basque nationalist youths set up their own armed organisation modeled on ETA, which they called *Iparretarrak*.<sup>160</sup> This group claimed responsibility for a series of attacks on French government offices and "non-Basque sensitive" tourist trade initiatives, culminating in the early 1980s with a series of dramatic events, involving the death of both militants and police officials, as well as a few people mistaken as targets.

The laws of de-centralisation of 1982, 1983 and 1986, redefining the region as a "territorial collectivity" with its own directly elected council, the *conseil régional*, and its own budget, had positive repercussions in terms of scope for local decision-making in Iparralde. Minority languages were recognised by the National Educational system and at the university level: depending on parental demand, French state schools were allowed to provide Basque lessons and, in some places, this has led to the establishment of the *Ikas Bi*<sup>161</sup> system, whereby children can follow half the lessons in Basque and the other half in French; at the pluridisciplinary faculty of the university of Pau located in Baiona, it is also possible to obtain a university degree in Basque studies in Basque.<sup>162</sup> In 1985, a national council for regional languages and cultures was created under the supervision of the prime minister. For Basque nationalists however, this was only a small step. It took another nine years before *Seaska* was also finally recognized by the French government.<sup>163</sup> Other local Basque initiatives received limited public funding.

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<sup>159</sup> *Enbata* was disbanded in 1974, though its spirit remains alive in the weekly magazine of the same name widely read by Basque left-wing nationalists across Iparralde. In its place, another political grouping emerged, under the name *Euskal Herriko Alderdi Sozialista*, meaning "Socialist party of the Basque Country". It did not, however, fare any better in the legislative elections of 1978 (3.4%).

<sup>160</sup> Meaning Those of the North.

<sup>161</sup> *Ikas Bi* translates as bilingual education. It was created in 1983 on the initiative of an association of parents. There are currently 69 establishments providing the *Ikas Bi* system. These including Catholic and French national education schools. In Hendaia, three primary schools and one secondary school offer the *Ikas Bi* alternative.

<sup>162</sup> But students wishing to branch out further must go to Hegoalde, to the Basque universities of Donostia, Gasteiz or Bilbo. This lack of educational opportunities at home, together with the lack of professional outlets and the consequent loss of a young population obliged to leave Iparralde has been a major worry for local *abertzaleak*.

<sup>163</sup> It now receives financial support from the Regional and General Councils. The *ikastolak* nonetheless continue to be short of facilities and regularly organise fund-raising events. There are now 23 *ikastolak* in Iparralde. 18 are primary schools, 3 are secondary schools and 1 is a lycée (equivalent of A level years). In 2000, the *ikastolak* had a total of 1851

Various political and intellectual movements evolved over these years, campaigning for Basque independence from France. Some members of the local clergy supported movements for the reassertion of the Basque language and Basque culture. At village level, younger people organised themselves into "*herri taldeak*", or village groups which coordinated activities promoting the "revival" of a "Basque nation" and maintained contact with Hegoalde. This involved the organisation of cultural events, including invitations to music and drama groups from Hegoalde to perform in Iparralde village festivities.

Mobilisation during the 1980s revolved around the idea of the 'internal colonialism of the French state'. As part of their drive to promote an indigenous economy, Basque nationalists attacked the tourist trade, which they regarded as a form of economic colonization. In response, restaurant owners and others working in the tourist trade created an association to protect their interests called "Turismoa bai" (Yes to Tourism). Tensions increased dramatically as the GAL, carried out its reprisals on ETA activists hiding on Iparralde soil. There were often cases of confusion where innocent people were made victims of these onslaughts. The general sense of fear propagated by these goings-on caused an acute crisis amongst Basque cultural and political militants in Iparralde, as they were cast in a very bad light amongst the non-nationalist population.

In 1986, the *herri taldeak* grouped together as a confederation in a political party known as *EMA*, *Eskerriko Mugimendu Abertzalea*.<sup>164</sup> In effect the political wing of *Iparretarrak*, it presented candidates in the local elections that same year, but won only a very small number of votes.<sup>165</sup> The activities of *Iparretarrak* led to an increase in French police controls in Iparralde, much to the distaste of HB and ETA since many of its militants used Iparralde as a safe haven from which to plan their operations in Hegoalde. HB set up a branch in Iparralde in 1986, with the name of *EB*, *Euskal Batasuna*,<sup>166</sup> in an attempt to exert more control on Basque nationalist activities there, creating tensions with *EMA*.

During this time, a younger generation of Basque militants set up another alternative Basque nationalist organisation, under the name of *Patxa*. These people who felt the other parties were too old-fashioned, concerned only with the preservation of Basque culture and language in a traditional rural context. By contrast, *Patxa* called for a focus on urban problems and the difficulties faced by young people today, due to unsatisfactory educational options and a lack of professional opportunities at home (Jacob, 1994:361). It also incorporated an idea introduced in Hegoalde, *Insumisoa* – or the refusal by young men to fulfill national conscription requirements. Refusal to do military service became the focus of one of the Basque nationalists' most prominent campaigns at this time, partially in Iparralde but also in Hegoalde.

By the late 1980s, *Iparretarrak*'s activities had waned. Apart from a few sporadic actions here and there in Iparralde against tourist initiatives and estate agencies, there was little in the way of a sustained campaign of violence. In 1988, *Patxa*, *EB* and *EMA* merged under the name of *Abertzaleen Batasuna*, or *AB*,<sup>167</sup> with the objective of gathering all Basque nationalists into a common political force able to present itself more effectively in municipal elections.<sup>168</sup> That year,

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pupils (Interview with representative of *Seaska* May 2000. see also 'Herri Urrats' pamphlet in *Le Journal du Pays Basque* 12 May 2002).

<sup>164</sup> *Eskerriko Mugimendua Abertzalea* means the nationalist movement of the Left

<sup>165</sup> 3.8% (*Journal du Pays Basque*, 25 and 26 May 2002, P.6).

<sup>166</sup> *Euskal Batasuna* means the Basque Union.

<sup>167</sup> *Abertzaleen Batasuna* means the Union of Nationalists.

<sup>168</sup> In 1990, *Patxa* took a new name, *Herriaren Alde*, or 'For the People', so maintaining its distinct party identity while participating in elections under the wider banner of *AB*.

EA, recently established in Iparralde, also ran in the elections, though independently of AB. Meanwhile EAJ also created its own branch in Iparralde in 1990. In the legislative elections of 1993, these Basque nationalist parties succeeded in getting a combined total of 6.65% of the votes.<sup>169</sup>

In 1990, the Basque Cultural Institute, *Euskal Kultur Erakunde*, was established with financial assistance from the Ministry of Culture, the Regional Council, the General Council of the département, and the Inter-Communal Syndicate in Support of Basque Culture. In turn, the Basque Studies Institute provides financial assistance to local Basque initiatives. Thanks to its efforts, many road signs in Iparralde are now written in both French and Basque.

During the 1990s, Basque nationalists and culturalists in Iparralde shifted their strategy away from direct demands for independence to attempts at negotiation with regional and state authorities for special conventions in favour of linguistic, cultural and economic development in the area. In 1992, the General Council of the département des Pyrénées Atlantiques and the Regional Council of the région d'Aquitaine engaged in the elaboration of a convention called *Pays Basque 2010*. This involved the participation of councillors of Iparralde, including Basque associations and socio-economic actors, leading to the creation of a Council of Development in 1994 and a Council of Iparralde councillors in 1995 to oversee the elaboration of development projects. In 1996, a series of proposals were made in the form of a *Euskal Herriko Antolaketa eta Garapen Eskema*,<sup>170</sup> for the development of Basque education and official recognition and financial assistance to Basque associations.

Demands for the creation of a département du Pays Basque have also become one of the main rallying points for Basque nationalists in Iparralde.<sup>171</sup> Since the mid 1990s, graffiti and posters demanding '*independentzia*'<sup>172</sup> have given way to slogans such as "*departamendua orain*".<sup>173</sup> Basque nationalists claim that a département would assist more effectively in the economic and rural development of Iparralde. In 1997, AB formed an assembly to gather all Basque nationalist parties under one banner. In the context of this Basque nationalist unity, the campaign demanding for a département du Pays Basque has taken on new force and gained increasing support from local inhabitants in general. In 1999, 57% of the population of Iparralde declared themselves in favour of a Basque department and demanded that a referendum on the issue take place.<sup>174</sup>

The French government's rejection of these demands reflects its fears of the potential impact in terms of ethnic separatism and a disintegration of the French nation-state.<sup>175</sup> In 1999, the then Interior Minister, Jean-Pierre Chevènement, declared that there was "nothing to gain from the setting up of ethnic realities in Europe, other than to Balkanize the whole of Europe".<sup>176</sup>

<sup>169</sup> Journal du Pays Basque 25 and 26 May 2002, P.6.

<sup>170</sup> In French, *Schéma d'Aménagement et de Développement du Pays Basque*, or Development Plan for the Basque Country.

<sup>171</sup> Demands for the creation of a département du Pays Basque were first voiced in the 1970s. This led to the creation of the '*Association des Élus pour un Département du Pays Basque*', an association made up, in addition to Basque nationalists, of members of the UDF and the PS, all in support of the idea of creating a Basque département. As part of his 1981 presidential election campaign, the Socialist leader, François Mitterrand, listed as one of his 110 proposals the creation of a Basque département. However, once elected President, he changed his mind.

<sup>172</sup> This means 'Independence' in Basque.

<sup>173</sup> This means 'Département Now'.

<sup>174</sup> Survey: C.S.A. Opinion for *Sud-Ouest* newspaper 28 August 1999. See also *Enbata* 2 April 1999; *L'Express* 7 October 1999 P.iv. *Le Monde* 12 October 1999, P.13.

<sup>175</sup> *Le Monde* 8 May 1999 P.13; *Le Monde* 19 December 1999; *Enbata* 24 December 1999.

<sup>176</sup> "Rien à gagner des réalités ethniques en Europe, sinon à Balkaniser l'Europe toute entière" (my translation from *Le Monde* 4 October 1999). During his tenure in the late 1990s, Mr. Chevènement was one of the most ardent opponents of the creation of a Basque département. He resigned over the issue of devolution for Corsica in 2000.

Nonetheless, despite negative reactions at the Paris headquarters of national political parties such as the RPR,<sup>177</sup> UDF and PS to the idea of a Basque département, dismissed as a “régression”, “dangereux”, “impracticable” and “sans avenir”,<sup>178</sup> some local representatives of these parties have gone along with the campaign, while insisting that they are supporting it along Republican lines “with a blue, white and red sash, not one with the Basque colours”.<sup>179</sup> On 9 October 1999, approximately 13,000 people took part in a second demonstration in Baiona to demand the creation of a Basque département.<sup>180</sup> For the first time, it included representatives of these French national parties.

Along with Greece, France is the only country in the EU not to have ratified the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages. In May 1999, having acknowledged that “regional languages do not pose a threat to the integration and cohesion of the French Republic”, 39 of the 98 clauses were signed.<sup>181</sup> While this was still unsatisfactory for cultural activists and nationalists, it was already a step too far for ‘Jacobins’, or supporters of a centralising state government.<sup>182</sup> The Charter was referred to the Constitutional Court which ruled it unconstitutional, on the grounds that it went against article 2 of the French constitution which states that French is the only language of the French nation.<sup>183</sup> President Chirac then refused to support Prime Minister Jospin’s proposal for a Constitutional amendment, causing the government to go back on its decision of ratification.

Since January 2000, the Délégation Générale à la Langue Française at the Ministry of Culture has put aside a special budget for the benefit of regional and minority languages in France amounting to 45,7347 euros a year. This is remarkably little. Two thirds of this budget is managed by the decentralised administrative structure of the Direction Régionale des Affaires Culturelles which makes the subsidies available for cultural initiatives only. According to Michel Alessio, responsible for Regional and Minority Language affairs at the French Ministry of Culture, “the French state prefers to give support to minority language communities in France in this unofficial way, so as to avoid the eventual claiming of specific rights”.<sup>184</sup>

During my fieldwork, in 2000, the French President, Jacques Chirac, called a referendum to approve a reduction in the French presidential term of office from seven to five years. AB took advantage of this event to enact a symbolic referendum for the Basque département, highlighting the refusal of the French state to grant a referendum on this issue while holding a referendum on the length of the presidential term, a matter of little concern to most people in the area. AB distributed tracts demanding the creation of a Basque département, which voters could insert into

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<sup>177</sup> *Rassemblement pour la République*, meaning “Rally for the Republic”, the neo-Gaullist party of French President Jacques Chirac.

<sup>178</sup> *L’Express* 7 October 1999, P.iv.

<sup>179</sup> “Avec une écharpe tricolore, pas aux couleurs basques” (my translation). Daniel Poulou, spokesman for Michèle Alliot-Marie, former mayor of St. Jean de Luz and now head of the RPR and vice president of the General Council of the *département des Pyrénées Atlantiques*, quoted in *L’Express* 7 October 1999, p. iv.

<sup>180</sup> The regional newspaper *Sud-Ouest* (10 October 1999) claims an estimated 10,000 people took part while the left-wing Basque nationalist magazine, *Enbata*, in Iparralde claims there were at least 16,000 participants (13 October 1999).

<sup>181</sup> *Le Monde* 7 May 1999 (my translation).

<sup>182</sup> *Libération* 7 May 1999 P.9.

<sup>183</sup> Interview with Regina Jensdotir, responsible for the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages at the Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 10 September 1999.

<sup>184</sup> Interview October 2000. A more recent illustration of the Jacobin paranoia with regard to the possible disintegration of their republican ideals is in the mobilisation of several sections of the French National Education system against the decision of the Minister of Education to institutionalise the Diwans, or Breton schools. Just before the decision was to be ratified, these various associations demanded a revision of the decision before the State council, on the grounds that it “threatens the principals of equality and unity of the République” (*Libération* 30 October 2001 “Le rang des laics contre la classe en breton”).

the ballot boxes instead of the official voting slips. In Hendaia, these unofficial votes, although counted simply as invalid votes, amounted to 17.8 % of the total votes cast.<sup>185</sup>

That year, a study by the regional television channel France 3 and a weekly regional newspaper, *La Semaine du Pays Basque*, reported that 67.5 % of the population of the *département des Pyrénées Atlantiques* is now favourable to the creation of a Basque *département*.<sup>186</sup>

As for the project Pays Basque 2010, this was developed following an agreement between the French government and the region of Aquitaine in May 2000. Negotiations between the Council of Iparralde councillors, the General Council, the Regional Council and local representatives of the state in the form of the *préfets*, finally resulted in the creation of a so-called *Convention Spécifique Pays Basque 2001-2006* in December 2000. With a total budget of 400,230,000 Euros provided by the French government, the region of Aquitaine and the *département des Pyrénées Atlantiques*, this convention aims to assist socio-economic, cultural and linguistic development in Iparralde. The section relevant to the development of the Basque language, in the form of the *Euskal Herriko Antolaketa eta Garapen Eskema*, was re-elaborated and put into practice with a total budget of 7,165,103 Euros. In order to ensure the smooth running of this scheme, a Basque language council<sup>187</sup> was also created bringing together Basque associations,<sup>188</sup> local councillors and delegates of the region of Aquitaine and the *département des Pyrénées Atlantiques*.

This convention is a great step in relations between local actors in Iparralde and French government authorities. It is significant in that it involves an official recognition on the part of the French government of the specific needs of the Basque Country in the areas of socio-economic, cultural and linguistic development. However, as Secretary-General of the Basque language council, Eguzki Urteaga, stated to me in an interview, there is still a great need for diplomacy and careful treading in relations with governmental authorities.<sup>189</sup> For example, the word 'normalisation' of the Basque language is still seen as threatening, government authorities preferring thereby to talk of 'aménagement' – or 'organisation' of the Basque language.

#### Basque Nationalism today:

Reflecting the emergence in Iparralde and Hegoalde of a range of 'nationalist' movements with different tendencies and objectives, the term nationalism in the Basque context has become ambiguous and unclear. In Iparralde, a small minority within the Basque nationalist camp condones violence in pursuit of Basque independence and maintains links with sympathisers in Hegoalde. Members of a larger group of more moderate nationalists seek to distance themselves from the conflictual political and social situation in Hegoalde by stressing the specific nature of their own demands while at the same time expressing solidarity with their counterparts across the

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<sup>185</sup> Statistics from the municipality of Hendaia.

<sup>186</sup> *Enbata* No.1646. 5 October 2000. Pp. 6-7.

<sup>187</sup> *Euskal Kontseilua* in Basque.

<sup>188</sup> The associations taking part are Erakasleak, Euskal Haziak, Pindarra, Seaska, AEK, Udako Euskal Unibersitatea, Euskal Irratiak, Herria, Uda Leku, Euskal Dantzarien Biltzarra and Euskal Herrian Euskaraz. All are specialised in different areas concerned with the use of Basque, such as Basque teaching, Basque radios and Basque cultural activities. *Ikas Bi* is the only association that does not take part, a fact that remained unexplained by both spokespersons of the Basque language council and *Ikas Bi*.

<sup>189</sup> The Basque government, as well as other political initiatives in Hegoalde, have also expressed willingness to give financial assistance. However, these offers have not so far been taken up given the risk they might cause of jeopardising the relationship currently being build with the French authorities (interview with Secretary-General of the Basque language council, Eguzki Urteaga, April 2002). It has been possible nonetheless to include a delegate from the Basque government in the working group on language issues.

border.<sup>190</sup> Non-nationalists, meanwhile, frequently maintain a sense of pride in cultural and ethnic symbols of Basque identity, while rejecting the political goals of the nationalists.

In Hegoalde, by contrast, the radicalization of nationalist politics continues to be a source of tension in everyday social interaction. EA, created in 1986 by a group of former EAJ members who had seceded from the main Basque nationalist party, distinguishes itself from EAJ as being more determined in its quest for independence and its 'social-democratic' strategy, and from Batasuna by its condemnation of violent tactics. Nonetheless, both EA and the independence-favouring section of EAJ are still criticised by partisans of the left-wing nationalist movement for not genuinely pursuing independence and being mainly concerned with preserving their power in Euskadi and cultivating their profile at the European level.<sup>191</sup>

In 1998, the Spanish government incarcerated the leaders of HB on the grounds of its close links with ETA. In its place, EH emerged as a new formation to take up the demands of the left-wing Basque nationalist movement. In March 1999, EAJ and EA formed an alliance in many municipalities for the elections as well as the provincial elections, which in the eyes of EH supporters only served to confirm its accusations that EAJ and EA, by negotiating with the Spanish parties, had become '*españolistas*', or 'pro-Spanish'.<sup>192</sup> Some people socializing in left-wing Basque nationalist movements, without necessarily formulating clearly any political argument, told me they saw the main difference between EAJ/EA and Batasuna as being that the former are "so conservative and traditionalist, whereas those of Batasuna are so much more open-minded and inclusive- active in feminist issues, gay and lesbian movements, things like that." Indeed, one of the strengths of the left wing Basque nationalist movement has been its ability to occupy these social spaces of contestation- the "front du refus"- and thereby marry their political image with these alternative social values.

The Basque nationalist parties of Iparralde and Hegoalde came to work more seriously together in the late 1990s. In August 1998, the nationalist parties of both Iparralde and Hegoalde officially signed an agreement, known as the Treaty of Lizarra-Garazi<sup>193</sup> in which several political parties of Iparralde and Hegoalde gathered together in their mutual recognition as representatives of Euskal Herria.

In this climate of consolidation, and in an attempt to draw a direct parallel with the Northern Irish peace process, ETA proclaimed a ceasefire in September 1998, declaring itself ready to negotiate with the Spanish government. This brought about a general climate of optimism and expressions of goodwill between Basque nationalist parties.<sup>194</sup> It prompted EAJ and EA to form an alliance with a

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<sup>190</sup> In October 2001, a schism occurred in the left-wing Basque nationalist movement of Iparralde. It is now divided between Batasuna, a political party and social movement which takes a harder line, uniting sympathisers from both Iparralde and Hegoalde, and a majority group preferring to concentrate their campaign at the local level.

<sup>191</sup> See for example *El Correo Español* 27 April 2000. Also based on personal conversations with militants of AB in Iparralde and EH in Hegoalde.

<sup>192</sup> Also based on observations and conversations.

<sup>193</sup> Signed in the towns of St. Jean Pied de Port in Lower Navarre (*Donibane Garazi* in Basque) and Estella in Navarre (*Lizarra* in Basque).

<sup>194</sup> One particular testimony of this time recalled to me by an informant comes to mind: Ion Elizalde, representative of EA at the municipal council of Hondarribia remembers this time as having quite a "surreal" atmosphere: "there were a lot of social gatherings between members of different parties, this kind of weird jovial atmosphere. I could go into Muara (the social bar run by supporters of HB) no problem- I'd be invited in even! And those people from HB who had so looked at me with distaste before were now shaking my hand and being really friendly. I remember we even ran the Korrika together. It was great. And then suddenly, with the end of the ceasefire, it all fell through. I reckon those of HB had no idea of what ETA was up to. They weren't expecting the end of the ceasefire at all. They are just kept completely in the dark, like puppets. And now, with each other, we are back to what it was before, maybe worse even. I wouldn't dare put a foot in Muara now!"

view to forming a common front in negotiations with the Spanish conservative government. Building the Treaty of Lizarra-Garazi, nationalist parties and other left-wing forces on both sides of the Franco-Spanish frontier banded together in a movement known as *Udalbiltza*, meaning “the gathering of municipalities” in Basque in September 1999. It was a successful project in its ability also to mobilize non-abertzale sectors, such as the Green party in Iparralde, and the left-wing party *Izquierda Unida/Ezkerra Batua*<sup>195</sup> in Hegoalde. Headed by an EAJ mayor from Hegoalde, *Udalbiltza* was designed as a Basque assembly with its own budget to which each municipality headed by a nationalist party would contribute.<sup>196</sup> This money would be re-allocated to Basque cultural initiatives in the most needy parts of the Basque Country, notably Iparralde and Nafarroa. The additional significance of this initiative by Basque nationalist parties on either side of the Franco-Spanish border lies in its effective defiance of state boundaries and authorities. Furthermore, it presents itself as a parallel project to the EU’s regional cross-border cooperation incentives and a challenge to state-run initiatives.

In the more positive climate generated by the ceasefire, Basque nationalists of different groups began to work together to explore new avenues of non-violent mobilization. EH, meanwhile, intensified its campaign for the return of Basque militant prisoners in Spanish jails to the Basque Country, with the slogan “Euskal Presoak Euskal Herrira”. However, in December 1999, fourteen months after the start of the so-called truce and only three months after the creation of *Udalbiltza*, ETA announced the end of its ceasefire. It claimed that this decision was motivated by the fact that the Spanish government had made no efforts to cooperate with EH or respond to its demands for the repatriation of Basque militants incarcerated elsewhere in Spain or exiled overseas, and that the other Basque nationalist parties, EAJ and EA, had failed to commit themselves to a genuine united Basque nationalist project with EH.

In January 2000, on the occasion of its general assembly, EAJ reiterated that its goal was self-determination.<sup>197</sup> In statements during the course of 2000, Juan María Jauristi, president of the Gipuzkoan branch of EAJ, defined himself as an ‘independista’ rather than ‘autonomista’,<sup>198</sup> while Xabier Arzallus, the chairman of the party, claimed to reject ETA but to share its objective of independence.<sup>199</sup> ETA, meanwhile, resumed its killings, targeting not only members of the Spanish army and the PP and businessmen, but also judges, journalists, *ertzainak* and Socialist politicians. This has accentuated the sense of crisis in Hegoalde, as many of the older generation of politicians and local personalities now perceived as potential targets had been active opponents of the Franco régime (Woodward in Rankin, 2001).

During my stay in Bidasoa-Txingudi, attacks were made on Irun and Hondarribia PP and PSOE councillors and local bases of the Guardia Civil, as well as on some of the local media. In February 2001, police discovered in an industrial part of Irun the place where the Basque empresario José-María Aldaia, kidnapped by ETA in May 1995, had been hidden until mid 1996 when he was finally freed. Also during this time, a ‘*mugalari*’, a Basque word meaning ‘smuggler’ which is also used to refer to ETA militants whose task it is to smuggle fellow militants, explosives, money, fake papers and other paraphernalia from one side of the frontier to the other, was caught in his home in the center of Hendaia.<sup>200</sup> Each time an ETA attack took

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<sup>195</sup> This is a coalition including the former Spanish Communist Party, created in 1986. *Izquierda Unida/Ezkerra Batua* means “United Left.”

<sup>196</sup> See for example *El País* 26 January 1999.

<sup>197</sup> See *Enbata*, 20 January 2000, Pp.4-5.

<sup>198</sup> *Diario Vasco* 3 December 2000.

<sup>199</sup> *Diario Vasco* 16 November 2000.

<sup>200</sup> See “Un veterano mugalari” and “Detenido en Hendaya el jefe de mugas de ETA al ser sorprendido en casa de su compañera”, in *Diario Vasco*, 24 March 2001 and “Un ‘frontalier’; arrêté à Hendaye”, in *Sud Ouest*, 24 March 2001.

place, members of the municipal councils, with the exception of the EH representatives, stood for five minutes in front of the town hall in total silence to protest against this violence. It was during these moments of crisis that the town hall of Irun hung out the banners "ETA no, ETA ez" from its balcony in April 2001. By April 2002, ETA had claimed thirty nine victims. At the same time, a few left-wing Basque nationalist militants in Irun, Hondarribia and Hendaia were arrested for various acts of sabotage. Local associations demanding the repatriation of 'Basque political' prisoners regularly staged small demonstrations in the locality, consisting of walking around with banners and photos of the prisoners with the sound of melancholic music.

Suspensions on the part of moderate Basque nationalist and Spanish parties that ETA had taken advantage of the ceasefire to actually improve its military commando led to a serious breach in relations between the various Basque nationalist parties. Even some members of the left-wing Basque nationalist movement who once believed that violence was legitimate in the struggle for 'Basque liberation' felt disillusionment, daring to express their disapproval of ETA and doubts as to the strategy of EH. With regional parliamentary elections due in Euskadi in May 2001, some people even wondered if ETA was not somehow hoping to bring about an increased vote for the PP and the installation of a PP member in the person of the leader of the PP's campaign, former Spanish interior minister Jaime Mayor Oreja, thereby better to justify its discourse of oppression at the hands of Spain. Amid these tensions, the Treaty of Lizarra-Garazi lost force as a rallying point among the various Basque nationalist parties.<sup>201</sup> At the same time, on the local level, EAJ tried to smooth relations with the various associations of the left-wing nationalist movement. In July 2000, the EAJ-led town council of Hondarribia, for example, allowed banners saying "Euskal Presoak Etxera", put up on lamp posts by associations calling for the return of 'Basque political' prisoners during a demonstration that went through Hendaia and across the frontier through Irun to Hondarribia, to stay there for more than seven months, whereas in Hendaia and Hondarribia, they were taken down by the municipalities immediately after the demonstration was over.<sup>202</sup>

In December 2000, the PS signed an 'anti-terrorist pact' with the PP, under which the two parties agreed on a common political approach to deal with ETA, effectively excluding the Basque nationalist parties and prompting criticism from EAJ of the pact as a political ploy ahead of regional elections, rather than as a response to genuine concern for ending violence.

The effects of this political and cultural crisis were reflected in the outcome of the regional elections. Turnout was strikingly high, demonstrating the desire of the population of Euskadi for an end to the conflict.<sup>203</sup> Expectations of increased electoral support for the PP proved unfounded, as EAJ-EA won a clear majority. EH, by contrast, saw its electoral support drop from around 15% to 10.1%. While it is generally believed that the reason for this was disillusionment on the part of EH supporters with regard to EH's political stance over the last few years and particularly following the end of ETA's ceasefire, seen as illogical and damaging for the development of the left-wing nationalist movement, EH representatives continued to argue that the fault somehow lay with EAJ-EA.

A few weeks after the elections, in an interview with the papers *Egunkaria* and *Gara*, ETA representatives denied having had any role in the electoral downfall of EH. This party, meanwhile, underwent its own self-reflexive process to re-emerge in June 2001 as *Batasuna*. Its re-formation

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<sup>201</sup> An example of the tensions is illustrated for example in the demonstration held on 15 January 2000 in Bilbao in support of *Udalbiltza*, whereby EAJ, EA and IU walked together in the lead and EH, followed behind, slightly detached from the rest of the demonstration (See also *Enbata* No. 1611. 20 January 2000. P.7).

<sup>202</sup> Based on personal observation and inquiry.

<sup>203</sup> 79.8% of the population of Euskadi voted.

under a new name was not sufficient to retain disillusioned EH supporters, who saw Batasuna simply as an even more radicalized political party.<sup>204</sup>

Udalbiltza still exists but since the beginning of 2001, it has no longer included EH.<sup>205</sup> Within Basque conservative circles, there is disagreement about the position to be assumed in relation to ETA, some believing the Ertzaintza should be more actively mobilised to enable them to fight against ETA, while others are reluctant to act too openly against ETA and, while opposed to ETA, carry on regarding its members as the poor lost children of EAJ and the Basque people. Arzallus, the president of EAJ, continues to maintain that ETA's violence is principally the fault of Spanish political incompetence. All nonetheless reject any kind of negotiation with ETA, while Batasuna refuses to condemn the violent group and calls for a 'political solution' in Euskal Herria with amnesty. On the other hand, the monthly newsletter of EAJ never talks about independence but rather about 'stateless nations', their "right to decide their own future", federalism and subsidiarity.<sup>206</sup>

Meanwhile, in addition to politicians and businessmen, artists, writers and academics denouncing ETA have suffered intimidation and vandalism. Several Basque public figures have left Euskadi, refusing to stand any longer the terror to which they are constantly submitted in the stifling political climate created by ETA and its supporters. Despite the successive metamorphoses of HB into EH and of EH into Batasuna, the concept of HB as a socio-political nexus remains alive (Pérez-Agote, 2001). Batasuna members continue to refuse to condemn ETA violence, maintaining that little has changed since the end of the Franco era in that Euskal Herria continues to be oppressed by the Spanish and French state. In Hegoalde, it is still common to hear Basque left-wing nationalists referred to as "those of HB" and "HBeros" (pronounced Atchaybayros, or HBites). In 1999, the Spanish government closed *Egin*,<sup>207</sup> a newspaper with Basque left-wing nationalist sympathies, and its radio station *Egin Irratia* following allegations of collaboration with ETA, but it was soon replaced by the newspaper Gara. Alongside ETA, a left-wing nationalist youth faction actively engages in street violence, or *kale borroka*. This left-wing nationalist nexus continues to demand amnesty and a referendum on independence for Euskal Herria, without providing any concrete indication of what would be its strategies, were it to obtain Basque independence.

In Iparralde, the return to violence of ETA in Hegoalde also prompted serious self-questioning among Basque left-wing nationalists. AB, although many of its members have openly criticised ETA, was hesitant to condemn it. However, over the past year, some supporters of AB have become increasingly vociferous in their disapproval of ETA's actions, particularly since the end of ETA's so-called ceasefire. Many now see ETA as a hindrance to the development and progress of the Basque cause. This anxiety came to a head following the election upheaval in Hegoalde in May 2001 as a section of the movement decided to join forces with the newly emerging party of Batasuna in Hegoalde. This led to AB finally undergoing a schism in September 2001, splitting into two groups, with a minority choosing to form part of Batasuna, and a majority (67%) continuing to favour an Iparralde-centered nationalist campaign. Those who have chosen to join Batasuna favour

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<sup>204</sup> Dissension within the movement led in October 2001 to the setting up of a new alternative left-wing Basque nationalist political group, Aralar, led by Patxi Zabaleta, an EH representative on the municipal council of a town in Nafarroa. Following the elections, Zabaleta had resigned from EH, prompting vigorous reproaches from other left-wing Basque nationalists. Aralar, according to Zabaleta, seeks to offer a way out of the impasse facing left-wing Basque nationalists, as an alternative party to Batasuna which, unlike Batasuna, condemns ETA violence and does not seek to impose its influence in Iparralde. Support for this party is estimated to be at least 9% among adherents of the now dissolved EH, and it is likely to play an important role in future developments within the world of Basque nationalism in Hegoalde.

Other groupings once part of EH which have now followed their own course are Zutik and Batzarre.

<sup>205</sup> In December 2001, Batasuna created its own Udalbiltza, under the name Udalbiltza-Batasuna.

<sup>206</sup> *Lema: Euskadi European*, January 2002 No.56. P.1.

<sup>207</sup> Meaning To do.

a Euskal Herria-wide strategy, in contrast with the majority of AB members who favour a more locally based and Iparralde-sensitive approach. By joining Batasuna, the minority will benefit from financial support coming from Batasuna in Hegoalde. The schism has created much tension in the left-wing abertzale movement of Iparralde, as a much necessary unity for obtaining demands in Iparralde seems less and less possible.

### Political organisation in Bidasoa-Txingudi

Under Raphael Lassalette<sup>208</sup> as mayor from 1981 to 2001, Hendaia's town council has been sensitive to the concerns of the Basque culture and language movement. Over the century, this has been largely due to the involvement of people originally from Hegoalde in local Basque political and cultural activities.<sup>209</sup> During the 1960s, a Basque cultural association, *Haize Garbia*,<sup>210</sup> helped to promote Basque culture and the Basque language along traditional Catholic lines (Michelena, 1997:594-599). In 1971, a bilingual school, *Hendaiako ikastola*,<sup>211</sup> was set up. Other Basque associations, such as *Akelarre*<sup>212</sup> and *Eraiki*, also helped to promote Basque values, this time with more explicitly nationalist motivations. Aspiring to an all-Basque education for local children, these associations set up another ikastola, under the name of *Gure ikastola*,<sup>213</sup> with the assistance of Seaska a year later. Hendaiako ikastola has been dismantled since but many public and Catholic schools in Hendaia have now assumed a bilingual section alongside their all-French system and, in the case of one school, of a bilingual Spanish/French section.

Reflecting the large number of Basque militants from Hegoalde living as political refugees in Hendaia during the 1970s and 1980s, Hendaia was the setting of many of the GAL's attacks. The town council was public in its condemnation of both GAL and ETA assassination and in its support for the families of victims. For some time now, the municipality of Hendaia has dedicated 1.5% of its budget to Basque culture, of which a substantial part goes to assisting the Hendaia branch of AEK. In 1995, Mr. Lassalette joined the council of Iparralde councillors to work on the elaboration of a Basque language development plan, as part of the Euskal Herriko Antolaketa eta Garapen Eskema. In the late 1990s, while making clear its condemnation of ETA's violence, the municipality proclaimed itself in favour of the repatriation of Basque political prisoners, equal to all other kinds of prisoners.<sup>214</sup> In 2000, however, Mr. Lassalette chose not to read out a letter condemning ETA, written by a councillor representing the Green party, in one of the council meetings.<sup>215</sup> Nonetheless, while being sensitive to the Basque culture and the Basque language, Mr. Lassalette never supported the campaign for the creation of a Basque département.<sup>216</sup>

Following the March 2001 municipal elections, Mr. Lassalette was succeeded by his deputy, José-Luís Ecenarro, who prefers to be known by the Basque version of his forename, Kotte. Born in Hendaia to Spanish parents who had taken refuge there during the Spanish Civil War, Mr.

<sup>208</sup> Born in Hendaia, Mr. Lassalette worked as a local school teacher.

<sup>209</sup> A local aristocratic figure Antoine d'Abbadie residing in Hendaia at the turn of the century is also largely credited with maintaining a promotion of Basque culture in the locality.

<sup>210</sup> Literally translating as "Clean wind".

<sup>211</sup> Meaning "Ikastola of Hendaia".

<sup>212</sup> The word Akelarre refers to the pagan festival in which witches were involved, which is often evoked as one of the classic features of Basque traditional culture.

<sup>213</sup> Meaning "Our ikastola".

<sup>214</sup> The municipality chose to omit the word 'Basque' and 'political' to refer to these detainees so as to make clear their impartiality to the demand for the repatriation of prisoners (Interview with Raphael Lassalette, January 2002 and Serge Lonca, councillor of Hendaia representing the Green Party, April 2002). But indeed, the issuing of this proclamation has its origins in a demand made by *Anai Artea*, the association representing 'Basque political' prisoners and their families to the municipality of Hendaia.

<sup>215</sup> Conversation with the mayor Raphael Lassalette and the writer of the letter, Serge Lonca.

<sup>216</sup> Interview with Mr. Lassalette, January 2002.

Ecenarro is also a member of the PS. In addition, however, he claims to be an abertzale, giving importance to Basque culture and the Basque language, without siding with any Basque nationalist party.<sup>217</sup> He is fairly fluent in both Spanish and Basque, but insists on his feeling Hendaian and a French citizen.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, Mr. Ecenarro leads a so-called 'plural' coalition, named *Hendaye Plurielle*, made up of twenty-five councillors who together form the majority group in the council. Hendaye Plurielle includes five people close to the PS,<sup>218</sup> six who are members of or close to the PCF, a former member of the French moderate conservative coalition group UDF, a sympathiser of the *Mouvement des Citoyens*,<sup>219</sup> and four councillors who also claim to be Basque nationalists, although they do not regard independence as their primary goal and condemn ETA violence. The remainder have no declared links with any party. Most were in the former council.

Until March 2001, the municipal council of Hendaia also included, in the opposition, one member of Biharko Hendaia, the local representative of AB. At the time, Biharko Hendaia represented approximately 8.2 % of the vote in Hendaia. Now, the opposition, composed of seven councillors, is made up of Carmen Hiribarren and two others from her list, Jean-Baptiste Sallaberry and another from his list, Green party member Serge Lonca and another person from the alternative mixed left-wing list, *Gauche Plurielle*.

As the case of Hendaia demonstrates, local politics in Iparralde tend to be dictated more by local influences than by political party considerations. While nine members of Hendaia's town council have open sympathies with the Socialist party, only Kotte Ecenarro is an official member of the PS. Even those who are members or sympathisers of national parties like the PS or UDF tend to adapt their positions to what they think are the particular needs of Hendaia. So, Mr. Ecenarro proclaims himself to be an abertzale in his own right and to support the campaign for the creation of a *département du Pays Basque*, while other council members such as the former UDF member,<sup>220</sup> the independent abertzaleak and PC sympathisers are able to fit in as part of Mr. Ecenarro's team.

In Hegoalde, by contrast, local politics are much more polarised along political party lines. Due to the pro-Republican sentiments of a large proportion of Irun's population, it suffered severely at the hands of Franco's forces during the Spanish Civil War. Under Franco, Irun and Hondarribia, like other towns in Spain, were run by officials close to the regime. Hondarribia was a vacation destination for members of Franco's family and for supporters of his government.

Since 1979, the municipal council of Hondarribia has been headed by moderate Basque nationalists, reflecting the strong traditional Basque character of Hondarribia's population. The present mayor, Borja Jáuregui, who took office in 1995 and is currently on his second mandate, is a member of EAJ. He succeeded Alonso Oronoz, a member of EA, and he leads a coalition of EAJ and EA councillors. Mr. Jáuregui is from a well-known local family which owns a hotel, bar and restaurant in the centre of town. However, he does not speak Basque and professes no interest

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<sup>217</sup> Interview with Mr. Ecenarro, January 2001.

<sup>218</sup> At the time of writing, only Mr. Ecenarro was an official member of the PS. Three councillors were due to renew their membership, while the other two expressed no need or hurry to officialise their support to the PS. While it was necessary for them to be members for the election campaign, so as to ensure the support of the PS, now that they are in the municipal council, this is no longer necessary.

<sup>219</sup> This literally translates as the 'Movement of Citizens'. This is Jean-Pierre Chevènement's French nationalist and Jacobinist party.

<sup>220</sup> In fact, the former member of the UDF, Jean-Francois Durandau gave up his membership in order to fit harmoniously into Mr. Ecenarro's list.

in learning it.<sup>221</sup> The council also has four representatives of Batasuna, and one councillor each representing the PSE-EE and the PP.

In 2001, the council of Hondarribia cited the promotion of Basque and development of more cultural activities as being among its priorities. In order to give sufficient areas of responsibility to both EAJ and EA councillors, cultural and Basque affairs have been assigned separately to two councillors. While EA councillor Ion Elizalde is responsible for the Basque language, with a budget of 419,690 Euros, EAJ councillor Aitor Kerejeta is in charge of culture, with a budget of 1,250,000 Euros. But, as both Mr. Kerejeta and Mr. Elizalde acknowledged to me in interviews, culture and euskera remain closely linked.

In Irun, by contrast, reflecting the more Spanish character of a significant portion of the town's population, the municipal council is led by a coalition of the PSE-EE and the PP. This includes four Socialists and four PP members. However, due to some of the old neighbourhoods of Irun identifying with Basque traditional nationalism, EAJ and EA have also benefited of a high number of voices.<sup>222</sup> There are presently seven representatives of EAJ. The mayor, Alberto Buen, is a Socialist and has held office since 1983. Already active in the Socialist movement before and during Spain's transition to democracy, Mr. Buen served as a Socialist councillor during the first municipal mandate in Irun, between 1979 and 1983, under an EAJ mayor. Mr. Buen does not speak fluent Basque, but has taken some Basque lessons, giving him some idea of the language and allowing him to read speeches in Basque and briefly answer back at Basque addresses.<sup>223</sup> In the opposition, the council also includes four representatives of Batasuna and one independent. In 2001, the main focus of the council's 2001 budget was on economic development. The Socialist councillor Fernando San Martín is in charge of Basque language and cultural issues with a budget for this area of 977,801 Euros.

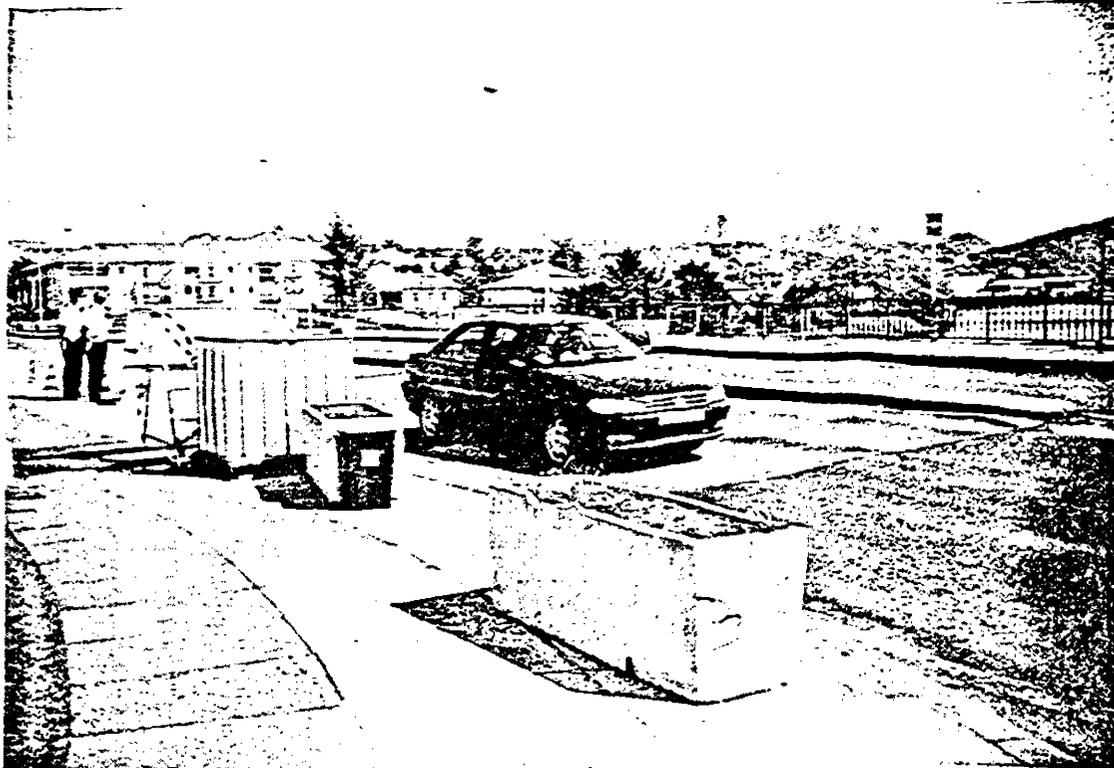
So the political make-up of the three towns is very different, reflecting the contrasting socio-political identifications and ambitions of their populations. Within these populations, individuals have different understandings of what it is to belong to the area and to feel Basque and perceive different social and cultural symbols as important to their identificatory process. Given the existence of such socio-political boundaries, not only within each of the three towns but between them as well, the challenge of rallying together under a common programme through the Partzuergo is considerable. To meet it, the three municipalities have responded in the Partzuergo not so much by erasing exclusive socio-political boundaries as by seeking to create new inclusive boundaries common to the whole area. In the following chapter, we shall place the development of cross-frontier cooperation into context.

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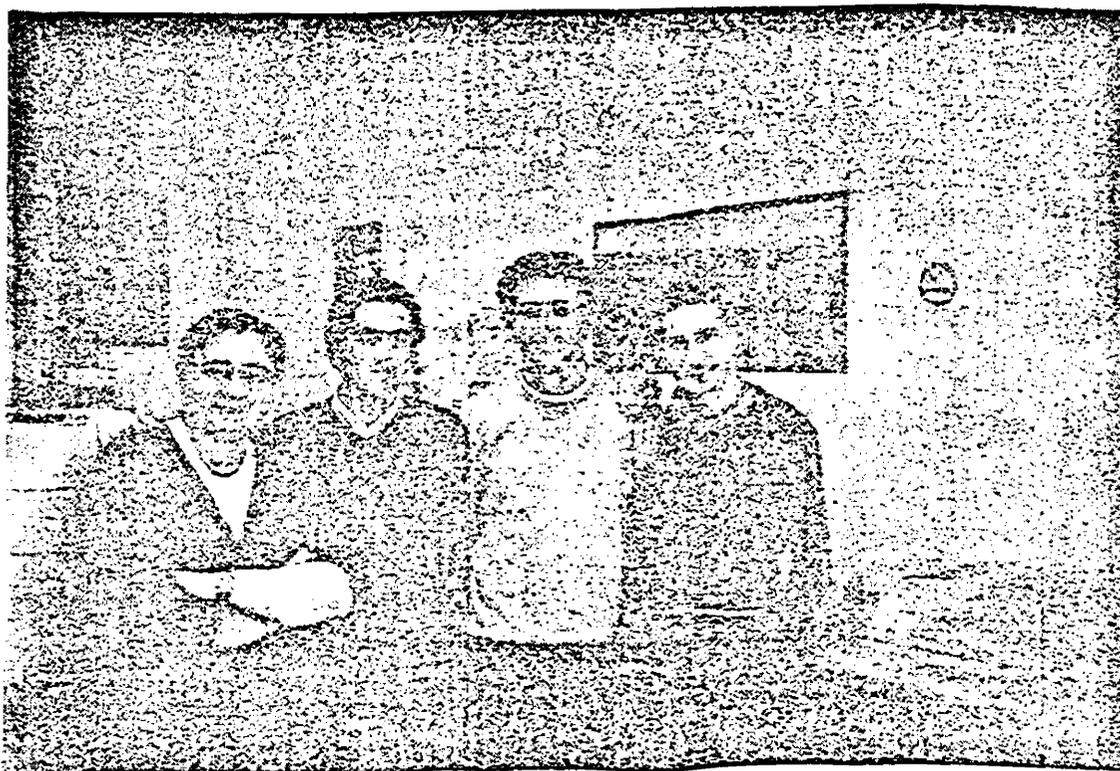
<sup>221</sup> In an interview in May 2002, Mr. Jáuregui explained to me that, as a child and whilst growing up, for various reasons, he did not have the opportunity of learning the language. He continued: "I do not need to learn Basque in order to feel any more Basque. I am now in my fifties and it is not now either that I am going to go off and learn the language. Anyway, I don't see why I should always have to justify myself for not speaking Basque."

<sup>222</sup> For more on the political history of Irun, see Puche (2001).

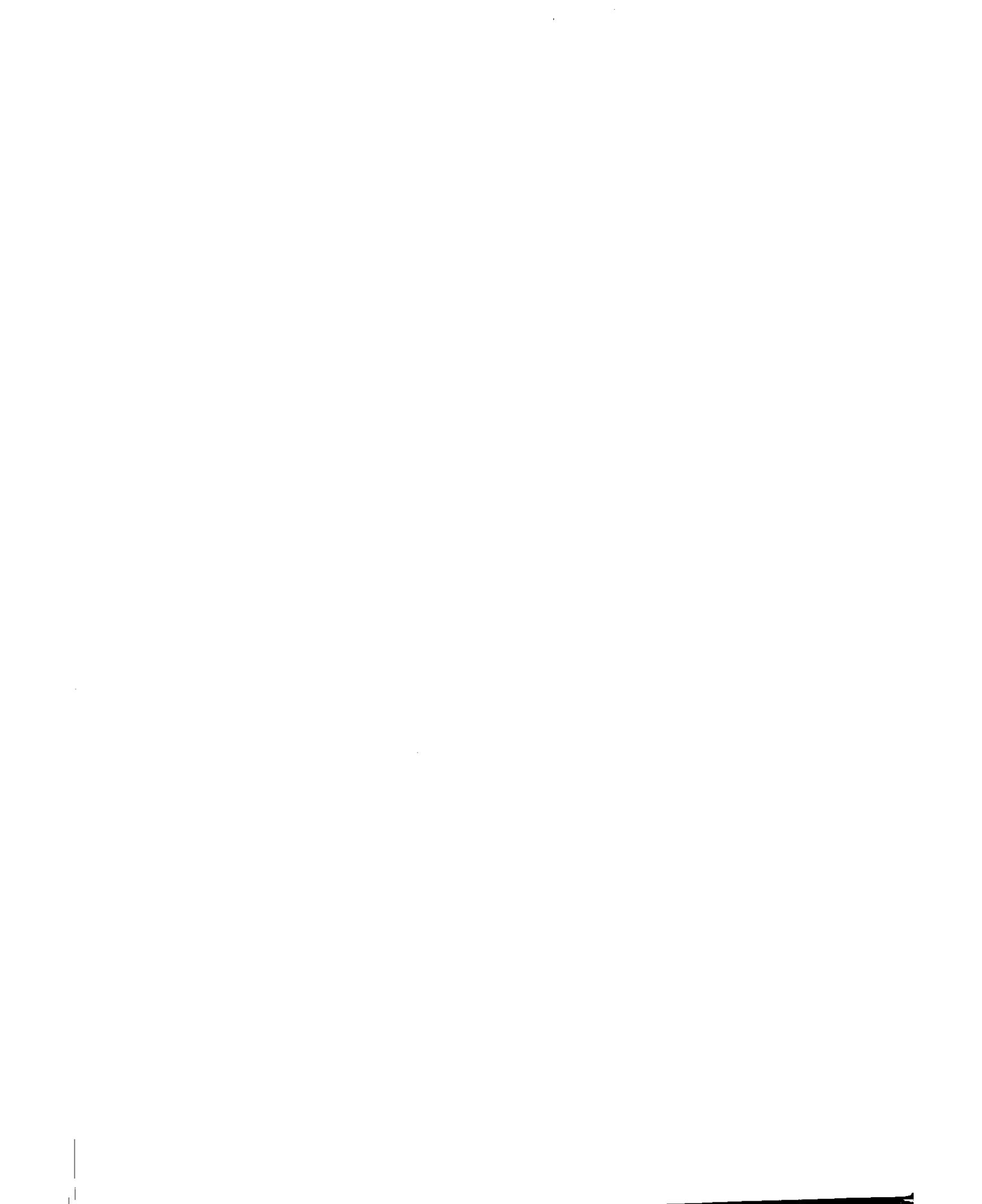
<sup>223</sup> Based on personal observations.



Driving over the anti-foot and-mouth-mat on Santiago Bridge from Hendaia to Irun.



Organizers of the Partzuergo: Pilar Fuertes, Felipe Saragueta, Javier Gonzalez (and me).



## Chapter Six: Cross-Frontier Cooperation

Cultural and institutional differences between France and Spain help to explain why regional and local cross-border cooperation between communities on either side of their common frontier has been slow to get off the ground. Although many inhabitants of Irun, Hondarribia and Hendaia have links across the frontier, whether for family, social, professional or political reasons, or for specific purposes such as visits to the doctor<sup>224</sup> or shopping, there has until recently been little in the way of cross-frontier *institutional* contact. The development of the railway service on either side of the frontier illustrates the suspicion that previously existed between the two states of which they form part. Each runs on different gauges and the only train capable of going on both is a high-speed Spanish passenger train.<sup>225</sup>

Today, many Hendaians have parents or grandparents who were originally from Hegoalde. But that doesn't mean that relations between the inhabitants of Hendaia and those of the two towns on the other side of the Bidasoa are unreservedly cordial. In everyday discourse, I heard many Hendaians express suspicion of neighbours in Hegoalde, commenting that the loud and extrovert "Spanish" are "eating us up" economically and culturally. Equally, many people who have settled recently in Hendaia from Hegoalde voice stereotypical attitudes about their French-national neighbours. Some told me they found "the French" boring because of their habits of eating lunch at midday and going to bed at 9.30 p.m., in contrast with the much later hours observed in Hegoalde. The same people characterised Hendaia as "a comfortable suburb of Irun and Hondarribia" where they were at home enjoying peace and quiet when not socialising on the other side of the frontier. Consequently many did not even install French telephone lines in their homes, relying instead on their Spanish mobile phones, with which they still managed to connect to the local Spanish network.<sup>226</sup> Most admitted to knowing little more of their adopted hometown than the way to the beach and to the doctor, the dentist and the supermarket.

On the other side of the frontier, some Hondarribians speak dismissively of Hendaians as "French" or refer to them by the derogatory Spanish term *gabachos*, in some cases even if both the people they are talking of and they themselves are Basque-speakers. But Hondarribians also often draw a distinction between themselves and their Irunian neighbours, reflecting their different experiences of Basque and Spanish identification and Irun's higher percentage of non-Basque Spanish immigrants among its population. Many Irunians, meanwhile, regard Hondarribians as "*vikingos*"<sup>227</sup> or "barbarians", uncouth in manner and excessively proud of their small town, often to the extent of hostility to non-Hondarribians.

During the early twentieth century, Hendaia was a destination for many Spaniards in search of a better economic lifestyle. Inhabitants of the three towns took part in each other's fiestas,

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<sup>224</sup> Incidentally, one of the doctors practising on the Avenue Allées, who has many patients of Spanish nationality, is the son of the last French consul in Irun, Mr. Ducourau.

<sup>225</sup> The railway tracks in Irun, laid in 1863, use the Spanish gauge of 1.67 metres, while the tracks in Hendaia, laid in the same year, use the 1.44 metres gauge common to France, Germany, Belgium, Switzerland and Italy (Michelena, 1997:244; [www.irun.org/caste/urbana.html](http://www.irun.org/caste/urbana.html)). A line linking Hendaia to Irun was built a year later, but only service trains were adapted to the different gauges. The topo, on the other hand, has its own railway line running all the way from Hendaia, through Irun to Donostia. Still today, merchandise has to be transferred from one train to another in order to proceed with its journey.

<sup>226</sup> Inversely, my mobile phone with a French network worked in Irun and Hondarribia as if I were still on French territory.

<sup>227</sup> According to local lore, Hondarribia was once the site of a Viking settlement, a factor often cited as a reason for the fiery character and blonde hair and blue eyes said to be characteristic of long-established Hondarribians.

contributing with dance groups, music bands and floats. The fishing communities of Hondarribia and Hendaia, while often in conflict over fishing rights, also maintained amicable relations. Men from Hendaia sailed in boats belonging to owners from Hondarribia and vice versa. Women from Hondarribia worked sewing nets in Hendaia and Donibane Lohitzune.<sup>228</sup> During the First World War, the municipality of Irun proclaimed its support for France and gave assistance to Hendaians. Following the armistice, Irunians took part in the celebrations in Hendaia (Michelena, 1997:617-18).

During the Spanish Civil War, Hendaia provided temporary shelter for numerous refugees from Spain. But while many were welcomed and assisted by the municipality of Hendaia and its population, there was also suspicion towards them as politically engaged people. During the German occupation,<sup>229</sup> many Spanish refugees were denounced<sup>230</sup> and sent to a prison camp in Gurs.<sup>231</sup> During the years immediately after World War II, relations between France and Spain were practically nil (Michelena, 1997).<sup>232</sup> In this context, the towns on either side of the frontier developed independently of each other. In the 1950s, while Hendaia and Irun expanded their industrial and railway facilities, an airport was built in Hondarribia, with no regard for the disturbances it caused to the people of Hendaia by flying very closely over the town.

In the mid 1950s, a partial relaxation in border crossing regulations brought about somewhat closer links between the two sides. People from Irun and Hondarribia crossed the frontier to Hendaia to purchase and smuggle home goods unavailable in Spain. Hendaians crossed to Hegoalde to buy cheaper alcohol, cigarettes and petrol, and to go to bars that stayed open later. With further alleviation of border controls in the 1960s, many Irunians and Hondarribians also sought work in Hendaia in order to earn higher salaries. In Irun, shops selling tobacco and alcohol and Spanish products were set up specially to cater for the population of Iparralde, who called them "ventas", or "Bentak" in Basque. From the early 1980s onwards, numerous children from Hondarribia and Irun went to school in Hendaia, to benefit from the supposedly higher quality of the French national educational system. Likewise, a few parents in Hendaia who wished their children to follow Basque education began sending their children to the Basque college in Hondarribia.<sup>233</sup> Every day, they would be stopped at the frontier for routine controls.<sup>234</sup> Through such contacts, many local inhabitants got to know the national language of their neighbours.

During the 1970s and 1980s, over half the local population was employed in some frontier-related activity such as customs, police or transport services.<sup>235</sup> In Irun and Hondarribia, customs and transport represented approximately a quarter of all jobs, with 80% of these employees Irunians and 20% Hondarribians (Puche, 2001:179).<sup>236</sup> During this period, the frontier also served as a

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<sup>228</sup> Interview with informants in Hondarribia and Hendaia. Also with Mikel Epalza, chaplain of the fishermen's community in Sokoa, near Donibane Lohitzune.

<sup>229</sup> In October 1940, the train station of Hendaia was the venue for a meeting between Franco and Adolf Hitler. One of the main issues on the table then was the possible presence of Nazi forces in Spain. Franco, however, refused to allow this (Puche, 2000:70), instead, simply agreeing to a policy of mutual non-intervention.

<sup>230</sup> While the municipality declared its official support of the Vichy government, a very small minority of the local population was involved in helping refugees to cross the border into Spain. (Interviews with people involved in these activities, including one who was deported to Buchenwald for this.)

<sup>231</sup> Gurs is in the province of Béarn. This camp was set up for the mass of refugees fleeing Spain during the Civil War. Later on, under German occupation, it was converted into a prisoners camp. Many of the prisoners continued to be Spanish, accused of Republican sympathies, Communist militancy etc.

<sup>232</sup> Only in 1948 was the frontier re-opened. Movement across the frontier however remained restricted. Local people were only allowed to cross with special permits.

<sup>233</sup> Most often these are parents with close family links in Hegoalde.

<sup>234</sup> Based on interviews and conversations with people who experienced this.

<sup>235</sup> *La Lettre d'Activités en Pays Basque* March 1991 No. 403 Pp. 6-8.

<sup>236</sup> In 1984, 1360 people were employed in the customs service in Irun (Puche, 2000:78).

shield for ETA militants fleeing the Spanish police and using France as a haven from which to plan their operations. Many so-called political refugees from Hegoalde now live in and around Hendaia and other parts of Iparralde, unable to return home still for fear of arrest.

With Spain's entry into the European Community, conditions in the area changed. Higher standards of living and lower real estate prices in Iparralde prompted many Irunians and Hondarribians to purchase land in Hendaia and establish their residence there. Although border controls still continued, these new residents went back and forth across the frontier, many continuing to work in Hegoalde. In 1993, members of the growing Spanish-national community in Hendaia formed the *asociación de trabajadores transfronterizos*, an association for "Cross-Border Workers", to represent them in their administrative relations with the municipality of Hendaia. In 1997, a survey by the municipality of Hendaia carried out "in order to better know our Spanish Hendaians", as Hendaia councillor Jean-Baptiste Etcheverry explained to me,<sup>237</sup> found that 20% of its resident population was of Spanish nationality. In parallel, the depreciation of the Spanish peseta over the 1990s led many Hendaians to do their shopping on the other side of the frontier. Increased local mobility back and forth across the frontier led for some people to the emergence on a local scale of what in effect can be seen as a "transnational" lifestyle (Hannerz, 1996; Smith and Guarnizo, 1998; Donnan and Wilson, 1999:5). Until the establishment of the Euro as from January 2002, many of these people carried two purses, one for francs and the other for pesetas.

#### The Creation of the Bidasoa- Txingudi Mugaz Gaindiko Partzuergo

In May 1980, the European Convention Framework on Cross-Border Cooperation between collectivities or local authorities provided a point of departure for the development of European laws to promote and facilitate cross-border cooperation (Tambou, 1999:5). It was not until 1989, however, that cross-frontier co-operation took on a new form in the Western Pyrenees, with a protocol between the regions of Aquitaine and Euskadi. In 1991, the establishment of the European Single Market and the INTERREG programme (Anderson, 2001) led to the launching of a cross-border regional cooperation initiative under the name of *Euro Region Aquitaine Euskadi*, primarily focused on economic cooperation, particularly in the development of transport and business exchanges along the Atlantic coastal area (Palard, 1997). At a local level, the mayors of the towns of Baiona, Angelu and Miarritze in Iparralde teamed up in mid 1993 with the mayor of Donostia, the capital of Gipuzkoa, to launch a cooperation initiative under the name of *Euro Cité Basque* in French, *Euro Ciudad Vasca*, in Spanish, and *Euskal Euro Hiria* in Basque. For the moment, this initiative largely revolves around exploring options for the development of urban construction, transport and communications infrastructure in the area, which stretches from Baiona along the Atlantic coast to Donostia and has a total population of more than 600,000.<sup>238</sup>

The Partzuergo, while part of a broader process of cross-frontier cooperation and reconfiguration of space (Tambou, 1999), stands out as being deliberately motivated by the realization on the part of local politicians in Hendaia, Irun and Hondarribia of the need to cooperate as neighbours in an increasingly open European context.<sup>239</sup> The extension of the Schengen agreement to include Spain

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<sup>237</sup> Interview June 2000, Hendaia.

<sup>238</sup> Under French law, the Euro Hiri has a private legal status, a *Groupement Européen d'Initiative Economique*, or GEIE, acquired before the signing of the second treaty of Baiona. As stated in its *White Book* (2000), its objective is to achieve a new "territorial balance"- to create a medium-sized conurbation with a strong European profile. It seeks to forge closer socio-economic links between the two sides so as to reflect the cross-border transnational lifestyle already led by much of the local population (Aramendi, 2000).

<sup>239</sup> Interviews with the various representatives of the three municipalities and participants of the Partzuergo between May 2000 and November 2001.

as of 1 January 1993, and the resulting dismantling of the border controls that had provided both Irun and Hendaia with much of their economic activity, threatened numerous job losses with repercussions for the rest of the local economy. An initial phase of contacts in the late 1980s led in 1990 to the submission of a proposal to the French and Spanish governments for inter-municipal cross-border cooperation and, subsequently, to an application to the European Commission for assistance through the INTERREG fund. That same year, in an "Institutional Declaration of the Lower Bidasoa", the three towns formally agreed to cooperate with each other on potential cross-border projects. Following further reflection and analysis by the three municipalities, joint committees were set up in the domains of culture, social and economic affairs. In 1992, Irun and Hondarribia created a development agency called Adebisa to promote innovation in the local economy on their side of the frontier. A year later, together with the municipality of Hendaia, Adebisa contracted two French and Spanish consultancy firms, Ikei and Pact, to carry out a study on possible medium to long-term economic and urban development in the area, known as the Strategic Development Plan of the Bidasoa.

In 1995, in a further step at state level towards enhanced cross-border cooperation, the French and Spanish states signed the Treaty of Baiona recognising the value of cooperation between communities on either side of their joint frontier. This provided the municipalities of Irun, Hondarribia and Hendaia with the legal backing for an InterAdministrative Convention of Cross-Border Cooperation,<sup>240</sup> enabling them to join together and form what they called the *Euro District Bidasoa-Txingudi* in French, *Euro Districto Bidasoa-Txingudi* in Spanish and *Bidasoa-Txingudi Euro Barrutia* in Basque. Under its aegis, they launched a series of cultural projects, financed by funds from their own budgets, from the INTERREG programme, the Aquitaine Euskadi fund, and regional institutional bodies.

It must be pointed out here, however, that the enthusiasm for cross-frontier cooperation was far from unanimous in the municipal councils. In Hendaia, members of the PC and RPR and UDF sympathists initially expressed reluctance regarding the nature of the proposed cooperation with their counterparts across the frontier on the grounds that it "risked threatening the sovereignty of France".<sup>241</sup> In Irun and Hondarribia, members of the PP similarly showed little enthusiasm for the project in its initial stages. Since late 2000, however, such concerns have been largely dispelled.<sup>242</sup>

The lack of an appropriate legal vehicle for the Euro Barruti nonetheless severely limited its functioning. It took several years for the three municipalities to find an appropriate solution in the form of a "consorcio", a Spanish juridical concept which allows for collaboration between local

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<sup>240</sup>Cited in Article 3 of the Treaty of Baiona (Official European Bulletin, 10/3/1997). Its objectives are stated as being: ever closer union between the people of Europe, promotion and development of border zones, economic and social progress of the municipalities, consolidation of cross-border cooperation and granting of a legal statute to cross-border cooperation (Saragueta, 2000:17 & 33).

<sup>241</sup> Interview with PC member Jean Navarron.

<sup>242</sup> During a meeting of the Partzuergo's General Council, 27 October 2000, in Irun, under the presidency for the first time of the then mayor of Hendaia, Raphael Lassalette, Hendaian councillor Jean-François Durandeau explained that "the lack of enthusiasm" that he and his UDF colleagues had initially expressed had been due to "a lack of information, but that now (he) very much appreciates the value of the Partzuergo, with its cultural, sport and touristic projects and the creation of a Recinto Ferial (as being) all very positive for the inhabitants of the Bidasoa" (quote taken from the minutes of this meeting).

In September 2001, Borja Semper, PP councillor in Irun and member of the Partzuergo's general council expressed to me in an interview his endorsement of the Partzuergo, something that he had not demonstrated so clearly before. In July 2000, for example, when the Partzuergo's General Council was due to meet in Hendaia, he failed to turn up, causing the meeting to be cancelled due to lack of quorum.

public institutions.<sup>243</sup> This finally led to the signing of the constitution for a Consorcio Bidasoa-Txingudi – or Partzuergo – in December 1998. The Partzuergo however, did not become operational until October 1999, due to the need for the Spanish and French states first to ratify the Treaty of Baiona and then to approve the Partzuergo initiative.

By endeavouring to promote a common local identity based on a heritage combining non-political elements that are Basque, Spanish and French, the Partzuergo seeks to go beyond the frontier as a political and social boundary, in a way that is relevant to theoretical debates on identity, power politics and the use of culture as a political tool. By promoting cross-frontier social and cultural cooperation, the Partzuergo adds a new dimension to the co-existence of the Spanish and French states on either side of the frontier. The Partzuergo is an attempt by the three municipalities of Bidasoa-Txingudi to work together on projects that concern them mutually and which can boost their economic and political profile at home and in the broader European context.<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>243</sup> The choice was between this and two French legal entities, the *Société d'Economie Mixte* and the *Groupement d'Intérêt Publique*. An SEM allows for the creation of a *société anonyme*, a partnership of various municipalities for the use of public services for common interest, while a GIP allows local public institutions across EU state borders to create a partnership with their own financial autonomy from their respective states. Both were deemed too restrictive because they favoured the French entity, thereby creating an unequal partnership (Tambou, 1999; Saragueta, 2000:30-32). Nor was the GEIE considered a possible option as it does not provide flexibility for the launching of specific projects (the Euro Hiri will be able to launch specific projects by creating consorcios specially for them) (Interview with Felipe Saragueta, May 2002).

By contrast, the framework of the 'consorcio' under Spanish law allowed the three municipalities to enjoy equal standing in their partnership, despite being located in different state territories, and carry out projects together. The consorcio is "the union or association of local entities with other public administrations or non-profit private entities for the management of an initiative of common interest with its common organisation and personal juridical identity" (Saragueta, 2000:31). It also has the advantage of being flexible in that it allows the possibility for members to choose the statutes themselves (Tambou, 1999:11-12).

<sup>244</sup> The Partzuergo differs from the Euro Hiri, which also has this general objective, in that it concentrates specifically on the three towns of Irun, Hondarribia and Hendaia, while the Euro Hiri, although it talks of being relevant to all the towns between Donostia and Baiona, has so far given only minimal information about its activities or encouragement to participate in them to the municipalities located on the coast between the two cities.

For a while, the promoters of the Partzuergo felt resentment at what they perceived as the Euro Hiri's sidelining of their initiative. In an interview in mid 2000, the then mayor of Hendaia, Raphael Lassalette, stressed the central role of the Partzuergo for any cross-border cooperation project in the Basque Country, due to its location on the frontier and its avant-garde nature, in contrast to the Euro Hiri. (He expressed the same opinion in the local media. For example, in *La Semaine du Pays Basque* 8-14 January 1999 P.18, he said "the first circle englobes Hendaye, Irun and Fontarabie, the second stretches to the BAB and Saint Sébastien and the third, why not, to Aquitaine-Euskadi with Bordeaux and Vitoria. Whatever these circles are, Hendaye is in the middle" (my translation from French).)

A year later, however, the director of the Partzuergo, Felipe Saragueta, recognized the necessity for the Partzuergo to be on good terms with the promoters of Euro Hiri since these are at the forefront of much of the changes in infrastructure that will locally be taking place in the future: "it is proposing so many projects that will affect us. For example, the idea to relocate the railway and install a new high speed train line, which risks bypassing us here in the area... things like that. It is essential that we be at the heart of all these negotiations and developments," he explained to me. In November 2001, relations between the two bodies were officialised with the incorporation of the Partzuergo as an active member of the Euro Hiri's College of Members and Directive Committee. This has advantages for both the Euro Hiri and the Partzuergo: while the Euro Hiri benefits from the Partzuergo's participation by getting more local legitimacy, the Partzuergo benefits by being kept up to date with the Euro Hiri's projects and by exerting influence on the decision-making process.

Representatives of the Partzuergo repeatedly stressed to me that the Partzuergo is concerned with the participation of the local population and exists thanks to them, in contrast with the Euro Hiri which organises no cultural and social activities of its own. One employee of the Partzuergo, Pilar Fuentes, reiterated to me that "the Partzuergo is concerned with culture - whereas the Euro Hiri is not." Nonetheless, in collaboration with Eusko Ikaskuntza, the Basque studies association, the Euro Hiri has organised a series of conferences on a variety of issues concerning border living, in an attempt to mobilize local social elites on this theme. As from 2001, promoters of the Euro Hiri have made more of a concerted effort in the cultural domain, in an attempt to appear more in touch with the local population, for example by featuring on its website, created in 2000 to give basic information about the origins and general aims of the Euro Hiri, the main cultural events taking place in the area- particularly in Donostia and Baiona.

As an associative entity with full juridical capacity for carrying out its objectives (Consortio, 1998:Article 2), the Partzuergo divides its development priorities into four main areas (1998:Article 3): Tourism, involving a series of initiatives for promoting the three towns together internationally; Culture, involving activities of "historical and cultural interest" and "linguistic development" designed to gather the populations of all three towns together; Social Affairs, including the provision of information about social services in the three towns and coordination in specific areas; and Economic Development, involving projects to promote the mobility and collaboration of the local population and local businesses, including the setting up of a business exhibition ground aimed at attracting foreign investment.

The Partzuergo is headed by the Presidency, under whose leadership the General Council oversees the activities of the Committee of Directors and votes on its proposals. The mayors of the three towns take it in turns to act as president for a year while the other two are vice-presidents (1998:Chapter 3, Article 13). The first president, from October 1999, was Alberto Buen, the PSE mayor of Irun. In October 2000, it was the turn of the then mayor of Hendaia, Raphael Lassalette, a member of the PS. In March 2001, following municipal elections, his successor as mayor, Kotte Ecenarro, also a Socialist, took his place. In October 2001, Borja Jáuregui, the mayor of Hondarribia and a member of the moderate Basque nationalist party, EAJ, took over the rotating presidency.

The General Council is made up of the three mayors, each with two deputies (1998:Chapter 3, Article 14). Since the municipal council of Irun is led by a coalition including the PSE-EE, the Spanish conservative party PP, and EAJ, the two deputies for Irun in the General Council are a PP councillor, Borja Semper, and an EAJ councillor, Elena Etxegoien. As for Hondarribia, where EAJ rules in a coalition with EA, its two deputies are an EAJ councillor, Aitor Kerejeta,<sup>245</sup> and an EA councillor, Ion Elizalde. Finally, in Hendaia, the majority coalition is made up of members the PS, the French Communist Party, the moderate Basque nationalist grouping AB and several independents. Reflecting this, the two deputies for Hendaia are ex-UDF member Jean-François Durandeu<sup>246</sup> and moderate Basque nationalist councillor Jean-Baptiste Etcheverry.

The Committee of Directors includes three municipal representatives from the General Council along with the director of the Partzuergo, Felipe Saragueta, a native of the nearby town of Bera in Hegoalde,<sup>247</sup> and another staff member of the Partzuergo, Pilar Fuertes. Two town hall secretaries also take part, providing administrative and legal support on behalf of the municipalities. Finally, two members of the staff of Adebisa, which in November 2000 changed its name to Bidasoa Bizirik,<sup>248</sup> also participate. These are the director, Guillermo Echenique, and the person responsible for cross-frontier issues, Eva Fernández.

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<sup>245</sup> Until the summer of 2001, it was José-Manuel Nogueras, also EAJ councillor. He voluntarily stepped down to concentrate his time on other affairs.

<sup>246</sup> Under the mandate of Raphael Lassalette, Kotte Ecenarro was deputy mayor.

<sup>247</sup> It is interesting to note that Mr. Saragueta, who was recruited in 2000, continues to live in Bera, thereby maintaining a certain degree of neutrality vis-à-vis each of the three towns.

<sup>248</sup> Meaning "Active Bidasoa". The change of name took place following the appointment of a new director, PSE-EE member Guillermo Echenique. According to Mr. Echenique, the name Bidasoa Bizirik was favoured "to reflect the dynamism of the area" and the use of the word Bidasoa made it sound more local and "so closer to the people" (Interview September 2001). In an interview with the local weekly paper *BidaBerri*, Mr. Echenique also noted that the decision to change the name was "because (the agency) is developing a wider activity than that with which it began and because we want to enter new fields such as the society of information and new technologies. Also, Adebisa, is a name which does not transmit what is our reality, whereas Bidasoa Activa places us in the geography and activity which we are developing." (My translation of original: "Porque se desarrolla una actividad más amplia que la que le dió origen y porque nos queremos adentrar en nuevos campos como son los que se refieren a la sociedad de la información y las nuevas tecnologías. Además, Adebisa, es una denominación que no transmite lo que es nuestra realidad, mientras que

Under the Partzuergo's constitution, Bidasoa Bizirik is responsible for the Partzuergo's administration and accounts (1998:Article 5), and Mr. Saragueta, and the other two members of its staff, Ms. Fuertes and Javier González, are employed by Bidasoa Bizirik. The Partzuergo has its headquarters in the offices of Bidasoa Bizirik in Irun, where Mr. Saragueta and Mr. González are based. Ms. Fuertes, meanwhile, is based in Hendaia at the *Service des Relations Transfrontalières*, or Service for Cross-Frontier Relations, set up by the town council to liaise with the municipalities of Irun and Hondarribia and Bidasoa Bizirik. By the end of 2002, the Partzuergo plans to have its own offices in a building formerly the French consulate in Irun and now undergoing restoration, known as Villa Ducourau.

As a project set up by the mayors of the three towns with the backing of their supporters in each town's municipal council, the Partzuergo's statutes currently restrict membership of the Partzuergo's organising bodies to members of the majority parties in the three town councils and their nominees. The director of the Partzuergo and minority members of the three town councils can attend meetings of the General Council but only with consultative roles. This effectively excludes members of the left-wing Basque nationalist party Batasuna in Irun and Hondarribia<sup>249</sup> from the decision-making process of the Partzuergo, a fact which is a source of continued complaint on their part.

The main areas of activity of the Partzuergo are dealt with by committees, with the participation of members of the majority parties in each town council and municipal and Partzuergo employees responsible for the relevant topics. Under the committees, working groups handle specific projects in such areas as sport and communication, with the participation of relevant local figures such as representatives of associations, journalists and entrepreneurs.

The Partzuergo's budget is funded by the three municipalities and by contributions from local and regional funds on both sides of the frontier and EU funds. In 2000, its first full year of operation, the budget amounted to 375,625 euros. In 2001, the budget rose to 12,071,993 euros. Hondarribia and Hendaia each contribute a quarter of the three municipalities' share of the budget, while Irun, as the biggest town, contributes half (1998:Chapter 3, Article 36). Despite Irun's significantly bigger financial contribution, it has the same voting rights and veto powers in the General Council as Hendaia and Hondarribia, following a proposal along these lines by the mayor of Irun designed to ensure harmony between the three towns.<sup>250</sup>

#### **A meeting of the Partzuergo:**

*On 8 March 2001, in the council chamber of Irun's town hall, a dozen men and women stand chatting. Among them, Ion Elizalde, a 28-year-old student wearing a woolly jumper recognisably made by the Spanish Basque fashion firm Mendi Loreak, jeans and earrings, is joking in Spanish with Borja Semper, in his mid 20s, more formally dressed in a dark blue suit with his hair slicked back with gel, and Guillermo Echenique, a round-faced, bespectacled man in his 50s in a dark business suit and open-necked shirt. Alongside them, Raphael Lassalette, a 64-year-old man in a casual grey suit, chats in French with Elena Etxegoien, whose well-groomed dark brown hair matches the sophisticated cut of her clothes. Nearby, Jean-Baptiste Etcheverry, dressed in flannel*

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Bidasoa Activa nos ubica en la geografía y en la actividad que desarrollamos.”). It is interesting to note here Mr. Echenique's argument on the basis of 'our reality'.

<sup>249</sup> Until March 2001, when municipal elections took place in France, the municipal council of Hendaia also included Robert Arrambide, representative of the left-wing Basque nationalist grouping Biharko Hendaia. He was not re-elected.

<sup>250</sup> Interview with Irun mayor Alberto Buen, and municipal officials from Hendaia and Hondarribia.

*trousers and a sports jacket, is engaged in a more serious conversation in Spanish with Alberto Buen, a short man with thick-rimmed glasses, brown hair and wearing a casual suit.*

*The atmosphere is relaxed and amicable, even though these people are politicians representing parties of opposing views. They are here for a meeting of the General Council of the Partzuergo. Mr. Elizalde represents the moderate Basque nationalist party EA on the town council of Hondarribia, and Mr. Semper represents the Spanish conservative party, PP, in Irun. Mr. Echenique is the director of Bidasoa Bizirik. Mr. Lassalette is the PS mayor of Hendaia, while Ms. Etxegoien is EAJ councillor for Irun. Mr. Etcheverry is an independent Basque nationalist on the Hendaia council and Mr. Buen is the Socialist mayor of Irun.*

*Somewhat apart from this group, seated on the benches to one side of the council chamber, a man and two women are watching in silence. Marije Zapirain, a smartly but simply dressed woman with tidily brushed short blonde hair, sits alongside Joxan Elozegi, a serious-looking man with a bushy greying moustache, wearing a casual suit. Behind them, Amaia Navarro, an elegantly dressed woman with well-groomed curly shoulder-length hair, sits on her own. All three are opposition councillors. Ms. Zapirain and Mr. Elozegi represent the left-wing Basque nationalist party EH<sup>251</sup> in Hondarribia and Irun respectively. Ms. Navarro is an independent member of the municipal council of Irun.*

*They are waiting for the mayor of Hondarribia, EAJ member Borja Jáuregui, to hold what will be the last board meeting of the Partzuergo under the presidency of Mr. Lassalette.<sup>252</sup> In the front row of the seats reserved for the public, two journalists representing Sud Ouest and La Semaine du Pays Basque, the two most widely read French-language newspapers in Iparralde, have come to cover the event. Beside them, two Irun-based journalists, one representing El Diario Vasco, the main Spanish language newspaper in Hegoalde, and the other the Spanish radio station Ser, are chatting to each other. A journalist for La Bahía, a Spanish-language magazine distributed free to the inhabitants of Irun, walks in and sits down beside a reporter from Txingudi Telebista who is accompanied by two cameramen.*

*Sitting behind the journalists, a pensioner from Hendaia is apparently the only person present for reasons of personal interest rather than professional duty. Beside him, Pilar Fuertes, an employee of the town hall of Hendaia working for the Partzuergo, is joined by Felipe Saragueta, a man in his mid 20s casually dressed with creased trousers and an open shirt who is the director of the Partzuergo, and Eva Fernández, one of the directors of Bidasoa Bizirik, smartly attired in a skirt and jacket. The three chat animatedly together.*

*At last, a tall man with thinning hair and glasses, wearing a casual dark blue suit, walks in. It's Mr. Jáuregui. He shakes hands with a few of the people standing, and everyone takes their seats. The three mayors sit behind a table at the end of the council chamber, facing the public. Mr. Lassalette, sits in the middle with Mr. Jáuregui to his left and Mr. Buen to his right. The other councillors of the majority parties sit on benches to one side, opposite the councillors of the opposition. Mr. Echenique and PSE-EE councillor from Irun, José-Antonio Santano, sit at one end of the front bench and Mr. Elizalde and Ms. Etxegoien sit together at the other end. Mr. Semper jokingly whispers that he "won't sit with the nationalists", instead taking his seat behind them on his own.*

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<sup>251</sup> Since this meeting took place in March 2001, before EH was reformed into Batasuna, the councillors were still members of EH.

<sup>252</sup> A few weeks later, were due to take place the municipal elections in Hendaia and, as Mr. Lassalette did not plan to stand again as mayor, the new mayor would continue as president of the Partzuergo in place of Mr. Lassalette for the rest of the mandate.

*The session begins. Mr. Lassalette greets the audience in Basque, Spanish and French: "Egun on deneri, buenos días a todos, bonjour à tous". From then on, however, he speaks only in French. Praising the success of the three towns' cooperation up until now, he stresses its importance not only for other bigger cross-border projects such as the Basque Euro Hiri grouping Donostia and the conurbation BAB, and the Euro Region Aquitaine-Euskadi, but also for the local population. Once he has finished, the secretary of the Partzuergo, Juana María Herrador, who is also general secretary of the municipality of Irun, and Serge Peyrelongue, general secretary of the municipality of Hendaia, take it in turns to read the various motions proposed by the Partzuergo. Mr. Peyrelongue speaks in French and Ms. Herrador speaks in Basque and Spanish. The motions are all passed unanimously.*

*After making a few suggestions for future Partzuergo projects and listening to the comments in Spanish of Messrs. Buen and Jáuregui, Mr. Lassalette invites questions from the audience. Two technical questions are posed and answered. Then Mr. Elozegi, one of the two EH councillors, puts up his hand to speak. He addresses the session in Basque, and the three mayors and Messrs. Semper, Echenique and Santano reach for their headphones to listen to the interpretation. As an opposition councillor, Mr. Elozegi has no participation in the running of the Partzuergo, and he uses this occasion to give voice to his frustration. Not only are the representatives of some political groups, such as EH, excluded from the Partzuergo's management, he observes but, "despite the Partzuergo's successful cooperation, members of the Partzuergo continue to talk of the frontier as if it were still in effect". They "should not speak about one side of the border and the other side of the border, or Irun so and so, Hondarribia such and such and Hendaia likewise, all separately," he argues. Instead, he urges, "it is the duty of the Partzuergo to promote the area as a unified whole."*

*To reply to Mr. Elozegi, Mr. Lassalette switches on the microphone in front of him and proceeds to talk in French. He explains that the issue of non-representativity was already brought up in another meeting last year, when it was decided unanimously by members of the Partzuergo's board to keep participation to the present three seats per municipality, giving the representatives of minority groups only a consultative role. This, he recalls, was agreed upon on the basis that having all political tendencies represented would cause disunity within the Partzuergo and hamper its effectiveness. Personally, he adds, he is not opposed to the idea of full participation. But he points out that it is a difficult issue to resolve if everyone is not in agreement. Having said that, he notes that indeed the inhabitants of Irun, Hondarribia and Hendaia are all one people. However "there is also the reality, that of the border, which still exists whether we like it or not, with its different cultures, habits and languages, in spite of there also being a common Basque character on either side".*

*In conclusion, adds Mr. Lassalette, "if only I could speak Basque, I would have answered you in Basque... This is another reality that remains and which continues to separate us... We must all work to protect the Basque language, though I do not think it is necessary for us to go as far as to create one country. Rapprochement is at the moment the most important step, so that we can know each other better and learn to like each other better... One last thing: your comments have not shocked me. Actually, I was expecting them."*

*Following these remarks, the final valedictory speeches are made, with Messrs. Jáuregui and Buen expressing their appreciation of Mr. Lassalette's efforts in "directing the destinies of the three towns together". Having listened to them wish him all the best in his retirement, Mr. Lassalette takes their hands in his and thanks them warmly. The session is brought to a close.*

*(Personal observation, Friday 2 March 2001, town hall of Irun).*

In this account, we can clearly see the deployment by the various actors of a range of symbolic boundaries. Some were used consciously by the individuals present in their interaction with others in that particular context. Others can be said to have been used unconsciously. In all cases, these boundaries served to assert and affirm the individuals' personal notions of self.

Four main boundaries can be immediately identified, in terms of language, personal appearance, personal stance and space. Let us begin with the linguistic boundary. At the start, we witness various actors altering their usual language of communication in an inclusive manner. Mr. Elizalde, for example, although he considers himself euskaldun – he speaks Basque and has told me he feels Basque first and foremost – speaks in Spanish in order to communicate with Mr. Semper. Introducing the session, Mr. Lassalette uses all three languages to greet the assembled company, before resorting to French, the only language with which he feels completely comfortable.

When Mr. Elozegi takes the floor, he chooses to speak in Basque, even though he is fluent in Spanish and can understand and speak French more or less well. He uses Basque as a matter of principle, as he claims to feel first and foremost euskaldun living in Euskal Herria rather than Spanish and a citizen of the Spanish state. In using Basque, Mr. Elozegi can also mark himself off deliberately from the other councillors, of whom many, as he knows, have only a rudimentary knowledge of Basque or no knowledge at all. By responding to Mr. Elozegi in French, Mr. Lassalette reasserts his right to his own notion of self in the common space in which they are both interacting.

In terms of the construction of boundaries, and thereby identities, what does not happen in this brief exchange is as important as what does happen. In choosing to answer in French, Mr. Lassalette eschews two other possible boundaries. As it happens, he at one point took Basque lessons with AEK. In this particular context he could have drawn on what Basque he does know in order to answer Mr. Elozegi. He also speaks some Spanish, and could have chosen to address Mr. Elozegi in that language.

The fact that Mr. Lassalette chooses not to use Basque can be ascribed to two non-exclusive motives. Firstly, such an option would almost certainly be too laborious, considering the intricacies of what he has to say. Had he done so, his effort would have been greatly appreciated by the Basque speakers present. But by continuing as before in French, Mr. Lassalette preserves his own boundary of identity, thereby asserting his right to speak French and yet simultaneously to feel Basque in his own personal way.

As for his possible use of Spanish, this would most likely have been taken as a great insult by Mr. Elozegi, who could have interpreted it as a condescending and imperialistic reaffirmation of his status as a Spanish citizen over and above all his claims to being Basque. In the event, we may assume that Mr. Lassalette did not consider either of these options, and if someone had suggested one or other to him he would almost certainly have rejected them as counter-productive in such a situation, in relation to his own personal identity and in the political diplomacy sought.

Personal appearance is the most immediately visible marker of identity. While with language, the linguistic boundary is only evident when a person speaks, while with dress, the identity markers are physically visible. The choice of dress can be either conscious or unconscious. Whatever the case, preferences relating to dress are revealing about the person's sense of self. They provide a message about the person relevant to his position in society and in his direct relations with other

people. They are also often in line with the person's identification: they can say much about the person's political affiliations, taste and social associations.

In our particular case, we witness some very contrasting modes of dress, following political lines. Through choice of dress, the person expresses his own political boundary. In the general socio-political context of the Basque Country, the smooth, clean-cut and close-shaven style of Mr. Semper is easily recognizable as fitting the image of the PP. In direct contrast, left-wing Basque nationalists often distinguish themselves by a particular kind of dressing-down. They very rarely put on business suits, though casual ones are sometimes worn. Instead, young and old often sport t-shirts distinctly marked with Basque slogans or long-sleeved and striped purple or turquoise and black, and out-door clothing, such as walking boots and anoraks. Many women wear their hair in a short crop, or long with a bandana covering their forehead and rarely wear skirts. Many young men choose to wear their hair short in the front and long in the back, and earrings, while the older men may choose to adopt a beard or bushy moustache. In the council meeting, the only distinctive marker which goes along with any of these stereotypical descriptions is Mr. Elozegi with his thick moustache. While a seemingly small detail, in the socio-cultural context of the Basque Country, this is very significant.

However, again, such boundaries are not always clear or fixed, highlighting in this case the unreliability of stereotypes. Mr. Elizalde, for example, would appear from first impressions to fit the stereotype of the left-wing Basque nationalist, on the basis of the stereotype depicted above. Through his personal choice of dress, Mr. Elizalde adopts the vestimentary boundaries for his own personal expression of identity. He gives his choice of dress his personal meanings. As for the other council members, at first sight their mode of dress appears rather indeterminate. The socialist councillors generally adopt a casually formal style of dress, while the representative of EAJ and the independent councillor from Irun are in more conservative smart dress. Seemingly not very conspicuous at first, these different styles are nonetheless markers of a general trend within these distinct socio-political circles.

Boundaries of dress are here subtly exposed. Often, when such boundaries are played out discreetly, others will be asserted more forcefully. It is therefore in the actual moment of social interaction that these and others become evident, as we have seen with the use of language and as we shall now see with the use of space.

Spatial boundaries can be noted not only in the use of space by the council members in the chamber but also in the way they talk about other spatial features, such as the frontier. Let us begin with the actual space of the chamber. At the beginning of their mandate, municipal councillors are allotted their seats in their respective municipal council chambers. While the councillors of Irun attending this board meeting of the Partzuergo in their own town hall tend to occupy the same seats in which they ordinarily sit, the seating choices displayed by the councillors from Hendaia and Hondarribia are more significant. While many, despite their different political affiliations, have friendly relations with each other, in the context of the Partzuergo meeting they choose to place themselves next to their political colleagues. So we see Mr. Elizalde taking a seat next to Ms. Etxegoien, after chatting with Mr. Semper and Mr. Echenique, and Ms. Zapirain sitting beside Mr. Elozegi. A return to the political boundaries that affirm each of the councillors' identities is thus evident.

The fact that Mr. Elozegi and Ms. Zapirain are not members of the board of the Partzuergo's General Council is an additional factor, which sets them consciously apart in space. At a Partzuergo meeting one week previously in Hendaia, in a conference hall where there were no allotted seating plans, Mr. Elozegi and Ms. Zapirain also set themselves well apart from the rest

of the council members by sitting together a few rows of seats away. At this meeting, by already being seated while waiting for the council meeting to begin, Mr. Elozegi and Ms. Zapirain effectively set themselves apart from the other councillors who are standing about chatting in the center aisle. But they are also seated some distance away from the other councillors who are not members of the board of the Partzuergo, such as Ms. Navarro.

Mr. Elozegi's objection to the repeated use of the word frontier by members of the Partzuergo says something about his perception of himself within a Basque space. A similar criticism was made by Mr. Elizalde, in other General Council meetings last year. However, within the complex context of Basque nationalist politics, despite their supposedly common visions of a united Euskal Herria, both contest each other's actual commitment to the eradication of the frontier both as a physical and symbolic boundary. EH partisans criticise EAJ and EA for their vague way of talking about fighting for the independence of Euskal Herria, while EAJ and EA partisans express doubts about the realistic and democratic aspects of EH's independence-seeking process.

In contrast to both Mr. Elozegi and Mr. Elizalde, Mr. Lassalette insists on his own 'reality' of the existence of the frontier, as a physical and symbolic border, marker of two separate social contexts affected by the presence and control of two different states. At the same time, he presents a different interpretation of the *raison d'être* and objectives of the Partzuergo to that of Mr. Elozegi, corresponding to his contrasting notion of self and different perception of a Basque space.

We also see facial expressions and physical comportment serving to demonstrate boundaries in this context of the Partzuergo General Council meeting. When Mr. Jáuregui walks in, he does so in a quick and rather abrupt fashion, greeting some people but not others, notably Ms. Zapirain and Mr. Elozegi who are positioned directly in front of him and so immediately within his eye range. Another example of how individuals choose to mark boundaries by their behaviour during the meeting is the choice by some members of the council who do not understand Basque to not pick up the translation headphones when Mr. Elozegi speaks. By not doing so, a message is transmitted about the indifference or rejection of what Mr. Elozegi is saying. Ms. Zapirain and Mr. Elozegi, meanwhile, also engage in boundary-drawing which separates them from their colleagues. With their stern expressions, the two EH councillors make their own detachment from the social mingling taking place in front of them particularly manifest.

Another detail that is of equally great significance in the sociopolitical context of the Basque Country, evident in this account of the Partzuergo meeting, is the spelling of names. The choice of French, Spanish and Basque ways of spelling words and names has cultural and sometimes political connotations (MacClancy, 1993b:88). For reasons of homogeneity, as I explained in the introduction to the thesis, I have chosen to use place names in their Basque version, and specifically in accordance with Batua, or unified Basque, rather than their Spanish or French equivalents. In this vignette, however, I have spelt some names the Spanish or the French way as I have often seen them written in various official texts, press releases and newspaper articles.<sup>253</sup> Echenique follows Spanish spelling, in contrast to Etxenike in Basque, while Etcheverry is written the French way rather than Etxeberri in Basque. I have also sometimes seen the name spelt Etxeverry, an alternative way of writing with Basque connotations. Similarly, Jáuregui is written the Spanish way instead of Jauregi in Basque, though I have seen it, on very few occasions, written in Basque. Elizalde, Etxegoien, Saragueta, Zapirain and Elozegi, on the other hand, are written the Basque way, as I have always seen them. The choice of spelling Elozegi

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<sup>253</sup> See for example, the list of members of the municipal councils published by the municipalities of Irun, Hendaia and Hondarribia and the list of members of the Partzuergo General Council published by the Partzuergo.

instead of Elósegui, or Etxegoien instead of Etchegoyen in Spanish and Etchegoin in French is significant. This shows a propensity on the part of the nameholders or the writers to play with the markers implicit in the choice of language spelling, revealing identification with French, Spanish or Basque values to the detriment of the others. Basque spelling, in particular, can be used for particular political purposes, setting inclusive boundaries, for example, to please a culturally or politically Basque audience or exclusive boundaries to mark a difference with other people whose names are written the Spanish or French way.

Finally, the identity markers and boundaries that we have seen used by the participants in the Partzuergo General Council meeting are only a few aspects of the notion of reality held by each of the contenders. The manner in which they each actually 'live out' the frontier and react to the way the Partzuergo operates sheds further light on the ways in which they construct and give meaning to their own identities in relation to the boundary area in which they live. In other words, the uniform of the politician left in the closet and the political lingo put aside, the way these participants behave and talk – in short, live in their social environment – reveals other aspects of their notions of self. The implications of this are relevant for an understanding of the human interaction on which social and political structures are based and the thorough analysis of the functioning of a political project such as the Partzuergo.

## Chapter Seven: The 'abertzale': a key figure in modern Basque society

*Today, 6 April 2001, is an exciting day for Basque nationalists and those concerned with maintaining and developing use of the Basque language: at around 11.00 a.m., the Korrika will pass through Bidasoa-Txingudi. The Korrika, which means the run or race in Basque, is a special marathon organised by AEK to raise funds for the promotion of Basque. A baton symbolizing the Basque language is carried by a runner and passed on as in a relay after laps of one kilometer. The Korrika is mainly funded by associations, businesses and other organisations which 'buy' a lap and then designate someone, usually a key figure in efforts to develop the Basque language, to carry the baton. Behind him or her run people of all ages, all motivated by their support for the Basque language.*

*The Korrika follows an itinerary traced by AEK through the seven provinces of the Basque Country. This year's event began several days ago in Bilbo and crossed over into Iparralde. Now, it is heading towards Bidasoa-Txingudi. It will enter Hendaia from the east, run through the town centre and across the border into Irun, and then pass through Hondarribia before going back across the frontier and finally finishing in Baiona two days later.*

*The excitement around the Korrika reflects the sense of solidarity felt by all those taking part. As Del Valle remarked in her anthropological analysis of the Korrika (1988), it is a ritual bringing together people who identify with the Basque language. On this occasion, the Korrika is particularly exciting for me because it crosses over and back across the frontier in Bidasoa-Txingudi.*

*With Elisa, a friend from Irun who works at Sokoa and studies Basque with me at AEK, I walk up to one of the roundabouts in Hendaia where the Korrika will pass. Here we plan to join in the run, together with other students of AEK. When we arrive, most of the other participants are already waiting, wearing tracksuit trousers and a vest bought from AEK as a contribution to the event. On the vest is this year's Korrika logo, a cartoon-style drawing of an astronaut holding the Korrika baton and flying in space with the planet Earth far below. Sharing our excitement, we greet each other and chat in Basque, even though many of us are far from fluent in the language. Other people present include children and teachers from the ikastola and French schools in Hendaia, as well as a few local inhabitants, members of Basque cultural and folklore associations. Amongst them is Serge Lonca, who teaches at the ikastola and represents the local Green party on the town council.*

*Soon, we hear the sound of the Korrika jingle "Gather one world"<sup>254</sup> approaching up the hill. Behind a van with the AEK logo leading the Korrika is a large group of people running. Most of them are factory employees at Sokoa, which has paid to run one of the laps. Despite the cheering from onlookers on the side of the road, the Sokoa team members look very serious, intent on their task of running. At the roundabout, the baton is handed over to one of the ikastola children and the Korrika carries on towards the town hall of Hendaia. There, amidst another crowd of children, regional journalists and television cameras are waiting to see the mayor, Kotte Ecenarro, take the baton.*

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<sup>254</sup> 'Mundu Bat Bildu' in Basque. This evokes not only the building of a world of Basque speakers but also a world against 'globalisation' – the second part of the jingle sings about 'Big Beñat' which is meant as a humorous local alternative sandwich to McDonald's Big Mac hamburger. Beñat is a common Basque name for a man.

Also wearing a tracksuit and the Korrika vest, the mayor leads us through the main square and down the hill towards the station. One of the organisers sitting in the van at the head of the Korrika shouts through the loudspeaker in Basque "step by step, little by little!"<sup>255</sup> And everyone running responds with the jingle to the rhythm of the music. Gaizka, a factory employee at Sokoa and the boyfriend of Kristina, a teacher at AEK in Hendaia, is running along looking very serious. He has been running since the start of the lap of Sokoa. So has Imanol, an older man with a big bushy moustache, also a Sokoa factory employee, now running beside Elisa and me. Directly behind the van leading the way runs Heren, another Sokoa employee in his mid twenties whose parents left Hegoalde during the last years of the Franco dictatorship to live in Hendaia. A few years ago, he spent time in prison for allegedly vandalising a French bank in Hendaia. With a group of friends, he holds on to a big AEK banner. One of them wears a beret, his long curly hair bouncing out and up and down to the rhythm of his steps. They all concentrate on their running, their faces growing redder and redder. As we accidentally bump against each other, we smile and nod friendly greetings in Basque. The feeling of complicity is strong as the music from the van keeps us going, up and down, up and down, at a steady pace.

Just before the station, a few policemen are standing beside the road, supposedly to keep order, along with several onlookers. As they approach, Gaizka, Heren and a few others raise their voices and chant "The Basque language in Euskal Herria!"<sup>256</sup> and "No Frontier!"<sup>257</sup> Gaizka raises his fist at them and cries "Freedom!"<sup>258</sup> in their face. The policemen, with their arms crossed, look back with expressionless faces.<sup>259</sup>

Not far away, Hendaia councillors Jean-Baptiste Etcheverry and Benito Zubeldia stand watching the passing throng. At this point, the mayor's lap ends. He hands over the baton to an AEK organiser and stops running to join his fellow councillors by the side of the road.

As we approach the frontier, a French police van with flashing lights drives up in front of the AEK van to lead us along the bridge. In my eyes, this formalizes the event about to take place. A mixture of apprehension and excitement is visible on the smiling faces of my fellow runners. As we reach the frontier, in the middle of the bridge, Imanol, who is running beside me, mutters to me, "I'm leaving you here. I can't go on." He and another couple who fled Hegoalde a few years ago for fear of reprisals from the Spanish police to take refuge in Iparralde, do not want to risk stepping on Spanish soil again. They stop running just before the Spanish flag marks the end of French territory, and rest on the edge of the bridge.

A crowd of people are waiting for us a little further on, beyond the now derelict former Spanish customs buildings. Most are teachers and students of AEK in Irun. Over their tracksuit trousers, some are wearing purple or blue shirts with horizontal white stripes. Many of the girls wear their hair tied up in Guatemalan-style bandanas, while some of the men have their hair short in the front and long in the back. The baton is handed over to one of them and we carry on running up the Iparraldeko Ibilbidea towards Irun.

Just before we reach the centre of Irun, a famous Basque rocker from Irun called Fermin Muguruza waits surrounded by journalists and fans. All smiles, he takes the baton and runs on, amidst much cheering from the crowd following on behind him. As he runs up the street, he looks

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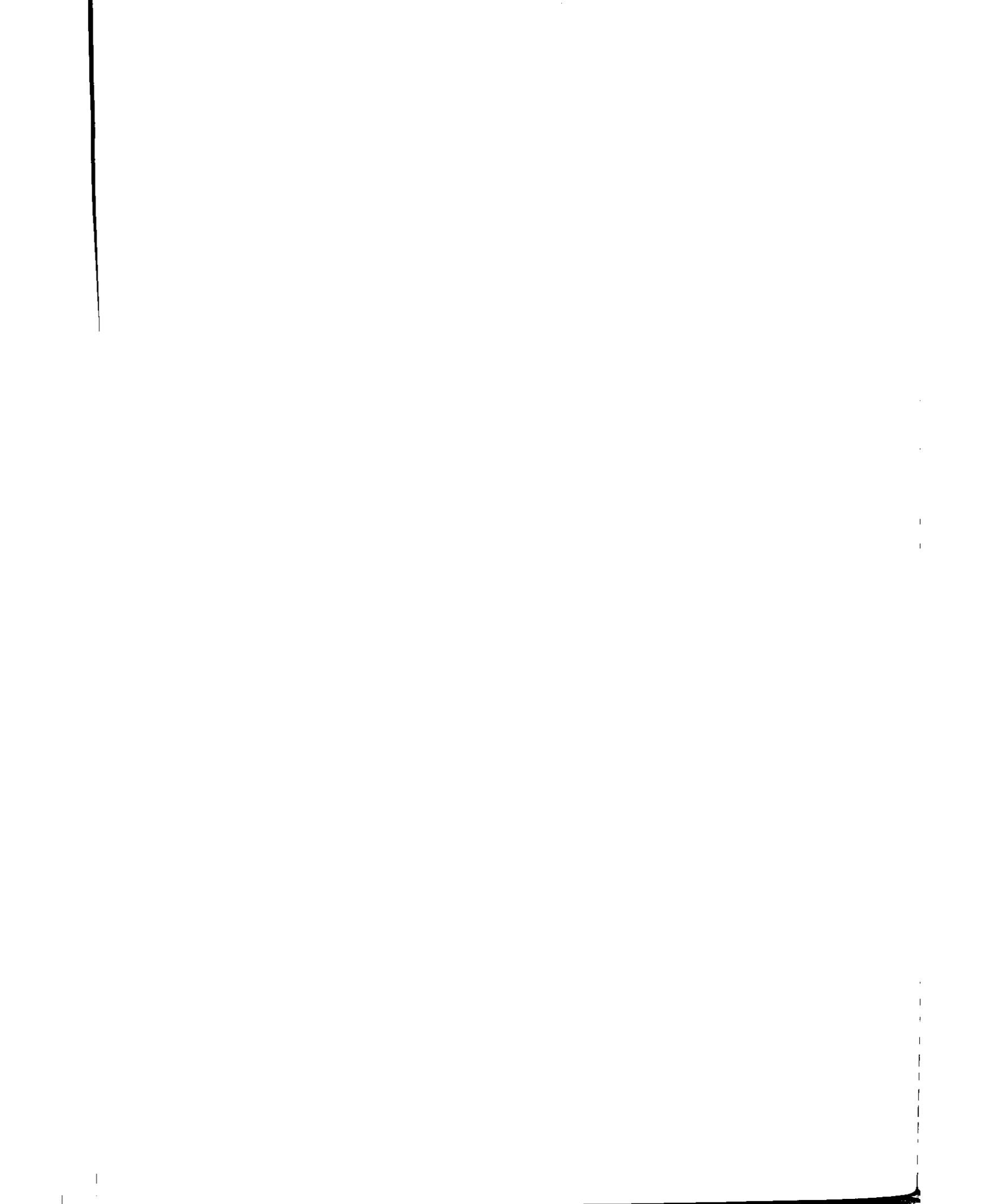
<sup>255</sup> "Tipi Tapa Tipi Tapa" This was another slogan of the Korrika, which draws the analogy between running in the Korrika and the progress made by the Basque language.

<sup>256</sup> "Euskal Herria Euskaraz!"

<sup>257</sup> "Mugarik Ez!"

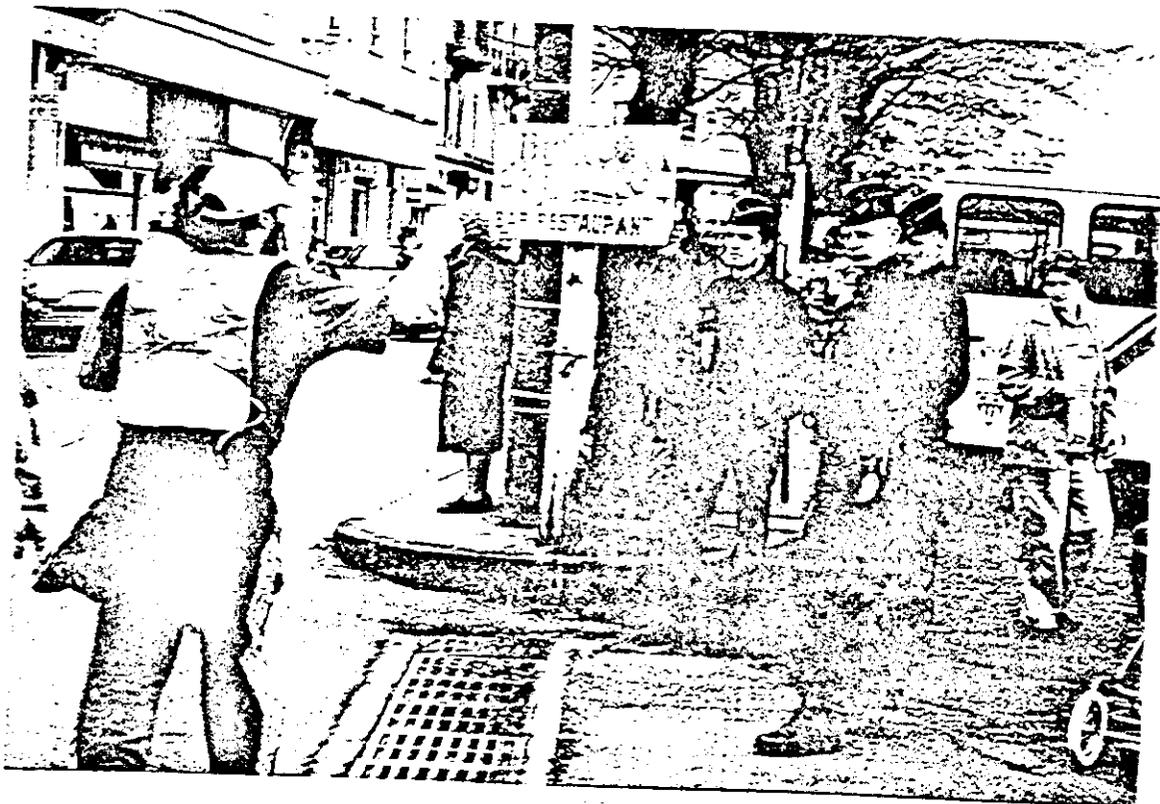
<sup>258</sup> "Askatu!"

<sup>259</sup> See picture.

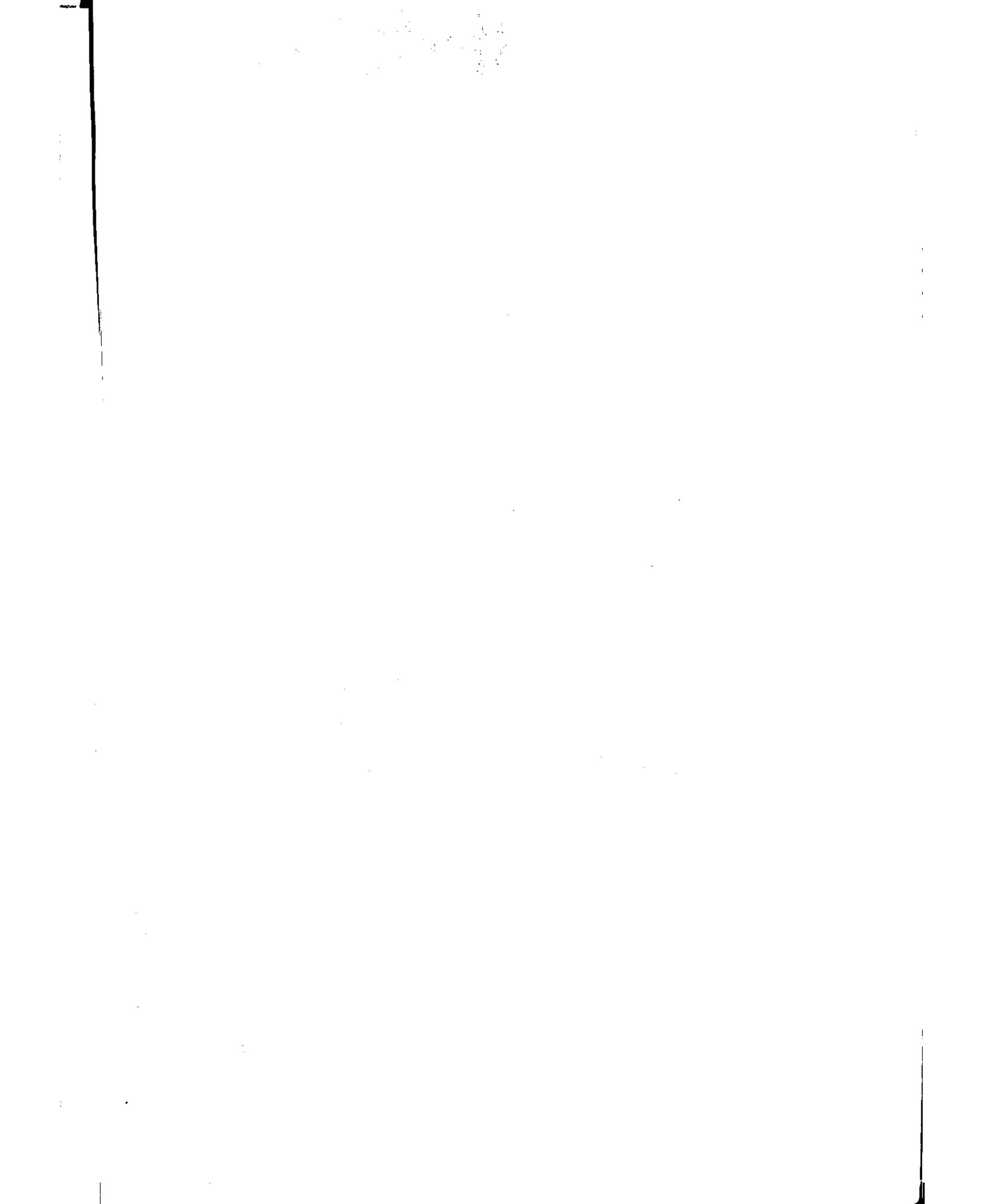




The Korrika runs past the 'Franco-Espagnole' pharmacy in Hendaia.



Running past: French para-military troops.

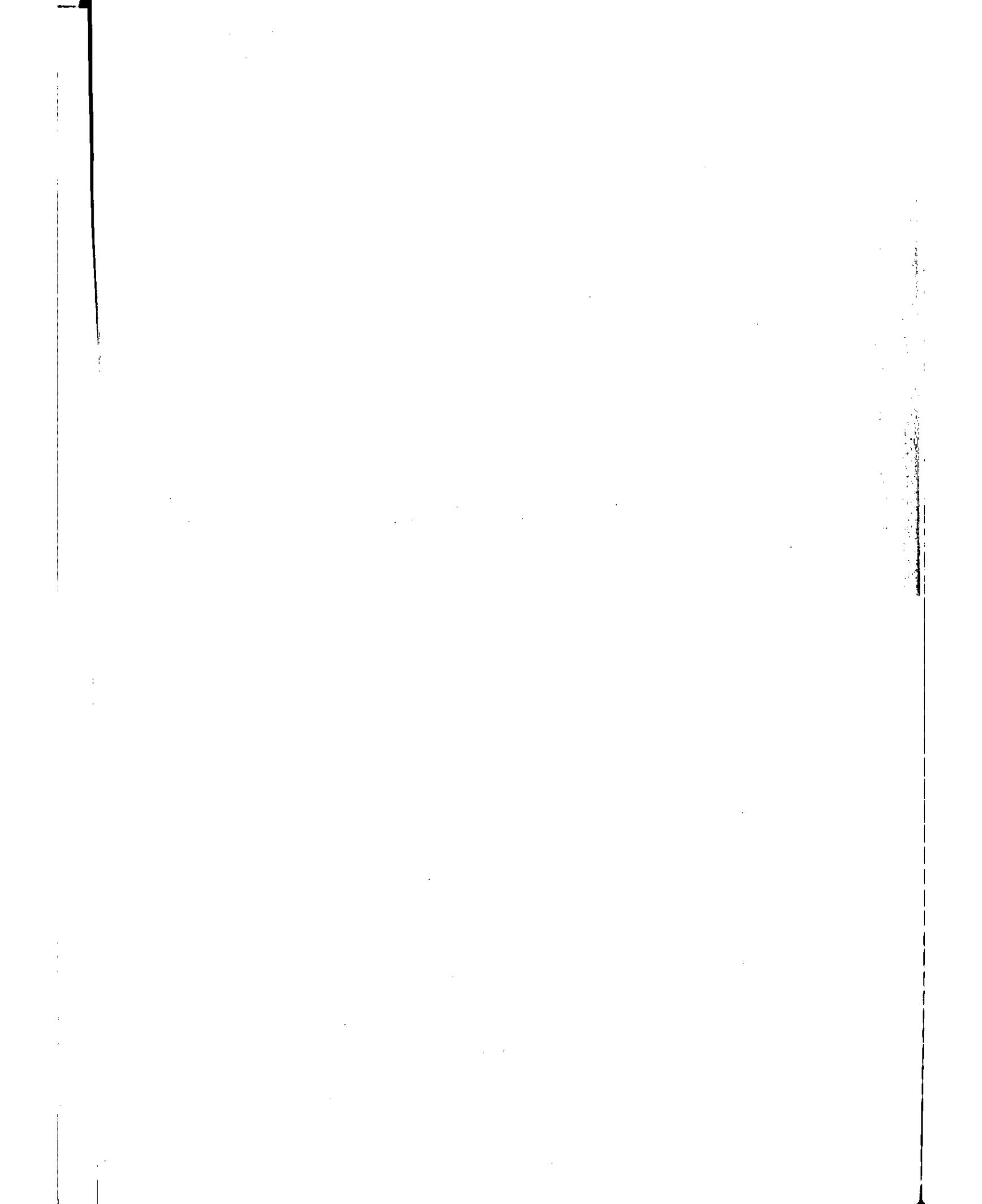




Korte Ecenarro, mayor of Hendaia, runs with the baton.

The Korrika runs across the Bridge of Santiago into Irun.  
Heren is in the lead, holding the Korrika banner.







The Korrika runs across the anti-foot-and-mouth mat.



Fermin Muguruza receives the baton in Iruun, surrounded by people holding placards in support of Basque 'political prisoners'.



*back at us from time to time, still with a big smile, showing that he is running with us, not just leading the race, in contrast to the mayor of Hendaia who looked straight ahead as he ran on his own.*

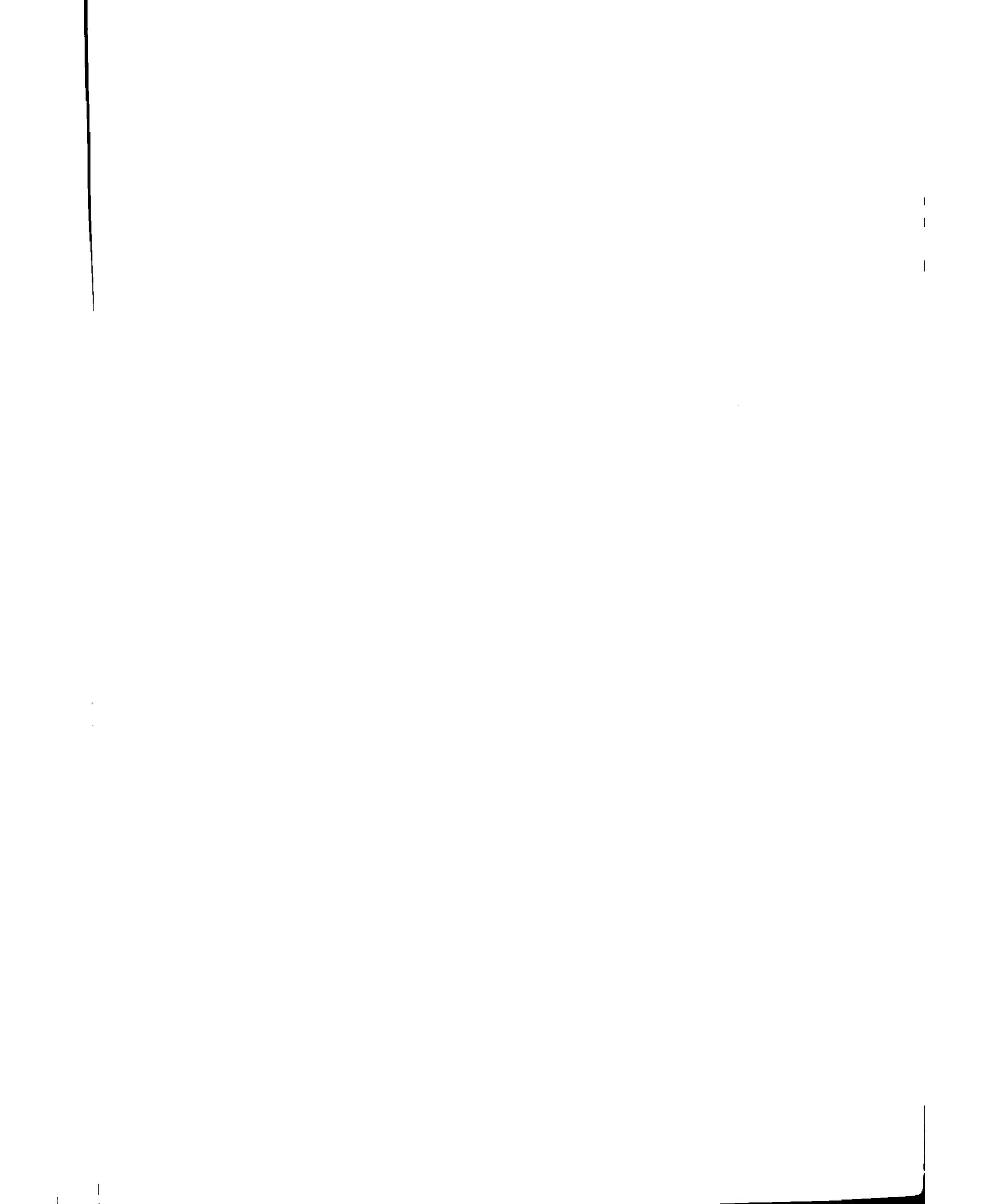
*At the top of the avenue, a much bigger crowd is waiting. People of all ages, including both children and old people, are standing on the side watching the Korrika go past, while others join the running. Amongst them, Marina Grijalba, a sixty-year-old woman living in Irun prepares to join the race. At this point, a large group of people carrying banners and billboards with black and white pictures of 'Basque political' prisoners dominate the Korrika. They represent associations demanding the return of these convicts to Euskal Herria. In front of them, others are carrying banners announcing a general strike called by EH in all of Euskal Herria on 15 April.*

*The Korrika passes through Irun to the roundabout from which the road leads to Hondarribia. Here, a smaller group of people, many of whom I recognize from Muara, a bar patronised by supporters of the Basque left-wing movement in Hondarribia. Some of them, including Eneko, Ibai and Aritz, dressed as usual in sneakers, tracksuit trousers and t-shirts with Basque slogans, are carrying similar banners and placards to the ones in Irun. Also amongst them is Marije Zapirain, the representative of EH in the municipal council of Hendaia. The baton is handed over to an old man, whom I have also often seen in Muara. He begins running and the rest of the group follows behind him. Running along the road to Hondarribia, we pass the airport on the right, where teachers from HABE, the alternative organisation to AEK set up by the Basque government, are standing waiting to join the Korrika.*

*We reach the city walls of Hondarribia and, still running at a steady pace, enter the medieval gates and go up the cobbled street that leads to the town hall. There, in front of the town hall, employees of the municipality are standing waiting with Ion Elizalde, EA councillor of Hondarribia in charge of the development of the Basque language. He is waiting to take on the baton. The mayor is nowhere to be seen. I wonder whether he has chosen to stay away after an incident two years ago when he took the baton and was booed by a group of youths who are Muara regulars for his failure to make an effort to learn Basque.*

*Up comes the Korrika and Mr. Elizalde takes the baton amidst cheering from the municipal employees. Aritz, Eneko, Ibai and their friends run behind him, still holding their placards and banners. Mr. Elizalde runs through the narrow streets of the old part of town and down and out again towards the marina. There, a crowd of children from the various schools of Hondarribia join in behind Mr. Elizalde and the Korrika proceeds round the marina area, up one street and down the main avenue before exiting Hondarribia again. At that point, I bump into Eneko who, exhausted by all the running, sits down by the side of the street to catch his breath. All red and hot and tired out, we sit in silence watching the commotion around us. Eneko, finally getting his breath back, searches for words and blurts out "so moving".*

Nationalism is in many ways a particular culture of its own, a web of meanings held in common by its members. A key figure in modern Basque society is the 'abertzale', literally a Basque patriot, a term that signifies someone who defines himself or herself clearly within the spectrum of local politics as a Basque nationalist. Within the complex interplay of social, cultural and political forces in modern Basque society, the abertzale occupies a crucial position as a creator and promoter of modern expressions of Basque culture and, at the same time, as a possessor and controller of symbolic power. Reflecting the struggles for power underlying abertzalism, use of the term is controversial. In many ways, debate surrounding its use and meaning mirrors the political, cultural and social tensions that condition many aspects of interpersonal relations in the Basque Country.

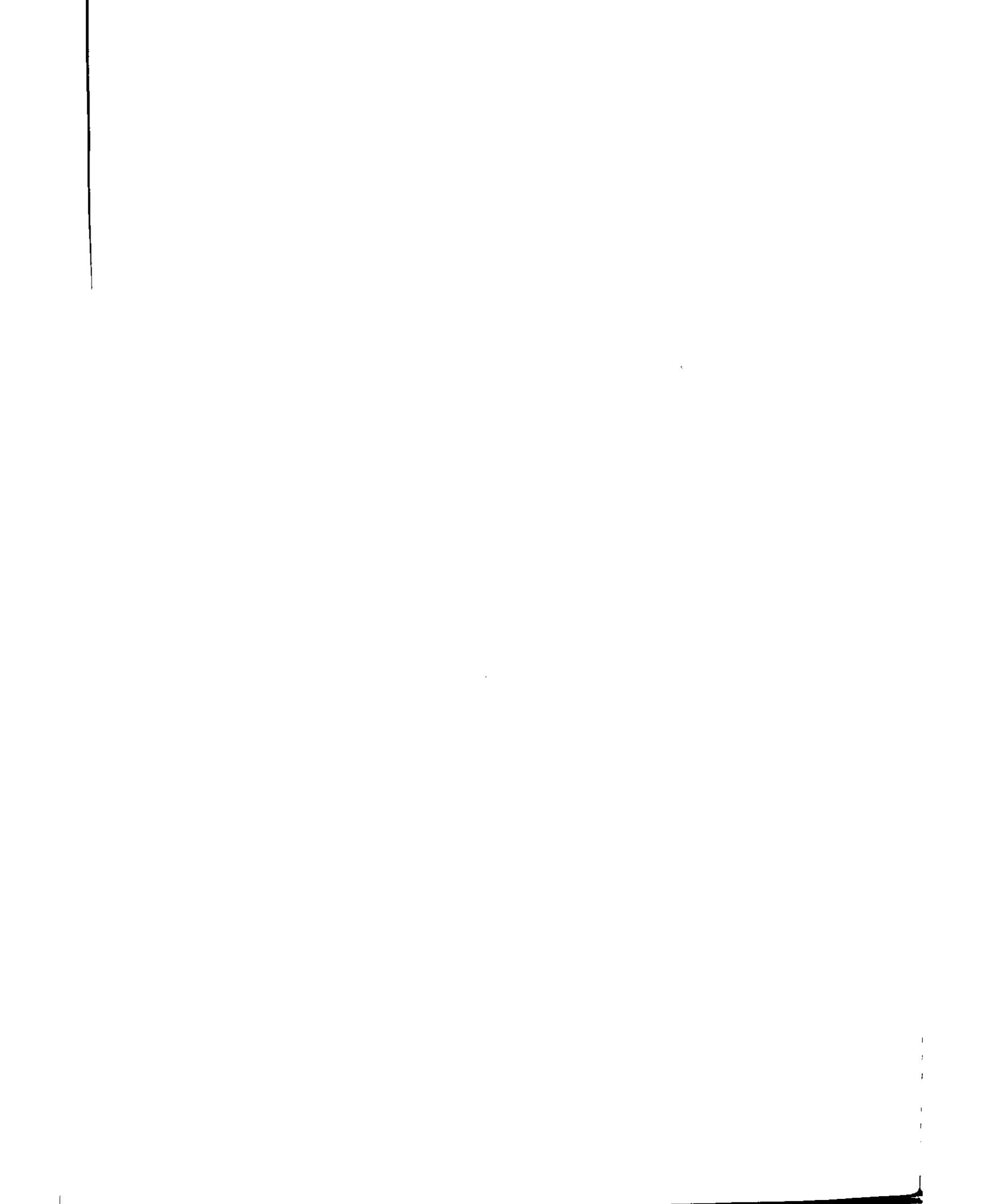




Runners, including Eneko and Aritz in the Korrika bearing placards of Basque 'political prisoners'.



Ion Elizalde leading the Korrika with the baton.



The scene described above illustrates an event bringing together people who identify with the Basque language. In the opinion of some non-participants I spoke to, all these people are *abertzaleak*, a label that many among both the runners and the spectators, including the mayor of Hendaia, Gaizka Heren, Jean-Baptiste Etcheverry, Benito Zubeldia, Imanol, the AEK teachers, Fermin Muguruza, the HABE teachers, Ion Elizalde and Eneko are happy to accept. Others by contrast prefer to call themselves *euskaltzaleak* – literally Bascophiles, a term rejecting political connotations. Among these latter are Serge Lonca and Marina Grijalba. As for Elisa, she hesitates between adopting either one of the terms to define her Basque identity. Even amongst the *abertzaleak*, however, individual interpretations of what they mean by this term can vary. This is often a source of confrontation. The *Korrika* is a rare event in which these people can come together in relative harmony.

The neologism ‘*abertzale*’ was first used in the late nineteenth century by the partisans of EAJ in Hegoalde, principally motivated by a view of a golden age of the Basques as a racially distinct group with their own unique traditions, rather than by aspirations for an independent nation-state. More recently, the anthropologist MacClancy defined the *abertzale* as “one who actively participates in the political struggle for an independent Basque nation with its own distinctive culture” (1993b:86 & 1996:213). MacClancy’s definition applies to the situation in the Basque Country from the late 1950s, following the emergence of the left-wing Basque nationalist movement in Hegoalde and its subsequent spreading to the Basque Country as a whole. At present, the term *abertzale* is commonly used by left-wing Basque nationalist militants as a positive term of identification for themselves. But it is also used by other people as a similarly positive term of self-identification. Mr. Ecenarro, the Socialist mayor of Hendaia, sees himself as an *abertzale*, defining the term “a question of identity, of feeling Basque, and of personal engagement in feeling such.” He rejected the idea of calling himself an *euskaltzale*, seeing in this term a reference to a too “passive identification with Basque culture”, to “someone who says Basque culture is all nice and everything, but does little for it”.<sup>260</sup>

The self-definition of the *abertzale* is based on a sense of political engagement in a specific understanding of what being Basque is all about. Such a person takes pride not only in his or her Basque heritage but in maintaining it alive in the present as a modern and dynamic identity, in alleged contrast to other people who are either indifferent to or ashamed of their Basque origins. Thus, the *abertzale* typically claims a commitment to bringing Basque identity out of the ‘ghetto’, for example by participating in the modernisation of the Basque language with the goal of raising it from the status of a ‘minority language’ to that of an everyday language used in both the public and private domains, thanks both to its ‘normalisation’ and the ‘*euskaldunization*’ of the local population. As such, the *abertzale* is often an enthusiastic speaker of the Basque language and an active organiser of and participant in a wide array of Basque cultural activities.

One self-declared *abertzale* and parent of two children at the Hendaia *ikastola* explained to me that to be an *abertzale* “is, in a way, to embody the modern Basque identity... that is not simply given, but must be acquired and worked on. Being an *abertzale* doesn’t just mean living the Basque way. You have to be committed.” This means investing much of one’s free time organising and supporting events that underpin an *abertzale* notion of Basque identity, such as fund-raising activities and Basque cultural events. People who organise their lives in this way end up forming their own distinctive cultural grouping.<sup>261</sup> They know each other, if not through direct contact, then by hearing about each other through the information channels of the *abertzale* network.

<sup>260</sup> Interview with Kotte Ecenarro, February 2001.

<sup>261</sup> One factory employee of Sokoa with whom I became good friends mentioned to me the distinctive cliqueness he said he felt in his work environment. As a person completely disinterested with Basque politics, while feeling Basque all the same, he noted that, in the factory, “whether you are an *abertzale* or not makes a serious difference in your

In Hegoalde, the abertzaleak form the core of the Basque nationalist movement. Within this movement, however, there is tension between those who support the left-wing Basque nationalist creed of HB and its successor parties and those who support the Basque nationalist party EAJ and its splinter party EA. Such tensions flare up, for example, in relation to campaigns for the repatriation of Basque convicts and in relation to projects designed to promote economic development but which are perceived as being environmentally detrimental. In Iparralde, traditionally stereotyped as a backward region at the margins of more prestigious French society (Jaureguiberry, 1993), one of the abertzale movement's principal concerns has been 'modernisation', essentially through economic development. In recent years, however, the abertzaleak of Iparralde have adopted similarly negative attitudes to major road-building projects and other infrastructure developments. In both Hegoalde and Iparralde, abertzaleak advocate so-called grass-roots action and self-sufficient economic initiatives such as the setting up of businesses, cooperatives, unions and associations representing farmers and workers of different specialisations. Linked to this is a concern with education, for the development of Basque awareness based on a specific view of Basque history and attachment to certain Basque cultural references.

Despite their claims to represent the essence of Basqueness, however, it would be unfair to accept the abertzaleak's assertion that they are and should be identified as the only true Basques. It is possible to feel Basque in one's own way without adhering to nationalist discourse. In this respect, I take issue with political geographer Mansvelt Beck (1998:162) who asserts in his analysis of identity patterns in the Basque border area that the combination of feeling Basque, speaking Basque and having "an outspoken wish for independence" amounts to proof of being a 'real Basque'.<sup>262</sup> In Iparralde, there are many people who are Basque-speaking and of Basque descent but who have no interest in Basque nationalism or demands for an independent Basque state. There are also people active in local development in the Basque Country who are Basque-speaking and of Basque descent but not involved in Basque nationalist politics. In Iparralde, some members of the mainstream French political parties have shown their support for Basque causes such as the ikastola movement or the creation of a Basque département. The RPR member of the French National Assembly for the département des Pyrénées Atlantiques, Michel Inchauspé, for example, took part in the inauguration of a new ikastola in a small town in Iparralde in November 2001, an initiative which would have been unthinkable on his part only a few years previously. Nonetheless, some self-declared abertzaleak told me that they doubted such people's commitment to "the development of Euskal Herria", suggesting that their stance might merely be an opportunistic response to changing attitudes among voters that were the result of abertzale campaigning.

Those referred to disparagingly by abertzaleak as euskaltzaleak enjoy Basque culture while not necessarily making it the most important feature of their identity, in contrast with the

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relationship with others... you are a bit left out if you're not. You can feel it, just this particular kind of camaraderie... which you are excluded from." On another occasion, my friend complained about the pressure he sometimes felt from this 'clique'. For example, when one of the factory managers was put in prison in March 2000, some of the abertzaleak initiated a collection of funds in the factory in order to give financial assistance to the manager's son so he could travel to see his father in prison. Factory employees were asked to donate a minimum of 7.50 Euros every month. At the beginning, my friend held back from making his own donation, unwilling to succumb to what he saw as peer pressure. However, after a month he realised that he was the only one in the factory who had not yet given his 'share' and so paid up.

What is also interesting to note in this particular incident, is that the manager who had been arrested had not been particularly liked by many of the abertzaleak in the factory, because of his personality and as their boss. However, as an abertzale in trouble with the state authorities, he benefited from the solidarity of his abertzaleak colleagues, demonstrating the inclusive quality of the abertzale boundary.

<sup>262</sup> As I have pointed out in Chapter One, the identification of political mobilisation with 'genuine' identity is an analytically invalid assumption.

abertzaleak.<sup>263</sup> Typically, such people are active in Basque cultural contexts such as Basque dancing and the organisation of art exhibitions, send their children to receive their primary education at the ikastola and themselves attend classes to learn Basque.<sup>264</sup> Because of their less-than-total political commitment to the cause of Basque independence, some self-declared abertzaleak to whom I spoke dismissed such people as being simply interested in Basque identity "in the folkloristic way" as "something simple and inoffensive" and "ethnologically interesting". As an example, these critics in Iparralde cited the fact that such people would send their children to the ikastola for kindergarten and maybe also primary education, but not for secondary education. "When it comes to so-called serious education, as from the secondary level say, they send them back to the French school. That shows how they see Basque just as this pretty language, nice to keep for local traditions, but then for serious matters it's back to French," one person commented.<sup>265</sup>

Serge Lonca, however, disagrees with this categorisation. For him, being an euskaltzale rather than an abertzale is simply to deny a nationalist project but not to take Basque culture and language any less seriously. Indeed, I have observed him very much involved in many Basque initiatives concerned with the development of the Basque language and promotion of Basque culture, which he describes as "not a simple folklore but as an important part of what living here is all about, that needs to be taken seriously." He adds: "That is why I often get criticised by abertzales. Because I am very involved in Basque language and cultural issues but I don't identify with them."<sup>266</sup> For Elisa who, in a long conversation, explained to me her hesitation in defining herself by either of the terms, abertzale or euskaltzale, the basis of reluctance towards each was precisely because of the often "extremist connotations" of the word abertzale and the "too dull" image of the euskaltzale. "I don't support EH, but neither do I feel close to the other nationalist parties... which are really quite conservative. So I don't know", she added.

Such is the ambiguity of boundaries that many people with no links to the Basque nationalist world often consider parents of ikastola children abertzaleak on the grounds that "they are taking part in the construction of a Basque identity in their children," as one informant said to me. Many of these saw no difference between the terms abertzale and euskaltzale.<sup>267</sup> Euskaltzale could even serve as

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<sup>263</sup> Urla (1987) talks about "Basque culturalists" and "Basque cultural activists". Although she does not define what she means by these, I guess she has in mind people actively engaged in the revival and promotion of Basque culture but who are not necessarily involved in politics as such. In my understanding, an euskaltzale is slightly different in that he or she may not be as militant as a Basque culturalist or cultural activist who, although not directly involved in Basque politics, may be more likely to be abertzale.

<sup>264</sup> An example of the use of the word euskaltzale on the part of an abertzale newspaper is in *Enbata* (18 February 1999, No. 1565) where an article talks about the Korrika of AEK as a pro-Basque language "event for the interest of euskaltzaleak" (p. 15).

<sup>265</sup> In this context, while some abertzaleak to whom I spoke rejoiced at the growing popularity and acceptance of the ikastola, they also lamented the decreasingly militant character of the ikastola. In the same vein, others complained about how certain Basque symbols were increasingly being used by people who had no nationalist consciousness. One young man, a self-proclaimed supporter of EH in Irun, described these people as "having no idea about what it is really all about. All these ikurriñak you see hanging from car rear mirrors - and all these lauburu pendants and bracelets." This illustrates the attempt by abertzaleak to exert control over certain symbols, that is, their own particular understanding of how these symbols should be perceived and used.

<sup>266</sup> All other self-defining euskaltzale informants whom I asked to define the term concur that it means a defender of the Basque language and culture. Many Basque people not involved in politics but concerned with the development of the Basque language and interested in Basque cultural expressions prefer to call themselves by this term rather than abertzale, seeing in it less radical and political connotations. When asked to distinguish between the two terms, all defined euskaltzale as 'the non-political one'. Many, however, then added that it was inevitable that, as a supporter of Basque language and culture, politics should come in. So the ambiguity remains, conveniently used at different moments for the construction of personal identity.

<sup>267</sup> In Spanish, a person active in the promotion of Basque language and culture is called a "Vasquista" (MacClancy, 1993b). In French, this person is called a "Basquisant". During the 1970s, 80s and 90s, basquisants were also referred to as "Enbatistes" from the name of the first Basque nationalist organisation in Iparralde, Enbata. This term continues to be used by old people. So the political connotation of the cultural militant remains.

a 'disguise' for the abertzale. When some people in my grandmother's village in the rural hinterland of Iparralde heard in 1996 that I was taking Basque lessons, they assumed that I had 'become abertzale'. Likewise, an old woman recalled to me how a decade earlier the fact that she had hung a *lauburu*, a traditional Basque symbol, above her fireplace had caused gossip in the neighbourhood about her being an abertzale. Such examples illustrate how boundaries can be interpreted differently according to which side of them a person stands on. In the Basque Country, as in any cultural system, while some symbolic boundaries may be commonly accepted and interpreted, others are not so clear. In Iparralde, many people not involved in the Basque nationalist movement told me that they associate the term abertzale with anybody who gives even minimal support to violence as a means of backing political demands in a Basque context. A retired teacher in the French state school system living in Hendaia described abertzaleak as "those who fight for independence and are disposed to using violence to attain it". Another informant in Iparralde referred to abertzaleak as "extremists" while yet another described them as "big mouths, bigots, who sully the image of real Basques". In Spain, the national political parties, and the PP in particular, tend to identify Basque nationalism with extremism, radicalism and terrorism. Much emphasis is also placed on the importance of condemning ETA violence and the fact that Batasuna does not condemn it, without any consideration for the need to recognise that violence also exists in other, opposite camps.<sup>268</sup>

Within the world of those who call themselves abertzaleak, there are also disagreements over who is and is not entitled to this designation. In Hegoalde, differences began to emerge in the abertzale movement in the new socio-political climate of post Franco Spain. Those who disagreed with the way in which events unfolded following the constitutional referendum and/or continued to support ETA sought to continue their resistance and protest in social and cultural movements alongside ETA. The result was a loosely structured conglomeration of associations, organisations and private and civic platforms identifying with left-wing abertzale ideas. This was identified by its organisers as the Basque national liberation movement. At the time, this coordination marked a fundamental difference between armed action and civil action (Mosca, 2001:19). Simultaneously, it remains detached from ETA, any links with it on the part of association participants being a matter of individual initiative. The main characteristics of this coordination or movement are its flexible and diffuse organisational structure, its rejection of the rationalisation of political life and separation from daily living and its refusal to recognise the existing institutions of the Basque Country (see also Mata López, 1993:99). Through it, a series of associations and foundations provide alternative initiatives to those of the Basque Countryal government. So, for instance, AEK works alongside the Basque government's own service catering for the teaching of Basque to adults, HABE, set up in 1982. Other expressions of this alternative fringe include associations supporting Basque militants incarcerated for alleged links with ETA and their families and dedicated to fighting against drug addiction, as well as feminist and gay groups and anti-nuclear and environmental groups. In March 2000, Gazteriak, a group of young abertzaleak of Iparralde, merged with their counterparts in Hegoalde, Jarrai, under the name of Haika. Haika was then outlawed in February 2001, following allegations by the Spanish state of links with ETA. Since then, radically inclined left-wing abertzale youths have re-emerged as a new group called Segi.<sup>269</sup>

Among members of the left-wing Basque nationalist movement, I often witnessed discussions about who they considered to be 'real' abertzaleak. Not only ideology, but practice and method form part

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<sup>268</sup> According to the magazine *Enbata* (April 2002 No. 1725. p.6.), the United Nations Organisation reported on 16 April 2002 58 incidents of torture during 2000 of Spanish or French Basque citizens at the hands of the Spanish police, the Guardia Civil and the Ertzaintza. In this same meeting that took place at the seat of the UN in Geneva, *Enbata* says Amnesty International reported 321 cases of torture in Spain by immigrants and members of minority groups between 1995 and 2002.

<sup>269</sup> Meaning Continue.

of the criteria. Once, in a casual dinner conversation in which a partisan of EAJ referred to himself as an *abertzale*, a left-wing Basque nationalist who was present sniggered, showing his reservations at the EAJ member's claim. Often, not only are members of EAJ or EA denied recognition as *abertzaleak* by their left-wing counterparts, mainly in relation to their different ideological stance and their alleged insincerity in their claim to really want independence, but they are also, in Hegoalde, accused of being "traitors" and "pro-Spanish". So for example, Marije Zapirain, Batasuna councillor in Hondarribia told me she did not regard Borja Jáuregui, the mayor of Hondarribia who is a member of EAJ, as "an *abertzale*. He is *españolista*."<sup>270</sup> In an interview however, Mr. Jáuregui described himself as being *abertzale*, "only difference between me and these HB people is that I support democracy, whereas they are exclusive, authoritarian and intolerant."<sup>271</sup> So some supporters of EAJ and EA insisted to me that they, and not the left-wing radicals, are best able to improve the popular image of the *abertzale*, avoiding connotations of violence. Beñat Oteiza, a representative of EAJ in Iparralde, explained that "EAJ enables people to disassociate *abertzalismo* from terrorism."

In Iparralde, particularly since the creation of Batasuna in June 2001 and the split within *Abertzaleen Batasuna*, there now also exists strong tension between left-wing *abertzaleak* of a kind reminiscent of the power struggles and strategy disputes that plagued Russian Communism in its early years. Members of AB lamented to me that since the departure of a minority of AB members to join Batasuna, they are often criticised by these for not being real "left-wing *abertzaleak*". One 27-year-old AB member noted to me, "of course, a lot of it is to do with these fancy ideals. You know, revolutionary ideas, anti-colonialist discourses etc. And well, us, with our strategy of going 'little by little', asking first for the creation of a Basque *département*, that is not so romantic and revolutionary and appealing to young people. Whereas the idea of *independentzia*, well..."

Basque nationalists in general like to associate themselves with parties representing national minorities in other parts of the world, such as *Plaid Cymru* in Wales, *Sinn Féin* and the Scottish National Party, calling them "fellow *abertzaleak*".<sup>272</sup> Often, to specify their ideological distinction from others who claim to be *abertzaleak*, the left-wing Basque nationalists will add the adjective *eskerra*, or "left-wing", to the term *abertzale*. This does not go uncontested, however, as for example by a supporter of the grouping EE, now adhered to the PSE, author of a letter to the *Diario Vasco* newspaper protesting at attempts by HB supporters to monopolise this label. He complained that "when HB and their torch bearers talk about *la izquierda*<sup>273</sup> *abertzale*, they are usurping an option which others in our work attempt to develop... We are still waiting to find out what is the economic and social model of this political formation..."<sup>274</sup> While being aware of this monopolization, which again is an example of symbolic control, I have decided for purposes of simplification in this thesis to use this term to refer specifically to members of AB and Batasuna and their sympathisers. My justification for doing so lies in the fact that, in general talk in the Basque Country, these *abertzaleak* are practically always referred in this way, as "left-wing" and that EE is now aligned with the Spanish Basque Socialist political strategy.

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<sup>270</sup> Another Batasuna councillor of Hondarribia, Jaime Anduaga, added to the confusion of the terminology by drawing a vague distinction between 'nacionalista' and 'abertzale'. In an interview, he told me the mayor Borja Jáuregui "would not call himself an *abertzale* but rather simply a *nacionalista*". For Mr. Anduaga, Mr. Jáuregui used the discourse of Basque nationalism, but was 'not really Basque' in his endeavour. So Mr. Anduaga saw Mr. Jáuregui as not being a really committed Basque nationalist and therefore not an *abertzale*.

<sup>271</sup> Conversation April 2000.

<sup>272</sup> *Enbata*, 13 May 1999.

<sup>273</sup> Meaning Left in Spanish.

<sup>274</sup> *Diario Vasco* 2000 "ETA y su izquierda", 22 December.

So abertzalism covers a range of sentiment, from strong attachment to the idea of a Basque cultural community to demands for new policies and priorities in the field of local culture, language and grass-roots development, and full-blown separatism. Some people have even come to adopt the term abertzale for themselves, while not necessarily being active within the conventional abertzale groups, such as the mayor of Hendaia, Kotte Ecenarro. Nonetheless, many of those taking part in one or other of Basque civil associations commented to me that the left-wing abertzaleak are "those most active and dynamic". The left-wing Basque nationalist movement can be credited with having encouraged a change in the local mentality towards the perception of Basque culture and language, from something old-fashioned and traditional to a modern and dynamic aspect of one's sense of self. In this way, a resident in Hendaia of New Zealand nationality who sends his children to the ikastola in Irun told me that "whether we like it or not, it is the abertzaleak, HB people, who are the most active and dynamic when it comes to cultural activities for our children. With puppet shows, clowns, imaginative children's stories in Basque etc."

This network of Basque cultural and political initiatives, all linked by an essence of left-wing abertzale ideology, must be appreciated as a culture, in the anthropological sense, of its own. As such, left-wing abertzalism propagates and maintains a certain situation of symbolic power. For participants in all the various civic movements in the Basque Country, whether they concern environmental or social marginalisation issues, it is difficult to act without left-wing abertzale ideology being in the midst. In this way, civic society remains largely dominated by this movement, allowing space for other actors of different ideologies (see also Pérez-Agote, 1984). A woman from Iparralde who felt personally concerned by a government plan to construct a motorway going through the Basque Country expressed to me the frustration she felt when she attended a street protest against the project and received cynical looks from some representatives of AB she knew leading the demonstration; "they know I am not abertzale, and that is why they gave me these ironic looks, as if to say "what is she doing here?" As if it is necessary to be abertzale to mobilise against such things as the setting up of a motorway. But no, why should it be always them? It shouldn't have to be this way. In fact, they give these causes a bad name. Always them. It puts off other kinds of people from mobilising too."

An example of how the left-wing abertzaleak's exercise of symbolic power has enabled them to take the lead in both civic issues and the use of the Basque language is expressed in the comment made to me by a young Hendaian member of an ecological association covering the Bidasoa-Txingudi area. When I asked him in what language its members from the three towns communicated with each other, I received what appeared to my interlocutor as a logical response: "In Basque. And that's not surprising: a young ecologist is also very likely to be a Basque militant." Another comment made to me by a man from Irun who supports a controversial campaign to have women parade in a traditionally male-dominated parade in the annual town fiestas of Irun and Hondarribia also illustrated how closely the idea of civic action and Basque left-wing nationalist identity have become linked. As we discussed the political profile of this movement, he remarked that "it is only normal that it should be mainly left-wing abertzaleak active there- they are the most open-minded people here." By contrast Marina Grijalba, who chose to run in the Korrika as her personal contribution in favour of the promotion of the Basque language told me how dismayed she was to see a lot of people in the crowd running carrying panels with left-wing Basque political slogans on them, asking for the return of Basque prisoners: "it makes me angry. Because I am not running for them, I am running for the Basque language. It is so frustrating because everything gets mixed up, language, politics. Before, yes, it was necessary. But not any more. Always these HB people there, infiltrating... imposing themselves."

According to Ion Elizalde, a representative of EA in the municipal council of Hondarribia in charge of the promotion of the Basque language, "working in the area of Basque culture can be frustrating because of this domination of these causes by those people from HB... As a member of the other nationalist camp, you are made to feel pretty small... criticising you, as if they are the only ones who know best and really care about Basque culture and language." On another occasion, when discussing the fiestas of Hondarribia, I asked him out of the blue whether he could dance the auresku, a dance popularized by Basque nationalists in Hegoalde as a traditional Basque salute and now often performed in Basque festive ceremonies, he reacted in a manner that was both surprising and revealing about the power of certain local symbols: "the auresku? Yes, I do actually, but so what? But I don't play the txalaparta like so many of these supposedly cool HB kids. So what?" The txalaparta is a kind of musical instrument consisting in a collection of thick wooden planks placed on trestles and two thick wooden batons, which the player rhythmically drops. The music produced by this was traditionally used for communication between people across valleys. Today, it is often performed in Basque left-wing nationalist rituals and taken as one of the things to be learnt as part of the general Basque cultural repertoire. Consequently, my informant must have thought I also took it as an indispensable element of Basque cultural identity.

This symbolic struggle over the definition of who qualifies as a 'real' Basque person has inevitable consequences for the Partzuergo, as those involved in it approach it with different understandings of what it is meant to do. Viewed from afar, the Partzuergo, in its use of Basque symbols and its attempts to promote the Basque language, seems to some people like an abertzale initiative, as is illustrated by the way in which some local people referred to it as "this Basque thing" when I first asked them about it in 1999. Other people who identified themselves to me as primarily French or Spanish were initially suspicious of the Partzuergo as heralding a move in the direction of Basque national reunification. At the same time, the Partzuergo is not exempt from criticism on the part of left-wing abertzaleak who question its actual motives. In its attempt to promote a new common perspective of the local space and a new sense of belonging amongst the local population, the Partzuergo has to grapple with the challenges of a symbolic struggle which creates boundaries of division and tension amongst its inhabitants.

## Chapter Eight: Boundaries for Belonging: the Alarde

*The framed photos that dominate the sitting room of the home of Josefa and Nicolás are placed in full view of anybody walking in. On the wall, a near-lifesize photo portrait shows their four year old granddaughter Idoia sitting on the floor wearing a smartly tailored blue and white jacket and skirt, a red beret on her head and a white sash round one shoulder hanging down to her waist. On her feet, she has white boots over white tights covering her little legs. Smiling sweetly, she holds a fan in one hand while the other rests on a miniature brandy keg attached to her waist. Idoia is dressed as a cantinera, the female figure who accompanies the all-male 'soldiers', most of them marching on foot, in the annual Alarde, a pseudo-military parade that is the highlight of the annual fiestas of Irun, where her family lives, and neighbouring Hondarribia.*

*Below this photo, a smaller one on a coffee table shows a real cantinera - Iulene, the youngest daughter of Josefa and Nicolás, aged 25. Wearing a blue and white tailored skirt and jacket and gracefully sitting astride a horse, she arches her back as she holds the reins in her white-gloved hands. The bright red of her lipstick matches the red of the festive beret atop her neatly bunned hair.*

*Across the room, three other photos hold pride of place on a bookshelf by the television set. In one, Iulene's sister, Amelia, a cantinera in another year's Alarde, is shown in profile, smiling a delicate smile of bright red lipstick under a red beret, her hair pulled back in a bun and held in place with a big pearl hairpin. In another, her brother David, wearing a smart blue, gold, red and white old-style military outfit, is shown as a lieutenant in the Alarde. His short brown hair is neatly brushed back, and he smiles proudly at the camera. Finally, a third photo shows Nicolás himself, dressed like David in a military outfit, but grander, with the insignia of a captain. Smiling broadly under his bushy white beard, he sticks out his chest in pride.*

*Looking fondly at the photographs, Nicolás tells me that he has decided to relinquish his position as captain this year "in order to give the younger generations a chance." So popular is the Alarde amongst the men of Irun that the list of would-be participants is extremely long and it can take several years before an applicant is allowed the honour of joining the parade. Having reached the elevated position of captain, Nicolás says he is happy now to carry on participating as a simple soldier. "David will probably carry on as lieutenant for a couple of years," he says. "But I believe I have had my time. And I am happy to have had two daughters chosen to be cantineras."*

*Josefa brings out albums containing yet more photos of members of the family in past Alardes. In one, there's another photo of Idoia dressed as a cantinera. This was the year that Iulene was cantinera and, on this very special occasion, Josefa made Idoia a little cantinera outfit identical to Iulene's. Pointing at the picture, Nicolás exclaims laughing "and I hope one day to see Idoia grow up to be a real cantinera too!"*

*Here we see a strongly 'Irunés' or 'Irundarra' – Irunian – family for whom the Alarde is of typical importance. "It is something I feel very deeply," Josefa remarked to me on another occasion. "It is part of our tradition", added Nicolás, "It is part of feeling 'Irunés de toda la vida'."<sup>275</sup>*

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<sup>275</sup> This is an expression which I heard from many Irunians when talking about their attachment to Irun and the Alarde. It literally translates as 'Irunian all one's life' and is meant to evoke an image of Irunian 'authenticity'.

*Neither Nicolás nor Josefa were actually born in Irun. Nor does either of them speak Basque, other than a few key words. Both were born in other parts of Spain, moving to Irun as children in the 1940s with their parents, who came here to work in activities related to the frontier.*

*Turning to me, Nicolás asks: "In France, they don't have such fiestas, do they? The gabachos don't have these kinds of traditions so much now, eh?" Looking mournful, Josefa observes: "And now, some people in the pueblo have decided in the last few years to mess up the fiesta, deciding they want to change it." Nicolás chips in again: "Now how would you like that? If people told you in France that your village celebration should be changed?" To which Josefa continues: "It is so sad, the Alarde has now become such a tense thing, now that these people try and impose themselves. It used to be such a lovely fiesta, the colours, the costumes, the excitement. For me, it was just the fact of being there, enjoying the fiesta. But now there are tensions because of these people, and so, even though the Alarde is still wonderful, it makes me really really sad."*

*At this moment, the doorbell rings and in walk six-year-old Toni and four-year-old Maxim. Nicolás opens his arms wide and exclaims in Basque to the children: "Aupa haurrak! Zer moduz?"<sup>276</sup> Knowing that their grandfather cannot speak Basque, Toni and Maxim reply in Spanish. Behind them comes Pedro, another son of Josefa and Nicolás. Pedro, however, is not in any of the photos that Josefa, Nicolás and I have just been looking at. In fact, he is one of those asking for change, to make the Alarde open to the participation of women on an equal basis to men, i.e. not just as cantineras but as soldiers, lieutenants, captains and the rest. On this matter then, Pedro is a *filius non gratus*. While happy to see him, Nicolás and Josefa change the subject of conversation.*

The word Alarde literally means a military review. In the context of Bidasoa-Txingudi, it refers to two parades which constitute the high point of the annual fiestas of Irun and Hondarribia. In Irun, the Alarde takes place on 30 June, the feast day of San Marcial, or Saint Martial, and in Hondarribia on 8 September, the feast day of the Virgin of Guadalupe. The Alarde originates in historical events involving the inhabitants of the two towns. In the case of Irun, it relates to a victory by the people of the town over the French army in 1522. In the case of Hondarribia, it commemorates another battle against French military and naval forces which besieged the town for more than a month in 1638. In both cases, the inhabitants of the towns built shrines to commemorate the event, dedicated to San Marcial and the Virgin of Guadalupe on whose feast days the victories occurred. They then vowed to enact a military parade and make a pilgrimage to these shrines every year on the same date.

Historically, many towns in Gipuzkoa had militias made up of the male inhabitants who together formed the militia of the foral community of Gipuzkoa. So the annual enactment of the Alarde is also a celebration of the province's former foral privileges. Today, however, its importance lies in its role as a generator of a sense of local belonging.<sup>277</sup> As the high point of each town's annual fiesta, the day of the Alarde is very much looked forward to by local inhabitants. For weeks beforehand, participants in the Alarde, particularly those who will be playing the txistu, a Basque flute, or the drums, rehearse in small groups parading through the streets. When the fiesta time comes, many people take a few days off work, including, in Hondarribia, most of the fishermen, so as to enjoy the festivities and spend time with friends and family. People with origins in Hondarribia and Irun but living in other parts of the Basque Country or elsewhere in Spain often take their holidays at this time in order to be present.

<sup>276</sup> Basque for "Hello children! How are you?"

<sup>277</sup> For further historical information on the Alardeak of Irun and Hondarribia see amongst others, Portu (1989), Aramburu (1978), Rodríguez (1975), Urbeltz (1995), Bullen (1997; 1999; 2000), and Kerexeta (2001).

Structured around particular rules and ideas, the Alarde evokes and reaffirms a local concept of social order. Interaction around the Alarde reveals a series of social, family and gender markers and boundaries common to Irun and Hondarribia and not found in Hendaia. As an orchestrated ritual taking place in what is in effect an exceptional moment, the Alarde is perceived by participants as a sacred event whose fixity and stability must be vehemently defended, to the extent of making them untouchable. Actors within the ritual are assigned specific roles in which they must act out symbolic gestures. The privilege of fulfilling these roles provides an occasion for participants to reassess their status within the social group and for social order to be reaffirmed.

In sociological terms, events of this sort typically serve as a way of enabling the community to show itself to itself at the same time as imposing itself on others. As a central site of construction and reinforcement of common identity, such events participate in the constitution of identificatory references, allowing individuals - consciously or unconsciously - to feel themselves to be members of the parading group. The reconstitution of a so-called common past, backed by a mythology retracing the heroic stories and accompanied by music and visual effects also presented as inherited, reinforces a feeling of belonging that is challenged by other forms of sociability during the rest of the year. In this way, such parades occupy the role of a ritual in the Kertzerian sense, exerting a particular power (Kertzer, 1988) by providing boundaries for inclusion and exclusion. The organisation of the Alarde brings together participants to experience and reinforce a sense of solidarity and belonging as Irunians and Hondarribians, a status which during this time becomes a great source of pride and a pretext for celebration.

Preparations for the Alarde take place throughout the year. A Junta, or council, consisting exclusively of male inhabitants of each of the two towns, takes responsibility for organisation. Until 1997, the municipalities played an important role in the Juntas of the Alarde, reflecting their financial support for the event. A few members of each town's council formed part of the Juntas and the mayors would choose the general of the Alarde. Since 1997, by contrast, the general has been elected by the members of the Junta who themselves are chosen by the active members of the Alarde. These men are usually people who have dedicated much work to the Alarde and who often have served in the past as commanders, captains or lieutenants, "people with a good reputation in the area, people of social influence," explains Nicolás.

In Irun, the Alarde is made up of nineteen companies, each with at least 350 men, and in Hondarribia of twenty-five companies. Some represent specific sections of society, such as the fishermen, the local youth, and non-Hondarribian holidaymakers with vacation homes in the area, while others represent neighbourhoods.<sup>278</sup> Most participants take part as members of the infantry which makes up the main body of the Alarde, bearing their own rifles following the tradition according to which, on hearing the approaching enemy, the men of the two towns seized their guns from home and gathered ready to fight. Other companies represent neighbourhoods or specific functions within the military, such as the cavalry, artillery, drummers, or the music band.

Each company is headed by a captain, supported by two lieutenants. Over the course of the year, these figures are chosen by the Junta. It is not necessary to actually live in Irun or Hondarribia or

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<sup>278</sup> These companies are called the *Arrantzaleak*, *Beti Gazte* & *Mixto* respectively. The company *Mixto* was founded in the 1940s in order to integrate the numerous Spanish holidaymakers, or '*veraneantes*' who purchased houses in Hondarribia. For some of my informants who criticised the narrow-mindedness of the *Betikoak*, this shows one of the many contradictions of the traditional Alarde- not only were they open to non-Hondarribians taking part in their Alarde, but they were keen to accommodate people who owned property in Hondarribia, including people close to Franco's régime.

to have relatives there in order to parade in the Alarde, but it is necessary to be invited by other participants. Some men who live in Iparralde or other parts of the Basque Country are able to take part in the Alarde because they have friends in Irun or Hondarribia who do so. Participants choose which company to parade with according to the practice of their family, relatives and friends or their attachment to a certain neighbourhood. Some men, for example, start off by parading with their father, uncle and grandfather in one company but then join friends parading in another or, when they marry, join the company of their father in law. I encountered men from a wide range of social and professional backgrounds taking part in the Alarde. What linked all of them, they said, was their enjoyment of the Alarde and their pride of feeling Hondarribian or Irunian. "What is important," said Esteban, a Hondarribian fisherman whom I asked about the criteria for participation in the Alarde of Hondarribia, "is that you feel the fiesta. That you feel Hondarribitarra."<sup>279</sup> That you are with us." "It is," he stressed, "a very open fiesta. All we want is to celebrate tradition together."

Despite the Alarde's strong traditional base, however, it has become a focus of extreme tensions, causing discomfort for many local people, as we have seen in the case of Josefa and Nicolás. These tensions first arose in 1993 in Hondarribia when a group of women organised under the banner of a group called *Bidasoaldeko Emakumeak*<sup>280</sup> expressed the wish to take part in the Alarde on an equal footing with the men on the grounds that they felt as strong a sense of local belonging as their male counterparts. Their request was rejected by the authorities and the general public as being in conflict with tradition and threatening to destroy the essence of the Alarde. In June 1996, an attempt by a mixed group of women and men to join the Alarde in Irun caused uproar, prompting both verbal and physical violence. This was repeated in Hondarribia the following September, when men and women from Hondarribia together with local women's association called *Emeki*<sup>281</sup> took up the demand for the participation of women in that town's Alarde. The case was taken to court and in 1997 a judge ruled that since these parades were funded with public money from the municipality they should respect sexual equality, with women being allowed to take part in them freely. However, the vast majority of the two towns' inhabitants, including many women like Josefa, refused to accept this ruling, arguing instead that it was the sovereign right of 'the people' to decide their own affairs. These so-called traditionalists criticized those who supported female participation in the Alarde on two accounts: as being mainly people from outside Irun and Hondarribia who, they claimed, only want to ruin the fiestas, and of being in their majority HB sympathists.

Despite such opposition, the mayor of Irun upheld the court ruling and stated that women should be allowed to take part. The traditionalists responded by setting up an association called *Betiko Alardearen Aldekoa*<sup>282</sup> in support of the organising boards of the Alardes which, to avoid legal action on the grounds of sexual discrimination, reconstituted themselves as private entities.<sup>283</sup> Since 1997, there have been two Alardes in Irun, the 'official Alarde'<sup>284</sup> supported by the municipality, in which men and women march together, and the much larger 'traditional Alarde'<sup>285</sup> which continues to reject the participation of women. In Hondarribia, the mayor avoided the issue by denying any municipal authority over the Alarde and handing over

<sup>279</sup> Hondarribitarra is the Basque way of saying someone who is from Hondarribia or Hondarribian. Curiously, for a reason I ignore, there is no Spanish translation of this term. I have never heard anyone say 'Hondarribiano' for instance.

<sup>280</sup> Meaning "Women of Bidasoa".

<sup>281</sup> Meaning "Slowly" in Basque.

<sup>282</sup> In Basque meaning "Those in support of the Alarde of Irun of always". The choice of calling the association in Basque, rather than Spanish, is significant, as will be explored later.

<sup>283</sup> These took the names of *Irungo Alarde Fundazioa* and *Hondarribiko Alarde Fundazioa*.

<sup>284</sup> *Alarde oficial* in Spanish and *Alarde ofiziala* in Basque.

<sup>285</sup> *Alarde tradicional* in Spanish and *Alarde tradizionala* in Basque. The official Alarde had approximately 1000 people in 2000.

responsibility for the event to its organising board. Members of Emeki, Bidasoaldeko Emakumeak and other supporters of women's participation ended up regrouping themselves as the association Juana Mugarrietakoa<sup>286</sup> and creating their own company, Jaizkibel, with the backing of the Basque government but with no support from the mayor of Hondarribia. Since 1997, Jaizkibel has attempted unsuccessfully each year to join the traditional Alarde along with the other companies. The mayor makes clear his support for the traditional Alarde by acknowledging the general in a public ceremony the day before and marching with other members of the town council in the rear of the parade.<sup>287</sup>

The conflict has given rise to two clearly distinct camps: the "tradis", short for traditionalists in Spanish, or "Betikoak", from the Basque word 'always', coming from the name of the association and alluding to their passionate attachment to an idea of tradition as permanent and immutable, and "the women", shorthand to refer to supporters of women's participation in the Alarde or, specifically to Irun who support the official Alarde, as "those of the official" and, specifically to Hondarribia who support the mixed company of men and women by that name, "those of Jaizkibel".

The controversy over the Alarde illustrates the way in which political tensions in Hegoalde find expression in debate over such issues as the 'correct' version of Basque 'history', 'tradition', and ideas of Basque authenticity, all of which are of central concern to Basque nationalists. Alarde traditionalists claim that they resist those calling for change on the grounds that the latter are a minority seeking to impose themselves on the majority. In the tense political climate of the Basque Country, it is an easy step for supporters of the traditional Alarde to draw a parallel between the supporters of women's participation, perceived as imposing themselves on the majority of Irunians and Hondarribians, and ETA and its supporters imposing themselves on the rest of Basque society, prompting the sort of insults that I often heard shouted at them of "terrorists", "extremists" and "HBeros".

In reality, the situation is more complex and the positions of the members of the two camps and of representatives of regional and local political parties are far from overlapping as neatly as such accusations suggest. Nonetheless, the political connotations that have been given to the controversy over the Alarde are revealing of the manner in which symbolic boundaries are used for the construction of different local cultural and political realities and identity. In exploring these constructions of 'us' and 'them', I will also consider what consequences they have for peaceful cohabitation among the citizens of the three towns and for efforts in favour of the construction of a 'Txingudi identity'.

*30 June 2000 has arrived, and with it the eighth and most important day of Irun's annual fiesta. Many of Irun's young people, from late teens to early thirties, have been out all night on "gaupasa",<sup>288</sup> dressed in white, red and black and partying in the bars of Irun. Some went to bed around 3.00 a.m. for a quick nap before waking again at 4.00 a.m. in order to hear the "Alborada", the 'awakening' which marks the beginning of the most important day of the town's week-long festivities. As one of my companions explains to me, "following the tradition," a*

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<sup>286</sup> This association is named after the nun who, according to local lore, hid the statue of the Virgin Mary during the siege of Hondarribia held by the French army. The choice of name is significant. In an interview, Ixabel Alkain, captain of the company Jaizkibel, explained that it was part of their effort to prove that they too were faithful to 'tradition' in their demands for the participation of women on equal terms to men.

<sup>287</sup> Based on observation and discussions with participants.

<sup>288</sup> Gaupasa is a Basque expression used by both Spanish and Basque-speakers in the Basque Country to mean partying all night.

*member of the local foral army will sound his horn to warn the inhabitants of Irun that the enemy is near, calling them to get ready to fight and to gather for the Alarde, the review of arms.*

*By 6.00 a.m., a big crowd is gathered around the church of the Virgin of Juncal to hear the band of the traditional Alarde play the 'Diana de Villarrobledo', a special tune that calls for the rallying of troops. It is still dark and, despite the tired state of most people, there is a buzz of excitement. People of all ages huddle together on the grass slopes between the trees and on the square in front of the main entrance to the church. The men who will be parading in the Alarde are gathered in groups, chatting and joking. All are dressed in the customary uniform: black jacket, red beret, white trousers, white shirts and white rope-soled alpargatas. Each carries his own rifle upright against his chest.*

*Those women who have got up early in order to see their husbands, boyfriends or brothers off in the Alarde stand to one side, chatting. Some teenage boys who are not taking part in the Alarde joke in Spanish with a group of teenage girls holding on to each other arm in arm and jostling about laughing. The girls all have long hair and are wearing white dresses or jeans and tight tops, with red scarfs around their necks or on their heads.*

*Six o'clock strikes and everyone tells each other to hush. Silence, and then a horn rings out. Far away on the other side of the crowd, a member of the Alarde cries out in Spanish and Basque that the inhabitants have to prepare for battle. He ends by shouting "Gora Irun! Gora San Marcial! Gora Irungo Alardea!"<sup>289</sup> To which we all shout back, "Gora!" At this point, the municipal band by the entrance to the church strikes up the tune of the Alarde. Everyone begins to dance on the spot, holding each other by the shoulders, smiling and laughing. In this fashion we head down to Urdanibia Plaza. There, explain my companions, the men will organise themselves into their respective companies- or troops, so that the review of arms can take place with the general.*

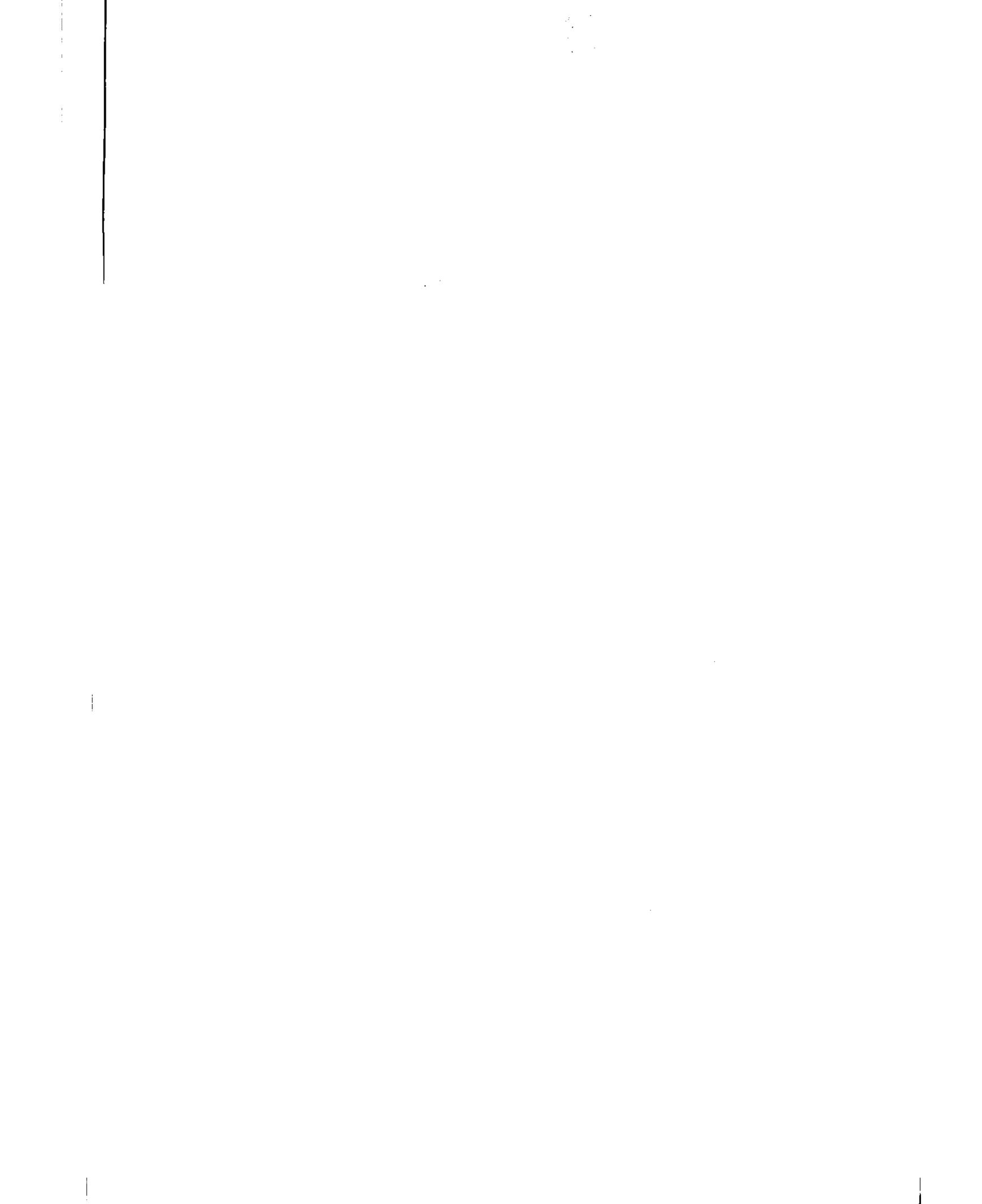
*In Urdanibia Plaza, still amid great animation and excitement, the infantrymen who make up most of the participants in the Alarde join their respective companies. The captains and lieutenants of the artillery and cavalry companies ride on horseback, accompanied by other men with cannons and mules carrying ammunition. The company of the woodcutters stands out from the others because of its members' large leather aprons and big saws.*

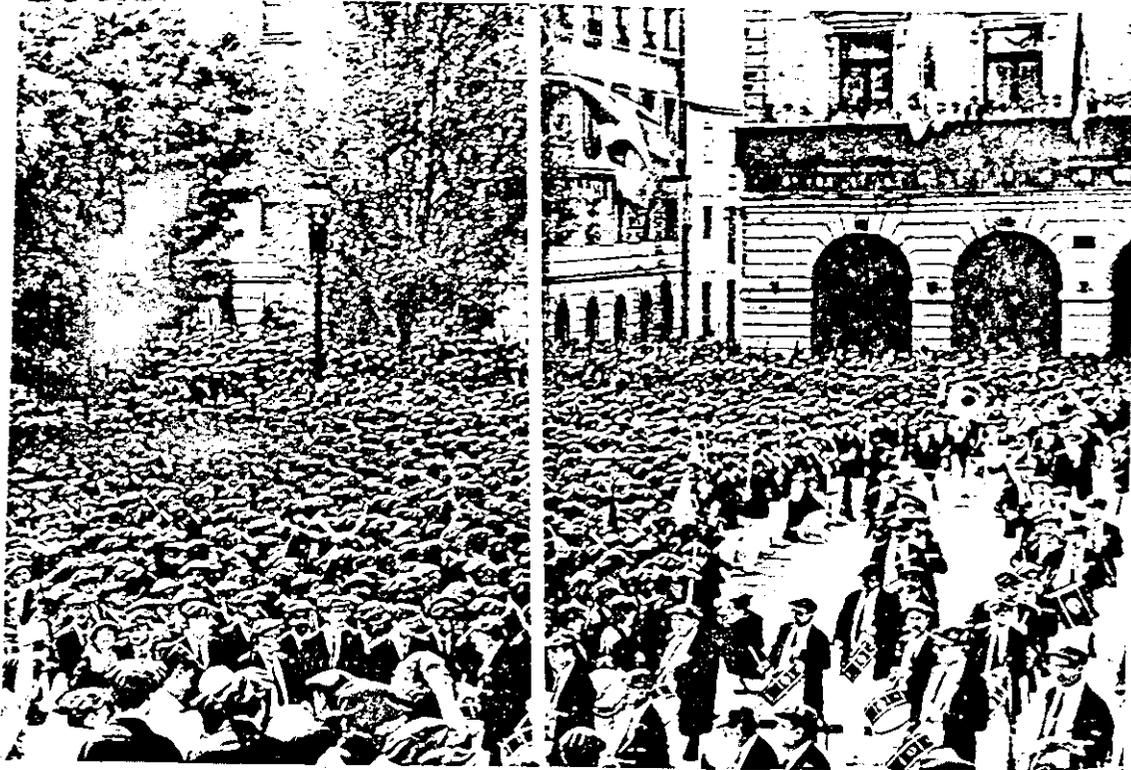
*Each company has a cantinera, a young woman wearing a military outfit in the company's colours and a sash across one shoulder giving the company's name: Olaberria, Meaka, Bidasoa, Uranzu, San Miguel, Buenos Amigos, Santiago, Lampize, Azken Portu, Anaka, Ama Xantalen, Ventas, Behobia or Belaskoenea. The cantineras all wear make-up, with bright red lipstick matching the red of their berets. Each holds a small keg in one hand, while with the other she shakes a fan and waves and smiles at the admiring onlookers. The men of the company keep close to their cantinera and, although not necessarily speaking to her, show their pride by sticking out their chests, glancing regularly in her direction and smiling at the onlookers watching her.*

*It is now full daylight and time for the Alarde to head up to San Juan Plaza for a review of arms in front of the town hall before setting off on their march. The band plays the Alarde tune, to the accompaniment of the txistu and the drums of a troop of musicians. All nineteen companies march one after the other up San Marcial Kalea. The noise of music, stamping feet and cheering is tremendous. Women and children on the side of the street jostle to get a better view of their men. Each time they catch a glimpse of those they are looking for, they jump up and down and cheer and wave. Josefa, her sister and her daughter-in-law are amongst them, dressed in white*

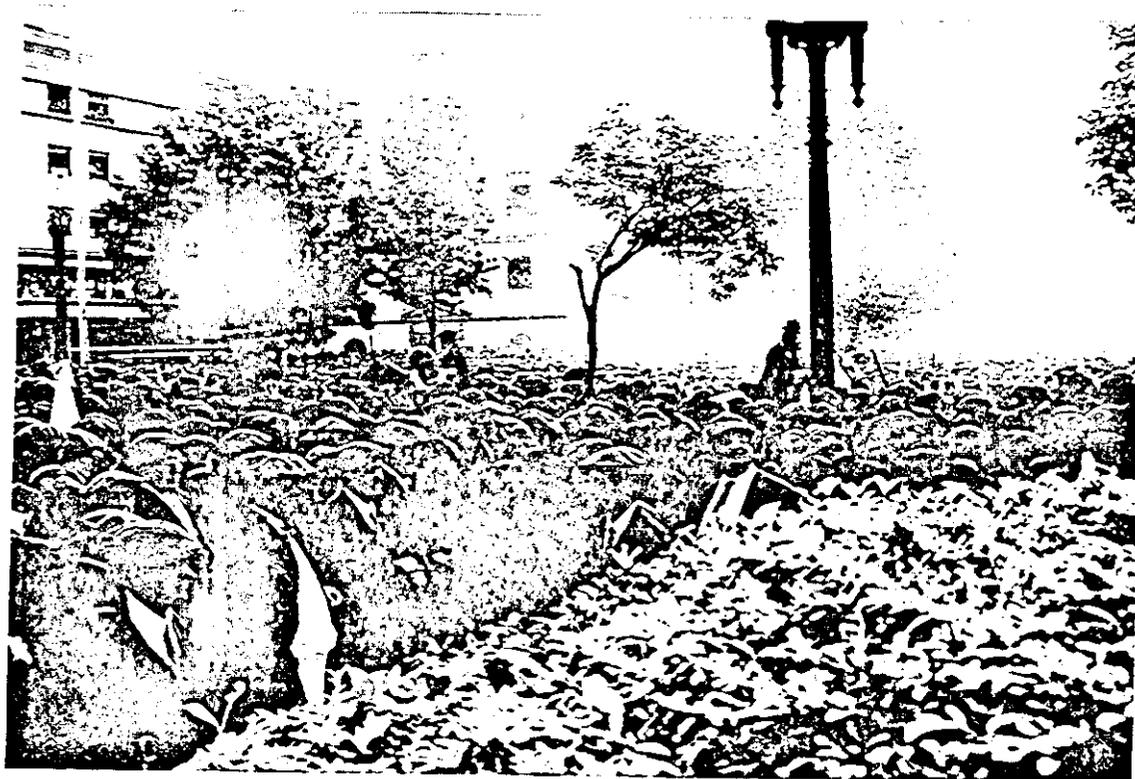
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<sup>289</sup> Gora is Basque for "Long live" or "Up with". Irungo Alardea means the Alarde of Irun.

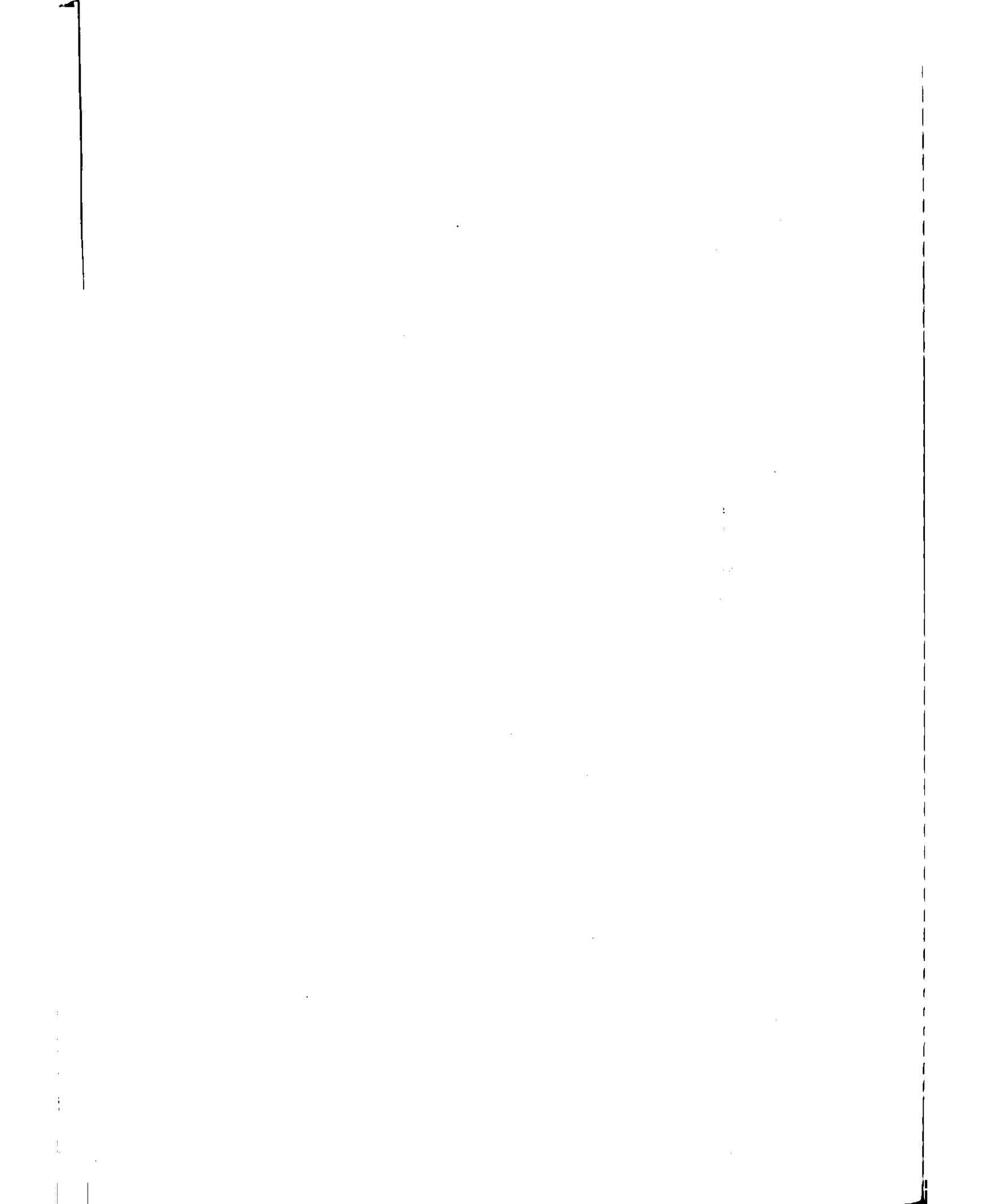




The traditional Alarde on San Juan Plaza, in front of Irun's town hall, with the Spanish, Basque and Irun flags.



The General reviewing his troops and Txingudi Telebista at work.



*and red with white skirts and shirts, a red sash and a red neckerchief and beret. Beside them, little children holding onto their mothers are dressed in white and red as well. A few, like Idoia in the photograph, wear special outfits: some little boys are dressed as generals or captains with smartly cut old-style uniforms and matching hats, while some little girls are dressed as cantineras with a touch of make-up. Holding onto their miniature kegs, they practise waving their fans in the same way as the cantinera, to the indulgent laughter of their families. As the men march past, they wave and call out to the women, "guapas!"<sup>290</sup> Amongst them, Josefa catches sight of Nicolás marching with one of his sons-in-law at his side. She waves excitedly at him as he marches past with a big self-satisfied smile.*

*On San Juan Plaza, the red of the berets is dazzling. Waiting for the signal of the Alarde general, the participants chat animatedly, trying out each other's guns and occasionally letting off a bang as they fire into the air, leaving a cloud of smoke above them. The women and children have walked up and stand watching from the sides of the plaza. Others look out from the balconies and windows of the apartments of relatives and friends. Nearly all the windows and balconies have flags with the insignia of San Marcial. The women look out at the crowd of men below and each time they spot someone they know they shout and wave frantically. And the men holding their guns nod back at them.*

*Finally the general gives the signal to depart. The Alarde forms ranks and begins marching through the streets of Irun in a long line of soldiers with guns, horses, artillery, flute players, drum players, one company after the other, each with their cantinera waving and smiling at the onlookers shouting compliments at her, "Aupa la cantinera! Zer polita!"<sup>291</sup>*

In 2000, after heated discussions with the town council, which fixes the itineraries and timetables of the two Alardes, Irun's traditional Alarde began a little later than usual and in a different part of town than had previously been the custom. The official Alarde was given precedence, starting earlier and following an itinerary closer to the previously established one. To the outrage of the Betikoak, the official Alarde was given the right to sound its Diana in San Juan Plaza, in accordance with custom, while the traditional Alarde's Diana had to take place by the church. This was designed to prevent the two Alardes from crossing paths, and so to avoid conflict.

Tensions, nonetheless, were visible around the official Alarde's parade. As its members gathered on San Juan Plaza, surrounded by supporters giving them encouragement by continuous cheering, a group of Betiko youths who had partied all night whistled and shouted, some of them throwing plastic cups at them. Trying to ignore them, participants in the official Alarde proceeded with the ritual of the Diana and then set off in procession, accompanied by their supporters. The contrast between the official Alarde and the traditional one was stark as the rest of the population stayed away and the streets through which the procession went remained practically deserted.

Betikoak in Hondarribia and Irun support each other in their common cause against those whom they see as the usurpers of their Alarde. Many are active in Betiko Alardearen Aldekoa initiatives to raise funds throughout the year for the Juntas, in the form of fairs, lottery prizes and private donations, maintaining what they call a spirit of 'defence' against 'the women'. On the other side, a few people who parade in the official Alarde in Irun also participate in the Jaizkibel company in Hondarribia. These particular supporters explained to me that they did so for reasons of principle, rather than for a sentiment of town belonging. The importance they give to their personal attachment to their town is made secondary to their idea of civic priorities. Stickers declaring

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<sup>290</sup> "Beautiful!"

<sup>291</sup> "Long live the cantinera! How beautiful!"

support for one or other of the two camps provide visual markers creating inclusive boundaries for fellow sticker wearers and other supporters and exclusive boundaries against others.

In this climate of tension, the mayors of both towns attempt to ensure calm by calling on the assistance of the *ertzaintza*, Euskadi's regional police force, armed with truncheons and wearing hoods, helmets, bullet proof jackets and in some cases carrying video cameras. In the sky above, an *ertzaintza* helicopter oversees the event, its loud buzzing adding to the tension. During the annual parade in Hondarribia, supporters of the traditional Alarde block Jaizkibel members from participating, threatening them verbally and physically. In such emotional moments, it is not rare to find people of both camps in tears. During the rest of the year, supporters of Jaizkibel in Hondarribia and the official Alarde in Irun face abuse from traditional Alarde supporters. I have seen them being insulted and assaulted in the street, while some shop-owners have suffered from boycotts and vandalism.<sup>292</sup>

Nonetheless, solidarity between supporters of the traditional Alarde does not efface boundaries between Irunians and Hondarribians. On the contrary, the issue of the Alarde is sometimes used as a way of emphasizing the differences between each other. Josefa, for example, commented that "in Hondarribia, with regard to the fight against the women, they are much more violent than here." A young Irunian man similarly told me: "They are real barbarians there, in Hondarribia, really quite cavemen-like in their attachment to traditional values and their sense of clan. Whereas we are quite a mixed, cosmopolitan people... we are more tolerant and open-minded."

Conversely, Kepa, a 25-year-old Hondarribian, painted this portrait of Irunians: "Irunians really lack a sense of tradition and a proper identity. I mean... in Hondarribia we would never let such a thing happen as it has done in Irun (alluding to the creation of an official Alarde). We Hondarribians have an extremely strong sense of identity. And much more respect for the traditions of the town." Kepa's parents are originally from Irun, but he now emphasises his belonging to Hondarribia by distinctly drawing up a boundary with Irunians.

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<sup>292</sup> During the rest of the year, employees of the local television station Localia Txingudi, formerly Txingudi Telebista, continue to be made aware of the strong community boundary that has been drawn up as a result of the Alarde conflict in Hondarribia. As a media concern, the station is accused by *betikoak* of sensationalising the conflict and placing traditional supporters in a bad light. So on this issue, in spite of its local character and the fact that it is based in Irun, it is treated as an outsider. On two occasions I was able to witness the consequences of this. Together with three members of the television crew I set off to Hondarribia to cover the local produce fair that takes place outside the old city walls every July. Farmers and local homemade food producers come to sell their wares and exhibit their prize animals. Our aim was to interview some of the people at the fair in order to get a general feel for the event to broadcast later in the evening news. Followed by the cameraman, I approached a small child willing to talk to us and, using the microphone, asked him in Basque if he was having fun. But, before he was able to answer, an old woman barged in through the crowd, grabbed the child and promptly whisked him away. The camera crew and I were unceremoniously left without an interviewee.

Later on that month, again with the camera crew, we set off to Hondarribia in order to cover the fishermen community's celebration of the so-called *Kutxa Eramaita* in Basque. As we set up the tripods for the camera in San Pedro Kalea in preparation for filming, a few middle-aged men walked past us and, as if in jest, cried out "aupa las escopeteras!" The term *escopeteras* refers to the women who wish to take part in the Alarde as soldiers, literally as gun carriers.

(Interestingly, when the activities of Txingudi Telebista were of interest to the traditional Alarde supporters, some of them had no qualms about soliciting their assistance. So, once, several weeks after the Alarde of Hondarribia had taken place, I was surprised to see two young women who had been *cantineras* walk in and ask to have a copy of the video filming the event. "We are *cantineras*," they declared, as if this status was a passport to anything. Again, rather than showing a willingness to take down the boundary between 'the people' supporting the traditional Alarde and Txingudi Telebista as epitomizing the media, the behaviour of these two women reinforced it: by demanding a right to a copy of the video of the Alarde, not only did they assume that being *cantineras* was an extremely important social status in Hondarribia but that it was 'their' fiesta and that gave them a right to anything broadcast on it.)

Anthropologist Maggie Bullen (1997, 1999, 2000) has described in detail the social background to this polemic around the Alarde and she provides particularly enlightening insights in her analysis of gender issues. Her general observation is that a certain minority is challenging a particular understanding of traditional gender social structure that is essentially macho, sustained by a majority. However, I suggest that explanations based on gender issues or the importance of tradition only touch the surface of a much more deep-rooted conflict, based on Alarde participants' interpretations of political difference and foreignness.<sup>293</sup> My interest in the Alarde stems from its importance as part of a process of creation of boundaries for identity in Bidasoa-Xingudi. While other fiestas and parades - or 'rituals' - in both Hondarribia and Irun at other times of the year also have their role to play in the continuation of 'tradition',<sup>294</sup> the Alarde is the

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<sup>293</sup> With various local people, I had the opportunity of discussing other theories to explain the vehement opposition to change: For many men, parading in the Alarde is a unique time in the year when they can feel particularly important, acquiring a special status that is completely unrelated to their lives during the rest of the year as a plumber, an unemployed person, a local shopkeeper etc. Women, too, by becoming devoted defenders of the traditional Alarde have gained special status in the community which they did not have before. As Ixabel Alkain, the captain of Jaizkibel, put it in an interview, "many of these women were simple housewives, stuck at home. With our cause, we have brought them out into the streets. They have important roles now in the community. No way of putting them back in now! - not that we want to. It is good that they have come out, though it is sad that they need this crusade against us to do so." They have now become heroines amongst their family relatives, friends and acquaintances.

<sup>294</sup> In Hondarribia, two other important celebrations are the *Kutxa Eramaita* and *Aste Saindua*. The *Kutxa Eramaita*, which means the carrying of the box, is a one day celebration for the fishing community, when a box containing all the legal papers of the Hondarribiko Arrantzaleen Kofradia signed by the clergy and municipal council of Hondarribia is approved by the latter and brought, in a big procession by the fishermen from the seat of the Kofradia to the church in the medieval part of town. Every year, a fisherman's daughter is chosen and given the great honour of carrying this excruciatingly heavy box on her head all the way up to the church, to the sound of music.

At Easter, during *Aste Saindua*, or Holy Week, a great procession takes place in which inhabitants of the town re-enact the stations of the cross. While, traditional Catholicism is hardly practised at all by many local people, this procession remains a strongly passionate religious event. While it is given great importance by Hondarribian inhabitants, it is not seen by most of them as the time for getting together as a community, as are the fiestas of Hondarribia. Over the past decades, *Aste Saindua* has become more of an attraction for tourists who come to see one of the 'traditional' religious rituals of the Iberian peninsula.

Other big festivities include *Euskal Jaiak*, which literally means Basque fiestas, and involves the parading of numerous dance groups dressed in traditional Basque clothes.

In 1999, an association representing the inhabitants of the marina area was founded as *Portuarraken Asoziazia* with the aim of bringing back to life festivities that had been lost in Hondarribia over the years. The word *asoziazia*, as was explained to me by a member of the association's committee, comes from the Hondarribian fishing community's dialect which is made up of a mixture of Basque with French. Such a choice of vocabulary is indicative of the strong emphasis placed again on 'tradition' as well as diffidence towards the establishment of *Batua* (in *Batua*, the word association would be *elkartea*). Their main initiative has been to bring back into existence a day-long fiesta which celebrates the blessing of the Fishermen's Virgin, *Ama Birjina Eguna*, abandoned for many years. The main activity of the day involves carrying the statue of the Virgin out of the fishermen's church, where it is usually kept, and parade to the old fishing port where a service takes place to bless the fishing boats.

A similar mass for boats takes place in Hendaia, with the *Fête de la Mer* in July. However, while the fishing port is now redundant, the priest comes principally to give mass to the yachts and other leisure boats.

In Irun, the day of Santo Tomás is another key festive date. The fiesta of Santo Tomás is in celebration of the patron saint of Irun. It is believed to have once been the day when tenant farmers would come to town from the surrounding countryside to pay their dues to the *jauna* or main landlord. These dues were largely paid in goods, particularly food. For this reason, participants in the fiesta dress in traditional Basque rural garb which consists of full dark coloured skirts and aprons, white blouses and blue checked neckerchieves and headscarves for the women and, for the men, knee length black trousers, thick woolly socks and espadrilles laced up around the calves, large blue shirts buttoned up only at the neck, and black berets. As this is the time of year when a particular kind of sausage is made, the *txistorra*, this is the main food of the day.

*Euskal Jira*, which literally means the Basque tour, was invented in 1928 as a fiesta to celebrate Basque folklore, in collaboration between Irun and Hendaia. It consists of a procession of floats running various Basque themes in which everyone taking part dressed up in traditional Basque clothes.

Since the mid 1990s, dance groups in Irun organise with the backing of the municipality the Folk Dance Festival of the Island of the Pheasants. This takes place in July, when the island is under Spanish jurisdiction, and involves inviting a folklore dance group from another country which performs on the island facing the audience sitting on the river bank in Irun.

social highlight of the year for most of the two towns' inhabitants, playing a central role for them in the evocation of a sense of community by giving concrete and visible form to abstract community links.

#### Boundaries of belonging: being Irunian or Hondarribian

In social terms, the Alarde evokes boundaries of 'insider', those who are 'true' Irunians or Hondarribians, versus 'outsider', those who are 'non'-Irunians or 'non'-Hondarribians. It serves this purpose even for people who have moved across the frontier to live in Hendaia, many of whom continue to participate in the Alarde. One such is Juan Etxebarria, a thirty-year-old man who moved with his parents as a child and now works in his father's firm in Hendaia. "Definitely, I am Hendaian, but I carry on feeling at home in Irun and for nothing in the world will I give up my participation in the Alarde," he explained to me. "I feel at home on both sides. Yes, I am Hendaian, but Irun is also in my heart." He dismissed the conflict around the Alarde as the work of "troublemakers who don't understand what the importance of community feeling is all about." Many people who recently moved to Hendaia hang Hondarribian or Irunian flags from their houses during these towns' fiestas, demonstrating their continuing sense of Hondarribian or Irunian belonging. When I asked about this, they replied that living across the frontier did not prevent them from following hometown traditions. "I don't see why I should alter my customs just because I have moved to live just a few hundred meters away," explained a woman who had a big Irunian flag hanging from her window in a residential area of Hendaia. "I still feel Irunian."<sup>295</sup>

For Nicolás and Josefa, as we have seen, the Alarde is an opportunity to demonstrate that, despite their non-local origins, they are legitimate members of the community. They adhere to the 'tradition' of the Alarde and by defending its immutability demonstrate the constancy of their belonging. When the traditional Alarde is perceived as being threatened by change, they and other people with similar backgrounds whom I met convert the marker of support for the traditional Alarde into a boundary demonstrating and reinforcing their belonging to the 'Irunian' camp, in contrast to the 'outsiders'. 'Tradition', as embodied in the Alarde, is taken to be a fundamental part of Irun or Hondarribian identity. Any attempt to bring about changes to the Alarde is perceived as an assault on 'tradition'. The Alarde serves as a boundary between those who participate in it and support it, and so belong, and those who do not participate, and so do not belong.

Language is used in a similar way, as when Nicolás addresses his grandchildren in Basque even though he does not know the language. Both adherence to the traditional Alarde and the use of Basque words and phrases form part of his strategy to signal identification as a 'local'. The traditionalists' choice of a Basque name for their association is a similarly important marker. The

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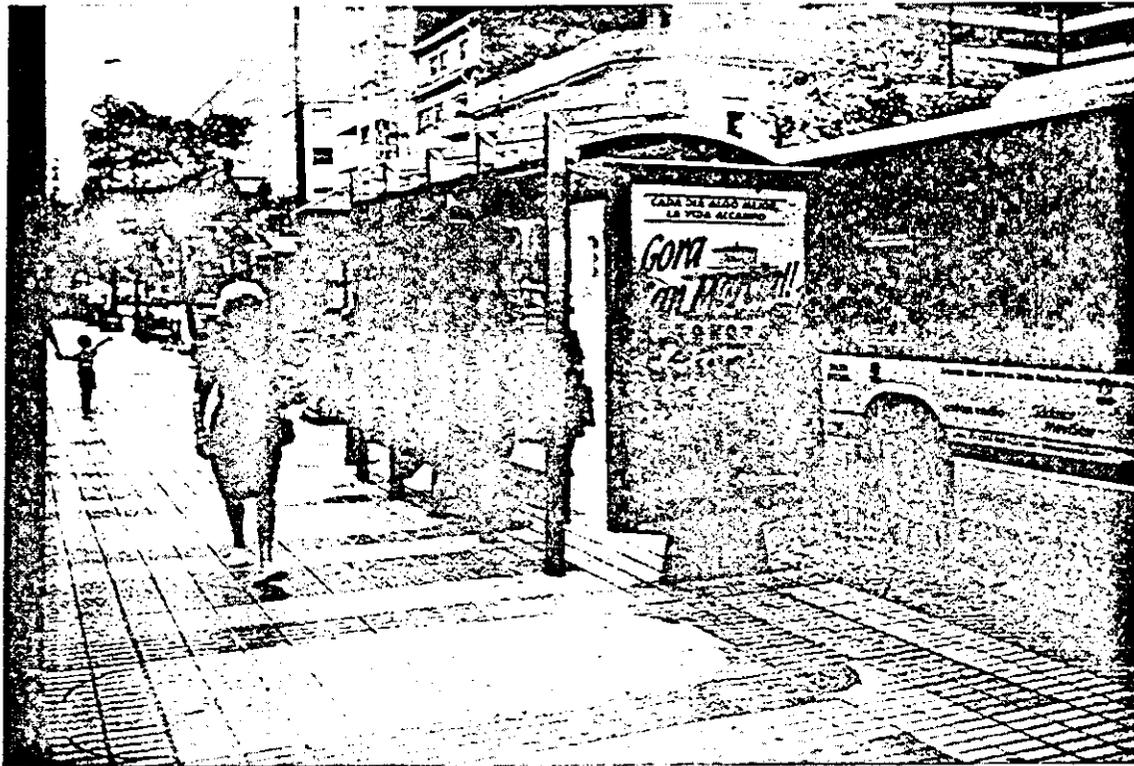
The fiesta of Saint John (*San Juan* in Spanish and *Saint Jean* in French) are celebrated on both sides of the frontier, though when I was in Bidasoa-Txingudi, I saw the fiesta being celebrated with more specific events in Irun than in any of the other towns. In the evening, looking across the Bidasoa river to Irun from Hendaia, one could see the bonfires that are customarily set alight on this day blazing away in the various Irunian neighbourhoods.

In all three towns there are, in addition to these fiestas, neighbourhood- *auzoa/barrio* - fiestas, organised by the local neighbourhood associations. All of these celebrations are worthy of their own study, which could give further clues to the understanding of issues of identity and belonging. However for lack of space, these unfortunately cannot be included in this thesis.

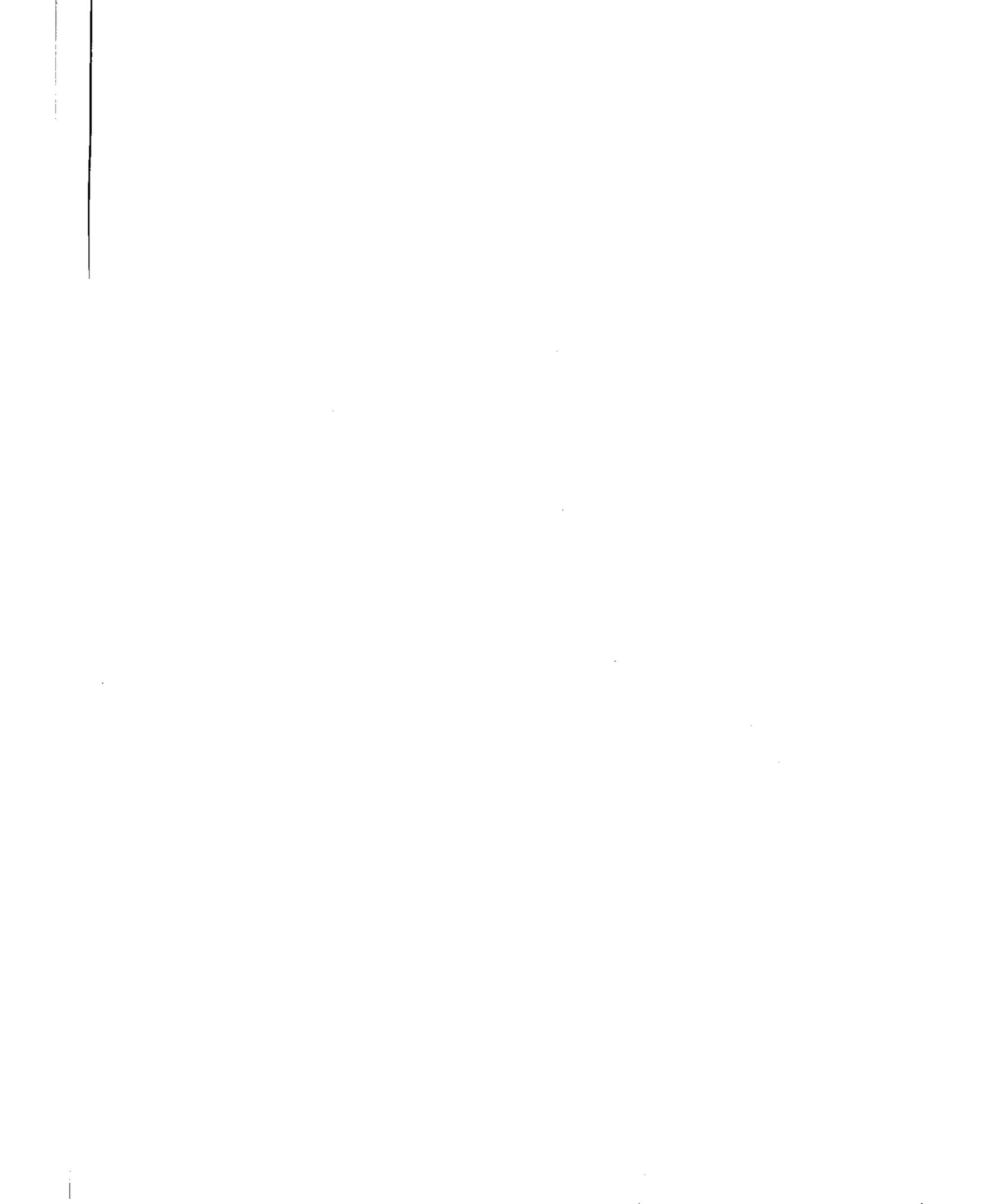
<sup>295</sup> Reactions on the part of other Hendaians to these flags ranged between a tolerant shrugging of the shoulders, as in the case of Monique Lambert, a former primary school teacher in Hendaia in her early sixties, who commented that "it's only normal that they should carry on their traditions even if living here", to hostility. In this vein, Séverine Merino, a middle-aged woman who says she hardly ever crosses the frontier into Hegoalde, remarked: "It just shows what little effort they make to integrate here. Not just that, but they impose their ideas and habits on us."



Members of the Jaizkibel company rehearsing on Armak Plaza in Hondarribia a few days before the Alarde.



Advertisement for Aicampo shopping mall in Kolon Ibilbidea in Irún, drawing on the notion of Irunian sense of belonging during the festivities.



use of Basque, often presented by Basque nationalists as the language of the oppressed indigenous minority, helps to buttress their claim to 'tradition' and local belonging, reinforcing the legitimacy of their cause in confrontation with the supporters of a mixed Alarde also advertising themselves in Basque.

Unfortunately for Nicolás and Josefa, Pedro is not the only member of their family who has chosen to support a mixed men and women Alarde. Another son, Juan, also supports them. In a conversation with me, both Pedro and Juan recalled how their decision to back the alternative Alarde was a serious blow to Josefa and Nicolás. They maintain no discussion about it has ever been possible. Instead, Pedro reminisces, he and Juan were accused of "betraying the family" and "going against the traditions of Irun and of the family". Pedro and Juan tell me they cannot understand such vehement outrage on the part of their parents. "It's just about the equality of men and women. I really don't understand why it has to be such a big deal. The importance of the Alarde for bringing people together in a fiesta shouldn't be affected just because women are also taking part," says Pedro. "My wife," he continues, "feels Irunian and would like to express this too, like the men in the Alarde. And I don't see why she shouldn't."

In some other families, similar dissension has led to rupture, with parents refusing to talk to their children because of their support for the alternative Alarde. Josefa and Nicolás, by contrast, have chosen to avoid discussing the matter altogether. In conversations with me, they spoke about the issue in terms of the need to keep the Alarde "as it has always been" and unaffected by "modern whims and changes". In taking this stance, they adopt markers and draw up boundaries which help them to demonstrate their belonging to Irun and its community and reinforce their identity as such. They ignore the existence of the alternative Alarde - and omit to include Juan and Pedro's photos with the others in their sitting room. When the Alarde comes, they share the excitement of the event with the other traditional supporters in the family and enjoy themselves with friends and acquaintances in Irun, not seeing their nonconformist sons until the day is over. The year I spent the festivities with them, Pedro and Juan's families were excluded from the customary festive family lunch together. "That really hurt me," reminisced Sylvia, Pedro's wife, "I just don't understand it."

In effect, Nicolás and Josefa react to Pedro and Juan's support for a mixed Alarde not only as a boundary between them and their sons but also as a threat to their identity construction. To counteract this threat, they join the majority in defence of the traditional Alarde, showing that they are more Irunian than their dissident sons. During our conversation, when I several times tried to get Nicolás to explain the Alarde situation today, he stressed his desire to speak only of the 'real' one.

Spatial boundaries reinforce the gulf between the two camps. During the fiesta, Nicolás and Josefa avoid areas where supporters of the official Alarde are likely to be. In Irun, this means most of the old part of town, around Plaza Urdanibia and parts of the San Marcial Karrika. Similarly, other friends of mine who supported the traditional Alarde and who frequented the bars in Urdanibia Plaza throughout the rest of the year did not want to go there during the fiestas, dismissing it as "the hangout of those of the official (Alarde)." In Hondarribia, the association supporting the traditional Alarde set up a bar to raise funds at one end of San Pedro Kalea. None of my friends who supported Jaizkibel wanted to go there or to other bars in the same street. Instead, they remained within the area bounded by the old city walls, with Muara as one of their main meeting points. The only place that was fairly neutral, with a mixture of young supporters of both camps, was the old fishing port area where temporary stalls selling drinks and food, fairground attractions and a concert stage were set up. Among them was a stand erected by the associations supporting Basque 'political' prisoners with huge photo portraits of these prisoners

hanging from the old fish market building providing a rallying point beneath which sympathists could gather. The crowd in this area also included people who, while supporting female participation in the Alarde, were not necessarily committed left-wing nationalists but who felt safer in this area than in the marina, mainly frequented by Betikoak.

*It is about 7.00 p.m. on a sunny September afternoon. Hondarribia's fiestas are already in full swing, with only a few days to go to the day of the Alarde. For weeks beforehand, people have been preparing, the men busy with rehearsals for the Alarde while their wives and mothers have been occupied preparing the special clothes that the men will wear on the big day. Many shopkeepers have decorated their shop windows with the local festive colours - green for Hondarribia and red, white and black for the Alarde.*

*Gradually, the marina area of Hondarribia is filling up after the late lunchtime lull. Groups of teenage boys and girls gather near a 'chucherrias' shop selling a wide array of sweets, crisps, pipas- dried sunflower seeds- and pastries. Most of the boys wear t-shirts and baggy jeans or corduroy trousers with Spanish or American surfing labels. Many of the girls wear bell-bottom trousers, also with brand labels, and tight tops, their long hair loose or in ponytails. Together, they sit on benches or on mopeds chatting in a mixture of Basque and Spanish. Some wear stickers on their chests with an abstract black and green picture of Hondarribia and the phrase "Betiko Alardea."*

*Suddenly, the music of drums and txistus rings out from behind a block of houses. From around the corner, five young men wearing black berets march into San Pedro Kalea, one playing the drums and the others following behind with txistus. Several of the young women sitting on the benches run to join them and, holding hands, skip behind them to the tune. Older people standing around drinking glasses of beer, some accompanied by young children playing together, stop to look, smiling. Some of the mothers, holding on to their children's hands, begin to dance, encouraging their children to do the same. A pot-bellied man wearing casual jeans and a check shirt picks up his small daughter and places her on his shoulders, breaking into an impromptu dance. Marching at a fast pace, the five young men reach the end of San Pedro Kalea and disappear round the roundabout of San Kristobal. As the music dies down, the young women, laughing and jostling each other, skip back to their friends by the chucherría shop.*

*Within an hour or two, the marina area is buzzing with people. Elderly men and women in couples or single sex groups, families with small children and babies in prams, and groups of teenagers walk around socialising, slapping each other on the back and greeting each other with kisses on the cheeks, talking loudly as they stand outside or inside the numerous bars, many of them holding a 'zurrito', a small glass of beer or red wine in their hands. Children run around playing, the little girls smartly dressed in frilly dresses with ribbons in their hair and little gold studs in their earlobes, and the little boys in neat shirts and knee-length shorts, some with their hair gelled down. While the adults order pintxos, the teenagers gather together or walk around in small groups, nibbling pipas, jelly sweets and crisps. A few more groups of men practising for the Alarde have been parading around. In between rehearsals, they stop to take a drink with their friends or rejoin their wives and children standing on the pavement.*

*Amid this general atmosphere of jollity and family togetherness, a rumour runs through the crowd that "ellas"<sup>296</sup> - the women, in reference to Jaizkibel - are also going to rehearse. Sure enough, the melody of txistus and drums can soon be heard approaching. "It's them," says a teenage boy wearing a red Mendi Loreak sweater and long beige baggy shorts, sitting on his*

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<sup>296</sup> In Spanish, this is the feminine third person plural.

moped with friends. "They're coming this way," confirms one of his friends, another teenage boy similarly dressed and with his hair cut mid-length with a long fringe, pointing down the street. As a group of men and women, all with black berets on their heads, and dressed casually, most of them in jeans or dark trousers and t-shirts, march into Beñat Etxepare Kalea playing the txistu and the drums, the two boys and lots of other teenagers rush towards them. Before they can reach them, a cohort of ertzainak in dark blue and red suits and big red helmets, their faces hidden behind hoods, emerges from a series of vans parked by the roundabout of San Kristobal to create a barrier between the marchers and the onlookers. Standing behind the ertzainak, the teenagers peer through.

A black-coloured banner hanging between two trees on either side of the roundabout proclaims in big white letters "Gora Betiko Alardea".<sup>297</sup> "Out! Out!"<sup>298</sup> the teenagers shout at the marchers, while other opponents of the Jaizkibel whistle and hiss and boo. One teenage girl, still sitting on her moped, beeps its horn incessantly in order to drown out the melody played by the marchers and gyrates to the sound of it as if it were music, a big insolent smile on her face. Down the street, the paraders march past the hostile crowd. Some of the women in the crowd deliberately stand with their backs to the procession and carry on chatting to their friends or stare up at the sky with a stern expression on their face, ostentatiously ignoring the paraders. Both women and men shout, "Out! Out! Feminists! Lesbians!" in Basque and Spanish. One man with a big bushy mustache wearing a casual dark blazer manages to get particularly close to the marchers and brandishes his fist in their faces, shouting "Get out of here! We don't want you here! Leave us in peace!"<sup>299</sup> A woman following him chimes in, shouting "Terrorists!" A few small children standing on top of a wall behind, next to their parents, join in the general shouting, crying "Out! Out!" in their little voices.

The marchers continue to play, marching in unison down the street, their faces clearly focused on their task and seemingly ignoring the insults. Some have stickers on their t-shirts and jumpers with a picture depicting red berets and the words *Emakumeak Alardean*<sup>300</sup> in big black letters. Excitedly, some of the teenagers rush off down another street, where they know the parade will continue, in order to carry on booing at them. On the street corner, a teenage girl with a Betiko Alardea sticker plastered on her shirt is standing on her own, her fingers plugged in her ears, making it obvious that she is trying to block out the sound of the paraders' music. Tears run down her face as she watches the marchers parade past her. Shaking her head and muttering to herself as she wipes her tears from her cheeks, she walks slowly behind the marchers who are disappearing down the street amidst a torrent of abuse. Reaching the roundabout where the marina area ends and the streets of the medieval part of Hondarribia begin, they stop playing and disband. A few walk off towards Muara, up one of the streets leading to the old centre.

This typical scene of the conflict that has ridden the annual festivities of both Hondarribia and Irun for the past few years took place in Hondarribia in 2001. On other occasions, I heard the mixed Alarde supporters called "traitors" (alluding to their alleged letting down of local values and destruction of the town fiesta), "maricas" (homosexuals) and "putas" (prostitutes). I also saw people attempting to assault them by pushing and hitting them and grabbing their guns and their berets as they paraded past. The drawing of a boundary by the Betikoak between themselves and supporters of a mixed Alarde, continuously emphasised outside the period of the festivities, was illustrated one year earlier in a meeting organised by the Junta of Hondarribia's Alarde in

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<sup>297</sup> "Up with the Alarde of Always." The banner has most probably been hoisted there especially for the passing of this particular parade because, less than an hour later, once the rehearsal is over, the banner is no longer there.

<sup>298</sup> "Fuera! Fuera!!"

<sup>299</sup> "Get out of here! We don't want you! Leave us in peace!"

<sup>300</sup> Meaning Women in the Alarde.

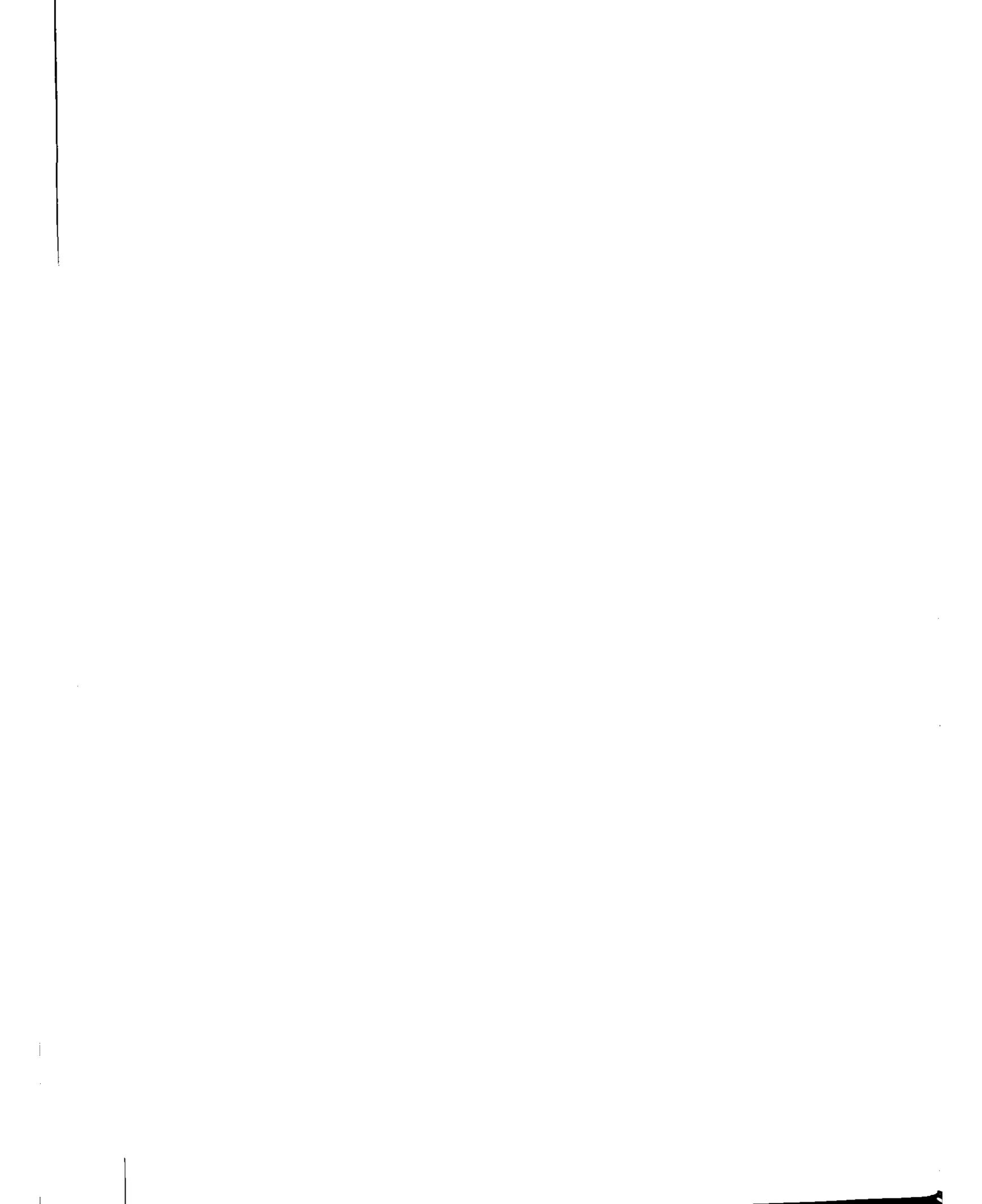




The Oficial Alarde parading down San Marcial Kalea, in Irun, protected by armed and helmeted ertzaintza and supported by only a few onlookers.



A Betiko supporter being arrested.



September 2000, following the arrest by the police of over a dozen young women who had used physical force to block Jaizkibel members from parading on the day of that year's Alarde. In an atmosphere of cheerful solidarity, about a hundred people had gathered in the basement room of a five star hotel in Hondarribia called Bidasoa<sup>301</sup> to discuss how to respond to the heavy fines to which the women had been sentenced. The meeting included men and women of all ages, but particularly of two age groups, between 16 and 26 - the age of most of the women arrested- and between 50 and 70 - the age of most of the mothers and grandmothers.

As those present chatted excitedly in small groups, the Spanish word "*ellas*" repeatedly came up. Some people had copies of a recent edition of the newspaper *Diario Vasco*<sup>302</sup> featuring on its front page a photo of some of the young women detained by the *ertzaintza* during the Alarde. Prominent in the photo was the face of a pretty young woman dressed in red and white like the others, looking at the policeman arresting her with an insolently flirtatious smile. Sitting behind a long table on a podium, the seven members of the Junta, men mostly in their forties and fifties, wore serious expressions emanating an aura of authority. Calling the meeting to order, a member of the Junta greeted those present in Basque before reverting to Spanish. Explaining that the Junta wished to organise fund-raising events to help pay the fines imposed on the women, he declared: "We are all in this together." The supporters of Jaizkibel, he added, "are doubtless preparing another coup against us (referring to the legal battle being fought out between the two camps at the high court). So we must make sure we are ready." At his invitation to the women who were arrested to identify themselves by putting their hands up, one revealed that she came from Pamplona. "From Pamplona?!" the Junta representative exclaimed: "Well! I didn't know we had friends that far away!" Amid the general laughter, everyone clearly shared a sense of fighting together for a great cause.

While inclusive boundaries create a sense of positive belonging, the construction of the 'other' or the 'outsider' is based on a series of identifiers that define difference in negative terms. As we have seen, the outsiders in the conflict over the Alarde are not just those who do not live in Irun or Hondarribia but those who support the mixed women and men's Alarde. The distinction between outsider and insider cuts across culture and gender in a process of identity construction which is subject to a specific set of socio-cultural values. Men from other towns can acquire insider status by being invited to take part in the parade. Women, by contrast, can only participate as insiders if they are from one or other of the two towns and if they accept a clearly defined gender role. In 1998, a group of women who support the traditional Alarde took the initiative of organising a complementary parade to the traditional Alarde in which women could take part, thus showing that women were not excluded from the traditional Alarde.<sup>303</sup> Some women who defend the traditional Alarde reject accusations of kow-towing to male supremacy. As Paula Aizu, a woman in her mid-twenties living in Irun, passionately explained to me, "Of course I believe in women's rights. I am a modern woman myself. And I defend myself as one. But the Alarde is something else. I don't see why there is any need for women to take part in it. It's ridiculous. It was not like that in history. So why should we change tradition now?"

### The Alarde and Politics

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<sup>301</sup> Just a week before, the local media had mistakenly mentioned that a meeting of Jaizkibel supporters were organising a meeting there, but a few hours after this had been broadcast, the hotel managers called in to vehemently deny this fact and clearly state its complete disassociation with Jaizkibel.

<sup>302</sup> *Diario Vasco* 9 September 2000.

<sup>303</sup> This involves the carrying of torches through the streets of Irun on the eve of the Alarde, an event in which only women and children take part. The parade is meant as a recognition of the important role played by the local women in the battle against the French army. By lighting up torches in the middle of the night and walking up the mountain behind the town, the women succeeded in confusing the enemy as to the whereabouts and size of the Irunian army.

In fact, the Alarde has been subject to change in the past without causing crisis, for example through the creation of new companies and changes in timetables, costumes and choreography.<sup>304</sup> In Irun, the figure of the cantinera was only introduced at the end of the nineteenth century (Aramburu, 1979:57).<sup>305</sup> In this case, however, the polemic has gone beyond gender issues to become a political controversy in which local politicians have also got involved. At the local council level, representatives of the left-wing Basque nationalists have shown support for the mixed male-and-female Alarde. But the stance of other parties has been less clear-cut. On the regional level, both the PP and the conservative Basque nationalist parties have taken positions firmly in favour of women's rights, but their local representatives have tailored their attitudes to what they perceive to be the dominant view of their electorate. In Irun, Maribel Castelló, an EA representative with responsibility for cultural affairs on the town council, was initially one of the most adamant defenders of women's rights. However, as the conflict developed, she was asked by her colleagues to step down. Local PSE representatives have similarly wavered between a desire to uphold the law and the need to retain the favour of their electorate, especially in Irun. In the municipal elections of 1999, mayor Alberto Buen won re-election after a last-minute declaration of support for a traditional Alarde.

Some Betikoak supporters to whom I spoke branded the women who seek to join the Alarde as radical feminists and them and their male supporters as leftists and dangerous nationalist extremists who want to use the parade for political subversion. Both Nicolás and his daughter Iulene, for example, told me that they reckoned at least two thirds of the mixed Alarde supporters must be HB voters. Betikoak supporters accuse supporters of the mixed Alarde of recruiting supporters from outside Irun and Hondarribia and even, according to rumours, of paying to them to take part. Both feminism and nationalism are perceived by the Betikoak as being outside the agenda of the Alarde, which they claim is not an appropriate forum for political campaigning. By dismissing mixed supporters as trouble-making radicals, the Betikoak are able to discredit their demands for sexual equality.

Since the outbreak of the conflict, a series of letters published in local and regional papers have added to the venom. Letters from the "tradis" associating supporters of a mixed Alarde with various left-wing political groupings have prompted defensive but also sometimes vindictive replies from mixed Alarde supporters. Public statements by representatives of the mixed Alarde supporters, for example on the occasion of the presentation of the cantineras taking part in the official Alarde in Irun, in which they express support for Basque prisoners and their return to

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<sup>304</sup> Changes over the last decades and centuries include, for example, the decision in Irun to concentrate the Alarde on Saint Martial's Day (before, a part of the ceremony took place the day before, on Saint Peter's Day), the change in part of the itinerary of the parade, the creation and introduction of new companies into the Alarde (in Irun, for example, the most recently created company is that of *Belaskoenea*, in the early 1980s. Another company, *Real Union*, was born out of the Irun football club a few years earlier). In Hondarribia, it was decided during the nineteenth century, to change the design of the uniforms worn by participants in the Alarde in order to differentiate it from the Alarde of Irun. During the reign of Franco, the Alarde of Hondarribia also went through numerous changes, amongst which was the introduction of the *Mixto* company. The name evokes the fact that it is made up of a mixture of people who came from outside Hondarribia or who had origins in Hondarribia.

<sup>305</sup> The image of the cantinera has also significantly changed over the course of the twentieth century. While today, to be a cantinera is a great honour, only several decades ago, according to various informants, this was not so much the case. There was something degrading about being chosen, as the status of cantinera was quasi equated with being an 'easy girl'. Few women wished to be cantinera and so, for lack of candidates, organisers of the Alarde often asked the same woman to be cantinera. Some women I talked to in their late sixties and seventies said they had been cantinera at least half a dozen times. Since at least the late 1970s, this image has changed, as the mingling of women and men in the public arena became more usual.

Euskal Herria, have served to provide the “tradis” with what they regard as additional proof of their political associations.<sup>306</sup>

While many supporters of the mixed Alarde are associated with the extreme left-wing nationalist movement, however, the connection is not straightforward. Many in the mixed Alarde camp do not share these political views<sup>307</sup> and there have been numerous lengthy debates between the women campaigning for participation in the Alarde over the best strategy for achieving their aims. Furthermore, there have been divisions within the left-wing nationalist camp arising from the clash between the desire to defend equal rights and social justice for all and the wish to protect local traditions as markers of Basque cultural identity. Even among those who support the idea of a mixed Alarde, some, including left-wing nationalists, have carried on parading in the traditional Alarde, refusing to confuse their political commitment with their enjoyment of taking part in a traditional event.

### The Alarde and gender issues

Many local men defend the traditional all-male Alarde by arguing that their womenfolk are its most ardent defenders. This is born out by the statements made to me by women like Josefa and Paula and the strong presence of women in the meeting in Hondarribia called to discuss a response to the fines levied on the women who had blocked Jaizkibel’s participation. Many women supporters of the traditional Alarde to whom I spoke argued that they do not feel excluded in the fiestas and that, on the contrary, they take part in their own way through the preparations for it and as spectators. As we have seen, the behaviour of the women spectators, dressed up coquettishly in red and white and makeup for the day, running with the children after the band of musicians as they play and march down the street and pushing tourists out of the way to get into the front row to wave at the men, reveals a seduction play that would surely disappear were the women to parade as well.<sup>308</sup>

In the traditional Alarde, the only woman honoured with participation is the “cantinera”, elected by the men of her neighbourhood. According to Alarde participants, her principal role is to keep up the morale of the troops with her beauty and her good nature. In the past, the cantinera was chosen by the people of the neighbourhood, but with the increase in population it was decided that candidates should make a formal application, enclosing a photo of themselves, and then rely on the lobbying of male relatives and friends in the company in order to have their names put in a lottery. Each company has its own cantinera and to be chosen to play this role is perceived as a public recognition of her and her family in the locality, her social status and her beauty.<sup>309</sup> The

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<sup>306</sup> Based on observations of and conversations with different supporters of a mixed men and women Alarde.

<sup>307</sup> Interview with María-Luís Agirretxe, lawyer of the company Jaizkibel in Hondarribia. Also based on observations and conversations with different supporters of a mixed Alarde.

<sup>308</sup> Based on personal observation.

<sup>309</sup> I have heard suggestions to the effect that candidates are more likely to be selected for the role of cantinera if they are from a well-off socio-economic background. While I have no evidence to support such assertions, it is undeniable that economic status plays a role since, according to the custom that has developed over the past several decades, the cantinera’s family is expected to pay for her elaborate costume and treat all the members of the company to drinks at the end of the Alarde. In my experience, however, rather than their economic profile, what stood out amongst the families of those young women selected as cantineras was their adherence to ‘traditional’ local social and professional characteristics. The importance attached to such characteristics is likely also to depend on the profile of the company in question, for example whether it represents a specific section of society or is more open in terms of the social, cultural and professional backgrounds of its participants.

As the status of the cantinera has risen, competition for the position has become extremely strong, to the extent that I have been told that some young women even delay getting married in order to increase their chances of being chosen. Such is the glamour surrounding the role, according to some informants, that the day when a young woman serves as cantinera can rank as ‘the happiest day of her life’, surpassing even her wedding day. I have also heard suggestions that

rules of the Alarde of Irun actually stipulate that the most beautiful young women of the town should be chosen (Aramburu, 1978). It was not uncommon for me to hear jokes about such and such a cantinera who was not exactly a classic beauty, sometimes involving suggestions of possible corruption in the voting process. Cantineras are required to be unmarried, not more than 28 years old, and Hondarribian or Irunian in the sense of having either been born in the towns or having lived there at least 15 years (Aramburu, 1978). They are one of the main focuses of the festivities, praised for their beauty and their "nobility" as "ambassadors" of their neighbourhood and town.

Indeed, such is the honour of being a cantinera that it is the dream of many young women to be given this role. Photo portraits of the cantineras of the year adorn shops in Irun and Hondarribia. They are invited to speak on the local radio and television stations. The local section of the regional paper, *Diario Vasco*, features their names and photos with the programme of the fiestas. Some bakers prepare special cakes on which they stick photos on rice paper of the cantineras. Some old women proudly told me that in their youth they were chosen to be cantineras several times. Today, due to the intense competition for the role, a girl can only be a cantinera once, enhancing the specialness of the role. One reason why women are the most vociferous defenders of the traditional Alarde is that the institutionalization of a mixed Alarde would diminish the importance of the cantinera and thereby risk dashing many young women's chances of one day becoming cantineras.<sup>310</sup>

Being a cantinera fits with the romantic image entertained in Irun and Hondarribia of the beautiful respectable woman who will then get married and who will continue to be honoured in the town. So, for example, I was able to observe a woman who had been a cantinera in the Alarde of Irun in the late 1980s being pointed out in the street by passers-by who whispered to each other in admiration "she was a cantinera." The importance given to the role reflects an aspect of Hegoalde society relating to the gender roles of men and women evident both in social values and in the way in which certain public spaces are used. In cake shops in Hegoalde, one finds women sitting and chatting together, while bars generally remain the domain of the men. Young people form *cuadrillas* – groups – to which they often remain loyal throughout their life.<sup>311</sup> According to informants, these *cuadrillas* are most often formed at school or in their neighbourhood, where children will make their first friendships, and largely consist of friends of the same sex. In their teens, when boys and girls form romantic relationships across *cuadrilla* boundaries, the importance of their respective *cuadrillas* does not diminish. Going out in the evenings, each often stays with his or her own *cuadrilla*. If they bump into each other in the same bars, they will take a few drinks together but will eventually move on to the next bar and carry with their *cuadrilla*. In such a context, peer pressure for social conformity can be strong, as I was able to perceive from personal observation and from conversations with various young people between the ages of twenty and twenty-seven. Expressing a different opinion poses the risk of ostracism from the rest of the *cuadrilla* and further repercussions on family and other relations in the town. In fact, two young women told me it was best simply to keep one's opinions, if one had any, to one's self. In such circumstances, the need to reaffirm one's belonging and acceptance by others is translated in relation to the Alarde into a refusal to reflect further on the issue and instead to adhere like the rest of the majority to the vehement defence of the traditional Alarde.

The same process is evident in the construction of masculinity which emerges in the debate over the Alarde and reflects the models predominant in society (Bullen, 1997, 1999, 2000). Supporters

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some families seek to increase the chances of one of their family members being chosen by paying favours to the Junta.

Again, I have no evidence to support such assertions.

<sup>310</sup> Conversations with supporters of both camps.

<sup>311</sup> For more on *cuadrillas* see for example Ramirez (1991).

of the traditional Alarde project the dominant model of masculinity built around the notion of the man as principal protagonist of the public arena, transmitter of certain masculine values, attached in this particular case to military practice and male diversion. Anthropologist Gilmore noted how a certain dominant kind of masculinity is enacted in public performances in many Mediterranean countries in such a way as to ascertain its perpetuation in the local society (1994:46). In the Alarde, the men are the protagonists of the fiesta and the minority women, as cantineras, appear as if on virtual pedestals. The arrival of the supporters of a mixed Alarde is an intrusion into a neat social order that threatens the ruin of traditional Irun and Hondarribia's respectable self-image. As one woman, her hair permed a shade of purple and wearing a large silk white blouse and a small red neckerchief, angrily exclaimed to me, "these women supporters, they are people who do not like the Alarde, who do not care about it. It doesn't mean anything to them. They have turned the Alarde into a masquerade, a complete joke." In Irun, a young man dressed as a soldier with a beret on his head and holding an old air gun, his face bright red from the heat and the passion, muttered to me under his breath just after the official Alarde had marched past: "They look like clowns. Ridiculous and pathetic."

On the side of the mixed Alarde, campaigners for sexual equality have retained the role of the cantinera in their parade, in apparent contradiction with a model of femininity that would normally be seen as sexist by most feminists. There are in fact former cantineras amongst the supporters of a mixed Alarde, and the contradiction, though it does not pass unnoticed, is part of an effort by them to grapple with the 'insider'/'outsider' challenges posed by the conflict. As one woman parading in Irun's official Alarde told me, "yes, it is true, I recognise it is quite contradictory. I think this cantinera image is ridiculous... But we can't bring in too many changes, otherwise we really will be lost in our effort to persuade the traditionalists to accept the simple change of having women as soldiers." She adds, "I must say, I am pretty anti-military too. So all this parading around does make me quite sick. I parade out of principle for the right for women to express their Irunian identity like the men."

#### Perceptions of the Alarde on the other side of the frontier

For some Hendaian with relatives and friends in Irun and Hondarribia, the Alarde also serves part of their identity construction and expression. Until recently, for example, Iñaki Beitia, a sixty-year old man born in Hendaia to parents from Irun and Hondarribia who settled in Hendaia in their youth, took part in the Alarde of Hondarribia. "I would take a day off work – not so easy to use the excuse of the Alarde in Hendaia though – and I marched with my cousins and friends, friends I have kept since I was quite young, from just crossing over to party. It's part of my feeling Hondarribian somewhere I suppose. And it is this special day in the year, when relatives organise a big lunch at home and the family gets together."

Despite such links, however, he and others expressed awareness of a boundary drawn between Hendaian and Irunian or Hondarribia co-paraders in the Alarde. "The jokes and remarks you get about being French, gabatxo, ... it does go on a bit," says Mr. Beitia. "I don't take it personally. You laugh along, but it is a bit tedious. There definitely are rivalries, a strange ambivalence between us. I suppose it's all about the pride of being Hondarribitarra. They are a funny lot. With their pride of tradition, their particular Basqueness and their fishermen. What is amusing too is that sometimes they pat me on the back after such a joke and say, "but we know you are different, eh, you are one of us!"

Georges Bertany, a middle-aged Hendaian whose hobby involves decorating floats for fiestas in Hendaia and sometimes exhibiting a few of them in other fiestas of Irun and Hondarribia, expresses a similar sense of boundary between himself and Irunians and Hondarribians in relation

to the Alarde. "It's not like the other fiestas of Irun. With the Alarde, it's different. It really is their fiesta. It's for them. So yes, I have been, when I had the day off. Just to take a look. But once or twice is enough. It's just not for us."

People in Irun and Hondarribia with whom I spoke denied any anti-French aspect to the Alarde, despite its origins as a celebration of victory against the French. But a sense of difference between the inhabitants of Irun and Hondarribia, on the one hand, and Hendaia, on the other, regularly evoked in conversations I took part in, signals a drawing of boundaries. As Nicolás explained to me: "O.K., the origin of the fiesta is a celebration of a victory against the French. But now, it is more just a fiesta. The Alarde is no longer specifically against the French but against what was then an enemy. This is just the fiesta of the people of Irun and Hondarribia. And if the gabachos do come, they just enjoy themselves as well. There is nothing for the Hendaians to feel excluded about. They have their own fiestas... though quite lame ones!!"

A few Hendaian musicians are also occasionally invited by the municipality of Irun or Hondarribia to join them in the municipal band when these are in need of extra musicians. Another Hendaian, sextuagenarian Monique Lambert who was once headmistress of a school in Hendaia, was once invited by some Irunian friends to come and watch the Alarde in Irun from the balcony of the town hall. She describes her experience: "It was a great honour. And I dressed up carefully in red and white for the occasion. Of course, I felt conscious of not being from there. But I have immense respect for their fiesta, the importance they give to their Alarde. It is their fiesta. And they understood that and I think they very much appreciated me for this."

While many young Hendaians in their twenties to whom I spoke went out at night in Irun and Hondarribia during the fiestas, few had actually been to see the Alarde. "They start so early in the morning, and then all it is is watching men troop past," says Emmanuel Lecumberry. "It's only exciting if you are from there. This is a fiesta for them." In their reactions to the conflict about women's participation in the Alarde, many Hendaians to whom I spoke revealed a similar sensation of a boundary between them and their neighbours in Irun and Hondarribia. Hendaian women to whom I spoke, though they made an effort to understand the point of view of the traditional supporters, all came to the same conclusion as Sandrine Irazu, a twenty-five year old woman working in a transport agency close to the frontier, who commented that "nothing of this kind could ever take place here, I don't think. We are not such a traditional society in this way." Tonio Bergouin, a young man in his twenties who regularly competes in rowing competitions with people from Irun, Hondarribia and other parts of Hegoalde, remarked that "all this fuss simply about the participation of women is really quite ridiculous. And so... well, you know how they are always criticising us, saying we are boring, stingy, cold... well, here we can now strike back, criticising them for being so old-fashioned and narrow-minded."

Some Hendaians who formerly took part in the Alarde because of close family links with people in the neighbouring towns have now stopped because of the conflict over the participation of women. "That is something I just can't be bothered with", remarked Benito Zubeldia, an abertzale member of the Hendaia municipal council who has family links in Hondarribia through his parents and his wife and is fluently trilingual. Another Hendaian commented: "I think this whole issue of the role of women and all that is something that is clearly different to us here in Iparralde." At the same time, he and others say the reaction of their Hondarribian friends has been one of understanding. "I suppose," explains Andoni Etcharry, a man in his sixties who defines himself as Hendaian although he has family in Irun and Hondarribia, "that this is where they appreciate our difference, as Hendaian, French, or people from Iparralde, and another culture basically." Mr. Etcharry speaks the local Iparralde form of Basque as well as Spanish, and, through family relations as well as involvement with the rowing club of Hendaia, regular interacts

with Irunians and Hondarribians. However, he reveals his Hendaian roots when speaking French in the way he pronounces Irun as if it were a French word and refers to Hondarribia by its French name, Fontarabie.

### Fiestas in Hendaia

By comparison with the passions that surround the festivities of Irun and Hondarribia, fiestas in Hendaia may seem a pale affair. Hendaia has its own annual fiesta in mid-January, known in Basque as the Bixintxos after Hendaia's patron saint, Saint Vincent. Until the 1970s, this was a lively one-week event including an open-air ball with live music, Basque folk dancing, games and convivial communal meals under marquees set up for the occasion. Many elderly Hendaians recalled to me how people from Irun and Hondarribia would come to join the festivities. Over the intervening years, however, excitement around the Bixintxos has largely fizzled out and during my stay in the area they were in no way such a thrilling subject of conversation amongst Hendaians with whom I spoke as were the fiestas of Irun and Hondarribia for the inhabitants of those towns. Many young people whom I knew in Hendaia did not even bother to take part.

One possible explanation, cited to me by Raphael Lassalette, the former mayor of Hendaia, is that the indifference to the Bixintxos reflects the time of year in which they take place, often marked by poor weather. In an attempt to revive the fiestas, the possibility of organising the Bixintxos during the summer months has been mooted. In January 2001, the fiesta committee of Hendaia which, although not an organ of the municipality, depends on the municipality for 90% of its budget and is made up primarily of municipal councillors, organised a series of activities for children, including a competition in which children dressed up as pirates, in memory of the locally famous naval mercenary Etienne Pellot who fought successfully with Napoleon Bonaparte against the English navy at the turn of the nineteenth century and who, later, managed to negotiate a peaceful entente with the Duke of Wellington when his forces invaded Hendaia in 1813 and threatened to destroy Hendaia yet again. The poster advertising the Bixintxos was adorned with a Walt Disney-style cartoon figure of a pirate, to evoke Pellot. So, finally, while the fiestas were declared a success in the local papers, the fiestas remained largely frequented only by children and their parents.

Many people to whom I spoke, including some living in Irun and Hondarribia, concluded from this that there is little sense of tradition in Hendaia. "Hendaians have little sense of Hendaian identity, as compared to us," a woman from Irun remarked. For others, it was confirmation of "the dullness of the French". Hendaia, however, counts a high amount of associations: there are 140 associations, many of which are cultural.<sup>312</sup> Several of these have successfully organised their own events, such as *Sagarno Eguna*, or cider day, during which associations set up stands on the Place de la République to serve cider and homemade delicacies.

Nonetheless, I heard members of local associations in Hendaia express frustration with what they perceived as inertia and favour towards tourists on the part of the town authorities who in recent years have taken over the running of the festivities. Some young Hendaians who have set up music bands complained to me that they received more interest and invitations to perform from other municipalities than from their own.

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<sup>312</sup> Statistics from the municipality of Hendaia, January 2000. In Irun and Hondarribia, by contrast, there are approximately 290 and 55 cultural or social associations respectively (statistics from the municipalities of Irun and Hondarribia).

In 1970, a group of youths set up their own music band called *Zarpai Banda*.<sup>313</sup> When the former president of the band, Michel Lambert, explained to me how it all began, he described how the band took part in the processions of the *fête basque* and how numerous Hendaian youths started dancing alongside them. "Since then," he said, "it has become the tradition, that Hendaian youths join us dancing in our performances. *C'est devenu la tradition!*"<sup>314</sup> *Zarpai Banda* has since played an important role in Hendaia, giving life to the town and providing entertainment in its until then tranquil festivities.

In August 2000, *Zarpai Banda* organised a fiesta to celebrate its thirty years of existence, involving street parades, concerts and food stalls under marquees on a grassy area between the town centre and the beach, in which numerous Hendaians, young and old, took part. As one friend told me afterwards, "it was a real thing for Hendaians. Everyone was there." Most participants, on the demand of *Zarpai Banda* "in order to give more of a sense of fiesta", according to Mr. Lambert, wore white clothes and red berets, sashes and neckerchiefs, the typical festive dress of Hegoalde now increasingly common in Iparralde. *Zarpai Banda* employed numerous Spanish and Latin American markers in the music, decorations and the kind of food that was served. The poster advertising the fiesta was adorned with the words "Viva la fiesta" with cartoon figures of a flamenco woman dancing alongside a drummer with a Mexican hat, big moustache and Cuban cigar, a Basque man dressed in white with a red beret and neckerchief and holding a *gaita* - a Basque wind instrument, and a black bull banging on a big bass drum.

In addition to the *Bixintxos*, the municipal fiesta committee organises another fiesta in mid-August, the *fête basque* whose highlight is a parade through the streets of Hendaia with floats including reconstructions of themes or objects specific to Hendaia, such as the tram that linked the centre of Hendaia with the beach area in the early twentieth century. The insignia of Hendaia, a whale and the initials HE,<sup>315</sup> adorn much of the décor, together with Basque flags. For the occasion, people wear traditional Basque garb and dance to Basque folk music.<sup>316</sup> Several Hendaians I spoke to about this event stressed that they did not *dress up* in traditional Basque dress, thus making it clear that this was not a carnival but "part of their identity" as one woman put it to me. As a fiesta taking place in the middle of the summer tourist season, the *fête basque* is very much a source of entertainment for tourists. While Hendaians take part in it as their fiesta, a few expressed to me their irritation with the tourists dressing up as Basques, for whom, as one friend commented, "it means nothing, it's just a laugh". Others, however, did not seem to mind too much the presence of the tourists: "after all, it is thanks to them that there is life in this place," grumbled another friend. Yet another informant told me that "anyway, tourists have always been part of the life of Hendaia. We're a mixed kind of town anyway, with so many people coming from other places."<sup>317</sup>

Other annual fiestas include the *fête du Chipiron* and the *Corso Lumineux*. The former is a day-long event taking place in July in the marina, involving a big convivial meal with seafood dishes.

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<sup>313</sup> *Zarpai* does not have a specific meaning but, according to its former president Michel Lambert, is meant to evoke "craziness, non-conformism, adventure and temerity. Basically letting loose". A *banda* is a type of music band, similar to a *txaranga*, a Spanish Basque-style steel band which is now also extremely popular in festivities in Iparralde, as well as other areas around, such as les Landes.

<sup>314</sup> Meaning "It has become the tradition!"

<sup>315</sup> The whale symbolises whale hunting which was the main source of economic revenue of Hendaia until the late nineteenth century. H. and E. are the last letters of Hendaia written in French (Hendaye). The insignia of the crown was bestowed by Louis XIV on making Hendaia independent from Urruña in 1654 (Michelena, 1997:15-16).

<sup>316</sup> The famous local figure, explorer, astronomer and Bascophile Antoine d'Abbadie is said to have attributed with having initiated the idea of a Basque fiesta in the late nineteenth century as a way of celebrating Basque traditions (see Michelena, 1997).

<sup>317</sup> During the summer months, the population is estimated to triple in number (municipality of Hendaia).

It brings together various local associations who take part in making the dishes. The latter festivity involves a convoy of more floats made by local associations and groups of friends parading through the streets at 10 o'clock at night in July. The last time I saw this event, however, there were only a few spectators on the side of the road. Hendaia was not having a successful summer with tourists largely because of the bad weather, and many Hendaians remained drinking in the bars by the beach.

Many other small festivities organised by associations and the fiesta committee of Hendaia follow themes. Over recent years, there have been Andalusian fiestas – *fêtes andalouses*, recreations of the fiestas of Pamplona, with specially set up stalls serving red wine and tapas, and an omelette fiesta, the *fête de l'omelette*, involving making a giant omelette weighing more than six hundred kilos. Zarpai Banda has also been extremely active in the organisation of such celebrations. Through its link with another musical band from Sulzbach in Germany, it organised a Beer Festival. On several occasions too, it included floats for the *fête basque* which followed the theme of the Alarde of Irun and Hondarribia. Three young local women were dressed as cantineras and seated on the float waving their fan to the passing crowds. In early 2002, it was decided that another annual festivity would be organised in June, called the *fête du printemps*, the Spring fiesta, and which would revolve around the participation of one or other of the towns with which Hendaia is twinned since 1999, Viana do Castelo in Portugal or Peebles in Scotland.

### Conclusion

While tradition, in all societies, draws its justification from the past, its utility in social terms is firmly anchored in the present. The value of tradition lies in the way it is used and the effect it has on local society. Tradition serves to identify people who belong together, but it is also a rallying point which people feel they 'need'. When a tradition no longer serves any use, its importance for local society wains and it eventually dies out. I venture to say that the importance given to tradition is largely related to the social and political context of the society in question. In a social context characterised by political insecurity and cultural tensions, tradition, in the form of a deliberate appeal to the values of the past, takes on particular importance as a means of gathering people together in a harmonious way.

In less than a century, Spain has undergone two dictatorships, a civil war and several attempted coups d'état. Today, Spanish democracy is still less than thirty years old and continues to be threatened by conflicting political, social and cultural attitudes, exacerbated with the violence of ETA. In Hegoalde, this has the consequence of sustaining a culturally and politically polarised society. As frontier towns, Irun and Hondarribia have had to come to terms not only with a large influx of immigrants but with the social and economic changes brought about by the ending of frontier controls and the removal of once seemingly secure boundaries that have gone with it. In such a context, the value of a tradition such as the Alarde, which until the outbreak of the current controversy incorporated a majority of inhabitants in a harmonious way, becomes evident.

If that is the case, one may ask oneself why the population of Hendaia seems to place so much less emphasis on similar traditions. I suggest that an explanation can be found in both the cultural make-up of the local population and the less conflictual political context of France in recent years. With regard to the cultural make-up of Hendaia, as already noted, a survey carried out in 1997 indicated that as many as 20% of Hendaia's residents had Spanish nationality. An even larger proportion, as my fieldwork revealed, have ancestral links to Hegoalde or other parts of Spain. Various Hendaians to whom I spoke estimated that 70% or more of the population might have a parent, grandparent or great grandparent that came from the other side of the frontier. Throughout the twentieth century, numerous people came from the Spanish side of the frontier

seeking refuge from repression or better economic prospects, making Hendaia a "*ville d'accueil*",<sup>318</sup> as many Hendaian informants put it to me. Elena Etxegoien, an EAJ councillor in Irun, told me that the close family, professional and Basque political relations entertained by many local people in Irun and Hondarribia with people in Hendaia and further up the Iparralde coast meant that they "have always spoken in an affectionate way of *el otro côté*", a term combining Spanish and French to refer to 'the other side' of the frontier. "We are all Spanish somewhere," fifty-year-old Jacques Artola, the owner of two photography shops in Hendaia, declared to me. Claude Urrutia, an employee at the town hall who does not speak Basque despite having a Basque name, noted that "for many of us, Spanish is our second language".

For all that, the identification of longstanding inhabitants of Hendaia with their town is clear. All such people to whom I spoke to identified themselves strongly with the town, calling themselves Hendaia - "Hendayais" in French or "Hendaitarra" in Basque. Pepito Aizpurua, a seventy or so year old man who grew up in Hendaia once commented to me how "though most of us have Spanish origins or originally come from elsewhere, we all feel Hendaian now." I heard references in French to some people whose families have resided in Hendaia for several generations as "*vieilles familles Hendayaises*".<sup>319</sup> Nor were these necessarily Basque-speaking families with Basque family names. The municipal elections in Hendaia in March 2001 were an occasion for many people to assert their identification with the town. All lists of candidates expressed in one way or other their priority as being to work "for Hendaia". Amid personal political disputes between some municipal councillors following the first round of voting in the two-stage elections and the eventual decision of three councillors to stop supporting Kotte Ecenarro, and instead create their own list, it was revealing to see the large number of people who came to support Mr. Ecenarro at a campaign meeting before the second round. In his speech, Mr. Ecenarro insisted that his party "is and will remain Hendaye", amidst much clapping from a full audience. Such incidents suggest that Hendaians express their belonging to the town through civic commitments, rather than through responding to appeals to tradition. As for people who have moved recently from Irun and Hondarribia to Hendaia, they until now have scarcely participated in the civic and cultural life of Hendaia<sup>320</sup> and so there is little requirement on the part of the rest of the Hendaian population to incorporate them,<sup>321</sup> for example through a traditional ritual such as the Alarde in Irun and Hondarribia.

All this may change in the future, as Hendaian residents with Spanish nationality are now able to vote in municipal and European elections in the place where they reside.<sup>322</sup> This will require

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<sup>318</sup> This could more or less be translated as Town of welcome or a place of refuge, open to inhabitants from other areas.

<sup>319</sup> Meaning Old Hendaian families.

<sup>320</sup> In December 1999, out of the 8610 Hendaian inhabitants registered for voting, 248 were of non-French EU citizens. 93% of these are of Spanish nationality (Statistics from the municipality of Hendaia).

<sup>321</sup> Candidates in the 2001 municipal elections appreciated the importance of including Spanish citizens on their lists. All four lists which ran in the elections, the current mayor's "Hendaye Plurielle", "Agir pour Hendaye", "Cap Alternance", "Vivre Hendaye" and "Biharko Hendaia" included one member of Spanish nationality. For Hendaye Plurielle, the Spanish candidate was Ederne Zugasti who had lived in Hendaia since 1989. She was personally approached by Kotte Ecenarro and invited to join their list. As the wife of Patxi García, one of the pioneers of the association of cross-frontier workers which caters for the needs of Spanish citizens recently residing in Hendaia but many of whom still work in Hegoalde, she was already known by the town hall. It was nonetheless pointed out by an Hendaian candidate from another list that Ms. Zugasti was only placed at the bottom of the list, therefore being the first person to be sacrificed if Mr. Ecenarro did not obtain as many votes as he hoped. In the end, she did get to be on the municipal council.

<sup>322</sup> It was once commented to me by a political analyst in Donostia that the increasing number of Spanish Basque people living in Iparralde could well lead to a change in the political make-up of the area. "Many of these people are likely to be Basque nationalists," he reckoned, "since it is not anybody in Hegoalde who would feel so at ease about the idea of living on the French side of the frontier. If they do so it is usually because they have Basque affinities." As such, he concluded, "they are most likely to vote Basque nationalist," thereby significantly boosting the Basque

Hendaian politicians to integrate them in their effort to get their votes. In Irun and Hondarribia, meanwhile, other customs that once formed an integral part of social life have begun to dwindle. For instance, the daily *txikiteo*, in which local men do the round of the bars drinking small glasses of wine – *txikitoak* – in the evening after work has very much been lost in the last few years. Even young people no longer go on the sort of all-night binges that they used to in Irun and Hondarribia, as many informants in these towns commented to me. Some inhabitants of Irun and Hondarribia suggested to me that this change of lifestyle reflected the influence of television and increased car ownership. Similar factors may eventually reduce the importance of the Alarde.

In the meantime, as we shall see later in more detail, the Partzuergo is also drawing on tradition and fiesta as part of its strategy to foster a sense of Txingudi belonging. One of its projects, conceived and promoted by the municipality of Hendaia, is the creation of a cultural itinerary, a path around the bay and through the three towns adorned along the way with panels giving information about the history of the area. These panels, according to the preliminary draft of the project, will explain how people on both sides of the frontier have many things in common, including the Basque language and Basque culture and how, despite the frontier, they have always succeeded somehow in maintaining these links. Another project is the annual hosting, since 1995, of a *Txingudi Eguna* or Txingudi day in which local associations are invited to present themselves to the public and a series of cultural and sports activities are organised for the enjoyment of the population of the three towns. A selective historical account (MacClancy, 2000:114) and the provision of a common space in which to celebrate together form part of a strategy to bring together the local population under new markers creating inclusive boundaries which may eventually replace the old boundaries still evident in institutions like the Alarde and still a factor in the daily lives of the inhabitants of the area.

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nationalist vote in Iparralde. The low participation of these residents in the 2001 municipal elections, however, has yet to demonstrate this, though this may change in the next local elections. It remains for me to point out that, from my fieldwork research, the generalised Basque and nationalist profile of the Hendaian resident of Spanish nationality is unfounded.

## Chapter Nine: Unifying or Dividing: Language as Boundary

*One day in the supermarket where I am working in Hendaia, I encounter Maiana doing her shopping. A native of Hendaia, Maiana lives and works at the smart spa hotel of Serge Blanco in the Sokoburu marina area of Hendaia. Three times a week, we meet at AEK's branch in Hendaia, where we take Basque lessons together. A tall woman in her mid thirties, with delicate clear skin and short hair cut in the neat style common among many women of Iparralde, she appears happy to see me and we chat together in Basque, which she speaks fairly fluently as a result of her diligent attendance at AEK over the past two years.*

*Basket in hand, a woman in her late sixties wearing a brown raincoat approaches. Seeing her, Maiana switches to French and introduces her to me as her mother. Knowing that her mother speaks Basque and wishing to carry on speaking in this language, I address her mother in Basque. She looks astonished and then, with slight irony, remarks in Basque, "It seems that it really is a fashion amongst young people now to learn Basque. I suppose it is good...I don't know. Not very useful though...Not like English or German or... And you all learn this Spanish Basque don't you? Batua?" Next to me, Maiana blushes, clearly ill at ease. While I carry on talking to her in Basque, her replies to me are no longer so fluent.*

In this brief encounter, we witness some of the tensions and contradictions surrounding the Basque language as a vehicle of daily communication in the Basque Country. Maiana and I are *euskaldun berriak*, or 'new Basque-speakers', who are learning Basque as part of our commitment to Basque culture and a 'Basque identity'. Maiana's mother is an *euskaldun zahar*, or 'old Basque-speaker', who learnt the language as a child in a family context but who now sees little use or value in the language as a means of communication in the 'modern' world of globalisation and consumerism. Not only did she not transmit the language to her daughter as a child but she sees little purpose in learning it today, dismissing our enthusiasm as a fad and providing no encouragement to her daughter in her endeavour. What might have been an inclusive marker in our relationship becomes an obstacle to mutual understanding. Instead, Maiana's mother imposes an exclusive boundary between those who, like herself, grew up speaking Basque and others, like Maiana and myself, have made the effort to learn the language.

The negative force of such tensions becomes clearly apparent when we consider that the Basque term to define 'a Basque person', *euskaldun*, literally translates as 'somebody who has the Basque language', linking Basque identification intimately with the language. Reflecting the absence of a national consciousness of Basqueness prior to the end of the nineteenth century, there is no word to describe a person who is ethnically Basque but does not speak the language, as is the case for many people of Basque ancestry. The terms *vasco* and *vascongado* in Spanish and *les Basques* in French are more inclusive, referring to someone who has Basque origins, regardless of his or her fluency in the Basque language. In an effort to resolve this polemic about how to include non-Basque-speakers who identify themselves as Basque into the 'Basque category', I have sometimes heard the term *euskaradun*. This literally translates as 'someone who has Basque' and, according to its proponents, makes a clear difference between that and *euskaldun* which they argue simply means 'someone who has Euskal (Herria) (in his or her heart)'. Seaska, for example, uses this term when advertising vacancies for the post of *ikastola* headmaster/mistress.<sup>323</sup> Other than with Seaska however, I have seldom heard this term used, and when I did, it was often the source of much debate, discussions revolving around its 'veracity' and meaning.

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<sup>323</sup> See for example, advert in *Le Journal du Pays Basque* 31 May 2002, P.7.

As has been noted by many scholars, a person who supports the Basque nationalist cause may not necessarily be of Basque origin or Basque-speaking. Likewise a Basque speaker may not have Basque origins or be a Basque nationalist, as is the case for Serge Lonca, the French teacher at the Hendaia ikastola who learnt it as part of his endeavour to participate more effectively in Basque society. In consequence, knowledge and use of Basque becomes a marker that imposes a variety of different boundaries, depending on the social context. Individuals' attitudes to the language are conditioned by the pervasive impact of Basque nationalism on local society. This nationalism, as we have seen, varies in nature and intensity on either side of the border, in keeping with the different historical and political traditions of the two states of which the Basque-speaking region forms part. As a pervasive social and political movement, however, nationalism is a factor, either through acceptance or rejection, conditioning most people's construction of notions of Basqueness. Within the complex network of social imperatives that characterises the Basque Country, it is difficult other than in an isolated rural context for an individual to speak Basque without any additional connotations of a political or social nature.

Whether, under what circumstances, and to whom a person speaks the local Basque dialect, the standardised Basque language, Spanish, or French, form an important part of the expression of that person's identity and of his or her presumptions with regard to the other person's identity. This is illustrated, for example, in local telephone etiquette: an urban Basque nationalist sympathiser with only rudimentary knowledge of the Basque language may answer the telephone in Basque but then switch to French or Spanish to conduct a conversation. Conversely, a local farmer may answer the telephone in French but then hold a conversation in her local Basque dialect if the caller is someone she knows.

One of the factors limiting the effectiveness of Basque as a means of communication has been its lack of homogeneity. The division of the Basque Country into two unequal parts by a state frontier means that each part exists in the context of a distinct nation-state administrative system, with consequences for the use and status of the Basque language, as discussed in Chapter Four. People living on either side of the frontier display wide variations in their linguistic capabilities, with some speaking either French or Spanish and Basque equally well, others showing proficiency only in one or other of the two official languages, and a small minority speaking all three. On both sides of the frontier varying proportions of people speak local Basque dialects, complemented by the use of Batua.

Dialectal variations are strong between regions, and even from one mountain valley to the next, and there is no socially or culturally recognized 'correct' way of speaking Basque. Faced with these variations, a unified form of Basque, known as Batua, was developed from the 1960s onwards in response to nationalist concerns in Hegoalde about the survival of Basque. A synthesis of mainly the Lapurterra and Gipuztarra dialects, Batua was initially promoted by a group of enthusiasts acting under the aegis of *Euskaltzaindia*, or Basque Academy, formed in the 1920s to promote Basque culture and the Basque language by Basque intellectuals from both Iparralde and Hegoalde. At a conference in 1968, the Euskaltzaindia established its objective as being "to diffuse the normalized language (Batua) in society, through the intermediary of schools, the media and all inter-dialectal channels, in order that it may be adopted by a maximum number of speakers" (Intxausti, 1992:184).

Thanks to the efforts of the abertzale movement and the development of Batua, the Basque language is no longer narrowly associated with traditionalism and the rural hinterland. However, while Batua has helped Basque to develop more as a public language, providing it with a standard way of writing and facilitating education in Basque, many euskaldun zaharrak continue to lament that this is not the 'real' Basque, undermining the efforts of the abertzaleak to gather people

together through a common language.<sup>324</sup> Even within communities, there are differences in the way in which Basque is spoken. In Hondarribia, the particular way of speaking of the fishing community differs markedly from that of the rest of the town's inhabitants. In an attempt to show sensitivity to dialectal variations, the ikastolak have adopted the local way of speaking Basque. In Iparralde, Seaska has begun to provide schoolbooks in local dialects. AEK has also taken steps to demonstrate sensitivity to local dialects, adapting its lessons accordingly.<sup>325</sup>

While Batua now largely dominates the way Basque is spoken and written in Hegoalde, Basque speakers in Iparralde pronounce and spell words differently. This is clearly noticeable in the Basque spoken by people from Hendaia, compared with people from Irun and Hondarribia. Many Hendaians speak Basque with a French sounding accent, pronouncing Rs as uvular trills and Js as palatal approximants, while Basque speakers in Hegoalde will pronounce Rs as apical flaps, and their J's as harder uvular trills.<sup>326</sup> The vocabulary and grammar also change in accordance with Spanish and French grammar. Basque words in Hendaia continue to remain both French and local-dialectic specific in spite of the presence of Spanish and the increasing influence of Batua. Ways of writing place names and personal names in Basque also differ on either side of the frontier as French and Spanish have had an influence on how Basque is written as well as spoken. Examples in Hendaia are the use of the word Bidassoa, the French spelling of the name of the river, in the name of the café on the Place de la République and the orthography of the Basque names displayed on houses. Maps of Hendaia continue to feature "the bay of Chingoudy", despite the currency given to the Batua form, Txingudi, by the Partzuergo and its projects.

#### Opening towards the Basque language in Iparralde and Institutionalisation in Hegoalde:

On both sides of the frontier, learning – or, in many cases, re-learning – the Basque language is an increasingly popular activity that is no longer necessarily reflective of political engagement. AEK classes, formerly dominated by young abertzale pupils, nowadays include people of different ages and backgrounds, from young men and women, whose parents chose not to speak it to them, as in the case of Maiana, to older people who heard Basque as children but stopped speaking it as they grew up and who are now anxious to establish their right to a Basque linguistic heritage and people who come from totally different backgrounds but wish to integrate into Basque society. These 'new Basque speakers' can be defined in Basque as euskaldun berriak.

In Euskadi, Basque has acquired equal status with Spanish in the public domain and it is increasingly used by young people, particularly those with Basque nationalist sensitivities, for personal communication in preference to Spanish. Following the creation of the Autonomous Basque Community, efforts to support the Basque language were among the first priorities of the territory's new political leaders.<sup>327</sup> The ikastola became institutionalised as part of the Autonomous

<sup>324</sup> I witnessed numerous incidents of this. One example is during a trip I undertook with a group of ikastola children from Iparralde to the mountains. When we stopped in a small hotel, the children ordered drinks in Basque from the euskaldun women behind the bar. Rather disparagingly, these remarked on the children's use of "an artificial Basque from the Spanish side". On another occasion, I observed old farmers in Iparralde looking uneasy about how to address ikastola children, convinced their Basque was different and that they would be unable to communicate with them. For more on this issue see for example Urla (1993, 1998).

<sup>325</sup> In its effort to promote day to day use of Basque, AEK campaigns for the officialisation and development of the language in Iparralde and for its recognition as an education service working beyond the state frontier (Gurrutxaga et al., 1997). Over recent years however, it has encountered various difficulties with state authorities both in Spain and France. Until late 2000, the French postal service was charging AEK for its use of Basque addresses in their correspondence. In Spain, between 1999 and 2001, AEK was subjected to court proceedings by the Spanish judge Garzón for its alleged support of ETA.

<sup>326</sup> See Burling (1992:95-107) for phonetical explanation.

<sup>327</sup> The Basque government's own Basque literacy institution, HABE, stands as an institutional rival to AEK. However, while tensions between the two parallel those between adherents to the Basque governmental status quo and supporters of

Basque Community educational system. Some ikastolak, however, chose to remain independent, and maintain their 'private' status, often supported by people with different political views to the government. Three modules were established in Euskadi's educational system, known as A, B and D. Module A provides all the child's education in Spanish, accompanied with Basque lessons. Module B provides half the lessons in Basque and half in Spanish, while module D provides all of the child's education in Basque, accompanied with Spanish lessons. In the past few years, module A has been in decline, often only found in towns with a high population of Spanish-speakers originating from other areas of Spain. The Basque government also led an effort to promote the use of Basque place-names, in preference to Spanish. Thus, Hondarribia, previously known by Spanish-speakers as Fuenterrabía, became known by the Basque form of its name, with the Spanish form less frequently used.

A high level of Basque fluency and literacy is now required to obtain a post in Euskadi regional administration. While not obligatory in private businesses, fluency in Basque is now becoming a significant criterion for employability.<sup>328</sup> Municipalities in Euskadi also have their own Basque translation and interpretation services. However, the decision whether or not to introduce simultaneous Spanish-Basque interpretation services remains a matter of discretion for individual municipal councils, depending on their willingness to devote a substantial part of the municipal budget to such services. Irun, for example, provides simultaneous interpretation at all council meetings. Hondarribia, on the other hand, does not, on the grounds that it is too complicated a system to install in the old town hall building and that there are always enough councillors or municipal employees who speak Basque to help non-Basque speakers in meetings.<sup>329</sup> The extent to which Basque is used in daily life varies from one place to another, depending on the origins of the local population and the degree of commitment of individuals to Basque culture. According to a survey carried out in 1996 by the Basque government, the government of Nafarroa and the Euskal Kultur Erakunde in Iparralde,<sup>330</sup> 42% of the population of Euskadi claimed to know Basque.<sup>331</sup> Knowledge of Basque is strongest among young people and those over 65. 70% of people between the ages of 16 and 24 know Basque. This percentage decreases sharply as the generations get older but rises again among people above the age of 65, of whom 34% know Basque.<sup>332</sup> Use of this knowledge however, is another matter. Only 33% of the population between the ages of 16 and 25 claimed to use Basque in their daily public or private life. Amongst the population between the age of 25 and 35, the percentage of active Basque users dropped to 25% (52% claimed to know Basque). As for the population above 65 years of age, the decrease was less, with 29% using the Basque language in their daily life.

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more militant nationalism (Gurrutxaga et al., 1997:74-75), it is not unusual now to see many moderate Basque nationalists taking part in AEK's Korrika, as we saw in chapter Six. (This marks a change to the situation described by Del Valle (1988) in her book on the Korrika where she mentions the non-participation of HABA adherents precisely because of this political tension.)

<sup>328</sup> Most left-wing Basque nationalist sympathizers however still criticise the Basque government for not doing as much as it really could for the promotion and standardisation of the Basque language. In Hondarribia, a good example of this came up when a councillor representative of EH in Hondarribia reproached Ion Elizalde, representative of EA and councillor in charge of Basque language issues, for not doing enough. She gave as an example the poor results of a survey carried out on the use and fluency of Hondarribian inhabitants. When I mentioned this to Mr. Elizalde, he exclaimed "but what do they (EH) want me to do? I'm not going to force people here with a whip to speak Basque?! And anyway, I was the one who commissioned this survey."

<sup>329</sup> Source: Basque language service of the municipality of Hondarribia.

<sup>330</sup> *Enquête sociolinguistique au Pays basque*, 1996.

<sup>331</sup> It is important to draw attention here to the shifting meaning of the notion of 'to know Basque'. While for some people, knowing Basque means being fluent in Basque, for others it only means to have a small repertoire of basic Basque words or to be able to construct basic sentences in Basque.

<sup>332</sup> "Pays basque", *Enquête sociolinguistique au Pays basque*, 1996. p.24.

This stands in contrast to Nafarroa where only 19% of the population claimed to know Basque. While a total of 23% of 16 to 24 year olds knew Basque, only 12% spoke it often. This percentage remains more or less the same with older generations and decreases as from the age of 50 (only 14% of 50-64 year olds and 13% of those aged 65 and above claimed to know Basque). The different situation of the Basque language in Nafarroa, in contrast to that of Euskadi, can be explained by the larger Spanish speaking population of Nafarroa – the most euskaldun part of Nafarroa is the mountaineous area close to the border with Iparralde and Gipuzkoa – and the low level of official support for promotion of the Basque language.

In Iparralde, on the other hand, Basque has no official status but remains a non-politicised medium of linguistic communication for many native Basque-speakers in a rural context. In parallel, it is the symbolic language of choice for people of Basque nationalist sentiment, while its value as a marker for the expression of Basque identity is increasingly appreciated among the general public. Outside these communities, few people will speak it in daily business transactions, even among those who grew up speaking it. Even so, in a survey carried out in Iparralde by the regional French television FR3 Aquitaine and the newspaper *La Semaine du Pays Basque* in October 2000, 62% of respondents proclaimed themselves in favour of the development of the Basque language in education. The survey carried out by the Basque government, the government of Nafarroa and Euskal Kultur Erakundea in 1996 recorded 26% of the population claiming to be actively bilingual in Basque and French, while 64.2% of the population did not know Basque at all. The majority of Basque speakers are still older people: 43% of the population over 65 could speak Basque, while only 27% of people between the ages of 24 and 35 and 24% between 16 and 24 could speak the language.

In 1999, the municipality of Hendaia, in its own effort to show its concern with the state of the Basque language, particularly in the context of the Partzuergo, contracted the Spanish Basque organisation SIADECO<sup>333</sup> to produce a survey on the attitudes and use of the Basque language among the local population. It revealed that 18.9% were fluent Basque speakers (SIADECO, 1999a), in contrast to 30% of the population of Irun and 65% in Hondarribia (EUSTAT, 1996).<sup>334</sup> Accompanying the results of the survey, SIADECO provided a list of suggestions for the development of the Basque language in Hendaia, such as providing more signs and information in Basque, more Basque cultural activities and encouraging municipal employees to learn the language (SIADECO, 1999a:14). In order to implement these measures, SIADECO recommended that the municipality set up a special Basque language commission and a Basque language service, composed of municipal councillors, which would be responsible for implementing Basque language policies in the town (SIADECO, 1999a:15).

At the time of writing, only two municipal employees had taken the initiative of learning Basque with AEK in Hendaia. The former mayor, Raphael Lassalette is also taking lessons. However, the other suggestions made by SIADECO remain to be followed up. The Hendaia council's website for example is available only in French. Efforts to put bilingual street signs remain half accomplished. While some neighbourhoods do have bilingual roadsigns, others still do not.

In the public space, Basque names and words are usually used for decorative and local identificatory purposes. Many shopkeepers in Hendaia who do not speak Basque nonetheless employ Basque names for their shops. So, for example, a café by the leisure port named *Sokoburu* is called *Bi Ur Arte*, meaning Between Two Waters (referring to the fact that it is close to both the

<sup>333</sup> Abbreviation for *Sozio-Ekonomi Ikerketa Elkarte*, meaning the socio-economic survey association.

<sup>334</sup> In 1999, the Basque language service of the municipality of Hondarribia commissioned SIADECO to carry out a survey on the use of Basque in the town's public places. It revealed that only 36.9% of the population of all ages were noted to be communicating in Basque (SIADECO, 1999b).

sea and the river) but the owner speaks no Basque. In meetings of the town council, French-speaking councillors discussing the future restoration of the area between the Avenue Allées and the Boulevard Charles de Gaulle which go over the railway lines, refer to it as *Bi Zubi Arte*, meaning Between Two Bridges. The state subsidised social center in a marginal neighbourhood of Hendaia is called *Centre Social Denentzat*, Denentzat meaning 'for everyone' in Basque.

So Basque remains popularly used for place names, largely to evoke the folkloristic and traditional aspect of the Basque Country.<sup>335</sup> When it comes to 'more serious' notices in shops and businesses, the state national language tends to be favoured. For example, at the Banque Inchauspé located by the station which belongs to an Iparralde family of the same name, while adorned by its logo saying "*herriko bankoa*" or local bank in Basque, a sign by the door advertises "Change, Cambio, Wechsel" only in French, Spanish and German. In general, public or official use of Basque symbols in Iparralde remains restricted to the sphere of folklore, shunning their political connotations. Thus can be understood the choice of the médiathèque in 2000 to stop providing the Iparralde left-wing Basque nationalist weekly magazine Enbata, but not Gara, the Hegoalde left-wing Basque nationalist newspaper.<sup>336</sup>

In Hegoalde, a similar phenomenon can be observed in the public use of Basque names as markers of cultural identity alongside with a general concern with political correctness. Many businesses, for example, even though in some cases run by people who are not Basque-speaking, have a Basque name in addition to a Spanish one. In this way accusations of discrimination against Basque are avoided. So can be understood for instance the decision to change the name of Irun and Hondarribia's development agency from Adebisa to Bidasoa Bizirik/Bidasoa Activa. Most inhabitants of Hegoalde, even if they do not speak Basque, also use key words in Basque, such as *Agur*, for goodbye, *Kaixo* meaning Hello, *Egun On* for good morning and so on. These can be used to begin a conversation before lapsing into Spanish again. For a non-Basque speaker, such a tactic involves acknowledging the Basque language as a boundary and making an attempt to overcome it. While such a person does not actually speak the language, he can make his own claim to it and thus make it part of his identity.

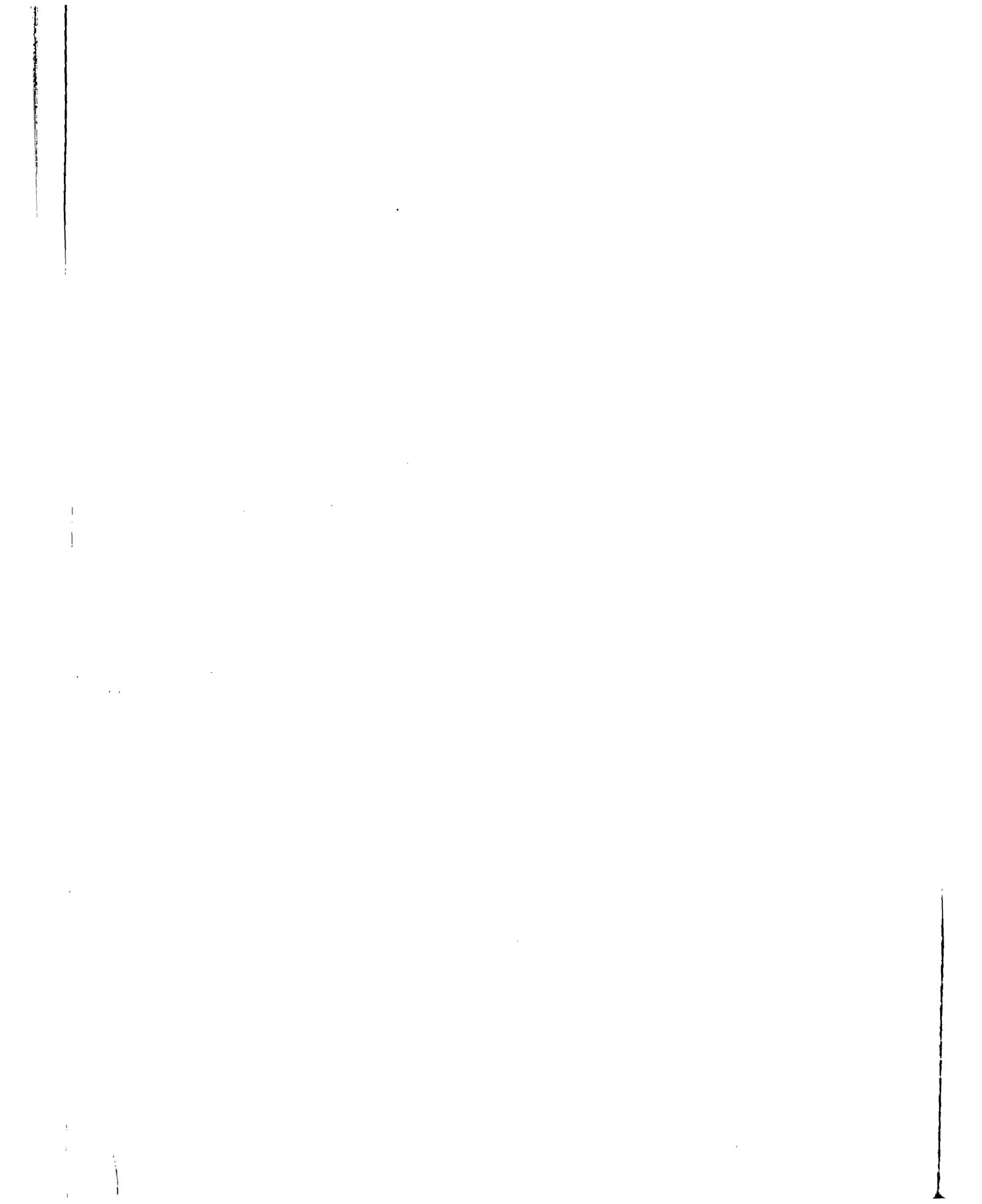
We saw in the account of the meeting of the General Council of the Parzuerger how the choice of personal names and how to spell one's surname have also become a focus of this symbolic struggle. In Hegoalde, where Basque first names were prohibited under Franco, giving one's children Basque names such as Gaizka, Iker, Arkaitz, Garazi and Nekane is now very common. In Iparralde, where French names like Marie-Jeanne, Josette, Yvette, Jean-Marie and Bernard were once mainstream, Basque names have regained popularity: Estitxu, Lorea, Amaia, Xabi and Eñaut. It is not rare either to find adults altering their names to fit Basque pronunciation and spelling. In this way, a person whose birth certificate bears the name Michel in French or Miguel in Spanish might present himself in Basque social circles as Mikel or, in Iparralde, as Mixel.

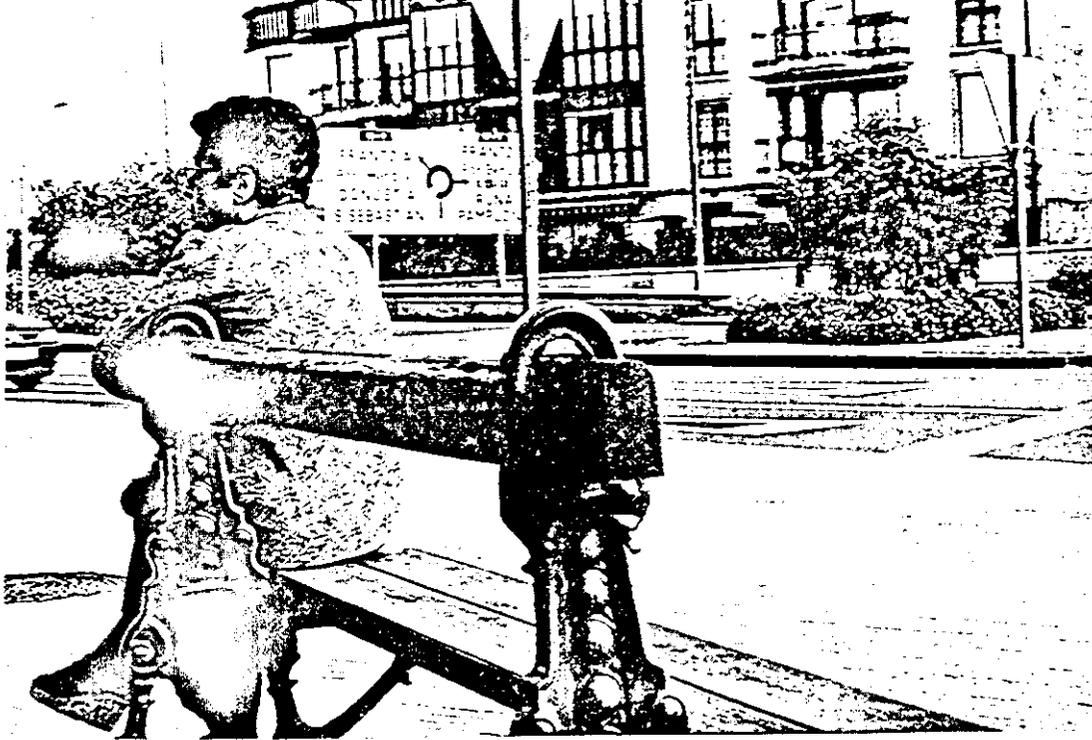
Place-names can also be referred to in a particular language so as to mark identification with speakers of that language. This inevitably involves rejection of other languages and association with other people. I have heard for instance, Robert Arrambide, the leader of Biharko Hendaia, refer to Hondarribia as "Ondyarbi", in the way inhabitants of Hondarribia refer to their town in an affectionate way. In doing so, Mr. Arrambide can be seen as seeking to apply the local dialect in

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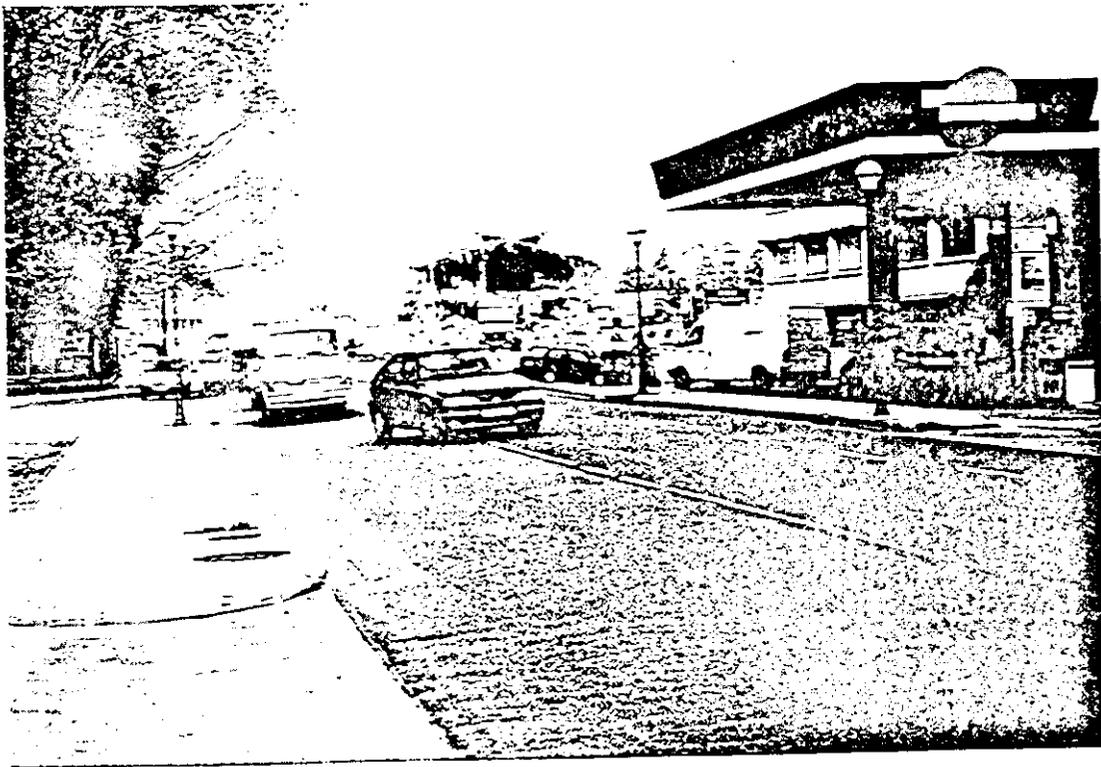
<sup>335</sup> Similarly, while the *ikurriña* was fought over in Franco Spain as a political symbol, in Iparralde, the *ikurriña* flutters in numerous places, in the shop window of the boulangerie on the Rue du Port, in the decorations of the boucherie Arruabarrena, on some of the labels of the supermarket shelves of Champion, and in the form of car-fresheners hanging from numerous rear-view mirrors of cars, or as stickers and necklace pendants.

<sup>336</sup> It does however provide the new alternative newspaper to Sud Ouest, *Le Journal du Pays Basque* launched in October 2001 by a team of Basque culturally and nationalist sensitive people.

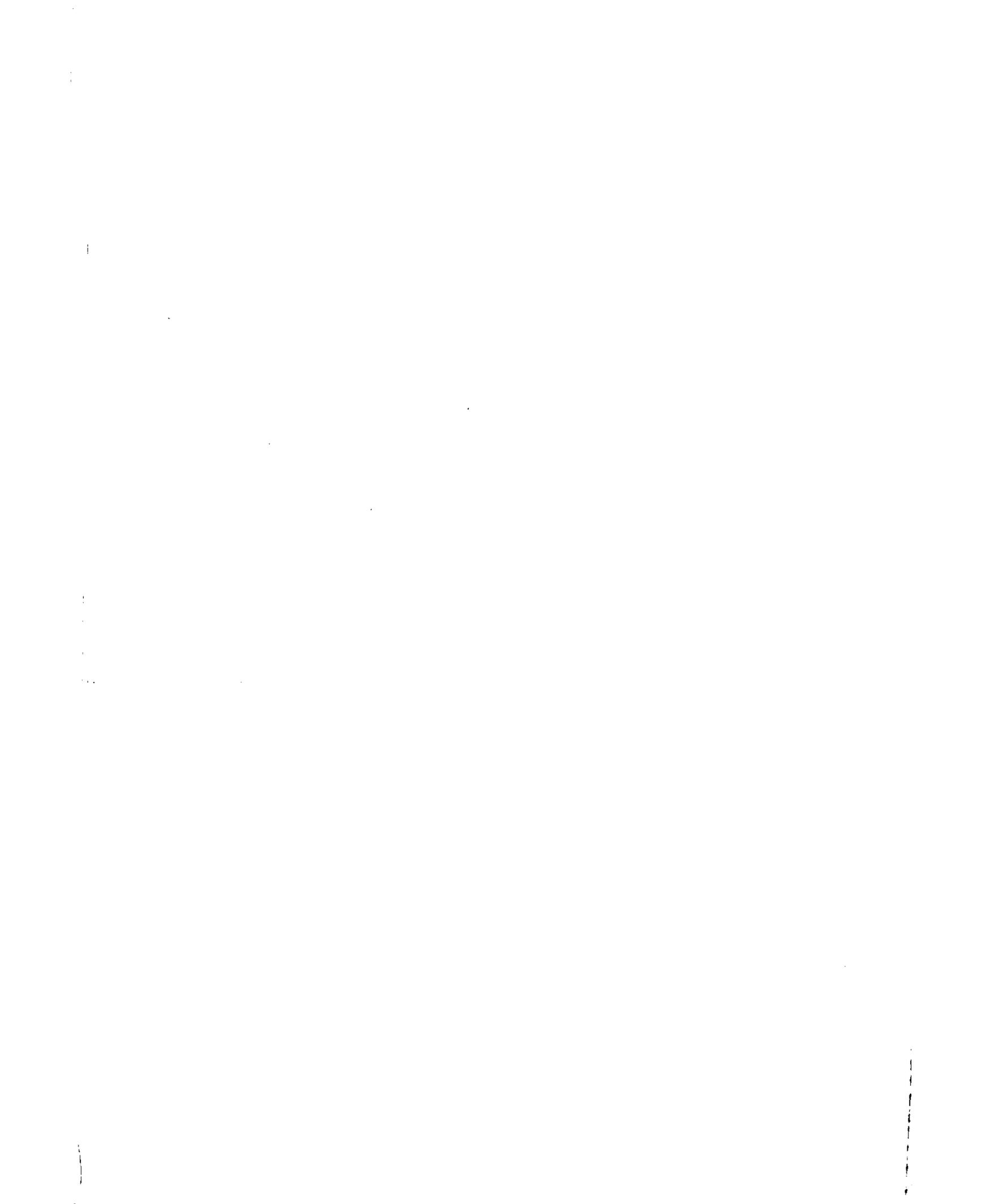




Roadsigns in Irun indicate the way to "France through Hendaia" in a mixture of Basque and Spanish.



The Repsol petrol station in Irun just before the frontier. Beyond, one of the old Spanish customs booths being pulled down (September 2001).



order to emphasise his association with this feeling of locality. This also marks him off from people who use the officially approved name Hondarribia or who continue to refer to the town by its Spanish name, Fuenterrabía, or its French name, Fontarabie. Most of the people I heard using Fuenterrabía were non-Basque-speaking inhabitants of Irun, though there were also some Basque speakers who, when they spoke in Spanish, used the Spanish term. A similar tendency can be observed in Hendaia, as we saw in Chapter Seven, whereby a proud Basque-speaker from Hendaia but with family origins in Hondarribia and Irun, insists, when speaking in French, on pronouncing Irun as if it were a French word, sounding something like 'Eerungh' and talking about Hondarribia the French way, as 'Fontarabie'. This serves to mark the speaker's identification with 'French culture' in spite of his strong commitment to the Basque language and 'Basque culture' and personal links to Hegoalde.

Similarly, despite the great effort made by Basque nationalists to avoid using state references when talking of the part of the Basque Country on the other side of the frontier, referring instead to Iparralde and Hegoalde, or *bestalde*, or 'the other side', it is not uncommon to note some of them getting their terms mixed up, and talking of going "to France" or "to Spain" instead, before quickly correcting themselves.<sup>337</sup> Such lexical dilemmas and slips of the tongue demonstrate that the border remains very much anchored within personal consciousness, whether desired or not. Similarly, people not identifying with Basque nationalism, but conscious of its importance for smooth social relations, often take care about the way in which they refer to the various parts of the Basque Country. Political correctness in relation to Basque nationalism and Spanish and French 'imperialistic' attitudes often conditions social communication in the Basque Country.

However, it remains to be said that the different situations of the language in Iparralde and Hegoalde have also had consequences for the significance of the Basque language as an element in the sense of self (Tejerina Montana, 1994:58-9). In Iparralde, its non-officialisation and so continued marginalisation from public life means that for many, learning Basque is very much a personal motivation, linked to the emancipation of one's sense of self. In Euskadi, meanwhile, the motivation to learn Basque is increasingly linked to professional necessity. Many in Euskadi see learning Basque as an obligation and regard the language as having little or no significance for their sense of self, other than in potentially compromising situations when it can serve as a marker or boundary of their identity or to signal their belonging to the Basque-speaking community. So, for example, Juan José Madurga, a teacher in Irun who had to learn Basque late in his life in order to ensure he kept his job, said he did not identify with it in the least. By contrast, the enthusiasm of those who want to learn confirms a certain set of values that sets these people apart from local French and Spanish people who do not speak Basque and from those *euskaldun zaharrak* who have chosen to forsake the language in favour of French or Spanish, as we saw in the case of Maiana.

While SIADeco set about making a survey of the situation of the Basque language in Hendaia, the local branch of AEK, took its own initiatives to encourage the use of Basque in the area. In 1999, it launched the idea of providing Basque-speaking shopkeepers with stickers saying that they could speak Basque - "euskara badakigu". Thanks to these stickers in shop windows, it was hoped, customers would know that they could speak Basque to the shopkeepers rather than French. Volunteers from AEK went around all the shops of Hendaia, offering these stickers to Basque-speaking shopkeepers. The reaction of some of the shopkeepers to this initiative, illustrates the ambiguous relationship of many inhabitants of Iparralde to efforts to promote the Basque language. While some<sup>338</sup> took to the initiative well, others reacted negatively and even

<sup>337</sup> I also once noticed Robert Arrambide saying 'Hendaye' and then quickly correcting himself to say 'Hendaia'.

<sup>338</sup> It is worth noting however that some shopkeepers who accepted this time to have the stickers might not have done a few years earlier, not wishing to associate themselves with such initiatives which were seen at the time by Basque non-nationalists as purely political and 'extremist'.

quite violently. A few complained that the sticker was like a brand mark, thereby reflecting the fears and taboos felt around Basque identity and language by many of the older generation. When I asked one shopkeeper who had been particularly hostile to the volunteers why he had refused to take the sticker, he explained that to him "these stickers are reminiscent of the star which Jews had to wear during the Second World War. It's a mark of ostracism." He himself could not speak Basque fluently, in spite of the fact that most of his family was Basque.

Such ambiguous and negative attitudes towards the Basque language amongst many people in Iparralde affect the way in which inhabitants in Hendaia set up boundaries for the expression of the self. Other kinds of negative attitudes exist in Irun and Hondarribia, in relation to the different sociocultural context developed in Hegoalde under different political and economic circumstances.

The notion of 'diglossia' then does not accurately theorise the language dynamics in the Basque Country. According to Sánchez and Txillardegui, two key Basque nationalist theorists, diglossia is the unequal coexistence of two languages, one considered as distinguished, cultivated and full of prestige, and the other considered low, uncultured and vulgar (Sánchez, 1980:22). Such perceptions date from a time when indeed the Basque language had a very low status. Today, it cannot of course be said that the Basque language is as widely spoken and valued in the public sphere as are French or Spanish. However, to talk in terms of diglossia is mistaken. Rather, as I have briefly explained here and will continue to demonstrate in this thesis, through the use of boundaries, the Basque language, like other languages, can be used as a vehicle of power in different situations.

The fact that Basque is the medium of expression for the abertzale cause creates a complex set of connotations for the language. The importance of the Basque language as a mode of Basque identification was actively promoted from the late 1960s onwards, particularly by the left-wing nationalists in their search for a broad-based constituency. The fact that people of non-Basque descent could learn Basque, even if only superficially, provided an opportunity for expanding the membership of the Basque community. By learning the language, the euskaldun berri could be identified as a Basque person within the left-wing nationalist movement. Language provided a new boundary, demarcating group belonging. But the 'radical' politics of the abertzale movement are perceived by many non-nationalists as a threat to the status quo of Basque society and Basque-speakers who use the language in a rural context are aware that it has political connotations in a more urban context. As for non-Basque speakers, they effectively have to choose between ignoring Basque or getting caught up in the social construction that results from the transmutation of a traditional means of communication into a highly charged social symbol.

Generally, a person actively committed to Basque identity will attempt to use Basque as his or her main mode of communication. In many nationalist fiestas, for example, speaking Basque, however badly, is *de rigueur*. It expresses solidarity between like-minded people and provides a way of identification and acceptance. In this way, however, the Basque language has come to assume political connotations in the eyes of non-nationalists. And, in some cases, it can serve as a deliberately exclusive boundary. So, for example, a friend in Hendaia who had taken Basque lessons but still did not speak it well and so continued to speak French to his friends, commented that he was discouraged from going to *Gaztetxeak* – militant Basque youth centres where music concerts take place – because he felt ill at ease in the presence of others who heard him chat in French to his friends. In another example, a friend complained about the attitude of an old acquaintance during an AB meeting where the threat of schism due to the prospective creation of Batasuna was being discussed. This person chose to address the meeting entirely in Basque despite knowing that my friend and a fair number of other AB members in the audience could not

understand Basque. This person had learnt Basque from zero only three or four years ago and, according to my friend, "just because he now speaks Basque, he thinks he is part of some great exclusive club, and thinks he can be so much more Basque than the rest of us non-Basque speakers here... That really gets on my nerves. I completely agree about the importance of using Basque in meetings and all that. But his particular attitude then was so full of arrogance and evoked a pretty exclusive stance."

The choice of which language to use in which context and with whom or for which subject is an issue of enormous social and political importance. Within such parameters it can be difficult for people to adapt to new boundaries, even when they may wish to do so. The complex pluricultural context of Bidasoa-Txingudi means that language can be used as a symbolic boundary in a rich diversity of ways. The potential for misunderstanding in a plurilingual context is greater than in a monolingual one, as can be illustrated by my observation of social interaction in Bidasoa-Txingudi with Dominique, a man in his mid-twenties from Donibane Lohitzune who declares himself to be an abertzale and attempts to form part of what he understands to be the abertzale world. The way he does so, however, is sometimes the source of misunderstandings.

*Unable to find interesting work in Iparralde, Dominique works in Bordeaux, the capital of the region of Aquitaine some 270 kilometres north of Donibane Lohitzune. As often as he can, however, he returns to the Basque Country at weekends. Concerned with what he sees as a lack of Basque political, cultural and economical dynamism in Iparralde, Dominique is a member of AB. He occasionally gives the group a hand with campaigning and logistics. However, he also stresses his critical stance with regard to the dominant minority in the left-wing abertzale movement which continues to maintain an ambiguous relationship with violence. He tells me that he finds "there is a tendency on the part of these people to isolate themselves from the rest of the local society." "Unfortunately," he adds, "part of the movement is being politically engineered by a more radical group, which gives the rest of the movement a bad image in the eyes of non-Basque-nationalist people."*

*Dominique did not grow up speaking Basque. Because of his new job in Bordeaux, he says, he has too little time to start taking Basque lessons, although he says this will eventually be one of his priorities. Together, we communicate in French but, as I soon find out, Dominique very much enjoys speaking Spanish, which he learnt at school and over the years from much partying in Hegoalde. He compares the inhabitants of Iparralde unfavourably to those of Hegoalde, whom he praises at length. "They are so much more lively and friendly," he said on one occasion when we met in Irun. "So much more active and open than us pathetic people in Iparralde with our Frenchy mentality. It is practically impossible to motivate people there to get going. We abertzales are such a minority there." His dream, he tells me, "is to eventually come and live here in Hegoalde. Or at least have a house here. Forget Donibane Lohitzune and its lousy practically non-existent night life, and just come and hang out here. Be in a real Basque atmosphere."*

*The first time that I arrange to meet Dominique in Bidasoa-Txingui, he suggests that we have lunch in Hondarribia. Knowing that lunch in Hegoalde will be later than in Iparralde, I suggest we meet at half past two in the afternoon. When he arrives, he is not enthusiastic about my suggestion to eat in one of the fish restaurants in the area of the old port, where many people, Hondarribians and tourists, tend to gather. Instead, he insists we have a drink in Muara, one of the main meeting places of the Basque left-wing nationalists in Hondarribia. Although I know the place, Dominique seems keen to lead the way. So I follow him up to the medieval part of town and through the entrance of Muara. Beyond the threshold, before one reaches the bar area, one has to proceed across a small empty space, through another door, and along a narrow corridor, like an*

*antechamber, preparing the intimidated uninitiated for the spectacle of posters, stickers and other paraphernalia donning Basque left-wing nationalist symbols decorating the bar at the end. There, Dominique confronts the barman, cheerfully addressing him in Spanish and orders us drinks. He then turns back to me and addresses me in French. We begin to talk about how life in Iparralde compares to that in Hegoalde and Dominique describes the people of Hegoalde as so much more open-minded and warm-hearted than those of Iparralde. Feeling hungry, I eventually ask Dominique if he would like to eat. Surprised, he replies that he has already had lunch. He had not understood why I had suggested we meet at 2.30 p.m. and, considering it, according to Iparralde custom, far too late for lunch, had already had his lunch at home before meeting up with me. So while I was working up an appetite, he had assumed we were meeting just for a drink.*

Apart from demonstrating the romantic and rather superficial image that is sometimes entertained by non-Hegoalde people about Hegoalde and the rest of Spain, this anecdote shows the extent to which certain boundaries can be engrained in the construction of the self. While Dominique may wish to associate himself with certain cultural boundaries, it remains difficult for him to assimilate them. Because we had not 'checked' each other's symbolic boundaries and observed how they were used in different contexts, I had mistakenly presumed that, from the laudatory way he talked about Hegoalde and the strong identification he professed to have with it, he could adapt himself to its symbolic boundaries. The differences between what he said about himself and how he actually behaved reveal significant aspects of his identity construction.

*One evening, Dominique joins me on a night out in Irun with some girlfriends of mine from Hondarribia. As self-proclaimed left-wing abertzaleak, Aurkene, Miren, Maite and Izaskun, choose to begin the evening in Hazia,<sup>339</sup> a bar similar to Muara off Mosku Plaza in Irun. Whenever I go out with them we speak in Basque, although from time to time, in order to emphasize a point, they use Spanish. They include me in their group and in their conversations, although I am not completely fluent in Basque. I understand what they are saying and I am able to contribute to the conversation, although there is a limit to how much I can take part. At times, I wish that I could use Spanish in order to express myself clearly, but I feel that the language has no place in our conversation and mutual identity construction, so I opt to remain silent; even when they make intermittent exclamations in Spanish. On the few occasions when I did contribute to the conversation in Spanish, I did not sense an enthusiastic response on their part and their replies continued to be in Basque. On the other hand, when I had difficulty saying something in Basque, they were patient and helpful. As an honorary member of the group, I am required to fit into the boundaries within which they express their identity. And since these boundaries are set by them, they can decide whether to comply with them or not, breaking into Spanish from time to time if they so desire.*

*On this occasion, we are sitting at the bar, simply dressed in loose black trousers and tight dark-coloured shirts, drinking our kalimotxos<sup>340</sup> and chatting away in Basque, when Dominique walks in with another friend from Donibane Lohitzune. Both are wearing t-shirts, Dominique's sporting the AEK logo and his friend's the Basque fashion label from Irunea 'Kukuxumusu', casual jeans and trainers. I invite them to join us and, in Basque, introduce them to my friends. Wishing to be sociable and friendly, Dominique chats to them cheerfully in Spanish. In response, however, Aurkene and her friends just nod and smile. Evidently not wanting to speak in Spanish, they resume chatting with each other in Basque. Undeterred by their reserve, Dominique talks to me in*

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<sup>339</sup> Meaning "Grain" in Basque, alluding to the eventual sprouting and blossoming of a free and independent Basque Country.

<sup>340</sup> This is a mixture of cola and cheap red wine.

*French, throwing in Spanish words. Apparently impressed by my friends, he takes me aside and asks me how I got to know them.*

*We continue to stand by the bar drinking together, Aurkene, Maite, Miren and Izaskun chatting amongst themselves in Basque, and I standing between them and Dominique and his friend, who are chatting to me in French. I feel I am in an awkward position, unable to get everyone to talk to each other in a consensual way. Aurkene does speak some French, having spent a couple of years at the university faculty of Baiona. But, in this situation, she does not appear to wish to use this language. Dominique, still eager to get to know my friends, continues to chat to them in Spanish, asking them questions and cracking jokes. This, however, does not have much effect, as Aurkene and her friends continue to seem unwilling to speak Spanish. As this scene continues, I feel increasingly embarrassed by Dominique's carefree insistence.*

*Eventually, Aurkene, Miren, Maite and Izaskun decide to move on to another bar. As Dominique and his friend plan to return early to Donibane Lohitzune, I remain with them in the same bar for a last drink before joining Aurkene and her friends elsewhere for the rest of the night. We resume chatting in French, I more at ease now that there is no more language miscommunication.*

This anecdote briefly illustrates the difficulty of communicating between supposedly like-minded people even when there is a mutually understood language. Disillusioned by the lack of left-wing abertzale ambience in Iparralde, Dominique is keen to mix with people of the left-wing abertzale circle in Hegoalde. But his entrance into that world is marred by his failure to recognise and observe the necessary symbolic boundaries. While his style of dress as well as his choice of bar clearly signal his identification with left-wing Basque nationalists and facilitate his integration with them, his inappropriate choice of language creates an obstacle that makes his respect for these other boundaries ineffective.

The unsatisfactory situation in which Dominique finds himself is not due to the fact that he does not know Basque but to the fact that he does not adequately compensate for this lack of knowledge. There are many people who identify with left-wing abertzale culture but who do not speak Basque. Many, however, conscious of the importance of speaking Basque for being fully included in the social group, try and learn it, for example by attending lessons with AEK where, in their mutual interest and effort, the students experience strong bonding. Those unable to take lessons, for whatever reason, make up for their lack of fluency by peppering their speech with Basque words and phrases. They will often begin a conversation with a brief cordiality in Basque, before resorting to Spanish or French. Others excuse themselves by explaining that "unfortunately they do not speak Basque" and then proceed to talk in French or Spanish.

It is surprising that Dominique, as a self-proclaimed abertzale, does not engage in such a strategy. Although he is well-informed about the political and cultural situation in Hegoalde, he continues to associate the Hegoalde lifestyle with the Spanish language, which he takes pleasure in speaking instead of French. Perhaps, in his pleasure at speaking Spanish, the language of a culture which he admires for its mythical warmth and liveliness, he is unaware of the complexities of local identity formation. Practically all inhabitants of Hegoalde are quite capable of speaking Spanish and their way of living and expressing themselves in social relations is very much linked to the general culture of the Iberian peninsula. When Aurkene and her friends use Spanish among themselves, however, this signifies a deliberate acceptance of a symbolic boundary marker in a specific situation. But the difference between speaking Spanish among themselves and speaking Spanish with Dominique is that in the latter situation, the boundary marker is imposed on them by someone they do not know.

Were Dominique to have made a few preliminary explanations about his inability to speak Basque, or to have used some Basque words, the reaction of Aurkene and her friends might well have been different. In fact, however, their coldness was already evident before Dominique even began talking to them, as he chatted to me in French. On another occasion, I recall, when I was talking about some friends of mine in Hendaia, Aurkene had asked me whether they were euskaldunak. When I said “no, frantsesak”, her face showed a little smirk. It seemed to me that she was thinking “frantsesa=gabatxo”, ignoring the fact that in Iparralde, it is not because one is French-speaking that one is necessarily gabatxo and, one may, like Dominique, be a supporter of left-wing Basque nationalism. Aurkene’s choice of not speaking French to Dominique, as an alternative to Spanish, may simply have been due to her lacking confidence in this language. But my interpretation is that French was also simply not one of the boundary markers that she wished to employ in that particular situation, on a night out with her Basque-speaking friends in a bar surrounded by fellow left-wing Basque nationalist sympathisers.

In other situations, while communication takes place in French or Spanish, occasionally saying something in Basque serves as a reminder of the inclusive boundary that bonds the speakers together. For example, in a meeting I once had with a representative of the former party Euskal Herritarrok in the municipal council of Irun, after initiating the conversation in Basque, I asked if we could switch to Spanish, so I could be sure to capture all he wanted to say in the interview. Once the interview over, the councillor returned to Basque to chat more informally and bid me goodbye. Similarly, with two friends from Irun, most of our face-to-face conversations were carried out in Spanish for the sake of spontaneity, but then, when it came to writing to each other, Basque was the language we used. This indicates what our ideal way of communicating together would be if I was fluent enough: always in Basque, a boundary marking the more intimate quality of our relationship.

The boundary quality of the Basque language in this case is also well illustrated in a meeting I attended in Hendaia, organised by the left-wing Basque nationalist group, Biharko Hendaia. This meeting was to discuss the approaching campaign for the municipal elections in March 2001, held in the headquarters of a local social club with political affinities to the group. When I arrived, the meeting had already started, and about a dozen people were already sitting around a blackboard in discussion with Robert Arrambide, the leader of Biharko Hendaia, standing beside it. When I walked in, they all turned round to look at me. I was the only person present who was not a member of the group. But, as Mr. Arrambide and I were already acquainted, he introduced me to the rest of the group. This he did in French, at which point, a woman in the audience whom I had also once talked to in Basque a few months before, added in Basque: “And she knows Basque!” At that moment, I understood I was welcomed into the group. Mr. Arrambide proceeded with the debate and, although his notes on the black board were in Basque and he talked about “Hendaia”, all the discussion was carried out in French. The reason for this was that some people in the audience did not know Basque and, in such a small meeting where practically everyone knew each other quite well, having the discussion in Basque and then translating it to French would have been too cumbersome. So, differently to the case of Aurkene and her friends, what bound the people together in this situation was the agreement that Basque is important – which allows me in – and yet their acknowledgement of the need to make an exception in the case of this meeting for practical reasons. The inclusive quality of the boundary of Basque was maintained by continuing to use Basque for references to place-names such as Hendaia and Mr. Arrambide still writing words in Basque on the black board.

Lack of knowledge of the Basque language, on the other hand, can be a source of voluntary self-exclusion. For example, Martine, a middle-aged woman living in Hendaia, says she has no interest in learning Basque, in spite of her claims to feeling Basque and her Basque roots on her

father's side. Her reason, she says, is that she feels a constant pressure from people around her to speak it. She says she feels this pressure especially at work, in Sokoia. "It is all a brain-washing enterprise, making everybody feel they have to learn it. It would just be a service to the militants. I won't succumb to this", she explains. One time, she recalls, a work colleague had commented on the fact that a new member of staff had taken Basque lessons and had concluded in jest "now you know what you have left to do, eh, Martine? Learn Basque" to which Martine got angry and categorically replied "no, I shan't" and walked off. So Martine engages in the symbolic struggle over the Basque language by refusing to learn it. Such an enterprise on her part, involves her rejecting the Basque language outright.

At the same time however, it must be considered that Martine engages in a dialectic which involves justifying her disinterest with the Basque language by putting the blame on the political situation in the Basque Country. When I asked her whether she didn't feel the urge to learn Basque simply for her own satisfaction, following her own terms of identification, she replied that this would not be possible, "not with this pressure I feel around me. It provides no choice." However, later on in the conversation, she adds: "Anyhow, I don't need to learn Basque to feel Basque. I would prefer to spend my free time doing other things." So Martine justifies her lack of interest in the Basque language as an aspect of her identity repertoire by accusing Basque militants of exerting pressure and a bad image on the language. In this way, she is able to use the Basque language as a way of setting up her own boundary between herself and Basque militants.

Even native Basque speakers sometimes, I noticed, avoid speaking Basque in public, so as to disassociate themselves from possible political connotations.<sup>341</sup> The preference for Spanish rather than Basque in the presentation of news programmes on the local Irun-based television station Txingudi Telebista can also be understood in this way. Txingudi Telebista is a member of *Bai Euskarari*, the Basque Country-wide initiative to promote the Basque language in the workplace. If it were truly to aspire to being a 'Txingudi' television station, it should in theory use Basque and French as well as Spanish. Since most of the station's audience are elderly non-Basque-speakers living in Irun, however, the television team chooses to broadcast most of its programmes in Spanish. Only a few programmes and news items are presented in Basque and even fewer in French. The team manager, although a fluent Basque speaker, preferred the news to be presented in Spanish or French rather than in Basque. I could not find any reason to explain this choice other than her lack of appreciation of the language as a possible alternative mode of communication in the professional context and maybe even a desire to avoid Basque out of fear that it might be associated with militant nationalism. The argument that too few television viewers understood Basque was made invalid, since very few could understand French either.

Felipe Saragueta, the director of the Partzuergo, once remarked to me how great a difference it made for him to be able to communicate in Basque with the people he had to deal with in municipal offices and on the town councils. Negotiations and trust became easier on both sides, giving him an advantage over those who could not speak Basque. Again, the language boundary marked an increased closeness between those within it compared to those outside it.<sup>342</sup> However,

<sup>341</sup> As an example of this, I once heard an old Basque woman saying she was ashamed of being Basque and consequently avoided speaking Basque in public, because of all the political issues around Basqueness. On another occasion, a friend in Hendaia of New Zealand nationality but who had already spent over ten years living in the Basque Country admitted to me that, the first few years he lived here he rejected the Basque language and had no desire to learn it because of the political connotations he had learnt to associate with it.

<sup>342</sup> The fact that Mr. Saragueta is euskaldun is also read by some, in the particular cultural-political situation of the Basque Country, as a marker with political implications. As he said himself, "if you are euskaldun, you are more likely to be abertzale". Although privately he is a supporter of the left-wing nationalists, he is sceptical of the latest radical shifts taken by Batasuna, and he avoids mentioning his Basque nationalist sympathies to his colleagues in the Partzuergo and Bidasoa Bizirik. "But definitely," he reckons, "they must guess somewhere that I am nationalist." He

in the political context of his job, he also mentioned that it was necessary for him to be careful not to overdo his use of Basque, especially in the presence of those who do not speak it. Doing so would give the impression that he was setting up a boundary between himself and those who did not speak Basque, preventing any bonding within or across other symbolic boundaries, such as support for one or another political party. In my own personal experience, it also happened that, in some situations, it was best for me to downplay my knowledge of the Basque language with local inhabitants who did not know it. This helped to avoid misunderstandings on their part about my possible nationalist sympathies<sup>343</sup> or making them uncomfortable about their lack of knowledge despite being more 'Basque' than me.<sup>344</sup>

### Conclusion

In this chapter, I have sought to demonstrate how language can be used as a marker for identity in a variety of different ways. I have shown how language can be used as a boundary marking difference and either inclusion or exclusion between a person and another. My examples also aimed to show how the use of language can be interpreted in different ways by different people. While some may take it as a marker signalling a boundary that welcomes them in, for others it may be taken as a marker that signals certain conditions, requiring them to act accordingly so as to find herself either inside or outside the boundary that is drawn. So we see that there are different 'realities' in the symbolism of language with consequences for the sense and expression of personal and group identity. For the Partzuergo, which seeks to promote trilingualism and to present the Basque language as the common symbol to the inhabitants of all three towns, in an attempt to draw inclusive boundaries enabling everyone in Bidasoa-Txingudi, whatever language they speak, feel Txingudian together, these different realities pose a serious challenge.

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recounts that once a member of the Partzuergo council, an EA councillor of Hondarribia, tried to find out more about his political views by coaxing him in Basque. "He said to me in Basque "yes, yes you are euskaldun, you must be abertzale too, eh? Like us," recounts Mr. Saragueta. On numerous occasions, too, he says he has been solicited by the different political representatives behind closed doors. On several occasions councillors from Hondarribia have sought to obtain information from him in privacy away from the presence of the Socialists of Irun. EH representatives in Hondarribia have also sought to gain his confidence in private meetings with him.

<sup>343</sup> A notable example is when I interviewed a PP councillor in Irun in Spanish. Impressed by my ability to speak this language, he asked what other languages I knew. When I came to list Basque as one of the languages, I sensed his face freeze for half a second.

<sup>344</sup> Back in my village, I recall the surprise and slight embarrassment on the faces of some of the other local youths when they first heard that I had begun taking Basque lessons (at the time, my sister and I were known in the area as "les anglaises" (the English girls)). In spite of being from Basque families, they had been accustomed to always communicate in French and, I recall, expressed very little interest in Basque cultural and political issues. Over the years, however, I noticed that they too began trying to use more Basque words in their speech, and two even took it upon themselves to take lessons with AEK. On some occasions, these even tried to correct me on my pronunciation. At the same time, the village fiestas, organised by them, became increasingly adorned with Basque writing and ikurriñas.

## Chapter Ten: Other Boundaries for Identity – Space, Language, Dress

There are many ways of describing 'going for a night out' or 'hitting the town' in Bidasoa-Txingudi. This reflects both the choice of phrases available in Basque, French and Spanish in the area and the cultural and political implications of using one or other of these languages. Few people speak all three, and those who do often prefer to use one rather than another for a variety of personal, cultural and socio-political reasons. At the same time, words from each language are used in conversation by people speaking in one or other of all three languages.

Generally, Basque speakers in Hegoalde talk about *farra egin* or *parranda egin*. 'Farra' or its dialectical variation *parra* means to laugh or to have fun in Basque. A Spanish speaker might hispanicise the noun and say *ir de parranda* or *ir de farra*. He or she might also say in Spanish *ir de juerga* or *ir de copas* or, more rarely, *ir de potes*. 'Juerga' is a Spanish colloquial term meaning partying, while a 'pote' is a Spanish colloquial term meaning a drink. This last word has been adopted by the French-speaking inhabitants of Iparralde to talk about *faire le poteo*. Some Basque-speakers of Iparralde do talk about "*poteo egin*" but more often they simply talk about *besta egin*,<sup>345</sup> which literally means to 'make fiesta'.

Irun provides the main nightlife location for young people in the area. With a larger population than either Hendaia or Hondarribia, it has a markedly wider choice of bars. On occasion, young people from Hegoalde who identify with left-wing Basque nationalism may go for a night out in Iparralde, for example to attend a celebration organised by a Basque association or in favour of a Basque cause. This has become possible thanks to the ending of frontier controls in a way that it never was during the Franco years and the transition years that followed. Sometimes, for example, young people from Irun and Hondarribia go out for a *bertsolari* evening in Pausu, near Hendaia, at a bar called *Xaia*, or to a dinner evening in support of Basque political prisoners, or, more rarely, to the annual *Sagarno Eguna* in the main square of Hendaia. Further afield, some also attend the annual *Herri Urrats*<sup>346</sup> held in support of Basque-language schools in Iparralde outside the town of Sempere, or the *AEK eguna*,<sup>347</sup> which rotates its venue among local villages every year. Following current fashion in Iparralde, the most popular alcoholic drinks at such events are beer, cider, *patxaran* (a typical Basque liqueur usually made in Nafarroa), and *kalimotxo*.

For the most part, however, nightlife in Iparralde is dismissed by young people in Hegoalde as a dull affair. Indeed, in Iparralde, there is no tradition of 'poteo' other than, most often, on the occasion of the annual *fêtes*, or *fiestas* that take place in every town and village at some point during the year, when bars set up in the streets by the local *fiesta* committee<sup>348</sup> and associations contribute to the general festive atmosphere. On these occasions, young people tend to drink mixtures of soft drink and spirits, such as *BabyBanga*, made of orange squash and whisky, and *GinKas*, made of gin and lemonade. Around eight bars offer some sort of social nightlife in Hendaia on a year-round basis. However, it is rare to find these full, other than during the annual *fiestas* in August.

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<sup>345</sup> Or "*pesta egin*", a dialectical variation more commonly found in the rural interior of Iparralde.

<sup>346</sup> This literally means the Step of the People. It is an event organised to raise funds for *Seaska*, the coordinator of Basque language schools – *ikastolak* – in Iparralde.

<sup>347</sup> In addition to the *Korrika*, AEK organises many fund-raising events. One of these is the *AEK eguna*. It usually involves a whole day of festivities, with shows, cultural activities, friendly competitions, concerts with Basque groups and a dinner.

<sup>348</sup> The *fiesta* committee is often made up of the local youth who receive money from the municipality in order to organise the *fiestas*. In Hendaia, however, for the past decade, this *bestako elkartea* in Basque, or *comité des fêtes* in French, is largely dependent on the municipality, with the participation of municipal councillors in the majority.

In general, young people in Hendaia prefer to cross over to Hegoalde – nowadays with greater ease thanks to the ending of frontier controls – to enjoy its lively atmosphere and cheaper prices in bars.<sup>349</sup> In Hegoalde, too, the most common drinks are spirits mixed with soft drinks, but the ingredients are different: cola and orangeade, for instance, mixed with rum or whisky in big glasses which are often shared between friends. In summer, once the annual fiestas of Irun in late June are past, Hondarribia, with its picturesque fishing harbour and its seaside resort and historic centre, becomes an active place for nightlife. Following the annual fiestas of Hondarribia in early September, however, Irun comes back into its own.

Whether in Irun, Hondarribia or Hendaia, in choosing which bars to frequent and which bars to avoid, individuals impose their own symbolic boundaries, adapting these as necessary in order to fit their personal sense of self. At bars in Hegoalde, young people from Hendaia often stand out from their local counterparts because of their use of French and their different manners and behaviour. What is more, they tend to favour a few specific bars and discothèques in Irun. Locals sometimes comment that 'the French', or 'gabachos', set themselves apart by their boisterous behaviour and excessive consumption of alcohol, getting extremely drunk before the evening is over and often ending up in brawls. While young people from Hegoalde generally go out in cuadrillas those from Hendaia tend to go out in mixed-sex groups.

Various degrees of such stereotypical behaviour will become evident in the ethnographic account below, made up of a series of synthetic descriptions of people out on a Saturday night in Irun. While the characters are real, I have changed their names in order to preserve their anonymity. Together, they provide a resumé of my personal experiences of going out in the area.

*It is past 2.00 a.m. on a Saturday night in Calle de la Mierda,<sup>350</sup> literally meaning 'Shit Street', a street in Irun more conventionally known as Calle Cipriano Larranaga but popularly known for the drug addicts who used to frequent the area a few years ago. Today, the street has been cleared of such people and a row of night bars has opened. At weekends, these bars, with flashy modern façades, some with catchy English or Irish names, attract numerous young revellers from Irun and its environs, including Hondarribia and, to a lesser extent, Hendaia. As the bars fill up, the street becomes a noisy hangout, littered with glasses and empty cigarette packets.*

*One of these bars, No.10, is packed with people dancing to chart music, practically elbow to elbow. The average age is about 25, and most of these people are clustered in same-sex groups of four or five men or women, sharing drinks and cigarettes. The interior is dimly lit, with the walls painted in dark colours, highlighting the varnished wood trimmings with jagged and curved edges on the walls, the ceiling and the bar. As part of the gaudy décor, cocktail recipes in Spanish are painted on the walls all around. The music blaring out from the small hi-tech stereos makes verbal communication difficult other than by shouting in each other's ears. Instead, social communication consists of squeals of laughter, smiles and a general shuffling and singing along to the lyrics, as the revellers sip from their large plastic glasses of spirits mixed with soft drinks.*

*Not far from the bar, four women are standing together. As they dance self-consciously to the music, they look around at the rest of the crowd. Nora, Ana and Vanesa are wearing close-cut black trousers and skimpy tops, while Laura wears a glittery red a-line skirt with high-heel boots, a silk cream shirt and a fuchsia neckerchief. Nora and Ana both have a lauburu, a Basque traditional symbol, hanging from their necks. They are all wearing makeup, consisting of foundation, red*

<sup>349</sup> As Sébastien, a Hendaian friend, explained to me, "It's not that we Hendaians are really boring, never go out and all that – we do! It's just that we don't do so in our own town. You'll find Hendaians in bars and fiestas everywhere but Hendaia! It's quite sad, but that's the way it is!"

<sup>350</sup> I use Spanish since this is how I have always heard this street referred to, even by Basque speakers.

lipstick and eye shadow. Above the noise, they try to hold a conversation in Spanish. The Spanish 2000 summer hit 'Bomba' comes on. Shrieking, the four jump about and dance with increased vigour, singing in unison to the chorus.

Elsewhere in the crowd, another group of friends, this time made up of five boys – Antton, Iker, Eduardo, Iñaki and Urbil – are also dancing to the summer hit, though less wildly, and singing along to the lyrics. Edging closer to the bar, they order another round of coke mixed with rum and a second packet of cigarettes. Eduardo and Iñaki wear dark checked shirts and new-looking jeans and their hair is short and gelled back. Eñaut, Iker and Urbil are wearing dark jeans, plain t-shirts and lambswool sweaters, with their hair newly washed but without gel. Eñaut stands out from his friends because his ears are pierced with small silver rings. As they get jostled around by the crowd, they manage to hold a brief chat in Basque, above the sound of 'Bomba'.

Grasping his wallet with a sticker of the Basque flag on it, Eñaut tries to get the attention of the barman. As he does so, he accidentally jostles another man next to him busy in conversation with a woman with permed blonde hair and a pink skimpy top. This man, similarly dressed in freshly ironed jeans and a dark checked shirt, but with his hair slicked back with gel, angrily pushes Eñaut back, swearing in Spanish. Thus begins a little scuffle, as Eñaut answers back, also in Spanish. Neighbouring groups of people, including Nora and her friends back off from the bar to a safer place. Luckily, the confrontation dies down as both men refuse to acknowledge each other's existence any further. Everything falls back into the familiar rhythm of dancing to the music and passing drinks and cigarettes round.

A short distance away in an older part of town, more young people are partying. A dozen bars surround or stand just off, Plaza Moscu, - Moscow Square – or Mosku in Basque for short, a rectangular space lined with poplar trees, officially known as Urdanibia Plaza. It is unclear where the popular name originates, though many reckon it is related to the left-wing Basque nationalist and anarchist character of those who have frequented this area over the last forty years or so. These bars are older looking, occupying the ground floor of the many eighteenth and late nineteenth century buildings that surround the square.

Miguel is one of these bars, located in a street giving onto the square. A wooden sign hangs above the door with the name of the bar carved out in pseudo-traditional Basque style letters. On the front door, a poster advertises a bertsolari evening singing in Xaia, a bar in Pausu, on the other side of the Bidasoa near Hendaia. Past this door, a medium-sized room with dark rugged stone walls is illuminated by the lamps above the bar. Like many of the bars on this square, the interior has a rustic atmosphere due to the wood of the low beams on the ceiling, the window sill and the bar that fills the left side. In the middle of the bar, by the beer taps, a collection box gathers funds in support of Basque convicts and their families. Behind the bar is a collection of handmade objects: an African mask, some witch dolls made of wood, straw and clay, a leather mask of the kind often found in arts and crafts fairs in different countries, and post-cards sent by friends from various places across the world.

Miguel is similarly crowded, mostly with small single-sex groups of friends in their late teens to late twenties. Amongst them is Aurkene, with her women friends Estitxu, Ainara, Nerea and Maite. They are more simply dressed than Nora and her group, in dark close-fitting shirts and sweaters and dark, loose-fitting jeans. The music they dance to, as they pass around glasses of coke and rum- and a mixture of red wine and coke for Aurkene- has a more hard rock flavour, with Basque lyrics. At one point, it changes quite radically to the familiar 'Bomba' song. The reaction is less euphoric than at No.10, but Aurkene and her friends nonetheless appear to enjoy the music as they dance animatedly.

*A group of four boys enters. Josu, wearing a simple checked shirt and combat trousers, with scruffy hair and several silver rings in his ears, leads the way. His friends, Aitor, Garicoitz and Gorka are all wearing t-shirts with Basque slogans on the front, one produced by AEK, promoting the use of the Basque language, and another calling for "independentzia". On seeing Aurkene and her friends, they exchange greetings in Basque: they know each other from hanging out in Muara, a bar in Hondarribia with links to the left-wing Basque nationalist movement. But after acknowledging each other's presence, the two groups resume partying on their own.*

*Not far away is another group of four friends, this time men and women together. Elsa, dressed in a black long-sleeved shirt and matching black trousers, wears a badge with the logo calling for Basque convicts to be transferred back to Euskal Herria above her left breast and a golden lauburu hanging from a chain around her neck. Alongside her, Antoine, Xabi and Marise are also wearing t-shirts with the AEK logo. They have come together from Hendaia. They order beers and stand close to the door, away from the crowd and the music, chatting in a mixture of French and Basque.*

*At this moment, Nora comes in with her friends. Just as they were leaving Calle de la Mierda to go home to bed, Nora realised that she had forgotten her jumper in Miguel, where they had begun their night out. As she heads towards the bar, Nora runs into Aurkene. They greet each other briefly in Basque, as they know each other from having been in the local equivalent of the Girl Guides together when they were children.*

*Having retrieved her jumper, Nora and her friends leave Miguel again. On their way home, they walk through San Juan Plaza, another part of the old centre of Irun lined with bars, where things are also in full swing. On the way, Nora's friend Vanesa bumps into Stéphane, a young man from Hendaia whom she knows because they both work at the same company in Hendaia. Breaking into French, she greets him and his mixed-sex group of friends, who have also come from Hendaia on a night out. They are dressed in smart jeans, surf t-shirts, and thin woolly sweaters loosely tied around their shoulders, and the women are wearing makeup and some of them lauburus from chains around their necks. Amongst them, I recognise Danielle, Céline and Christophe from the Océanic bar in Hendaia, the principal meeting place of rugby fans. Clutching big plastic glasses of rum and coke which they have bought in one bar, they are heading for a bar around the corner from San Juan Plaza, their habitual haunt, Kutxa, a bar decorated in a similar way to No.10 in Calle de la Mierda, with a flashy glass façade and dark, mirrored interior, before eventually ending their evening in Zona, a discothèque nearby.*

This brief account gives us an overview of the spatial context used by different groups of young people during a typical night out in Irun. We have been presented briefly to six groups of friends in their mid to late twenties: Nora with her group of women friends, and Aurkene with hers; Eñaut with his group of men friends and Josu with his; and Elsa and Stéphane, each with their group of men and women friends. Generally, they all seem to enjoy themselves more or less in the same way: going from bar to bar, ordering drinks and passing them around, dancing in clustered groups to very loud music which includes a mixture of Spanish summer hits, and smoking American cigarettes.

However, subtle differences can be noted in their style of dress and taste in drinks and music, and further details would give more clues about how each of these characters uses boundaries affecting language, dress and behaviour to construct his or her personal identity. In this chapter, I have chosen to hint only superficially at these, so as not to distract from our specific interest in the use of space.

Four bar areas stand out. First, Calle de la Mierda, in a central part of Irun which has been restored over the past forty years with the construction of blocks of flats and, over the past decade, following

the removal of drug dealers and addicts, bars on the ground floor. These bars are modern in style, with flashy façades. One is a recently opened Irish-style pub. The young people who come here mostly dress according to mainstream fashion, and the music is mainly Spanish pop music. Though mostly Spanish is spoken in these bars, Basque is also spoken and many people wear various mainstream Basque symbols. On this street, we observed interaction in the bar called No.10.

Secondly, Mosku Plaza, in another central part of Irun where the streets have retained their eighteenth and nineteenth century architecture. The bars on the ground floor of many of these buildings have a less modern and more traditional style than those in Calle de la Mierda. This style is deliberately maintained, for example in the Basque names of the bars written in pseudo-traditional Basque letters. Inside, many of these bars cultivate an 'ethnic' style, with craft objects as decorations. Their explicitly Basque character is demonstrated by stickers and posters stuck on the walls and windows displaying traditional Basque symbols, advertisements for Basque cultural events and slogans promoting the use of Basque. Some of these bars have an additional left-wing Basque nationalist tone, with posters calling for the independence of Euskal Herria, portraits of Basque convicts or collection boxes in support of the convicts and their families. The young people who come here tend to dress in a more dressed-down fashion, often wearing clothes that convey explicitly left-wing Basque nationalist messages. In this area, we observed partying in the bar called Miguel.

Thirdly, the area around San Juan Plaza. This is also in an old part of Irun, with eighteenth and nineteenth century buildings and bars with a correspondingly traditional appearance. Compared with the bars in Mosku Plaza, however, they have fewer Basque symbols, particularly political ones. They are also slightly more spacious and more brightly lit. One has recently been renovated as a pseudo-Irish pub, similar to the one in Calle de la Mierda.

Finally, near the area around Plaza San Juan is a street, which, like Calle de la Mierda, has been redeveloped with blocks of modern flats. At street level, there are a number of bars similar to those in Calle de la Mierda, one of which is Kutxa and another, more in a discothèque style, is Zona. Many of the same young people from Irun and Hondarribia who go to San Juan Plaza and Calle de la Mierda also frequent this area. In addition, it is popular among young people from Iparralde, many of whom speak French and little or no Spanish or Basque.

While there are more bars in other parts of Irun, these four areas are the main points of reference for young people going out in Irun. Each has specific connotations for the people that frequent them. Eñaut, for example, whom we saw partying with his male friends in No.10, in Calle de la Mierda, makes a clear distinction between each of the four areas. For him, Mosku Plaza is "an area quite linked with the abertzale left, I mean the HB people. And well, I don't really like going there. It's not my kind of... I just don't enjoy the whole aura of the place." By contrast, he sees Calle de la Mierda as "more a place *de copas*- for drinks- basically a place for *pijos*<sup>351</sup> - people with gelled hair, more money, and more conservative. Whether they identify themselves as Basque or not, it makes no difference. Of course, it is a place which you would associate more with the PP, if you really had to generalise." As for the other two areas, he adds, "you have the French area, two discothèques where the French go: the Jennifer, this big discothèque on the road to Hondarribia, and, more central, a few bars, like Zona, Kutxa etc... Next to these, you have the area of San Juan Plaza, which is more of an atmosphere *de toda la vida*,<sup>352</sup> the old Irun. Which I would say is more

<sup>351</sup> This is a Spanish expression to refer to people who are quite snobbish and who spend their money on expensive fashion items. At the same time, *pijos* are also known to have a distinctive dress code which, while consisting of all the most fashionable labels, is quite conservative.

<sup>352</sup> We saw this expression already being used in discussions related to the Alarde. Here, again, it evokes this idea of a 'real' or 'genuine' Irunian atmosphere – of always.

nationalistic – in a different way to those in Mosku. You can definitely see a difference, in the décor and the style of people.”

Nora defines the four areas in a similar way, although her boundaries are slightly different. On this occasion, we see her and her friends starting out in Calle de la Mierda and ending up at Miguel in Mosku Plaza. On other occasions, I have seen her enjoying a drink in the area of San Juan Plaza. At Miguel, Nora is well aware of the presence of symbols in support of the Basque left-wing nationalist movement, such as the collection box “in support of amnesty and the return of Basque prisoners to Euskal Herria and all that and... no, I don’t support that, when it comes down to it but... I don’t know I just... I suppose it passes me by. I enjoy coming to this bar because I like the general atmosphere, the mixture of people and the music.” Nonetheless, she draws a line between Miguel and some of the other bars in Mosku Plaza, stating that she does not go to all of them. “There are a few bars in Mosku where I just wouldn’t put a foot in. Some like Eskina, because they are too *macarra*- too plebian, all these druggies and punks. Others, like Hazia, are really left-wing abertzale, and they don’t interest me one bit. And then, the other one, Kabegorri... well, you get all those that support the participation of women in the Alarde. And, well, that’s not my kind of people either.”

By contrast, Aurkene, the daughter of a councillor representing the left-wing Basque nationalist political part EH in Hondarribia, and Josu, a young man currently on the dole but actively involved in voluntary activities with AEK and also on the local committee of Haika, enjoy going not only to Miguel but to the other bars in Mosku Plaza as well. Both say they like these bars “because they are much more Basque-speaking”. Josu explains that he attaches great importance to being able to speak Basque rather than Spanish in the bars that he frequents. “I am from Hondarribia. But once, when I was small, my family had to live in Irun for a while. I really didn’t like that. So few people here are Basque-speaking that you always have to use Spanish. I remember.. at one point, I became conscious of the fact that I was always having to use Spanish, in the streets, in the shops, with Spanish television and I realised how difficult it actually is to *live* in Basque. And that is what I like about Hondarribia: the fact that it is possible to just speak Basque, go into a shop and just speak. In Irun, you still get these disagreeable comments sometimes. You walk into a shop and when you speak Basque, some people just say nicely, “I’m sorry, I don’t understand”, and so at that point I’m happy to speak in Spanish. But then you get the occasional fool who tells you: “talk to me in *cristiano*”.<sup>353</sup> So basically, when I do go out in Irun, well, Mosku is the place where I like to go.” In a similar vein, Aurkene emphasises her attachment to speaking Basque and adds, “Mosku is more abertzale.”

Aurkene and Josu also go to the bars in Calle de la Mierda, however. “OK, they are not so explicitly abertzale, but so what?” says Aurkene to me in Basque. “I am not interested in following political lines the whole time. These bars I really like for having fun, their atmosphere, the music and all that.” As for Elsa, who lives in Hendaia, when she wants a big night out, “basically, to do the poteo,” she practically only goes to Mosku Plaza. “Sometimes I will start the evening around San Juan. I like to go there too because it is part of the old Irun and Basque-speaking. But I will always end up in Mosku. I like Mosku because it is my kind of atmosphere. It’s friendly, most bars have Basque music.” When I asked her about Calle de la Mierda, however, she said she was not aware of its existence. “But anyway,” she adds, “I am not interested in hanging out with the Spanish and the *franchouillards*.<sup>354</sup> When I am here in Hegoalde, what I like is to be in abertzale places, which are not easy to find in Iparralde, or basically just really limited.” As a self-defined left-wing abertzale,

<sup>353</sup> This is used by some sections of the Spanish-speaking population to express the idea Spanish is the ‘proper’ - Christian - language, as opposed to the ‘pagan, prosaic and plebeian’ Basque language.

<sup>354</sup> This is a derogatory term served to label those ‘typically’ French people of ‘French mentality’ who have no interest in Basque culture and no consciousness of Iparralde as different to France.

Elsa has a firm idea of where she wants to go: “the places where the abertzaleak are, where I can get a Basque atmosphere.”

Clearly, then, there is more to the ‘atmosphere’ of the bars of Irun than just music and friendly jostling together in a small crowded space. Asier, the bar tender in Miguel, explains what he thinks is the appeal of his particular bar: “You have a mixture of different people who come here. Before coming here, I worked in a bar by the train station, and there it was more just old men coming in for their daily glass of wine, the txikiteo, you know. And many of them just spoke Spanish the whole time. That was another generation and another cultural environment- Irunians, but many with Spanish origins. Here, on the other hand, I can speak Basque. And for me this is important. There, there was no way I could speak it. And at the same time, this place is not political. You can come in dressed as you want. We don’t mix things up. I think that’s important too. OK, we have the collection box in support of Basque prisoners. But this is just a support of general principles, you know, Human Rights. There is no pushing politics down people’s throats here.”

Miguel succeeds in attracting a range of different clients by having sufficient Basque cultural and political markers for those like Aurkene, Josu and Elsa who identify strongly with Basque left-wing nationalist culture, but not so many as to antagonise those like Nora who do not identify with it so much. The atmosphere can include popular modern Basque music as well as Spanish chart music. And the people who go there range from Nora, who speaks only Spanish and whose style of dress is considered by many as “Spanish” in general cultural and political terms, to Aurkene and Josu who prefer speaking Basque. Asier, Aurkene, Josu and Elsa all attach importance to the fact of being able to speak Basque in Miguel, while Nora, who does not speak Basque, is not prevented by any language boundaries from enjoying Miguel like everyone else.

Nonetheless, some other people who also identify themselves as Basque feel less comfortable in Miguel. One such is Eñaut, an active member of EAJ who speaks Basque and Spanish fluently and identifies himself “firstly as Basque”. “Sometimes,” he says, “I do go down to Mosku. Especially Miguel... Well... Let’s say I used to...- because now I don’t really enjoy going down there. I can’t explain, I just don’t feel at ease... It’s not necessarily the political thing. I don’t have a problem going somewhere run by an HB person. It’s not that I think these bars are more radical or anything, or that there is a risk of getting attacked or whatever, no. It’s just the atmosphere, with the decorations, the music, and... yes, the posters saying things with which I don’t agree... When I go out, I want to have fun. I don’t want to have to deal with all this business.”

Dislike of Mosku Plaza is much more forcefully expressed by Iulene, a 27-year-old woman with Spanish parents who grew up in Irun and who is a friend of Eñaut. Despite having done all her schooling in Basque, she seldom uses Basque in her own social circle and she dresses in a way similar to that of Nora. “I really don’t like this environment of hard-line nationalism. It really gets on my nerves, with their labels and slogans and their spliffs. It’s all the same all the time. And you are made to feel completely out of it.” Instead, like Eñaut, she enjoys going out in the area of San Juan and ending her night in Calle de la Mierda.

Eñaut denies that his dislike for Mosku Plaza is politically based, but he talks about being in disagreement with the markers of an inherently political kind that he sees in the décor and atmosphere of the bars there. These include Basque cultural symbols that promote political ideas of Basqueness in a particular way, which Eñaut and his party do not support. As for the possibility of speaking Basque in the bars of Mosku Plaza, even this is not sufficient to attract him to the area. The Basque language is an important feature of Eñaut’s sense of self: he took the initiative of learning the language when he was a teenager, by attending evening classes in Hondarribia. But he is also comfortable in a Spanish-speaking environment. “I am very committed to the Basque

language – in fact, I take part in a local initiative which deals with the promotion of the language. I practically always speak Basque with my friends and other people. But I have no problem speaking Spanish too. I mean, I'm not going to oblige people around me to speak Basque. Of course, it would be great if everyone could speak it all the time. But Spanish is also my language, I can't deny that."

As for Calle de la Mierda, which he describes as a place frequented by people "of a more conservative sort, people wearing clothes with labels, guys with gelled-back hair etc- basically more people who support the PP", Eñaut says he likes it as a good place for having fun. "All I want is to have fun. It's not because I am in a place where there is no typically Basque décor that I cannot be Basque. I am just on a night out. The problem is that HB people very much dominate Basque kind of stuff. And anyway what is so 'Basque' about the way they are? I don't have to be like them in order to feel Basque, you know. I like American music and going to an Irish pub too... Anyway, on a less big night out, I actually do prefer to go to San Juan Plaza, which is more Basque and Irudian 'de toda la vida', which is my kind of place."

So Eñaut's personal sense of self as Basque is something that he can maintain as a private affair in the context of partying. Despite the importance that he attaches to the Basque language and Basque symbols of the sort that decorate the bars of Mosku, he insists that they are not indispensable for his sense of self. On the other hand, he objects to the way in which members of a particular sociopolitical group can dominate perceptions and the use of these symbols. For this reason, Eñaut avoids Mosku in favour of Calle de la Mierda, where these particular symbolic struggles are not felt and where, despite his critical view of the Spanish conservative types that he finds there, he can enjoy a night out. Partying beside people who may be "supporters of the PP" does not necessarily make him and his friend Iñaki PP supporters too- even if Iñaki also dresses in a similar way, with his hair slicked back with gel, after-shave and creased trousers. Eñaut and Iñaki may share some boundaries with these people but they manage the symbolic markers present to make them fit with their own sense of self. Were they to feel the need to demonstrate their Basqueness in a more decisive manner, they could resort to other symbolic boundaries. This is already shown by the *ikurriña* sticker on Eñaut's wallet, for example, or his chatting to his friends in Basque above the noise of No.10.

Among those who go to San Juan Plaza and the area around it, Stéphane and his friends are the sort of people that Elsa describes as *franchouillards* and many young people in Hegoalde refer to as *gabachos*. Although he was born in the Basque Country and both his parents are Basque, Stéphane does not speak Basque. He explains that he does not like to go to Mosku Plaza because it is too "*bascoille*".<sup>355</sup> It's always just the same kind of people. You know, these people who think they are so Basque. I mean, for example, they all dress the same. With their t-shirts which say *Presoak*<sup>356</sup> or *Independentzia*.. I don't know.. AEK.. bla bla.. All the same, like sheep. That's not me. I might wear a t-shirt that says something, but it would be discreet. An *ikurriña*? ...Maybe. I did once have a big one hanging from the window of my van, but after a while I took it off.. Firstly because I didn't want to have problems with the police, and secondly because it is also a bit too *bascoille*. And... *ce n'est pas l'habit qui fait le moine*,<sup>357</sup> you know, it's not because you dress Basque that you are Basque. I am Basque simply because my mother, my father, my grandparents were all from around here. So what? I could have been born elsewhere. You know that a lot of the people who dress like Basques... some of them are not even from here, or they don't even know how to speak Basque. So... anyway, these bars in place Moscou are just full of these people, and... it just gets on my nerves. Where I like to go is completely different. There, you can really

<sup>355</sup> French derogative word to refer to Basque nationalist militants.

<sup>356</sup> Meaning 'Prisoners', alluding to the left-wing campaigns calling for the repatriation of so-called Basque political prisoners.

<sup>357</sup> This French expression means: it is not because you are dressed as a monk that you are one.

have fun: the Kutxa, the Zona, in Calle de la Mierda. The Jennifer? That's more when I was 16, 17 years old or so, where you get your first real *cuite*,<sup>358</sup> you know, get completely drunk. That discothèque is really French, I must say. You even have busloads of kids who sometimes come down from as far as Bordeaux."

Unlike Eñaut, who learnt Basque as an adolescent, Stéphane expresses no interest in learning the language. "Do I wish I could speak Basque? ... Not really, no ... I don't have the time.. Anyway, it's not my thing, all this Basque business." And yet, Stéphane will often pepper his speech with Basque words like *goazen*, meaning "let's go", or *harritua*, meaning "amazed". In this way, he can appropriate for his own use certain Basque symbols without having to associate himself with people of more pronounced Basque nationalist views that he does not support. He is able to maintain a sense of self close to that of a 'French identity', without losing the sense of difference that he draws from his personal association to a Basque identity. In the company of people from other parts of France, he is proud to say he comes from the Basque Country. But the same subtle juggling with symbolic boundaries for the construction and expression of his sense of self sees him choosing to go out to bars in Irun associated more with 'the French' crowd.

In the same way, Aurkene and Josu set firm boundaries between themselves and people like Eñaut, for all his Basque attachments, whom they regard as more Spanish than Basque "with their pijo look." While they do occasionally go out in Calle de la Mierda, they draw the line at Plaza San Juan. Aurkene dismisses the area as "stuffy, too traditionalist and with pretty conservative people." Josu explains further: "I am OK finishing a big night in Calle de la Mierda because that is what it's good for. But with the bars of San Juan, it's different. It just carries on being the same, with the same kind of people all night." In the same way as Eñaut is uncomfortable in Mosku Plaza, Aurkene and Josu feel uncomfortable in the bars of San Juan Plaza, even though people speak Basque there. My impression, although this is something that has never been explicitly said to me, is that this is the case because the Basque of San Juan Plaza is spoken by people who are ideologically different to them. As for Elsa, her understanding of what is a 'Basque atmosphere' contrasts with that of other people who feel equally Basque. And despite her efforts to integrate with the crowd in Miguel, for example by the use of such markers as the badge in support of Basque convicts, she stands out for her slightly different behaviour, manner of dress and choice of drink.

### Conclusion

This account aims to shed light on social behaviour and interaction so as to further the understanding of issues involved in the construction of personal and collective identity. By analysing the use of space by a number of young people in their choice of bars during a typical night out in Irun, I have shown how spatial boundaries are used by individuals as markers of personal identity. Their choice of bars indicates who they wish to identify with and who they wish to avoid identifying with, all as part of their personal strategies for consulting and expressing their sense of belonging to the area.

Boundaries of language, politics, dress style and taste in drinks, while at first apparently straightforward, are in fact used and interpreted differently by different individuals for their personal self expression. Beneath the general image of partying together in the same way, we see subtle markers that indicate differences between the different groups of bar-goers. Equally, behind such supposedly universal Basque symbols as the *lauburu* and the *ikurriña*, different individuals express a personal sense of Basqueness that is very different from one person to the next.

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<sup>358</sup> A *cuite* in French means to be in a serious drunken state.

In an earlier chapter, I talked about culture as a web, or system of shared meanings. As putative members of a common group, we use this system of meanings to help interpret and make sense of the world around us. These meanings are embodied in the material and social world in the symbolic boundaries and markers which surround us. While the fact of sharing common "maps of meaning" gives us a sense of belonging to a common group and a sense of 'who we are', we also interpret these meanings individually (Cohen, 1994a, 1994b, 1998). This ethnographic account shows how different people perceive in different ways the social order and the reality in which they live and how they position themselves in response to it and to each other.

As we have seen from this account, an individual's relationship with his spatial surroundings is an important factor in creating a sense of security and comfort. Individuals' choice of one bar or another was related to their identification with and sense of control over specific symbols, such as language, Basque cultural markers and Basque nationalist ideas. The 'frame' that results from social interaction and markers within the space creates an atmosphere which the person coming in may either accept or reject, depending on his or her desires and capabilities. We saw how some people chose to go to certain bars because of a feeling of affinity for the social and cultural context which they perceived these bars to represent. Such behaviour corresponds to the way in which place, as noted by Hall (1995:180), can act as a sort of symbolic guarantee of cultural belonging, as it establishes symbolic boundaries around a culture, marking off those who belong from those who do not.

In other cases, by contrast, we saw how some individuals chose not to go to a certain bar because they did not accept or wish to adapt to the social or cultural boundaries implicit in such a choice, or because they sensed that the symbols present within that space had already been appropriated by people with whom they did not wish to associate. And in yet other cases, we saw how some individuals, rather than adapting to the boundaries or attempting in some way to change them, chose simply to blend in, while interpreting and using in their own way certain symbols important to their personal sense of self, even though their approach differed from that of the other people present within the bar. Here again, I join Hall in his identification of place as part of the system of meaning (Hall, 1995:192) and, as such, open to different interpretations, since the definition of the place depends on the person's individual experience within it, his or her memories and the people with whom he or she is. Each person can use place in their own way to express what they mean (Jess and Massey, 1995:172). Within larger social contexts, people maintain "micro-orders" on which they can depend for the maintenance of their sense of self (Berger, 1986:xvii).

Language, taste and politics have all revealed themselves as equally important boundaries in this process of organising and presenting one's sense of self. Identity is forged from a conglomeration of different features, selected by individuals for their construction of their selves. Within this context, the symbols of nationalism are just one of a series of markers available for individuals as they assert the boundaries that provide a framework for their identities and are reflected in their use of space. In all cases, those involved in this process of identity formation require an audience, not only in terms of a contrasting 'Other', a 'You' and 'Them', but also in terms of solidarity between members of a group who identify in similar ways, the 'We'.

What we observe on our brief excursion into Irun nightlife is indicative of this. When Stéphane goes out in Irun, he and his friends hang out in specific bars with other people from Hendaia, in a joint affirmation of their sense of Francophone Iparralde identity. Aurkene and Eneko, when they cross the frontier to attend a bertsolari evening in Xaia, find themselves partying in the company of people of whose identity is forged through similar cultural, linguistic and political boundaries to their own. Similarly, Elsa, in choosing to go to "the abertzale places" in Irun with her friends,

demonstrates her abertzale identity, not so much to local people from Hegoalde in the bars she frequents, as to her friends from Iparralde who accompany her.

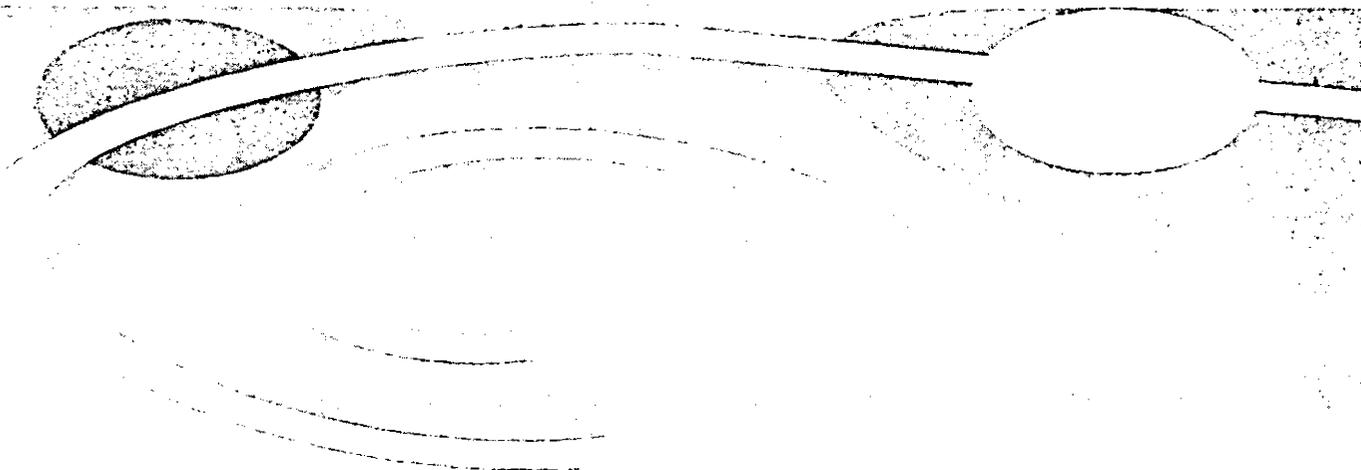
In the wider context of life in Irun, Hondarribia and Hendaia, such considerations help to shed light on the limitations facing efforts by the Partzuergo to promote a local 'Bidasoa-Txingudi spirit' or sense of 'Bidasoa-Txingudi citizenship'. As we have seen, some people from both Iparralde and Hegoalde enjoy going out in all three towns. Others, by contrast, stay within the locality where they live, in effect imposing boundaries on their mobility and their ability to participate in the social and cultural interaction of the broader area. In shaping their personal identities in this way, both sets of people are invoking and responding to invisible boundaries beyond those of physical space. Even those who go out to bars in all three towns tend to stick to certain places.



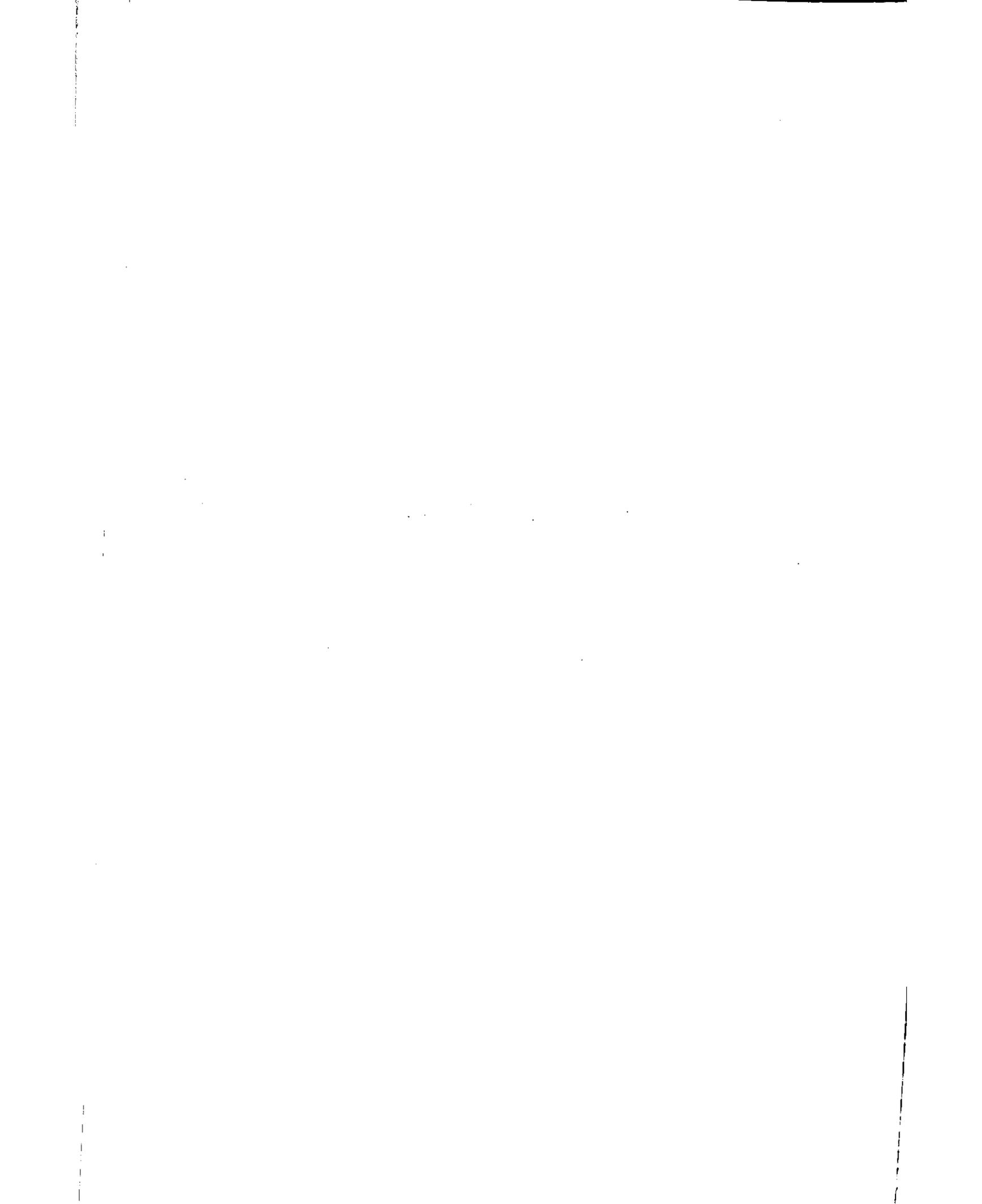
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LE BONSERIE EN MARTE



## Chapter Eleven: The Partzuergo in Action: Building Beyond the Boundaries

### Establishing the legitimacy of Cross-border Cooperation

Just as the “cultural branding of its flock” (Gellner, 1983:40) has been an essential element in the creation of the modern nation-state, the creation of a sense of ‘Txingudi identity’ is considered by the promoters of the Partzuergo as a fundamental step to its success. Although its promoters repeatedly stressed to me in interviews that the Partzuergo is an ‘apolitical’ initiative, it clearly is a political project drawing on a ‘projection’ at an intercommunity level of concepts of community identity found within each of the three towns in the same way as partisans of closer European integration attempt to rally together national populations under an EU banner (Stráth 2000). As Stráth pointed out in his research on attempts to create a European identity, “no projection is ever non-interested/non-ideological” (2000:13). The Partzuergo’s rhetoric is a political discourse which entails a certain vision and interpretations of reality. Its emphasis on cultural projects and its repeated evocation of the importance of the Basque language and culture are part of its drive to create a common sense of ‘Txingudi belonging’. By developing a common sense of self-understanding and belonging to a so-called Txingudi culture and society, the Partzuergo is laying the foundations for further initiatives of an economic and political nature.

In all communities, shared myths, legends, symbols and ritual help to provide a sense of belonging. In some cases, the Partzuergo draws on symbols and rhetorical devices used by Basque nationalists, as in a reference to “*Hiruak Bar*”,<sup>359</sup> meaning “Three make One”, echoing the Basque nationalist phrase “*Zazpiak Bar*”, or “Seven make One”, a reference to the seven provinces that make up Euskal Herria. Such actions mirror Basque nationalist tactics aimed at mobilizing people by using and manipulating certain symbols for political purposes. In other cases, the Partzuergo makes use of historical or quasi-historical references and inherited or invented ritual to press home its message. By creating a sense of Bidasoa-Txingudi identity, the Partzuergo seeks to establish legitimacy for its actions, even though most local inhabitants play no role in its everyday running and conceiving of projects.

In this respect, the Partzuergo is an example of how “administrative organisations create meaning” (Anderson, 1983:55), in the way that it has attempted to construct a social trend in its favour through the use of social values such as language (Fishman, 1971, 1972) and emphasis on common history (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1986). By picking out certain facts from the past at the expense of others, the Partzuergo is constructing its own historical reality, creating in effect its own mythology. This strategy, which Alonso (1988) calls “departicularization”, is a familiar tactic in the process of nation-state formation (Foster, 1991:242). A touch of romanticism helps to boost its credibility and with it the popular appeal of the Partzuergo. Just as the bureaucratization of French society over the course of the late nineteenth century helped to transform “peasants into Frenchmen” (Weber, 1977), the Partzuergo hopes to transform the diverse inhabitants of Irun, Hondarribia and Hendaia into ‘Txingudians’.

In this context, it is interesting to contrast the Partzuergo’s initiative with that of the EU.<sup>360</sup> Like the EU, the Partzuergo is inherently a political initiative with economic objectives. While the promoters of European cooperation began by introducing the legal bases for implementing economic initiatives and only started to worry about obtaining legitimacy in the eyes of public opinion in a second stage, however, the promoters of cross-border cooperation in Bidasoa-Txingudi have done the opposite. Unable for legal and financial reasons to launch its economic

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<sup>359</sup> *Bidasoa-Txingudi*. October 1999 No.12 P.4.

<sup>360</sup> See Shore (2000) for an anthropological analysis of the EU’s attempts at ‘building Europe’.

initiatives from the start, they began by stressing the importance of popular participation and identification.<sup>361</sup> In 2001, Mr Etcheverry reiterated that the Partzuergo “is not just a Partzuergo of elected people. This would not serve its purpose, not without the support of society.”<sup>362</sup> Only in a second stage has the Partzuergo now moved on to give more practical emphasis to economic projects.

The importance of getting the local population to “feel like inhabitants of Txingudi”<sup>363</sup> is repeatedly stressed in the three towns’ public communications concerning cross-border cooperation. They talk about the changing local environment in the wider context of the EU, the importance of historical, cultural and political links between the three towns, and the idea that as neighbours they share much in common despite a turbulent and often conflictual past. In a public statement in October 2000, Aitor Kerejeta, the EAJ councillor in Hondarribia in charge of cultural affairs, insisted that “this Partzuergo, this union between the three towns, this town of towns, must serve to develop those elements we have in common. If the frontier has served as a barrier, if it has signified a wall between our two sides, finally if it has been a scar in history, we now have to heal this wound and make up for lost time.”<sup>364</sup>

It is interesting to note Mr. Kerejeta’s portrayal of the frontier as a barrier when, as we have seen in our brief historical overview of Irun, Hondarribia and Hendaia, the frontier was also the economic mainstay for much of the local population. This is clearly a Basque nationalist discourse, which Mr. Kerejeta backed up again in an interview to me: “Of course I want to see the three towns together. I am a nationalist, and for me this is the most natural thing that could ever happen. The frontier and all the Spanish and French politics behind it prevented this from happening, but at last this can change.” At the same time, Mr. Kerejeta’s logic goes along with that of other promoters of the Partzuergo who readapt their way of speaking about the frontier to fit the new situation of emerging cross-border co-operation and the ending of police and customs controls.

Nonetheless, although in Mr. Kerejeta’s words “we can begin to see Bidasoa-Txingudi as our home,” he adds that “of course, that doesn’t mean that we have to give up our attachment to our town. I will, for example always continue to feel Hondarribitarra. It’s just like you and your neighbourhood. You always have a preference for a particular part of a place.” A “veritable cross-border identity”, as two other organisers of the Partzuergo called it, will take time to develop, and, as they said, the Partzuergo is merely taking the first steps in the dismantling of physical and symbolic boundaries as part of a larger process. Recognizing the challenges, a former spokesperson of the Partzuergo, Vicky Alquezar, admitted in a press conference that “our objective is that the local population take up little by little the idea that we belong to one city made up of three. But it is clear that someone from Irun will never become Hendaian.”<sup>365</sup>

One of the first acts of the promoters of cross-frontier cooperation was to create a new name for the area. Prior to the three towns’ cooperation initiative, the name of the river Bidasoa had been used to define the *comarca*, or district, which groups Irun and Hondarribia as the *Comarca del*

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<sup>361</sup> Interviews with officials of the three municipalities and the Partzuergo.

<sup>362</sup> *La Semaine du Pays Basque*. 2001, St. Jean de Luz. 12-18 October P.18.

<sup>363</sup> Iñaki Iturrioz, sports technician at the municipality of Hondarribia, quoted in the opening article of *Bidasoa Txingudi*. June 2001 No. 20. P.3.

<sup>364</sup> *Bidasoa Txingudi* September 2000 No.16. P.3.

<sup>365</sup> *Diario Vasco* 1 October 2000.

(*Bajo Bidasoa*).<sup>366</sup> But there had been no common name covering the broader area also including Hendaia. The name Txingudi, written in accordance with modern Basque orthography, was originally applied to a small marshy bay on the edges of Hendaia. In recent years, it had also come to be applied to a marshy area between Irun and Hondarribia which was made into a nature reserve under the protection of the Basque government in 1998,<sup>367</sup> and by extension to the area around the Bidasoa estuary. By combining this name with the name of the river, the initiators of the cross-border project invented a catchy new name, Bidasoa-Txingudi.

As Bourdieu has pointed out, the act of naming a place involves a re-conceptualisation of the space in question and its acquisition of a new status in the eyes of those people interacting with and within it (1991:220-21). In anthropological terms, such an action can be understood as a way of imposing authority through symbolic control. The bestowing of a new name for the area of Bidasoa-Txingudi supported efforts to create a sense of common identity among people on either side of the frontier and thus bolster acceptance of cross-frontier cooperation. The fact that the promoters of the cooperation project chose to spell the new name in Basque rather than French or Spanish was both a way of emphasizing the common Basque culture on either side of the frontier and a deliberate ploy to impose a stamp of Basque political correctness on the project.

According to Juan San Martín, a locally renowned linguist, historian and former ombudsman to the Basque government residing in Hondarribia, the choice of a Basque-sounding name was a classic tactic on the part of local politicians.<sup>368</sup> Even though in his view a more appropriate name for the area would have been the Latin place-name Oiasso or Oarso, used by Roman settlers to refer to the general area covered by the three towns today, he acknowledges that this name lacks the appeal of Txingudi. "Why they discarded a Latin word as an alternative is quite obvious: why go for that, devoid of any useful political and cultural significance, when one can go for a Basque one?" As for the orthography, he adds, "of course they will choose Txingudi written that way, it sounds so conveniently more Basque."

The new place-name, formalised in the name of the cross-border Bidasoa-Txingudi Euro Barruti, has been maintained in the name of the Bidasoa-Txingudi Mugaz Gaiandiko Partzuergo. Introducing its use on an everyday basis has taken longer, however. In Hegoalde, one hears references to *comarca del Bidasoa-Txingudi*, *comarca de Txingudi* and *comarca del Bidasoa*.<sup>369</sup>

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<sup>366</sup> The full name of the Comarca is "Bajo Bidasoa", meaning Lower Bidasoa, so making a difference with the rest of the Bidasoa area further upstream in Nafarroa where the town of Bera is located. Often however, I have heard local inhabitants of Irun and Hondarribia talk about their area as simply the "comarca del Bidasoa".

<sup>367</sup> This nature reserve is officially called Playaundi. However, it is known by both the local population and people in other parts of Hegoalde as the "*parque natural de Txingudi*". A book entitled "Txingudi" was published in 1999 by the Basque government about this nature reserve (Mikel Etchaniz et al., 1999).

Interviews with inhabitants of Hondarribia and Irun and employees of the nature reserve of Playaundi. Conversations with inhabitants of nearby towns Pasaia and Donostia.

<sup>368</sup> In an interview, he added: "what do politicians know about culture?!"

<sup>369</sup> The municipal newsletter, *Lettre de la Municipalité d'Hendaye*, dated August 1994, for example, refers on pages 10 and 11 to the cooperation agreement but makes no mention of the name Bidasoa-Txingudi. In a communiqué issued by the Euro Barruti, the mayor of Hendaia talks about *Bidassoa Txingudy* (*Bidasoa-Txingudi* April 1995 No.0. P.6). During my fieldwork, I found that the term was not used in a uniform manner. For example, tourist pamphlets issued by Bidasoa-Turismo sometimes talk about the comarca del Bidasoa to refer to the three towns and at other times to refer only to Irun and Hondarribia. A pamphlet advertising bed and breakfast style accommodation in farms and another advertising hostals in town both include on their front cover the title Comarca del Bidasoa-Txingudi, while on their back cover they use the title "Comarca del Bidasoa". While the first pamphlet talks of Irun, Hondarribia and Hendaia as making up this Comarca, the second pamphlet does not make this clear. In another instance, I observed Bidasoa Bizirik confusing the terms comarca de Bidasoa-Txingudi and Comarca de Txingudi on the same page of a communiqué (<http://www.bidasoa-bizirik.com>). The Partzuergo uses both Bidasoa-Txingudi and simply Txingudi indiscriminately. So for example, a communiqué dated December 1998 talks about the "inhabitants of Txingudi" (*Bidasoa-Txingudi* December 1998 No.10 P.3) while another of May 2000 refers to the "citizens of Bidasoa-Txingudi"

The word 'Txingudi' on its own is now frequently used by Partzuergo and municipal officials when addressing the population of the three towns. In the Partzuergo's official literature, references to an actual *city* of Txingudi gently drum the notion into people's heads. This is sometimes done in a subtle manner, for example by simply mentioning the number of craftsmen in "the city of Txingudi"<sup>370</sup> or the opinion of local youth on living in "the city of Txingudi".<sup>371</sup> On other occasions, as for example in a communiqué which talks about the Partzuergo's and "our" desire to constitute a "CITY OF TXINGUDI" (its capitals),<sup>372</sup> the process is more blatant. In its official magazine, Bidasoa-Txingudi, the Partzuergo regularly runs a competition called "Ideas City of Txingudi", inviting local inhabitants to imagine how they would like 'their' city of Txingudi to be in the future.<sup>373</sup>

An example of deliberate invention of ritual is provided by the ceremony organised to formalize the Partzuergo's constitution on 23 December 1998, for which the mayors of Irun, Hondarribia and Hendaia met on a boat in the middle of the Bidasoa estuary, each having set out by boat from their side of the river. In a 2000 edition of the Bidasoa-Txingudi magazine, in which is explained the composition of the Partzuergo's first budget begun in late 1999, the Partzuergo is likened to "a newly married couple".<sup>374</sup> Another example is that of the ceremony for the inauguration of a "Eurofair" in June 2001, organised by the Partzuergo with the support of regional funds as part of an information campaign about the euro. Two representatives of the Partzuergo stood on one side of a ribbon drawn across the international bridge linking Irun to Hendaia, while a dancer performed the Basque dance called the auresku. Over the following ten days, seminars and workshops were organised in the three towns to explain the euro, while a bus linking the three towns was decorated as a "Eurobus" for three months. In this way, the Partzuergo sought to build 'Europeanness' into their ideal of a Txingudi identity and citizenship.

A project first mooted in the mid-1990s but still pending is a planned cultural itinerary round the bay and through the three towns, by means of which both local people and visitors would be able to get a sense of community in the area. As Mr. Etcheverry, the councillor in charge of cross-frontier affairs for the municipality of Hendaia and one of the principal promoters of the project, explained to me in an interview, the idea "is to encourage local inhabitants to explore their own surroundings more. By going through the three towns and across the Bidasoa, it will become evident that the area is geographically bound together. Like that, the people walking along the path will feel more in touch with their neighbourhood and thus with each other."<sup>375</sup> As a path symbolically crossing the frontier and traversing the three towns, the proposed cultural itinerary can be perceived in anthropological terms as having a quasi-ritualistic function. By offering those who embark on it a 'journey' between time, statuses and places, it provides what Turner (1967) defines as a key "meaning-creating experience".

Under plans drawn up by Maîtres du Rêve, a French consultancy firm based in Aix en Provence contracted to carry out the initial phase of the project, the trail would be equipped with information boards "explaining the history of the area"<sup>376</sup> in order to give users a holistic vision of the area. After a year of interviewing local associations and public figures, the consultancy came

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(*Bidasoa-Txingudi* May 2000 No.14 P.3). On the website of Irun's municipality, a section talks about the demographic situation in "Bidasoa-Txingudi" (<http://www.irun.org/caste/viviendas.html>). However, it only features statistics for Irun and Hondarribia.

<sup>370</sup> *Bidasoa-Txingudi* December 1997 No.7 P.2.

<sup>371</sup> *Bidasoa-Txingudi* May 1998 No. 8 P.4.

<sup>372</sup> *Bidasoa-Txingudi* July 1997 No.6 P.3.

<sup>373</sup> For example *Bidasoa-Txingudi* July 1997 No.6 P.18.

<sup>374</sup> "Recién casados" (my translation). *Bidasoa-Txingudi* May 2000 No.14. P.11.

<sup>375</sup> Interview, Hendaia. 12 August 1999.

<sup>376</sup> Quoted during a presentation to the mayors of Irun and Hondarribia June 2000. Translated from French.

up with a presentation in June 2000, focusing on the “natural space”, the “historical space”, the “cultural space” and the “escapades” of the bay. Faithful to the wishes of the Partzuergo, as a representative of Maîtres du Rêve explained to me, “the idea behind the project as we have conceived it is to encourage *la rencontre*,<sup>377</sup> enable the inhabitants to get to know each other better, and so reinforce a common identity. To learn to live together, basically.” In this vein, the text of Maîtres du Rêve’s presentation seeks to evoke a sense of community and belonging, with titles such as “Txingudi, my bay” and phrases such as “Txingudi, tell me who I am”. Information on the panels along the way would remind readers that despite the frontier the inhabitants of the three towns share common social and cultural links.<sup>378</sup> Historical references to battles between the French and Spanish armies over the centuries would explain how political events at the nation-state level sometimes created a situation of official enmity between the three towns. At the same time, however, they would stress how members of the local population continued to cooperate across the frontier through family and social links and through smuggling, an activity highlighted as “an early form of cross-border cooperation”<sup>379</sup> in opposition to the nation-state.

The figure of the smuggler, well-known in Basque literature and folklore and in the Basque nationalist imagination,<sup>380</sup> thus provides quasi-mythical input into the efforts of the Partzuergo<sup>381</sup> to forge a ‘Txingudi identity’. In the border area of Behobia, a neighbourhood of Irun, there are plans to restore a derelict nineteenth-century customs building as a museum about smuggling. The information panels of the planned cultural itinerary, meanwhile, would evoke anecdotes about the smugglers’ daring and adventurous life – “a real culture of its own”<sup>382</sup> – and how, dressed in special dark clothes and armed with a multi-purpose knife, they scurried along secret paths through the mountains in the dark of night to carry out their *gaulara* – or night work – smuggling goods and helping refugees. Little, by contrast, is said about the darker sides of clandestine border-crossing, such as the activities of those who during World War II took money from Jews fleeing Nazi persecution only to abandon them to their fate half way across the mountains, or those who today supply arms, information and money to ETA militants.

When I asked an employee of Maîtres du Rêve involved in the project whether these panels would also touch upon the more recent and contemporary political, socio-economic and cultural issues, my question was received with uncertainty and finally with the answer that the project was “not a political manifesto or propaganda tool”. This illustrates not only a concern with political correctness in the confection of the history of the area but a voluntary refusal to acknowledge

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<sup>377</sup> Meaning Meeting.

<sup>378</sup> Interview with technicians of Maîtres du Rêve, February 2001.

<sup>379</sup> *Bidasoa-Txingudi*. April 1995 No.0. P. 4. and also [www.bidasoa-txingudi.com/presentation.html](http://www.bidasoa-txingudi.com/presentation.html).

<sup>380</sup> An example of this was provided during a meeting in the nearby town of Urruña organised by a local left-wing abertzale group, *Herritarrak*, to talk about the Euro Hiri project (February 2001). The director of the agency of the Euro Hiri based in Baiona, Michel Casteigts, was invited to present the project. Apparently to his surprise, many members of the audience expressed outrage at what appeared to them as extraordinary arrogance on the part of the promoters of the Euro Hiri in engaging in such a project without consulting the local population first. At one point, a woman in the audience spoke up and, after making fun of Mr. Casteigt’s inability to speak Basque, stressed that “the Basques have always maintained their own cross-border links, well before any Euro Cité or whatever project should come along. Smuggling is one example.”

Again, I found a reference to smuggling in a text on Hondarribia’s municipal website. Immediately after talking about Hondarribia’s conflicts with Irun in the fifteenth century, the text jumps to talking about the First World War which happened to be “the golden age of smuggling” (<http://www.hondarribia.org>. Consulted in May 2001).

<sup>381</sup> In a study of legal aspects of the Partzuergo, Felipe Saragueta, the director of the Partzuergo, also treated briefly the subject of smuggling. In an initial section setting out the sociocultural context of the Partzuergo, Mr. Saragueta cites smuggling in first position on a list of “outstanding historic elements which have enabled the area to become a nexus of union” (Saragueta, 2000:26). Smuggling, writes Mr. Saragueta, “can be considered, in a way, the beginning of cross-frontier cooperation, the creation of the first areas of economic exchange” (2000:26).

<sup>382</sup> *Maîtres du Rêve*- “Chemins de la baie de Txingudi- programmation thématique et contenu des panneaux d’interprétation” June 2000. P.2.

other realities present and to confront the tensions in the area that still exist. Instead, the answer that “this is not a political manifesto or propaganda tool” indirectly suggests that alternative historical accounts are precisely that.

In the context of the “Path of the Bay” project, *Maîtres du Rêve* suggested to the Partzuergo the idea of documenting the lives and reminiscences of local inhabitants. In response, the Partzuergo bought a movie camera and in January 2002 invited the anthropology department of the University of Euskal Herria in Donostia to put a group of undergraduate students in charge of producing a documentary film on the local inhabitants. This project, in process at the time of writing, appears to be intended to gather ‘live’ information about local customs, ways of living and kin relations, thereby contributing to the preservation of some kind of “heritage” that “would otherwise be lost”.<sup>383</sup>

To paraphrase Geertz (1973:5), the Partzuergo is trying to create an idiom or a web of shared meanings, in the form of a collection of symbols which the population of the three towns can understand and identify with. Building on the “Path of the Bay” project, the Partzuergo plans to assemble and publish a collection of didactic material about Bidasoa-Txingudi for use by children in local schools. In parallel, the Partzuergo is seeking in discussions with the French Ministry of Education to resolve certain legal issues that currently make it difficult for schools to take spontaneous trips across the frontier, so as to enable school children from either side of the frontier to be in closer contact with each other.

#### Implementing cross-frontier cooperation

Pending formalisation of the legal status of the cross-frontier cooperation project, the Partzuergo’s precursor, the Euro Barruti, launched a number of cultural and social projects, including a magazine and an annual local festivity. Such projects, needing no formal structures for their execution and so easy and quick to put into effect, were perceived as important for the success of the project. As Serge Peyrelongue, the secretary-general of the municipality of Hendaia explained to me, “when the three municipalities first got together to think about projects to do together, culture and social events were the main things we all thought of.”<sup>384</sup> In other interviews, representatives of the three town councils insisted on the importance of “culture” and “social activities” for encouraging participation on the part of the local population and promoting a new sense of local belonging.

As part of its inclusive approach to the concept of “a Txingudi spirit”, a term which repeatedly crops up in Partzuergo publications or media coverage of the Partzuergo,<sup>385</sup> the Partzuergo promotes Basque, French and Spanish equally. All of its public information leaflets, posters and cultural programmes, as well as the minutes of its council meetings, are produced in all three languages. On public occasions, the mayors of the three towns, though none of them are fluently trilingual, always begin their speeches by greeting the audience in the three languages. Other Partzuergo spokespersons are chosen for specific occasions for their fluency in one or another language. So, for example, the director of the Partzuergo, as a native Basque speaker of Spanish nationality, may give part of a presentation in Basque and then be followed by a councillor from Hendaia speaking in French and a municipal employee of Irun or Hondarribia speaking in Spanish.

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<sup>383</sup> Interviews with Felipe Saragueta, director of the Partzuergo, and Jean-Baptiste Etcheverry, councillor of Hendaia.

<sup>384</sup> Interview May 2000, Hendaia.

<sup>385</sup> For example *Présentation du Txingudi Eguna*, Town hall of Hendaia, October 1999, P. 4.

The Partzuergo lays particular stress on Basque, repeatedly referring to it in public statements as the common feature of both sides of the frontier. The mayor of Irun, for example, wrote in the magazine *Bidasoa-Txingudi* in 1995 that "over the centuries, we have ignored the call of a common nature and of a common language: euskera".<sup>386</sup> In another editorial in the magazine, written in all three languages, the councillor of Hondarribia in charge of culture stressed that "there is something that this frontier has not been able to eradicate from either side of the Bidasoa, and that is its common CULTURE, the BASQUE one, and a common LANGUAGE, BASQUE" (his capitals).<sup>387</sup>

In early 2002, the Partzuergo announced plans to launch a project aimed at developing knowledge of Basque amongst the staff of the three municipalities and local businesses.<sup>388</sup> While the municipalities of Irun and Hondarribia make knowledge of Basque a condition for employment, significant number of municipal employees do not know Basque, having taken up their posts before the establishment of the Basque government and its bilingual policy.

Reflecting the Partzuergo's drive to promote Basque as a common cultural element, many of its projects have only Basque names. This is the case, for example, for "Txingudi Eguna", or the "Day of Txingudi", first launched by the Euro Barruti in 1995 and always referred to in Basque, rather than in French or Spanish. The main feature of the event, whose location rotates each year between the three towns,<sup>389</sup> is a fair bringing together local associations, each with a stand where it can give out information about its activities. According to official statements, Txingudi Eguna aims to "bring together the inhabitants of the three municipalities in a festive atmosphere"<sup>390</sup> by "providing an annual rendez-vous which allows us to get to know each other better through a common celebration."<sup>391</sup>

A couple of months prior to the festivity, a competition for the design of an official poster encourages the active participation of local people. On the actual weekend, other activities and competitions are organised for children and teenagers, as are shows involving adults in local choirs, drama groups and folk dancing. At midday on Sunday, a series of long tables are placed under a marquee where a cooked lunch is served to all comers by a local association. In 2000, a concert with a famous Basque singer from Hegoalde, Kepa Junkera, was organised on the Saturday night in the football stadium of Irun. In the 2001 edition, which took place in Hendaia, a cooking competition took place, in which candidates competed to cook the best *marmitako*, a local dish consisting of chunks of tuna in a tomato-based sauce. Art associations of the three towns set up a joint exhibition of paintings in the town hall of Hendaia.

In an interview, Mr. Etcheverry explained the Partzuergo's support for such a project by alluding to the "typical" character of the local population: "Here, we like to party. We are a convivial kind

<sup>386</sup> *Bidasoa-Txingudi* April 1995 No. 0. P.6.

<sup>387</sup> *Bidasoa-Txingudi* September 2000. No.16. P.3.

<sup>388</sup> Partzuergo Press release January 2002. P.3.

<sup>389</sup> Until 1999, Txingudi Eguna was conceived as a fiesta taking place in the three towns at the same time. The idea was that people could go to different parts of Bidasoa-Txingudi for different activities in the programme of the fiestas. This was stopped after it became evident that such a system had the effect of dispersing participants and taking away any feeling of "gathering together". (Interviews with various organisers of the Partzuergo.) In May 2002, I was told by employees of the Partzuergo that as from this, the Txingudi Eguna would be shortened to a one-day long festivity, "in order to render the day more special, all activities concentrated in one big party," said Javier Gonzalez.

<sup>390</sup> *Txingudi Eguna. Rapport de Présentation*. 1999. Municipalité d'Hendaia. P.9.

<sup>391</sup> My translation from Spanish. "1er Cumpleaños del Consorcio", *Bidasoa-Txingudi* December 1999 No. 13 P.5.

of people - on both sides of the frontier. Much of the social life here revolves around partying, sport, eating... So what could be more natural than to organise a big fiesta?"<sup>392</sup>

In 2000, the Partzuergo decided they would like to have a stand serving simple, local style food at the Txingudi Eguna. A group of women from Hondarribia who made *taloak*, a kind of unleavened maize flour bread served with cheese, cooked ham or sweet fillings, offered to give their services. It happened however, that these women were supporters of the participation of women in the Alarde. In an effort to create inclusive boundaries, the Partzuergo agreed to allow this group of women to set up their stall. However, that year, the Txingudi Eguna took place in Hondarribia, and many of the town's inhabitants who were supporters of the traditional Alarde reacted to the presence of these women with insults and threats to demolish their stall. So in its effort to produce harmony with its projects, the Partzuergo organisers had effectively failed to realise the implications of ignoring certain tensions between local inhabitants. What is ironic about this particular incident is that, while politics around the Alarde is taken very seriously by local politicians in their concern to preserve their electorate, within the Partzuergo and their desire to be "apolitical", as Javier González, an employee of the Partzuergo, described to me, and to rally together the local population in cultural and festive events, they fail to take into account the continuing existence of this conflict.

Some activities which began as part of the Txingudi Eguna programme have been redeveloped individually, to be held at other times in the year. Two such initiatives involve a music festival, *Bidasoa Folk*, with the stated objective of "attracting different cultures to our bay",<sup>393</sup> and a cross-frontier theatre group whose first performance in 2001 was based on the theme of "the frontier". A future project under consideration would involve local photographic clubs in organising a photography festival with the participation of famous professional photographers. This could then lead to a book featuring the best photographs around the theme of Bidasoa-Txingudi.<sup>394</sup>

Another area where cross-frontier cooperation has achieved concrete results is sport. The Partzuergo organises a series of sports competitions during Txingudi Eguna where local sports clubs take part in competitions and give demonstrations. The first tentative steps to encourage local sports clubs to get together and organise local competitions began in 1998. Since then, the Partzuergo has subsidized cross-frontier initiatives between different clubs, including a bicycle race along the Bidasoa, a basketball tournament and a canoe race down the Bidasoa. Txingudi Korrika, an event launched by running clubs in Hondarribia and Irun, has been extended to include runners from Hendaia, thanks to additional financial backing from the Partzuergo. In 2000, the Partzuergo set about publishing a directory of sports clubs in the area, with a view to improving mutual awareness and communication. A database of the activities of the sports clubs was made available by the Partzuergo and the three municipalities agreed to make their sports facilities available to each other for sports events organised by the various clubs.

The Partzuergo's sports working party has succeeded in solving administrative and legal obstacles which made it difficult for teams of one country to play in competitions of the other. It also encouraged the creation of teams composed of players from different clubs in Irun, Hondarribia and Hendaia to represent Bidasoa-Txingudi as one place, all wearing the same uniform with the logo of the Partzuergo. Sport has been one of the most straightforward and easiest ways of involving people in friendly cooperation, without committing them to more

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<sup>392</sup> Quoted from a speech at a conference organised by the Partzuergo to present its projects to the general public. Hendaia, October 2000.

<sup>393</sup> Partzuergo press release August 2001.

<sup>394</sup> Interview with Claude Urrutia, representative of the Photo club of Hendaia and Partzuergo press release August 2001.

delicate political or economic issues. Mr Etcheverry, the Hendaia councillor, stressed that "the faith and enthusiasm" found in sport "succeed in overcoming the problems on the way".<sup>395</sup> Other members of the working party explained to me that the importance of sport as an area of action was linked to the fact that "practically everyone in some way or other enjoys sport, if not practises it".<sup>396</sup> As an article in Bidasoa-Txingudi magazine states, the Partzuergo "imagines sport without frontier in order to establish criteria for and construct, with the cooperation of the clubs, a Txingudi sport."<sup>397</sup>

Building on such initiatives, the Partzuergo has launched a number of cross-frontier economic projects. One of its first steps was to commission another Strategic Development Plan of the Bidasoa. One of the recommendations under the first Strategic Development Plan had led to the decision in 1999 to construct a commercial exhibition area in a disused sector of the former customs area on the Irun side of the frontier. The date of completion of this project, called FICOPA,<sup>398</sup> is yet to be determined.<sup>399</sup> The principal backers of this project are the municipality of Irun and the provincial government of Gipuzkoa. The Pyrénées Atlantiques département, the Partzuergo and the joint regional fund of Aquitaine-Euskadi are also financial contributors. The project is designed to welcome business conferences and exhibitions, thereby attracting more entrepreneurialism in the area and increasing local investment.

Upon conclusion of the first strategic development plan which listed a series of potential social, cultural and economic projects, including the commercial exhibition area and the urbanisation of the frontier area, the second plan was launched in 2000 to develop the ideas of the first strategic plan as well as work out new ones for short term and long term future developments (Saragueta, 2000:51). Again, the main target areas are stated as being economic development and creation of employment, social development and coherence, and environmental development.<sup>400</sup> As the Plan is also concerned with the development of a Txingudi consciousness, it adds to this list "development of the zone with its very own identity"<sup>401</sup> and in this vein suggests the continuation of already established projects such as the Bidasoa-Txingudi magazine, Txingudi Eguna and plans for a "path of the bay". There is also the idea of constructing a "Txingudi avenue". Since the existence of the Partzuergo was officialised, economic projects have gained increasing importance and ambition. Under the aegis of the Partzuergo, its organisers can manage political relations and explore possibilities for further economic projects across the frontier.

Another project currently under way involves Bidasoa Bizirik, which previously handled tourism promotion for Irun and Hondarribia, *Bidasoa Turismoa*, working with the municipality of Hendaia to promote Bidasoa-Txingudi as a single tourist destination.<sup>402</sup> Since July 2000 brochures advertise Irun, Hondarribia and Hendaia jointly and the tourist offices of the three towns now present themselves together in tourist fairs across Spain and France. A year later, they released a CD-Rom featuring Bidasoa-Txingudi as "the city of cities" – "ville de villes" in

<sup>395</sup> *Bidasoa-Txingudi* July 2000 No.15 P.13.

<sup>396</sup> Interview with Iñaki Iturrioz, sports technician of the municipality of Hondarribia.

<sup>397</sup> *Bidasoa-Txingudi* July 2000 No.15 P.13.

<sup>398</sup> FICOPA stands for *Feria Internacional de la Costa Vasca*. In Basque, it is translated as the *Euskal Kostaldeko Nazioarteko Erakustazoka* and in French *Foire Internationale de la Côte Basque*.

<sup>399</sup> In an interview in January 2001 in the local weekly paper *BidaBerri*, the director of the project, Luis Alberto Petit predicted that the fair would be inaugurated in the summer of 2002. However, in April 2002 this was recognised as being unlikely.

<sup>400</sup> Plan Estratégico (2ª fase) Consorcio Transfronterizo Bidasoa-Txingudi. *Presentación Ayuntamiento de Irún*, 8 Mayo 2002.

<sup>401</sup> Minutes of the General Council of the Partzuergo, 8 February 2000.

<sup>402</sup> Partzuergo Press release, March 2001

French, "ciudad de ciudades" in Basque and "herrien herria" in Basque.<sup>403</sup> This is distributed for free in the tourist offices of the area. It shows attractive images of the three towns and, with a soft lull of new age music in the background, has a male voice repeatedly pronouncing the words "Bidasoa-Txingudi...Bidasoa-Txingudi". While a woman's voice briefly mentions that Bidasoa-Txingudi is composed of three towns, no mention is made of the frontier.

In March 2002, the Partzuergo held its First Trans-frontier Congress on Tourism in Hendaia, with the participation of regional representatives for economic and industrial affairs from both sides of the frontier, including local entrepreneurs and shopkeepers associations. It was decided then that future projects which would contribute to the cultural life of the area would include the launching of a ten-day music festival.<sup>404</sup>

In the commercial sphere, Hendaia's economic development bureau is working with Bidasoa Bizirik on ways of helping small and medium-sized businesses. In November 2001, representatives of local businesses and the Chamber of Commerce of Baiona met in Irun to discuss possible cooperation under the auspices of the Baiona-Bidasoa Programme of Cooperation between Businesses (Baibi).<sup>405</sup> The Partzuergo is also in contact with regional employment offices on both sides of the frontier to explore ways of developing job opportunities in the area. In 2000, the Partzuergo launched a two-year training and employment scheme for a small number of local youths for the restoration of the Villa Ducourau. Due to various legal obstacles, however, the project was not able to include the participation of youth from Iparralde to take part in the project. So in the end, only youths from Irun and Hondarribia were able to take part, thanks to the collaboration of the Spanish employment agency, INEM.<sup>406</sup> In the summer of 2001, the Partzuergo distributed computers once used in the customs offices to local associations on both sides of the frontier.

Since May 2000, the three municipalities have been exploring the possibilities of establishing a common sewage and garbage collection system, a project extended in 2002 to cover possible cooperation within the context of the Euro Hiri. At present, Irun and Hondarribia share a joint waste management service, called *Txingudi Zerbitzuak* in Basque and *Servicios Txingudi* in Spanish, while Hendaia shares sewage and garbage collection services with neighbouring towns in Iparralde. However, the contract of the municipality of Hendaia with its neighbours is about to end and the rubbish dump that it currently uses is close to full capacity. With EU environmental regulations requiring more ecological solutions to waste disposal, a joint solution for the three towns might be able to benefit from EU funds.

Since May 2001, the Partzuergo has operated a cross-frontier lifeboat service. This responds to the growing demands of the leisure sector following the expansion of the marina of Hendaia during the late 1990s and the construction of a marina in Hondarribia in response to continued strong demand from yacht-owners in the area.<sup>407</sup>

In April 2002, another project discussed at a meeting of the Partzuergo's General Council concerned the need to find a solution to the traffic problems in the three towns. Currently, the road network between and around the three towns is too small to deal with the increased amount of traffic, particularly of lorries going through. As there are plans at a regional level for a high-speed train service across the frontier which would affect the area common to Irun, Hendaia and

<sup>403</sup> Partzuergo Press release, August 2001.

<sup>404</sup> *La Semaine du Pays Basque*. "Bidassoa Txingudi: vers une offre touristique commune" 8-14 March 2002.

<sup>405</sup> This is an abbreviation of the two names together, Baiona and Bidasoa.

<sup>406</sup> Instituto Nacional del Empleo.

<sup>407</sup> *Proposiciones Euskadi Aquitania*, Consorcio Transfronterizo Bidasoa-Txingudi May 2001 P.6.

Hondarribia, the Partzuergo has been working on a proposal to build a deviation from the motorway. Such a project would require the approval of the provincial government of Gipuzkoa and the Basque Country government as well as the Spanish state since the motorways are beyond municipal competence. Such a project would fit in with other plans at the regional level to improve transport and road connections with the establishment of a railway line for a high-speed train and a so-called 'intermodal service' where freight would be unloaded from lorries to carry on their journey by train. In an effort to give more weight to their project, the municipalities of Irun and Hondarribia have presented this as a Partzuergo project.

### Communicating Cross-frontier Cooperation

When the Euro Barruti was launched in 1995, its promoters decided that they needed a newsletter to inform local inhabitants about the project and its objectives. This was when the Bidasoa-Txingudi magazine was created. It was launched with the objective, "to develop a means of communication between the inhabitants of the three towns situated around Bidasoa-Txingudi."<sup>408</sup> Lacking the means and expertise to produce the magazine itself, the Euro Barruti contracted the task out to a local media enterprise, Txingudi Telebista, one of three firms that responded to a call for tender.<sup>409</sup> The media company, now renamed Localia Txingudi following its acquisition by a larger private television channel in April 2001, continues to produce the magazine. The contents and presentation, however, are decided on in collaboration with the organisers of the cross-frontier cooperation project.

As the voice of the Euro Barruti and now the Partzuergo, the magazine provides a case study in communication of a cross-frontier cooperation initiative. It features articles explaining the Bidasoa-Txingudi project, as well as reports about local public figures who live a cross-border or international lifestyle. The choice of subject matter is supported by a certain choice of words, presentation of ideas, particular narrative tone and other rhetorical devices, such as the constant use of the pronoun "we" to underline the theme of cooperation and convey a sense of community, where everyone is made to feel together in a united effort. In their writings, the mayors of the three towns often adopt a somewhat nostalgic tone, reiterating calls to overcome differences and make up for lost time.

Catchwords such as 'the future', 'building', 'constructing', 'solidarity', 'together' and 'in common' emerge repeatedly, evoking positiveness, optimism and success. In the same vein, the concepts of Europe and citizenship are often cited as values for moving forward. Similarly, words and phrases such as "our bay",<sup>410</sup> "*Txinguditarrak*",<sup>411</sup> which in Basque means 'those from Txingudi', and the more directive "what we call the city of Txingudi"<sup>412</sup> all serve to convey the idea of a Txingudi people. Again and again, through the evocation of "we", "our patrimony" and "our obligation", references to common kinship are made. As anthropologist John Borneman noted in his study of how the West and East German states sought to exert influence on the populations of the two Berlins prior to the coming down of the Berlin Wall, "kinship is the topos on which 'nationness' as a subjectivity is mapped. Because kinship is a constitutive element of

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<sup>408</sup> My translation from Basque, Spanish and French. "Editorial", *Bidasoa-Txingudi* April 1995 No. 0. P.3.

<sup>409</sup> These are: *Zed comunicaciones* which produces BidaBerri, *Ediciones Txingudi* which produces a small Spanish speaking weekly magazine called *Vivir La Bahía* and covers basic news in Irun and Hondarribia and sometimes in Hendaia. Txingudi Telebista was already involved in the production of publications, being contracted by the municipality of Irun to produce their monthly all-Basque magazine on life in Irun, called *Irunero*, also funded by the provincial government of Gipuzkoa and Euskaltzaindia.

<sup>410</sup> For example December 1995 No. 2. P.3 and September 2000 No. 16. P.17.

<sup>411</sup> For example June 2001 No.20. P.3.

<sup>412</sup> For example October 1998 No.9 P.13.

nationness, it indexes categories of belonging essential to a state's claim to legitimacy in representing a nation. The ability to name or categorise becomes significant when the name serves to classify either a category of ownership or membership" (1992:19). By invoking a sense of 'Txingudi belonging' and of community across municipal, national and linguistic boundaries, Bidasoa-Txingudi magazine contributes to the reification of what its articles "describe or designate" (Bourdieu, 1991:220).

In order to make the magazine attractive to its targeted readers, its promoters decided from the start that it had to be relevant to the lives of local people. The aim, recalls Pilar Fuertes, an employee of the Partzuergo, was to provide a magazine "that could reflect the reality of cross-border life of the local inhabitants and thus the *raison d'être* of the Euro District."<sup>413</sup> The trial-run edition of April 1995 began with an article giving a run-down of the different types of cross-frontier cooperation that had taken place in the EU over the twentieth century, setting the context for cooperation in Bidasoa-Txingudi. It also included statements by the three mayors expressing a positive vision of cross-frontier cooperation and stressing the importance of participation by the local population. The editorial stated that the magazine was "born out of the conviction that cross-frontier cooperation is not decided only in the spheres of state or regional administration (but) must place itself at the first level of society, the closest possible to the citizen".<sup>414</sup> From the beginning, too, the magazine occasionally dedicated a page or two to extracts of letters from readers, which according to its editors have become increasingly numerous over the years. By featuring these letters, the magazine conveys an image of popularity and democracy, demonstrating the openness of the Partzuergo to public opinion and readers' suggestions.

In contrast with local commercial media which mostly restrict news coverage to what happens on their respective side of the frontier,<sup>415</sup> Bidasoa-Txingudi magazine was conceived as disregarding

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<sup>413</sup> The trial-run issue of Bidasoa-Txingudi magazine explained its aim in an editorial as being "to develop a mode of communication for the inhabitants of the three towns located around Bidasoa-Txingudi" (April 1996 P.3). The ninth edition of Bidasoa-Txingudi magazine reiterated the aim of the magazine, saying that it "seeks to render closer the social, economic and cultural reality of the area to its inhabitant, by presenting them with themes of current affairs such as the environment..." (October 1998 No.9. P.5).

<sup>414</sup> *Bidasoa-Txingudi* April 1995 No.0. P.3.

<sup>415</sup> The regional and local press provides minimal information about events taking place on the other side of the frontier. In Iparralde, the French language regional papers *Sud Ouest* and the weekly *La Semaine du Pays Basque* and, in Hegoalde, *Diario Vasco* only occasionally mention activities across the border, and these will most often simply relate to important events. The Basque left-wing nationalist newspaper *Gara* and the Basque-language newspaper *Egunkaria*, based in Hegoalde, have Spanish correspondents in Iparralde, but rarely provide much detailed news from the area. In October 2001, a daily paper was founded in Iparralde, under the name of *Le Journal du Pays Basque*, competing with *Sud Ouest*, which until then had had a monopoly position as the only local daily newspaper. *Le Journal du Pays Basque* is left-wing abertzale in its sympathies, and covers news from Hegoalde slightly more than the other Iparralde papers, but its main ambition remains the provision of coverage of Iparralde.

Even in Bidasoa-Txingudi itself, the choice of newspapers and magazines covering local issues in the three towns is limited. In Hendaia, a twice-yearly municipal newsletter, *La Lettre de la Mairie d'Hendaye*, written in French, is distributed to people's houses and provides news of municipality-related issues, while a monthly magazine called *Bil*, produced by a small group of local people with left-wing abertzale ideas, can be bought in most newsagents in the town. The magazine's tone, particularly in its editorial page, is clearly cynical, and often includes an article on the situation of incarcerated Basque militants or on the promotion of a Basque initiative. Also written in French, it covers events taking place in Hendaia, and reports on the minutes of the municipal council meetings. However, it remains Hendaia-centred although its back page does feature a programme citing the main events taking place in Bidasoa-Txingudi.

In Irun, there is a slightly wider choice of locally produced magazines and newspapers, but they too mostly concentrate on current affairs directly linked with the town. The town council's official monthly magazine, *Irun*, covers municipal issues in Basque and Spanish. There is also the free monthly magazine *Irunero* which we already mentioned above. *Bidasoan* and *El Irunés*, both monthly Spanish-language magazines, focus on events in Irun and Hondarribia. *Vivir La Bahía* is also distributed free, being financially supported by local publicity. *Irun Iruten*, an Irudian initiative largely

the existence of the frontier. By concentrating on events in all three towns, it defines a certain concept of space, as defined in its title. The same concept is reiterated in articles recounting local success stories, such as one about the Hendaia-born member of France's national football team, Bixente Lizarazu. In an interview with him, the magazine asked about his childhood in "Bidasoa-Txingudi" and his opinion about cross-frontier cooperation. Citations of famous public figures originally from Irun, Hondarribia or Hendaia, interviewed on the subject of their personal vision and experience of the area of Bidasoa-Txingudi, also help to emphasize some kind of legitimate image of the cross-frontier cooperation initiative. By evoking the local attachment of these public figures, the magazine stresses the idea of a homeland and makes cross-frontier cooperation an important part of this experience. Such devices are all examples of virtual flag-waving in the manner analysed by Michael Billig (1995) in his study of "banal nationalism" – everyday, mundane, subtle gestures that powerfully evoke and emphasise a sentiment of belonging to a place and a group.

A fundamental feature of Bidasoa-Txingudi magazine is the fact that it is written in all three local languages, French, Spanish and Basque, with a view to avoiding exclusion and appealing equally to everybody. In addition to demonstrating the magazine's cross-frontier character, this is a way of rejecting linguistic boundaries in local society. In the trial-run edition, the mayor of Hendaia evoked in French the challenges overcome by the three municipalities and stressed the need "to know each other better, to better understand our needs and ways of functioning, in order to better decide together... For the happiness of our co-citizens increasingly endowed with a common vision of the future of our bay." Below his statement, the mayor of Irun pointed out in Spanish that "I firmly believe the obligation of our generation is to overcome these concepts (artificial difference and distance) and embrace firmly both banks of the Bidasoa within the indispensable context of the EU."<sup>416</sup> Finally, in Basque, the mayor of Hondarribia reiterated the need to carry on with "our efforts" as key players in Europe.

Articles in the magazine are typically presented in full in one of the three languages, with summaries in the other two languages. The choice of language for the main version of each article is tactical. For example, the main text of an article about an aspect of Hondarribia will be written in French, with summaries in Spanish and Basque, thereby addressing readers from Hendaia who are less likely to know about Hondarribia than people from Irun or Hondarribia itself. Likewise, an article about something in Hendaia is likely to be in Spanish or Basque rather than French. Such a tactic ensures that the reader, looking for articles in his or her language, will read about aspects of Bidasoa-Txingudi with which he or she is less likely to be familiar. It also offers readers the possibility of broadening their linguistic horizons by reading articles in other languages as well.

In friendly and optimistic tones, articles about cross-border cooperation are interspersed with others about local life and traditions, typically covering such themes as the cross-frontier composition of the municipal symphony orchestra of Hendaia, plans to filter waste water in Irun and Hondarribia in order to meet EU environmental standards, the experience of a cross-frontier

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subsidized by the municipality of Irun to promote the use of Basque, produces a small sporadic magazine called *Kuzkain*, written by local Basque-speaking youths some of whom come from Hendaia.

In Hondarribia, two magazines published by the municipality of Hondarribia, one in Spanish in which are featured all the activities of the municipality, and another more leisurely one, written in Basque similar to Irun's *Irunero*, are the only main magazines in town. Another small magazine, *LagartoJarto*, produced by a group of youths from Irun and Hondarribia, also appears sporadically in the two towns, focusing on such activities as skateboarding and surfing in the three towns.

The only newspaper written in French, Basque and Spanish and distributed on both sides of the border is *Bidaberri*. But its target readership goes beyond Bidasoa-Txingudi to include both Donibane Lohitzune and Bera.

<sup>416</sup> *Bidasoa-Txingudi* April 1995 No.0. P.3.

cooperation initiative between Germany and the Netherlands, and how EU regional funds can help to finance cross-frontier cooperation. An early issue focusing on economic development demonstrated the Euro Barruti's concern with the economic health of the area and appreciation of the importance for local inhabitants of maintaining high living standards. One article talked about the possibilities of Bidasoa-Txingudi benefiting from financial assistance from the EU for local development in areas such as industry, commerce, tourism, culture and youth employment. Others focused on the Irun food market, soon to be transferred to new premises "in order to improve the city and make shopping in Irun a more attractive and agreeable activity",<sup>417</sup> on the construction of "the most modern"<sup>418</sup> port for the fishing industry in Hondarribia, on increased freight traffic through Hendaia,<sup>419</sup> on the economic advantages of Bidasoa-Txingudi's geographical location,<sup>420</sup> and on the activities of Serge Blanco, a famous rugby player and entrepreneur who set up a successful health spa in Hendaia in 1991.

In its December 1997 issue, the magazine focused on the theme of craftsmanship in Bidasoa-Txingudi. Articles featured fifteen different craftsmen based in the three towns, narrating their biographies in such a way as to help make cross-border cooperation a living reality for its readers. The edition ended with an interview in which a representative of the department of economy and tourism of Gipuzkoa stated the provincial government's support for small enterprises. In December 1998, to mark the signing of the constitution of the Partzuergo, the magazine published an article giving the history of local cross-border cooperation and explaining the structure of the Partzuergo.<sup>421</sup> The theme was given visual reinforcement by the inclusion of photographs showing a meeting of the Partzuergo's General Council, children enjoying themselves at Txingudi Eguna, and visitors picking up information leaflets in one of the recently set up tourist offices. Other articles addressed themes of industrial and socio-economic change in a positive way. A report entitled "Before the Frontier, now Europe. The INTERREG program works to eliminate borders in order to construct Europe" explained the role of EU regional aid and its relevance for Bidasoa-Txingudi.<sup>422</sup> A feature humorously entitled "The guinea-pigs of Maastricht"<sup>423</sup> introduced the association of cross-frontier workers founded by people of Spanish nationality who have established residence in Hendaia but continue for the most part to work in Hegoalde. Such articles seek to demonstrate the Partzuergo's relevance in the context of an already existing cross-border lifestyle.

Ten thousand copies of the first edition were distributed through public buildings and shops in Irun, Hondarribia and Hendaia.<sup>424</sup> By December 2001, thirty three thousand copies of each edition were being produced and distributed by private postal service paid for by the Partzuergo with the objective of reaching every home in Bidasoa-Txingudi. But though the magazine reaches an increasingly large audience, not everything has been smooth sailing. In November 1999 and January 2000, I attended editorial meetings at which the format and content of forthcoming issues of Bidasoa-Txingudi magazine were the topic of discussion. Partzuergo officials and magazine journalists had recently recorded the criticisms of some local inhabitants with regard to the magazine, focusing particularly on what was perceived as its excessively institutional character.

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<sup>417</sup> *Bidasoa-Txingudi* December 1995 No.2. P.5.

<sup>418</sup> *Bidasoa-Txingudi* December 1995 No.2. P.6.

<sup>419</sup> *Bidasoa-Txingudi* December 1995 No.2. P.7.

<sup>420</sup> "Intermodal de mercancías, tren de futuro. La situación geográfica, un atout pour la Bidassoa." (December 1995 No.2. P.8).

<sup>421</sup> *Bidasoa-Txingudi* December 1998 No.10.

<sup>422</sup> "Avant une Frontière, maintenant l'Europe. Le programme Interreg travaille dans la suppression des barrières pour construire l'Europe." (*Bidasoa-Txingudi* December 1998 No.10. P.7).

<sup>423</sup> "Las cobayas de Maastricht," (*Bidasoa-Txingudi* December 1998 No.10. P.8).

<sup>424</sup> The number of copies was increased to twenty two thousand five hundred in 1999, and to twenty five thousand in May 2000.

In brainstorming sessions at these editorial meetings, participants reviewed the aims and methods of the magazine and discussed ways of improving its format and content in order to make it more attractive to the local population. While one person stressed that the magazine could fill a significant gap in the local press by focusing on the area and keeping people up to date with cultural events and other news in the three towns, another person acknowledged the role of the magazine as a propaganda tool of the Partzuergo and emphasized the need to find a way of "disguising the fact that it is so".

In response to these suggestions, the magazine featured in its February 2001 issue a programme of cultural events in the three towns.<sup>425</sup> For the most part, however, the magazine continues to focus on the Partzuergo and the activities of the three town councils. Its April 2001 issue featured the Partzuergo in the main news item, while another section provided a report on recent meetings of the three councils and news of their future projects. In this way, the magazine has clearly become a mouthpiece for the Partzuergo and the three councils. In an interview in early 2002, Ms. Fuertes acknowledged that "the function of the magazine has changed over the years. Initially, it was meant to be a mode of communication, a source of information about things going on in the three towns for the local inhabitants. But then, over the years, it has changed quite significantly and has now become much more an actual tool of the Partzuergo."

The close connection between Europe and feeling 'Txingudian' continues to be regularly evoked. In the June 2001 edition of the magazine, the cover is blue with a picture of gold coin marked "EuroTxingudi" on it. Above it, the title of this edition declares that the Euro is "already there",<sup>426</sup> advertising its "Eurofair" project six months before the Euro is official EU currency.

In this context, what is not featured in the Partzuergo is as significant as what is featured. Contributions from outsiders are by invitation or in the form of letters selected for publication. Controversy is carefully avoided, and no articles mention any of the conflictual issues that affect people in the area. Several editions of the magazine featured articles about the various festivities existing in the three towns. However none of these mentioned the Alarde. Articles about cross-frontier cooperation make no mention of the differing views of the various political actors in the area with regard to the frontier and cross-frontier cooperation. Articles explaining how the Partzuergo works fail to comment on the fact that minority groups within the three town councils are excluded from active participation in the Partzuergo or on the difficulties encountered in trying to get some associations or local institutions to work together across the frontier. In short, information is provided on a selective basis, carefully presented in order to maintain a positive image of the Partzuergo and to keep any potential sources of conflict at bay. In the December 2001 edition of the magazine, the mayor of Hondarribia, who had just taken on the position of president of the Partzuergo, was quoted as saying: "We still have a long way to go, but everything needs time and there is no need to rush."<sup>427</sup> Despite the vagueness of his statement, such formulations of the Partzuergo's ideas and aspirations make them seem obvious, to the exclusion of any other possible alternative.

The Partzuergo has also made use of other modern means of communication. In 2000, it commissioned a Spanish image consultancy to produce a logo. The result was a design showing three circles coloured red, yellow and green set against a blue background evoking the sea and the river and linked by a white ribbon ending in a spiral in the centre: "Strong colours and curvy lines

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<sup>425</sup> Edition number 1, released in July 1995, cites a few selective dates of cultural interests in the three towns, and so do subsequent summer editions. However, I take these as exceptions since they are editions that appear during the summer tourist season, when leisure is a logical theme for the magazine.

<sup>426</sup> *Bidasoa-Txingudi* June 2001 No.20. P.1.

<sup>427</sup> *Bidasoa-Txingudi* December 2001. No.21. P.5.

to represent the dynamism of the union of the three towns” was how Bidasoa-Txingudi magazine presented the logo.<sup>428</sup> In a press release in July 2000, the Partzuergo acknowledged its commercial purpose (Ehlers, 2002) as being “to identify the Partzuergo in all its marketing plans, communications and publicity.” Since then, the Partzuergo has used it in all its public communications, as well as to decorate the uniform of sports teams of Irun, Hondarribia and Hendaia sponsored to participate in local competitions together.

In January 2001, the Partzuergo launched its website, [www.bidasoa-txingudi.com](http://www.bidasoa-txingudi.com) or [www.bidasoa-txingudi.net](http://www.bidasoa-txingudi.net), with a home page made up of various shades of blue similar to that of the logo, displayed in the top left hand corner. The website features the latest activities of the Partzuergo and its projects, and outlines its organisational framework, in Basque, French, Spanish and English. On the top of the home page, a series of photos evoke a sense of dynamism and modernity, displaying objects related to high technology, such as colourful test-tubes and a satellite, and smiling men and women engaged in various business activities. Intermingled with these are photos of the natural surroundings of Bidasoa-Txingudi, the sea and the mountains, and others suggesting the rich variety of cultural and social activities available in the area, with details of a sailing boat, a basketball net and a man donning a helmet in preparation for some kind of mountaineering activity. Other photos present a sensitive and humane face of the Partzuergo, one showing a small baby and another the smiling face of a doctor wearing a partially lowered surgical mask. Below, over a bigger version of the logo, the Partzuergo’s name is written out in full four times in each of the languages. Clicking on them, the visitor accesses information about the Partzuergo in the relevant language. At the bottom, other links give access to the websites of the three towns and Bidasoa Bizirik.

The following pages include the blue heading with the logo and more photos. On one, a “presentation” of the Partzuergo and its “raison d’être”<sup>429</sup> explains the geography of Bidasoa-Txingudi with an aerial photo of the three towns, the estuary and the sea. Below are featured the coats of arms of Irun, Hondarribia and Hendaia with a small paragraph featuring the demographic and economic details of each of the three towns. The text mentions the strategic position of Bidasoa-Txingudi in the centre of the Baiona-Donostia axis as an area of “strong European vocation, in the specific framework of cross-frontier cooperation”.<sup>430</sup> There follows a brief history of the area as a frontier site, starting with the Romans who settled in the area, and of the emergence in the twelfth century of Hondarribia as a strategic fishing port. The text mentions the constant movement of people through the area, evoking its dynamic “métissage”.<sup>431</sup> It then goes on to note that “the history of the Bidasoa has first been one of division before being a link, and the idea of a unified area is the one which offers the possibility of overcoming these crises from its history”.<sup>432</sup> Below, three “historical elements” are listed as “enabling the conception of a bond in the area to exist”: smuggling, the exchange of students in the last few years, and Basque culture and language.<sup>433</sup> Other pages provide documentation about the Partzuergo’s constitution, statutes and budget, photos of its officers and images evoking unity and commonality, such as a picture of a chain and another of three coloured balls in the sand.

To make the website interactive, the Partzuergo has included on its page about cultural and educational projects a small search-engine in which are registered details of the various associations in the three towns. By typing in a particular theme, visitors obtain a list of relevant

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<sup>428</sup> *Bidasoa-Txingudi* May 2000 No. 14. P.5.

<sup>429</sup> <http://www.bidasoa-txingudi.com/presentation.html> French version.

<sup>430</sup> <http://www.bidasoa-txingudi.com/presentation.html>

<sup>431</sup> <http://www.bidasoa-txingudi.com/presentation.html>

<sup>432</sup> <http://www.bidasoa-txingudi.com/presentation.html>

<sup>433</sup> <http://www.bidasoa-txingudi.com/presentation.html>

associations with their contact details. On another page dealing with economic development issues, a form allows visitors to give their opinions of the site and fill in their contact details in order to receive more information.

Significantly, the Partzuergo has chosen Internet addresses ending in .com and .net, rather than country-specific addresses such as .fr for France or .es for Spain. This ensures neutrality in relation to either of the two states in which the area is located, avoiding any risk of accusations of statist or national bias. Its inclusion of English as one of the languages of its website underscores its desire to appear modern, open-minded, European and international. A page entitled "links of interest" provides links to the websites of the provincial government of Gipuzkoa, the Pyrénées Atlantiques département, the region of Aquitaine, the European Commission, the Euro Hiri, and LACE-TAP, the network of European Border Regions, thereby giving a distinctly European tone to the Partzuergo initiative.

Targeted communication drives also take place at local level. In 1998, Hendaia set up a so-called *Laboratoire de Langues*, with the aim, according to Mr. Etcheverry, the councillor responsible for this project, of helping Hendaia residents of Spanish nationality to learn French. The 'laboratory' also provides lessons for people wishing to learn Spanish, as well as a computer programme enabling students to study Basque. But the teaching of the latter, as Mr. Etcheverry explained, is less emphasised as the local branch of AEK, the association teaching Basque to adults, already provides Basque lessons with financial support from the municipality. In an effort to show its concern for the development of the Basque language in Hendaia, the municipality commissioned the French national statistics institute to conduct a survey on the use of Basque in Hendaia. The results of this were published in a communiqué by the Partzuergo, together with a list of places in Irun and Hondarribia where French and Basque lessons could be taken. Irun has a center for Basque language studies, the municipal *euskaltegi*,<sup>434</sup> and a branch of AEK. There is also a language school providing courses in a number of foreign languages, the *Escuela Oficial de Idiomas*, run by the municipality. Hondarribia also has its own *euskaltegi*.

In June 2000, the municipality of Hendaia, with the help of the Partzuergo, opened up a "Cross-Frontier Information Point" in a building already housing the Service for Cross-Frontier Relations. Directed at recently established Hendaian residents of Spanish nationality, it aims to provide basic information about administrative, legal, social and cultural activities in Hendaia and, for more detailed information, to direct visitors to the necessary municipal services. An employee who speaks fluent French, Spanish and Basque welcomes visitors by appointment. The information point also publishes a monthly newsletter, named in Basque *Ondoan*, meaning "next door" or "nearby", featuring municipal news relevant to Hendaia residents of Spanish nationality, which is distributed to people's homes. According to Mr. Etcheverry, who is also in charge of this project, the aim is to "facilitate the integration of the new population of Hendaia originating from Hegoalde".<sup>435</sup> In collaboration with Bidasoa Bizirik, the information point also eventually plans to provide information to businesses wishing to find out more about setting up in French territory. The cross-frontier character of this information point is further enhanced by its collaboration with Irun's municipal information service, known as the SAC, in an exchange of information, particularly on administrative matters. This initiative forms part of a general endeavour on the part of the Partzuergo to encourage the sharing of information by the three towns in the interest of the local citizens.

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<sup>434</sup> Literally meaning 'place for the Basque language'.

<sup>435</sup> Quoted from an interview done on behalf of Txingudi Telebista, 30 June 2001.



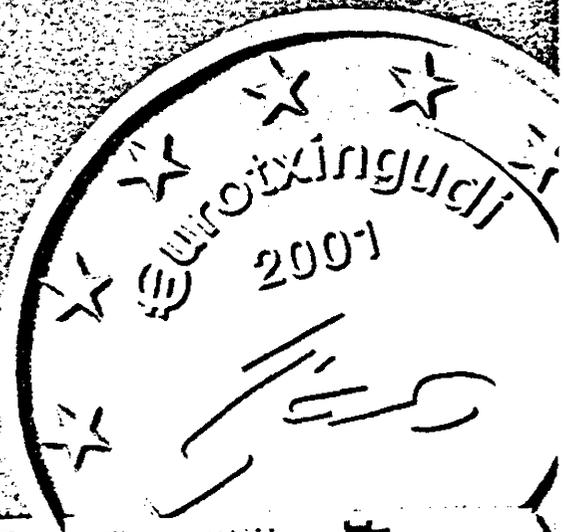
Irún • Hondarribia • Hendaye

# €uro txingudi

El euro se adelanta  
no te quedes atrás

L'euro arribe  
ne restez pas en arriere

Hemen aitu euroa  
ez zaitez atzean geratu





El Punto de Información Transfronterizo de Hendaia ha venido a confirmar en sus primeros seis meses de funcionamiento la necesidad real de los residentes en la localidad de Txingudi y originarios de este lado del Bidasoa de contar con un lugar donde poder responder a sus dudas sobre lo que supone ese cambio de residencia, un paso que ya han dado más de 3.000 personas

# Al otro lado del Bidasoa

EMA PARDO

El crecimiento de la población de Hendaia en los últimos años se explica en buena parte por el flujo de personas que en la década de los 90 se trasladó de la margen izquierda a la margen derecha del Bidasoa atraídos sobre todo por el precio más asequible de las viviendas. El desplazamiento, aunque hoy en día ya como un goteo, fue adelante y actualmente los guipuzcoanos y también navarros que viven en Hendaia suponen entre el 25 y el 30% del total de residentes de la localidad, que aman casi 13.000 personas.

El departamento de Relaciones Transfronterizas de Hendaia nació en el año 1996 con la intención de atender a los hendaiegos originarios de este lado del Bidasoa. La Asociación de Trabajadores Transfronterizos del Bidasoa habíaemandado ayuda en más de una ocasión con un servicio de estas características, que dos años más tarde hizo posible la apertura del laboratorio de Idiomas. El último eslabón de la cadena, hasta la fecha, es el Punto de Información Transfronterizo, situado también en el número 20 de rue de Port.

Elsa Spizzichino, responsable del Punto de Información Transfronterizo de Hendaia, señalaba que «el objetivo de este servicio es atender e informar a los españoles que residen en Hendaia. Aquí podemos ofrecer una información general. Si la consulta requiere de una respuesta más específica, añadida, entonces les orientamos hacia los técnicos o administraciones correspondientes».

En sus seis meses de funcionamiento, este punto de información ha recibido con cita previa a 134 personas, la mayoría de ellas residentes en Hendaia. Las cuestiones más frecuentes se refieren a los trámites para hacerse residentes, los impuestos o las posibilidades de ayudas familiares.

## Resultados satisfactorios

Los primeros balances realizados con los técnicos de diferentes departamentos administrativos han mostrado la satisfacción por el trabajo de información y orientación que viene desarrollando el Punto de Información Transfronterizo de Hendaia. «La dificultad para estas personas es la información y dónde buscarla», comenta el jefe de Relaciones Transfronterizas Jean-Baptiste Etcheverry en el primer número del boletín publicado por este servicio, y ahí está la utilidad de este punto.

Elsa Spizzichino añade que «la gente nos va conociendo poco a poco, unos por medio de la Asociación de Trabajadores Trans-



La urbanización Port Bidasoa, situada junto al río y con vistas hacia la vecina ciudad de Irún, acoge a un número importante de guipuzcoanos.



El Punto de Información Transfronteriza funciona desde el verano.

fronterizos del Bidasoa o por la prensa, otros gracias al boca a boca. Cada vez llegan más personas, este mes de enero por ejemplo lo tengo a tope, y es que realmente estamos dando respuesta a una necesidad. Se funciona con cita previa, que se puede concertar aquí mismo o bien por teléfono: 05.59.48.89.10. De esta manera se gana en calidad, ya que podemos dedicar hasta media hora. La atención al público, en caste-

llano, euskera o francés, se lleva a cabo los martes en horario matinal y los jueves por la tarde.

La mencionada novedosa publicación del servicio, bautizada con el nombre de Ondoan, quiere ser otro punto de encuentro con los hendaiegos originarios de la margen izquierda del río. Aquí se recogen desde consejos prácticos hasta apuntes culturales, en esta ocasión con protagonismo para los *Bixintzuz*. Igualmente se ad-

junta un cuestionario para posibilitar que sus destinatarios hagan llegar sugerencias sobre los temas.

## Participar en vida ciudadana

Además de los contactos con los vecinos también son importantes las reuniones entre administraciones de uno y otro lado del Bidasoa. Así, en este tiempo desde el Punto de Información Transfronteriza de Hendaia se ha iniciado un encuentro entre re-

presentantes de las áreas municipales de Hacienda de Biarritz e Irún. Esta idea se quiere trasladar en un futuro a otros sectores. La tarea iniciada por el Ayuntamiento hendaiegos persigue como objetivo futuro integrar a esta población en la vida ciudadana, «que no sólo duerman aquí o se paseen por la playa», afirma Elsa Spizzichino. «Es igualmente importante que conozcan y participen en la oferta cultural del municipio».

## Iruneses en Hendaia

Andoni y Eva se instalaron en la urbanización hendaiega de Port Bidasoa hace poco más de un año. Llegaron desde Irún, «donde ni por asomo podíamos encontrar un piso al precio que pagamos aquí. Es verdad que las viviendas son más sencillas, pero nosotros dabamos valor a otras cosas como tener un trocito de jardín o vistas. Aunque yo era reacio a venir a vivir a Hendaia, hoy en día estoy contento. Personalmente, por mi trabajo, me viene bien para desconectar». Muchos de los que han cruzado el Bidasoa han tenido como primera preocupación el tema de los impuestos. «Mi opinión en relación a este asunto», decía Andoni, «es

que en un lugar u otro somos trabajadores y tendremos que pagar en función de ello. En unas cosas se paga más y en otras menos». Este irunés sí habla en cambio de la existencia de una «frontera psicológica, debido al idioma o simplemente a la forma de vida de los franceses. Si alguien decide venir aquí tiene que tener esto claro».

Andoni y Eva insisten que el idioma es una traba para poder participar en la vida social de su nueva localidad. Al mismo tiempo creen que el euro «ayudará a decidirse a entrar a un bar a tomar un café e iniciar una conversación con otra gente, algo que igual ahora no haces porque no llevas francos».

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## Chapter Twelve: The Partzuergo- successes, drawbacks and challenges

*"No to the extension of the airport of Fontarabie. Demonstration with our neighbours from the other side of the Bidassoa. 13 April, at 5.00 p.m. Meeting at the bus stop of Mendelu, Hondarribia." This announcement, written in French, is typed in bold black letters on a sheet of white paper and posted in the windows of numerous shops in Hendaia. It calls on inhabitants of Hendaia to take part in a demonstration against the Spanish government's plan to enlarge the airport located in Hondarribia on the banks of the estuary of the Bidasoa opposite Hendaia, officially known as the airport of Donostia, or San Sebastián. In Irun and Hondarribia, a similar call to demonstrate is posted in most shops. Written in Spanish, it says "Demonstration. On 13 April 2002 at 5.00 p.m., there will be a demonstration against the enlargement of the airstrip of Hondarribia. Itinerary: Mendelu crèche to the Airport, with a stop there, and back to Mendelu. All Txingudi is concerned. We look forward to your participation. "*

*And so at 5.00 p.m. on a cold and wet Saturday afternoon in the spring of 2002, around 3000 people are gathered in Mendelu, a neighbourhood of Hondarribia bordering on Irun due to be demolished if the airport enlargement goes ahead. Men and women, mostly aged between forty and seventy, stand around in anoraks, leather jackets and imitation fur coats. The reason for their presence is made evident by the placards and banners that some of them carry. In Basque and Spanish, they read "Airstrip no! Houses yes!" while a banner held up by some people from Hendaia states in French "No to the extension of the airstrip".*

*In the middle of the crowd, Borja Jáuregui, the mayor of Hondarribia, Alberto Buen, the mayor of Irun and Kotte Ecenarro, the mayor of Hendaia, are surrounded by some of their colleagues from the three town councils. Chatting together amicably, they look around at the neighbourhood of Mendelu, mostly made up of small blocks of flats. The crowd falls silent as the three mayors move forward to lead the demonstration out of Mendelu and on to the main road to the airport approximately one kilometre away.*

*At the junction with the main road, a municipal policeman with a red beret stops the traffic in order to allow the procession to advance. Groups of people holding banners walk in front of and behind the three mayors and their entourage. Amongst them, a group of young children from Mendelu carry placards in Basque and Spanish with texts like "Without my neighbourhood, where shall I play? What will happen to my house?" In unison, led by their teacher, they shout in Spanish "Airstrip no! Houses yes!" Most people in the crowd seem to be talking in Spanish, but in the middle of the procession a group of people from Hendaia are chatting together in French, while a few others are speaking in Basque.*

*Arriving at the airport terminal, the marchers gather around its entrance to watch a performance by the children of Mendelu. Running from one end of the road, past the entrance to the airport building, the children shout their slogan louder than ever to the accompaniment of a man tapping on an African drum, led by their teacher who wears a grotesque model of an aeroplane on his head. The crowd claps loudly in support of the children's message. Journalists from local newspapers and the local television station, Localia Txingudi, interview some of the participants. Eventually, the demonstrators regroup into a procession to walk back along the main road to a roundabout just beyond Mendelu at the entrance to Irun, and finally back to Mendelu itself.*

Plans for the enlargement of the airport of Donostia made headlines in local newspapers on either side of the frontier as from the beginning of 2001. At present the airport can be used only by small to medium-sized planes which cover the journey between Hondarribia and Madrid ten times

a day. The only airport in Euskadi able to take larger aircraft is at Bilbo, an hour and a half's drive from Hondarribia, although Miarritze in Iparralde, less than an hour's drive away, also has an international airport and another slightly smaller airport is located at Irunea, an hour and a half away in Nafarroa. Under a proposal put forward by the Spanish government, the airport's runway would be extended to enable it to take larger longhaul aircraft. The plan is designed to improve the air transport infrastructure of northern Spain, but it would cause considerable inconvenience in Hondarribia, Irun and Hendaia. The houses of Mendelu would be demolished and all of the surrounding largely urbanized area would suffer from this extra noise and pollution. In addition to damaging the environment and the quality of life of the local population, opponents claim that the project would jeopardize the area's potential as a tourist destination, turning it merely into a transit point for people heading to more picturesque places in Iparralde and Hegoalde. As a result, the three municipalities have been unanimous in their rejection of the project. Negotiations with the Spanish government have not been easy, however. In September 2001, the mayor of Hendaia, Kotte Ecenarro, went to Madrid to make personal contact with government officials in an attempt to open negotiations. In spite of this, the threat remained that the project might go ahead.

It was in this context of urgency that associations and local business representatives in Irun, Hondarribia and Hendaia began to mobilize in the autumn of 2001. In late November 2001, a federation of neighbourhood associations called *Oiasso* and representatives of local businesses in Irun joined forces with neighbourhood associations in Hondarribia to create a coordinating group called in Spanish the *Coordinadora Contra la Ampliación de Pista del Aeropuerto de Hondarribia*,<sup>436</sup> led and run by the cultural and social association of Mendelu, *MugiOndo*.<sup>437</sup> In Hendaia, the local branch of the Green Party, which since municipal elections in March 2001 has had one seat on the local council, joined forces with the *Coordinadora*. Another local environmental association, *Hendaye-Bidassoa Environnement*, voiced its concern to the Hendaia council and, via the Green Party, has also taken part in the activities of the *Coordinadora*.

The demonstration on 13 April 2002 was the first major demonstration against the proposed runway extension. Significantly, as a number of participants observed, it was also the first time that inhabitants of the three towns had gathered together for a common cause. As José Ramón Arizu, an inhabitant of Mendelu who is the chief organiser of the *Coordinadora*, told me in an interview in front of the airport terminal, "it wasn't easy getting everyone together at first. It took at least four months of serious coordination. But we are very happy with the result. We were expecting around 2000 people to take part in the demonstration today, and I think we are much more than that, about 3000. And we have had a very good response too from the three mayors and also the Partzuergo." The President of *Hendaye-Bidassoa Environnement*, Claudette Peyrega, also expressed her satisfaction with the mobilization. "We are all concerned, and we have managed to rally together on this issue. This part of the frontier is also, after all, our home. We are altogether."

Indeed, in spite of the differences that are often voiced and acted out by much of the population, as pointed out throughout this thesis, this occasion was marked by unanimity. This was clear not only from statements by the demonstration's organisers and the participation of numerous inhabitants, including the three mayors and councillors of the various parties, but also from the wording of the poster announcements. The poster in Hendaia referred to "our neighbours on the other side of the Bidassoa," avoiding reference to the frontier. While it referred to the airport of Fontarabie, using the traditional French name for Hondarribia, it used the Basque version of the town's name, Hondarribia, in accordance with the terminology used by most Hegoalde

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<sup>436</sup> Meaning Coordination against the extension of the airport strip of Hondarribia.

<sup>437</sup> Meaning Beside the frontier.

inhabitants, when it stated the starting point for the demonstration. The posters in Irun and Hondarribia mentioned the importance of this demonstration for the people of "Txingudi", a reference to the inhabitants of all three towns.

Although the representatives of various associations involved in the demonstration talked to me about each other as "the French" and "the Spanish", their being together in this demonstration marked a significant step towards the sort of union of the people of Txingudi to which the Partzuergo aspires. An elderly man from Mendelu whose house is threatened with demolition referred approvingly to the presence in the demonstration of "brothers" from Hendaia. A woman from Hendaia observed while marching that "we are at home" on the Hegoalde side of the frontier as well, even though her husband then observed that "we are divided by the Bidasoa". Robert Arrambide, left-wing abertzale from Hendaia noted that, while there had in the past been political demonstrations bringing together people from both sides of the frontier, this was the first time that "civil society" from both sides of the frontier had come together in this way. There were no speeches or demonstrations by local political parties on this occasion, and the three mayors limited their participation to simply walking at the head of the rally. In this way, the event brought together the inhabitants of the three towns without pomp or political declarations in response to a common concern about the future.

Ironically, it might seem that, despite all the efforts of the Partzuergo to mobilize the populations of the three towns around a series of positive projects, they actually needed a negative incident to bring them together and overcome the boundaries dividing them. Merely by being present without making a show of it, the three mayors succeeded in tacitly assisting in the legitimization of the Partzuergo. Indeed, the word Partzuergo or Consorcio was on the lips of many of the participants that I interviewed in the demonstration. As one member of the Coordinadora put it, "it is the first time that I see people of the three towns together. And we benefit from the support of the Partzuergo."

#### Successes and Failures of Cross-frontier Cooperation

As this event demonstrates, the Partzuergo's drive to encourage a new holistic perception of the area has begun to bear fruit. As we shall see, it has been aided not only by negative threats such as the proposed airport extension but also by new opportunities in the field of business, leisure and life-styles following the lifting of border controls. Commercial initiatives fuel the process by changing the way local people view their surroundings and encouraging them to perceive the three towns as a whole.

Inevitably, however, social values and traditions specific to each of the two sides of the frontier and to each of the three towns continue to hold great importance. Individuals who have altered their lifestyle, for example by taking up residence or pursuing new leisure activities on the other side of the border or by starting new business initiatives, remain attached to their social group and its local space. And though the socio-cultural projects of the Partzuergo have managed to overcome some of the cultural and political challenges particular to Bidasoa-Txingudi and appealed to a growing number of local inhabitants, major obstacles to effective cross-border cooperation remain. As we have seen, behind the Partzuergo's image of unity and harmony and outside the context of such unusual moments of consensus as the demonstration against the proposed airport extension, the political and cultural boundaries used by local inhabitants in the formation of differing individual notions of identity continue to exercise a divisive influence.

On the positive side of the balance sheet, public awareness of the Partzuergo has grown considerably over the past few years. When I began my field research in late 1999, my inquiries

about the Partzuergo frequently elicited comments along the lines of “the Partzuergo? No idea” or “It’s some kind of Basque project, isn’t it?” Participation by local associations in Txingudi Eguna, mentioned by many people as an example of the Partzuergo’s initiatives, has increased significantly.<sup>438</sup> Many participants in Txingudi Eguna expressed positive views of the Partzuergo as a logical initiative, “considering that we are neighbours and we have so much in common in spite of the frontier that divided us”, as a French-speaking woman living in Hendaia told me.

In parallel, awareness of Bidasoa-Txingudi as a spatial concept has grown. The local media now talk freely about “the area of Bidasoa-Txingudi”, “our district<sup>439</sup> of Txingudi”, and “Txingudi citizens”. While it is still rare to hear ordinary people talk in this way, it is not uncommon to hear references to the “bay of Txingudi”, a place-name that has stretched from the little bay in Hendaia to refer to the three towns together. An annual marathon around the bay, organised by the athletics associations of Hondarribia and Irun under the name Txingudi Korrika, has extended its scope with financial help from the Partzuergo to include runners from Hendaia. New cross-border initiatives between associations include joint concerts by the choirs of the three towns and plays by drama groups, often supported by subsidies from the Partzuergo. In 2000, despite mocking of the term ‘Txingudi’ on the part of his friends, one of whom remarked that it is something that “no one uses here. It’s all part of the ‘make-up’ of the Partzuergo,” Urbil Artola, a popular musician from Hondarribia, wrote a song entitled “Txingudi”.<sup>440</sup> In 2001, some young musicians from the Conservatory in Irun decided to name their group Oiasso, the Latin name for the area, “in homage to the cross-border area to which we belong”.<sup>441</sup>

Since the mid 1990s, local enterprises have shown awareness of the business potential of this new cross-border space. Firms based in Hendaia and Hondarribia provide boat services between the two towns, while French and Spanish bus companies link all three municipalities. Many local businesses and social or sporting initiatives have adopted Txingudi as part of their name.<sup>442</sup> So the rowing club in Irun formerly known as Santiagotarrak is now called Txingudi Santiagotarrak and the yacht club which manages the leisure port in Hendaia changed its name from Club Maritime Hendaye to Club Maritime Hendaye Txingudi. As its director explained to me in an interview, the name change was “an endeavour to move with the times”. Two influential local initiatives are a commercial centre outside Irun, “Centro Commercial Txingudi”, and the television channel Txingudi Telebista, renamed Localia Txingudi in April 2001 when it was bought by a big television network, which broadcasts to the three towns. In 2000, a baker in Irun gave the name Txingudi to a new cake that he was selling. The same year, when the Partzuergo announced its intention of creating its website as [www.txingudi.com](http://www.txingudi.com), it turned out that the name had already been taken by a publishing house in Irun.<sup>443</sup>

Associations and other groups have not been indifferent to the financial opportunities offered by the Partzuergo. An employee of the Partzuergo noted that it receives numerous applications from local associations for subsidies for projects with minimal cross-border elements, suggesting that such requests are motivated only by the financial benefits that could be obtained. Other bodies have been skilful in drawing on the discourse of the Partzuergo for their own purposes. When Gure Irratia, a Basque radio station based in Baiona, sought to extend its reach in Iparralde to the

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<sup>438</sup> Based on personal examination of the application forms and field observation.

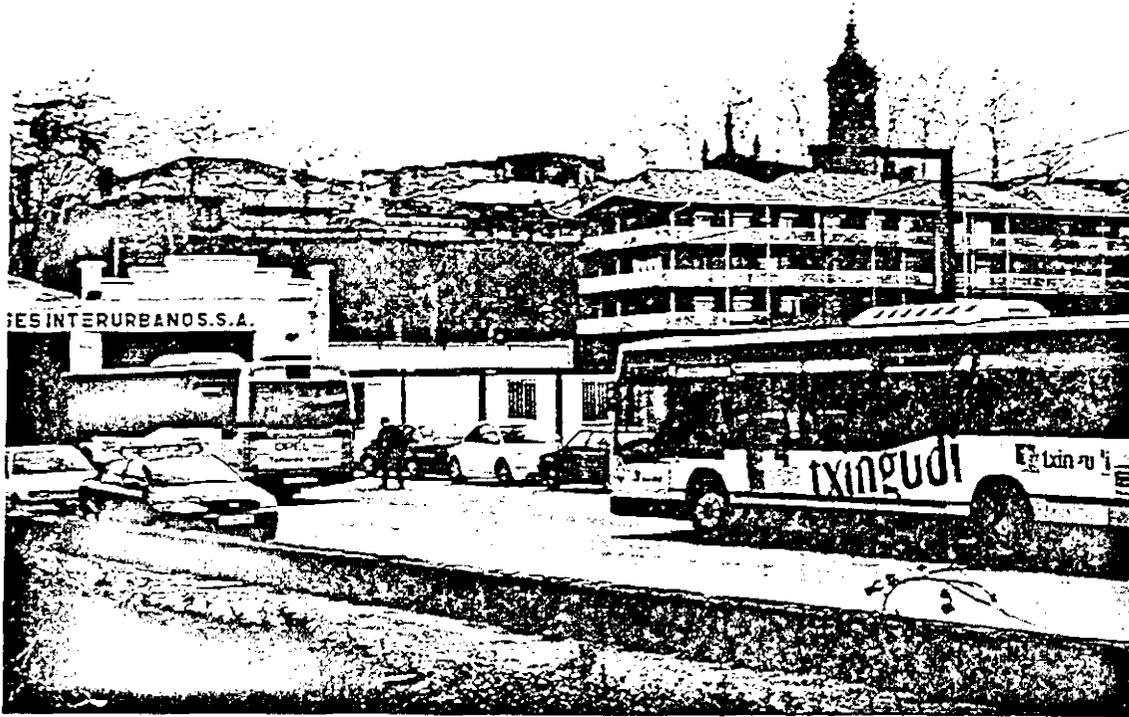
<sup>439</sup> “Comarca”, in Spanish, “bassin”, in French, and “aldea”, in Basque.

<sup>440</sup> Urbil and Txomin Artola, 1997, “Txingudi” in *Hondarribian*. Banako Records.

<sup>441</sup> Quoted from interview in Irun-based magazine *La Bahía*, January 2001, P.5.

<sup>442</sup> In mid 2000, a local hospital in Congo was inaugurated thanks to the financial assistance of a Irunian non-governmental organisation *Behar Bidasoa* (meaning Need Bidasoa) was named Txingudi “in honour to the area which made this project realisable” (*Diario Vasco* 17 August 2000).

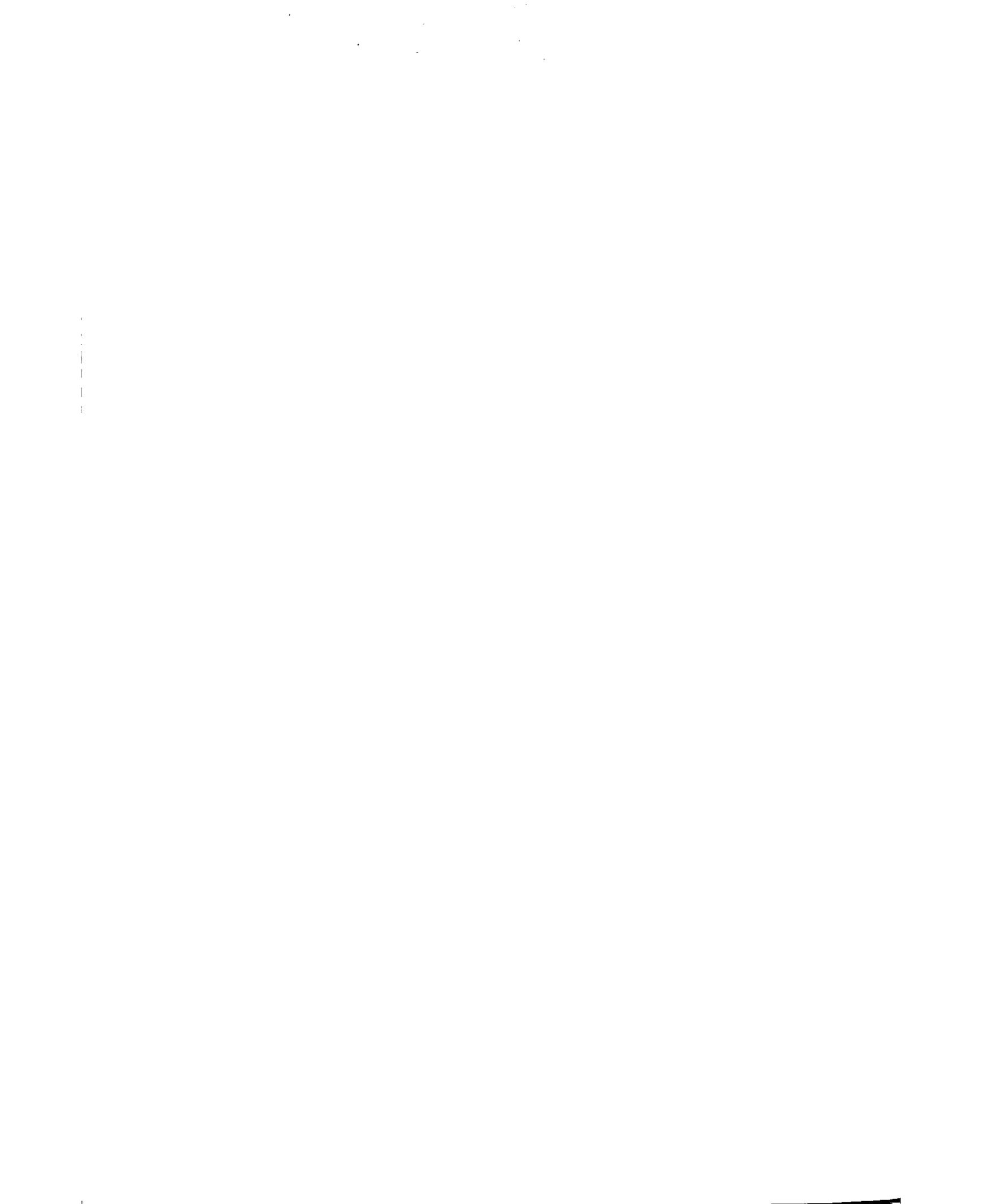
<sup>443</sup> Consequently, the Partzuergo opted for <http://www.bidasoa-txingudi.com>



Bus in Hondarribia advertising Txingudi Commercial Centre.



Old house on San Pedro Kalea, Hondarribia, with a banner calling for the return of Basque 'political prisoners' to the Basque Country. In the foreground, the telephone booth advertises McDonald's and the Txingudi Commercial Centre in Spanish.



area close to the frontier which it had not previously been able to reach because of reception problems<sup>444</sup> by creating a small local branch called *Antxeta Irratia*,<sup>445</sup> it successfully appealed to the Partzuergo for financial backing, hailing the "Txingudi project" as going "forward step by step, opening its doors to the Europe of tomorrow". Drawing attention to the obstacles in the way of integration, it ended its proposal in terms similar to the Partzuergo's own rhetoric by portraying itself as a "function of integration of the different communities of Txingudi" and as "an assistant in the institutional and social project of the future".<sup>446</sup>

Nonetheless, as Gure Irratia noted in its application to the Partzuergo,<sup>447</sup> cultural, social and linguistic boundaries used by the local population in the construction and expression of their selves continue to limit the Partzuergo's ability to bring people together as citizens of a common area in a harmonious way. The frontier, as the central physical boundary in the area, continues to influence the identity formation of many local inhabitants. This can be seen in the way some people have reacted to some of the Partzuergo's projects. For example, the Partzuergo's plan to combine the tourist offices of the three towns encountered reluctance in Hendaia, where employees of the local tourist office expressed reservations about working with "those of the other side", as I heard them call people from Hegoalde. During the 1999 Txingudi Eguna, which took place in Irun, Txingudi Telebista journalists were dismayed by the lack of cross-border awareness on the part of some of the people they interviewed at stands representing their associations.<sup>448</sup> When they asked these people what occasions they were looking forward to participating in over the next few months, all listed festivities taking place in Hegoalde. None raised the possibility of going across the frontier, even to Hendaia.

Attempts by the Partzuergo during 2000 and 2001 to encourage schools in the three towns to collaborate in specific initiatives met a less than enthusiastic reception. Some teachers in Hendaia told me they did not see any interest in having more contact with schools in Irun and Hondarribia, since so many children from Hegoalde attended school in Hendaia. In Irun and Hondarribia, reactions were similarly apathetic. The French teacher of the ikastola of Hondarribia told me in an interview in February 2001 that she had once expressed interest in making contact with French schools but met little enthusiasm, either from schools in Iparralde or from the parents of her own pupils. Teaching of French in Hegoalde is decreasing radically in favour of English, a trend explained to me by a Hondarribian parent as reflecting the fact that many young parents in Hondarribia come from other parts of Hegoalde further from the frontier and so have little appreciation of the intimate contact with Iparralde neighbours that Hondarribians once had. In early 2002, the ikastola of Hondarribia set up a small radio studio and invited the participation of the ikastola of Hendaia to take part in some of its programmes, an invitation enthusiastically accepted by the school's director. Relations between other schools, particularly with the state schools, as well as the Ikas Bi system in Hendaia, remain minimal or non-existent, however, indicating the importance of different identifications.

Efforts to coordinate the citizens' information service in Irun and the Information Point in Hendaia have had only limited results. In response to several attempts on my part during 2001 to obtain basic information about Hendaia in the office of Irun, I was told that I would be better off asking in Hendaia directly. In other areas of social services, local bodies explore cooperation initiatives further afield, rather than looking for partners in Bidasoa-Txingudi. In Hendaia, the

<sup>444</sup> In September 2000, the French regulatory authorities proposed a new frequency (90.5 FM).

<sup>445</sup> Meaning Seagull station both in allusion to the seaside character of Bidasoa-Txingudi and the fact that a seagull, flying around, takes no heed of frontiers.

<sup>446</sup> Radio "Antxeta Irratia" *Avant-Projet*. Hendaia 1 July 2001, P.2.

<sup>447</sup> Radio "Antxeta Irratia" *Avant-Projet*. Hendaia 1 July 2001, P.2.

<sup>448</sup> Based on personal observation.

director of the social centre *Denentzat*,<sup>449</sup> financed by the French government and the town council, explained a lack of contact with similar centres in Irun and Hondarribia as being due to his centre's local and French 'republican' nature and the fact that its primary concern was with the socially and economically deprived areas of Hendaia. He then mentioned that he was seeking to establish contact with social workers from Peebles, the Scottish town with which Hendaia is twinned, in order to have an exchange of ideas and initiatives. In Hondarribia, a youth programme recently launched by the municipality under the name of *Prevención Juvenil*<sup>450</sup> made contact with a similar initiative in Pau, the main town of the Pyrénées Atlantiques département, instead of considering possible collaboration with similar initiatives in Hendaia. Ironically, in this case, it appeared to me that Hendaia was not considered as an option due to its proximity.

In response to encouragement from the Partzuergo, several associations have met to explore the possibility of launching projects together. These, however, have not always had harmonious results. In 2000, members of the sailing club of Hendaia was disappointed with the attitude of their counterparts from the sailing club of Hondarribia when it was their turn to organise the Txingudi fishing competition. According to the Hendaians, the Hondarribians changed the rules of participation from those instituted by the sailing club of Hendaia when it had organised the event the previous year by demanding that participants pay a higher entry fee and hold a Spanish fishing license. As a result of these new rules, would-be participants from Hendaia were put off taking part in the competition. When I went to find out about this event at the yachting club in Hondarribia, however, I heard a completely different story, with a committee member explaining to me that the French had simply not wanted to participate this year. Another instance of miscommunication and discord in the context of a Partzuergo project occurred in a meeting between teachers of Irun, Hondarribia and Hendaia in late 1999 to discuss the possibility of organising a joint choir. A suggestion by some French-speaking teachers from Hendaia to include French songs met opposition from Basque-speaking teachers from Irun and Hondarribia. What was meant to be a collaborative project bringing the different schools together ended in tension and disillusion.

This last case illustrates how tensions surrounding language issues continue to be an obstacle to harmony, despite the Partzuergo's promotion of trilingualism and of Basque as a common language for the area. Within the Partzuergo itself, only the director, Mr. Saragueta, is completely fluent in Spanish, French and Basque. Of the three mayors, Mr. Ecenarro from Hendaia can speak Basque and Spanish as well as French. The mayor of Irun knows a little French and once took Basque lessons but is most comfortable speaking Spanish. The mayor of Hondarribia can only speak Spanish and expresses no interest in learning Basque. As a result, communication within the Partzuergo takes place predominantly in Spanish.

Mr. Saragueta once remarked to me that he needed to be careful not to appear to be favouring the Basque language too much in Partzuergo projects. He noted little enthusiasm on the part of members of the Partzuergo, particularly those from Irun, notably the Socialists and members of the PP. An example he gave me during the summer of 2001 concerned the possibility of Partzuergo support for the Antxeta Irratia project which, appeared to some members of the municipal councils as possibly too closely linked to left-wing Basque militantism.

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<sup>449</sup> *Denentzat* translates in Basque as 'For everyone'. It is interesting to note that a social center established under the aegis of the French state should have a Basque name. When I asked the director about this, he replied that in the Basque Country, such an initiative "is typical. It is a custom here to give Basque names to things. But in no way does it have to signal any Basque associations within the social center. It remains clearly an initiative with French Republican values." Interview November 2001.

<sup>450</sup> Literally translating as 'Juvenile Safety'.

That is not to say that nothing is being done to address such issues. The project of Antxeta Irratia has been taken up. At the insistence of Mr. Etcheverry and with support from the Hondarribian councillor Ion Elizalde, and the agreement of Irun's councillor in charge of culture and the Basque language, Fernando San Martín, the Partzuergo has set up a working group on the Basque language. Under an agreement in April 2002, the new working group will receive 18,030.36 euros from the Partzuergo's budget for 2002. Interestingly, Mr. Etcheverry was one of the main advocates in the Hendaia town council for the proposals by SIADECO following their survey on the situation of the Basque language, although lack of support from other councillors prevented these from being followed up. So here the Partzuergo provides a forum within which people like Mr. Etcheverry are able to develop projects that they cannot so easily do in the more restricted environment of their hometown.

Nonetheless, many of the boundaries dividing the population of Bidasoa-Txingudi are evidenced in the Partzuergo and its interaction with local citizens. As an organ set up and run by the three towns' councils, which in turn are run by members of the French and Spanish Socialist parties, the Spanish conservative party PP and the conservative Basque nationalist party, the Partzuergo has a clear profile as part of the local political establishment. Olivia Tambou, in her study of the Partzuergo's legal status (2000), states that the Partzuergo is an egalitarian and democratic body thanks to the fact that the three towns have equal voting and veto rights, even though Irun is economically and financially more powerful. However, she neglects the fact that the Partzuergo's political base as it stands today is limited by the fact that it is run by the ruling parties of each municipality, without the participation of the opposition parties. As already noted, this excludes Batasuna, the left-wing Basque nationalist party, whose representatives have denounced this lack of inclusiveness.<sup>451</sup> While admitting that the Partzuergo could be a step towards their objective of uniting the French and Spanish sides of Euskal Herria, they express scepticism about its potential for actually achieving such an objective under its current constitution and leadership.<sup>452</sup>

One contradiction brought up by some councillors of Hondarribia is the dominant role played within the Partzuergo by Irun and the PSE-EE. Irun is represented in the Partzuergo's Committee of Directors by José-Antonio Santano, the Socialist deputy of the town's Socialist mayor, rather than by one of its three representatives in the Partzuergo's General Council, the mayor, PP member Borja Semper and Basque nationalist party member Elena Etxegoien. This arrangement, while perhaps expedient in terms of the politics of the Irun town council, is in conflict with the statutes of the Partzuergo, which specify that representatives of the three towns in the Committee of Directors should be drawn from among their representatives in the General Council. Mr. Santano is also the president of Bidasoa Bizirik, which supervises the day-to-day operations of the Partzuergo, while its director is a former president of the provincial government of Gipuzkoa, PSE member Guillermo Echenique. Irun's financial contribution to the running of Bidasoa Bizirik is significantly greater than Hondarribia's, and this is reflected in the influence on its operations of the municipal council of Irun. The strong Spanish Socialist component in the Partzuergo and Bidasoa Bizirik once led Mr. Saragueta, the Partzuergo's director, to remark to me that he "work(s) with Spanish people" and that "we want the help of the agency but not its control".

Bidasoa Bizirik was initially meant to assist in the re-orientation of the area's economy following the removal of customs controls at the frontier, by assisting local small enterprises and launching

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<sup>451</sup> *Diario Vasco* 7 October 2000. Left-wing Basque nationalist representatives in Irun, Hendaia and Hondarribia have repeatedly demanded a referendum on the issue.

<sup>452</sup> Interview with: Robert Arrambide, former Hendaia opposition councillor and left-wing Basque nationalist, April 2000, Joxean Elosegi, EH councillor in Irun, April 2001 and Marije Zapirain, Batasuna councillor in Hondarribia, March 2002. They unanimously suggest that the Partzuergo should take up the form of a parliament in which would be present all political representatives of Bidasoa-Txingudi.

initiatives for job creation.<sup>453</sup> In this context, Bidasoa Bizirik has a section specialising in applications for external funds, particularly from the EU. The growing importance of this activity has sparked criticism from some local people who see this body as a machine that is increasingly focused on getting subsidies.<sup>454</sup> The role of Bidasoa Bizirik in relation to the Partzuergo was a source of much discussion during 2000 and 2001.<sup>455</sup> But despite a decision at the time that its involvement should be only temporary, there has so far been little indication of change. Mr. Saragueta and two technicians continue to be employed directly by Bidasoa Bizirik, and Mr. Saragueta reports to the director of Bidasoa Bizirik, Mr. Echenique, as his boss. Reflecting such ambiguities, Mr. Saragueta's role as director of the Partzuergo continues to be perceived differently by the three municipalities. In Hendaia, he is understood to be the director and in Hondarribia the manager, but in Irun he is considered to be merely the chief coordinator. Nonetheless, when I mentioned such matters early in 2002 to members of the ruling majorities in the various councils, all said that they saw no contradictions and that it was only normal that an existing service should be used. Mr. Etcheverry did acknowledge to me in an interview in March 2002 however that "yes, maybe we did a mistake there. But as we were all so eager to get things going, we were ready to take on whatever was necessary for the idea of cooperation to go ahead".

The Partzuergo has also been criticized for failing to encourage genuine participation on the part of local people in its activities.<sup>456</sup> Despite a general invitation issued by the three municipalities in 1993, 2000 and again in 2002 for people to take part in discussions about the strategic development plans for the area, recent events have gone ahead without much public consultation. Rather than invite the local population to take part in the creation of common projects, the Partzuergo turned to outside consultants for the creation of its logo, as well as for the preliminary studies of the area and planning the cultural itinerary round the three towns. Critics complain that the participation and views of local inhabitants are called for only *after* such projects have already been launched. Consequently, when in October 2000 the Partzuergo organised a conference to present its projects to the general public, the audience included only three people who were not linked in some way or other to the three municipalities or the Partzuergo. As for the regular council meetings of the Partzuergo, although they are open to the public, they rarely attract attendance. As we saw in the earlier account of a meeting of the Partzuergo's General Council, the only outsider present on that occasion was a retired man from Hendaia.

Members of a group of local young people who have launched their own project under the name of *Mugazabaldu*, meaning in Basque "step on - or efface - the frontier", to work on border-related issues in the Irun neighbourhood of Behobia with the involvement of local inhabitants, have complained about the Partzuergo's lack of engagement with them. Repeatedly, they invited Partzuergo representatives to attend their events and take interest in their projects. In 2001, when they organised a three-day conference in which local inhabitants were invited to talk about their experiences of life on the frontier, the only Partzuergo employee to attend was Pilar Fuertes, who came for one evening. In the summer of 2001, when the Partzuergo invited bids for the production of educational material accompanying the 'Path of the Bay' project to be distributed to local schools so that children could be introduced in an educational way to Bidasoa-Txingudi,

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<sup>453</sup> See *Adebisa Annual Report 1999*, Irun.

<sup>454</sup> Interviews with local entrepreneurs and officials, including one EAJ councillor in Irun.

<sup>455</sup> For example, see the minutes of the meeting of the Committee of Directors on 2 November 2000, in Irun, when the then representative of Hondarribia José Manuel Noguera, questions the independence of the Partzuergo under the present arrangements and asks whether the municipality of Hendaia should be included in Bidasoa Bizirik. Already, in the Partzuergo's General Council meeting of 22 October 1999, which took place in the municipal council hall of Irun, the then mayor of Hendaia Raphael Lassalette expressed his approval of having Adebisa as the manager of the Partzuergo's affair but stressed the need that this be recognised as only a short term convention and that, eventually, a more "independent and autonomous" way of working should be found.

<sup>456</sup> Based on interviews during fieldwork.

Mugazabaldu made a bid along with two other organisations,<sup>457</sup> *Maîtres du Rêve* and *Arkolan*,<sup>458</sup> an Irun-based association involved in the development of an archaeological site and the construction of a museum of Roman times in Irun with the support of the municipality. When *Maîtres du Rêve* won the contract, it seemed to Mugazabaldu representatives that the bidding process was rigged from the beginning. Early in 2002, they were disappointed again when they found out that the other project related to the 'Path of the Bay', the production of a documentary film about people's lives in Bidasoa-Txingudi, was not to be put out to tender, as they had been told by Mr. Saragueta, but had already been awarded to the Donostia university students.

As it turns out, some members of Mugazabaldu are employed in educational projects by the municipality of Hondarribia and I subsequently learned that relations between the two sides have not always been smooth. This served as one of the reasons why Hondarribia representatives in the Partzuergo may not have been enthusiastic about employing Mugazabaldu for Partzuergo projects. Some participants of the Partzuergo also noted to me that they saw advantages in contracting firms from outside Bidasoa-Txingudi, in their so-called desire to preserve neutrality in the development of some projects. I venture to say that, contracting a firm from outside also gives a more 'sophisticated' image. So, below the surface of the Partzuergo's image of harmonious consensus and desire for civic participation, we see that personal and political concerns influence decisions. Since mid 2001, Mugazabaldu has succeeded in gaining support from the municipality of Irun in relation to plans to develop the frontier area in Behobia. It is ironic, however, that an association which appears to have aspirations similar to those of the Partzuergo should not be welcomed by the Partzuergo and should have to continue seeking support from one of the three participating councils as an individual initiative.

Other areas of frustration reflect the sensitivities of particular interest groups. Shopkeepers in the border area have complained that projects like the planned commercial exhibition area, in which the Partzuergo is a participant, will deprive them of customers by preventing lorry and car drivers from parking to go shopping in the area. Local environmentalists have complained about the Partzuergo's failure to mention ecological concerns in its constitution.<sup>459</sup> In January 2002, when the three municipalities made public plans to install an incinerator in Irun, local environmentalists protested against its un-ecological character.<sup>460</sup> Concerns have also been raised over plans by the Irun council to rehabilitate the marshy area and small islands on its side of the Bidasoa in order to incorporate them into an adventure park for canoeing and kayaking as part of the larger project to make Bidasoa-Txingudi attractive for tourists with a series of leisure activities.

The Confraternity of Fishermen in Hondarribia has complained that the Partzuergo ignores it,<sup>461</sup> despite what its president, Esteban Olaizola, describes as the Confraternity's "important role in the economy and traditions of Hondarribia".<sup>462</sup> "All the Partzuergo is interested in is flashy tourism," he added. The director of a transport agency based in Irun, Joxan Garayalde, complained about the lack of interest of the municipalities in the transport industry and

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<sup>457</sup> In their proposal, Mugazabaldu made an effort to employ the same language as the Partzuergo, talking about how, "to foster a Txingudi identity, it is necessary that we get to know each other", something they had not done in previous public texts (Eg *Sud-Ouest* 31 January 2001 and "Mugazabaldu: un proyecto de desarrollo comunitario en torno a la frontera", unpublished paper, *Heziketa eta Zerbitzuak*, 2001).

<sup>458</sup> *Arkolan* is an abbreviation and merger of the words archaeology and 'lan' which, in Basque means 'work'.

<sup>459</sup> In response, Partzuergo director Mr. Saragueta explained in an interview in June 2000 that it went without saying that the environment was a concern of the Partzuergo since its preservation was necessary for the successful development of its projects, particularly in tourism. He also mentioned the waste disposal project as a demonstration of the Partzuergo's concern with the environment.

<sup>460</sup> "Une analyse au vitriol" *La Semaine du Pays basque* 22-28 March 2001, P.16.

<sup>461</sup> *Bidaberi* January 1999 No.7 P.10.

<sup>462</sup> Interview April 2000, Hondarribia.

reproaching the Partzuergo of being focused only in the domain of tourism. "It is principally thanks to us, to the transport agencies, that Irun and Hondarribia did not go down hill economically after the frontier was opened. And the municipality of Irun have taken their time in providing us the space we need to develop our industry. Just because of this concern always with tourism. So, the Partzuergo... I think it's a complete joke."

The apparent failure of the Partzuergo to take account of such local concerns contradicts its claim to be forging a new consensual social space. During my fieldwork, I also encountered expressions of resistance on the part of some people towards the Partzuergo, on account of their perception of its directive character. Bidasoa-Txingudi magazine has been criticized by some as being a clearly propaganda tool. Other people explained the poor attendance at the concert by Kepa Junkera, despite his great popularity in the Basque Country, as being due to uneasiness with the context of Txingudi Eguna in which the concert was organised. In response to my question on whether they used the term 'Txingudi', many people scoffed at the idea, describing it simply as a political ploy and saying that they would continue to talk of the comarca del Bidasoa for Irun and Hondarribia and refer to Hendaia separately.

The dominance of Spanish cultural influences in the Partzuergo initiative is made evident in details such as the way information about the Partzuergo is presented. On its websites, texts appear to have been written first in Spanish and then translated into French, Basque and English, often with mistakes. Most of the texts are first written by Bidasoa Bizirik and then translated by them or by Hendaia municipal employees. On the Partzuergo's website, a section listing participants in the committee of directors includes, beside the name of Hendaia's municipal secretary, the Spanish word "*secretario*". Figures for the Partzuergo's annual budget from 1999 until early in 2002 were cited in pesetas, even though the euro had been in existence as a cross-frontier currency since 1999. The practical reason for this was that the accounts of the Partzuergo are managed by the Spanish-based agency Bidasoa Bizirik. However, it should go without saying that any endeavour to promote values that are non-nationalist and aim to be 'European' should take advantage of the existence of a European currency.

Although the municipalities of Irun and Hondarribia had roadsigns since the late 1990s announcing "Bidasoa-Txingudi: Irun, Hondarribia", they do not mention "Hendaia". Meanwhile, in Hendaia, there are no similar signs. Instead, visitors to Hendaia are welcomed by roadsigns announcing the town's twinning arrangements with Peebles in Scotland and Viana do Castelo in Portugal.<sup>463</sup> Roadsigns continue to refer to the frontier and state territory, even though they are now in Basque as well as in French or Spanish. As we saw in chapter Three, a road sign in the centre of Hendaia points to the frontier with the words "frontière" and "muga", while in Irun roadsigns point to "Francia" and "Frantzia". The municipalities of Irun and Hendaia have had their own websites since 1999 and 2000 respectively but make little effort to keep their sections on the Partzuergo up to date. On Hendaia's website, for example, the list of activities dates back to 2000. When I mentioned this to Kotte Ecenarro, the mayor of Hendaia, in an interview in April 2002, he replied that "this kind of communication is not our priority. We have other more important things to worry about." At the same time, however, he still insisted that Hendaia's interest in the Partzuergo remains strong.

Even the councillors in the majority have not demonstrated themselves to be as exemplary Bidasoa-Txingudians in their lifestyle as they are in their speeches. When I pointed out how I had

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<sup>463</sup> Since 1998, the municipality officialised its twinning with these two towns following contacts made with them by Robert Arrambide and Monique Lambert, two key local figures of Hendaia. This initiative is called by its French and Basque name *jumelage/parezkatze*.

noticed few councillors present at Partzuergo events such as Txingudi Eguna, Serge Lonca, a councillor of Hendaia in the majority at the time, acknowledged to me that "what we do in our public life and what we do in our private lives are often two very different things." Another example is provided by Ion Elizalde, the Hondarribia councillor, who protested on several occasions in the Partzuergo's General Council at the continued use of the word "cross-frontier", which he said contradicts the Partzuergo's objective of overcoming boundaries.<sup>464</sup> However, in an interview, Mr. Elizalde joked about the Partzuergo being "*un maquillaje*" – make-up – "just the way we still talk about the gabatxoak on the other side of the frontier, the way we complain about them getting drunk in our bars... And all this about 'Txingudi'. Come on, none of us use this term. I certainly don't!" In mid 2001, Mr. Elizalde moved to live in Hendaia, where he had bought a flat.<sup>465</sup> But he admits that he doesn't know Hendaia well. "Only the supermarket and the way to the beach! What else does Hendaia have that I need to know about?" he says, laughing. "I only discovered where the town hall was the other day, when I had to go there for a Partzuergo meeting!" On another occasion, Mr. Elizalde complained when Txingudi Telebista broadcast some news in French over a period of several months (this was actually done by me), in addition to its customary use of Spanish and occasionally Basque. "It's so annoying," he said. "I can't understand anything!"

In interviews with me, all three towns' mayors expressed their positive, enthusiastic and harmonious views of the Partzuergo, sustaining this impression in a wide variety of media shows. In an interview in May 2002, for example, Mr. Jáuregui, the mayor of Hondarribia, noted the "symbolic importance of the Partzuergo." But such an image crumbles when we observe interaction in less public instances. Despite their insistence on mutual understanding and enthusiasm, the interests and priorities of the three municipalities are often quite different. A clue can already be picked up when one takes a look at the different priorities given by each of the municipalities to the choice of twelve projects listed in the second strategic development plan. While Hendaian delegates see cultural projects as one of their main priorities,<sup>466</sup> their counterparts from the other two towns complain about the insistence of "the French" on these initiatives. Hondarribian delegates give more priority to the development of road communications and tourism<sup>467</sup> and Irun delegates favour business ventures along with development of road communications and an intermodal centre to deal with freight traffic. As Mr. Durandeu, delegate of Hendaia on the General Council of the Partzuergo, acknowledged in an interview in April 2002, "Irun and Hondarribia are really keen on launching these ambitious projects. For example, their idea now to attempt to resolve traffic problems in the area and to ask for the support of regional and state authorities. We, on the other hand, have got our own pet project with the 'Path of the Bay'. More simple steps, and more to do with culture. What interests us especially is things like that, culture, sport, tourism, and yes, the Recinto Ferial comes into it."

Through an examination of life in Irun, Hondarribia and Hendaia, within the Partzuergo and the development of its projects, we see that the official discourse of the Partzuergo is not as harmonious as the promoters of the Partzuergo would represent it in their public speeches and media statements. Despite the mayors' and the councillors' assurance of optimism and general

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<sup>464</sup> Partzuergo General Council, 14 February 2000, in the municipal council of Irun.

<sup>465</sup> Numerous other councillors from Hegoalde also live in Hendaia. Two of these are Fernando San Martín and Miguel Angel Paez, both PSE-EE representatives at the municipality of Irun. Being in constant need of personal bodyguards to protect them from possible attacks by ETA, living in Iparalde is rendered furthermore attractive as a much less risky place.

<sup>466</sup> In May 2002, the first three priorities stated by Hendaia delegates in the Strategic Development Plan were the 'Path of the Bay', the construction of a Txingudi Avenue and the creation of a common citizens' information service.

<sup>467</sup> The first three priorities stated by the Hondarribia delegates in the Strategic Development Plan were the development of roads around and between the three towns, the 'Path of the Bay' and the development of tourist services.

positiveness, each has different interests and visions of the Partzuergo and what can be done with it. We also see that local inhabitants have their own interpretations of what the Partzuergo is about. In all cases, different senses of identity are evident. These accounts reveal a contrast between how individuals see identity as a fixed and homogenous thing and how, in their daily life, they provide evidence of how identity is actually constructed through the flexible use of markers and boundaries very different from such an immutable and holistic notion of identity. In the process, power plays a fundamental role in the discrepancy between discourse and practice. Held back from fulfilling its objectives by the fact that it is an organisation essentially made up of politicians, the Partzuergo's ultimate success hinges on the extent to which its promoters take account of power relationships in the area and the manner in which individuals constantly adapt aspects of their identity and behaviour to different contexts, company and circumstances.



A moment during the seminars on Souvenirs of the Frontier organised as part of the Mugazabaldu project. The person talking is Bittor Urra who worked in the toll booth on the Irun side of the Bridge of Santiago during the 1960s, charging people going across.



Organisers of Mugazabaldu: Felix, Garicoitz, Ion, Ion (and me).



### Conclusion: 'Identity' as a political project

In this study of identity issues in Bidasoa-Txingudi, I have sought to confirm a more liberating approach to the empirical understanding of identity. By approaching identity through the principle of organisation of identifications, I have set out to demonstrate its flexible and changing nature. Bearing in mind the nature of identification strategies as political projects – whether on the part of individuals, social groups or political parties – I have attempted to look at social behaviour and interaction without preconceived definitions regarding questions of underlying identity. This has left me free to examine how people pursue identification strategies and for what motives. I have examined the way in which individuals engage in struggles for the control of symbolic markers which they use to form boundaries in the search for power and its consolidation. I have sought to demonstrate that individuals construct their own identities in a variable manner according to the social context and the boundaries that are drawn up. In this way, I have shown identity to be the product of a fluid and changing application of markers and boundaries for the purpose of identification.

In parallel, I have analysed the way in which such strategies form part of a broader political context in Irun, Hondarribia and Hendaia. I have shown how the promoters of the Partzuergo pursue some of their political objectives through the fabrication of identity as a politically imposed concept for purposes of seeking and retaining power at a local interpersonal level, as well as at the municipal, regional and supranational level.

I have also sought to demonstrate the shortcomings of primordialist approaches to identity at the level of the group. 'Basque identity', like any other ethnic or group identity, is a composite conglomeration of flexible and changing boundaries. This would also be the case of a 'Bidasoa-Txingudi identity' as and when it develops.

All expressions of identity involve an action or reaction in relation to the identity demands and expectations of others. In a social context, an example can be found in Bidasoa-Txingudi in relation to the vestimentary choices confronting a person considering attending a local fiesta. If the person chooses to attend, she must respond to certain boundaries that such a choice entails, either by dressing in the customary fiesta clothes or wearing different clothes of her own personal choice. At the fiesta, the person has to respond to yet more boundaries, such as whether or not to engage in drinking the beverages on offer, whether or not to start singing and dancing, whether to sing some songs and not others, dance some dances and not others, and so on. By adopting the markers used in the context of the fiesta, the person becomes part of the group and contributes to the drawing up of the boundaries that distinguishes this group. However, she may not use some of the available markers in the same way as other people in the group, and thereby may draw up boundaries between herself and the others, while not necessarily diminishing in her own eyes her membership of the group.

Given that such variable identity constructions on the part of individuals are political in their nature, analysis in terms of group identity expressions, ignoring these individual variations, is potentially dangerous since it involves the acceptance of an attempt to exercise power at the group level on the individual. Using identity to define something or someone is an attempt at control and appropriation, in the same way as naming implies an attempt to exercise power over the thing or person being named. To include someone under a particular label when that person does not want to be or does not feel included is an exercise of power, in the same way as is the refusal to give an identity to someone who wishes or feels entitled to be included. An example of the attempt to use 'identity' in order to impose a way of thinking and behaving on a group of

people is illustrated in this thesis by the conflict around the Alarde. A more insidious strategy, because of its pervasiveness in the context of the Basque Country, is the assertion of 'Basque, French or Spanish identity' in the attempt to rally or exclude people under specific labels in the context of nationalist ideology.

Amongst the organisers of the Partzuergo, I often heard statements such as "we need to know each other better"<sup>468</sup> and "we still have some way to go".<sup>469</sup> Such statements seem to suggest that the creation of an overarching 'Bidasoa-Txingudi' sense of belonging is simply a matter of stimulating awareness of a shared cultural heritage. Such an idea, however, is based on questionable assumptions. One of these is the functionalist idea that because individuals have fluid, changing and situational identifications, these 'identities' will logically fit together in a harmonious hierarchical arrangement like "concentric circles which would encourage compatible loyalties from the local to the European level" (García and Wallace, 1993:172): this ignores the political aspect of identity construction. Another assumption is that, simply by exploiting locally existing symbols such as language, history, myth, memory, folklore and tradition, a Bidasoa-Txingudi identity can be forged: this ignores the fact that it is precisely those cultural elements from which existing identities are constructed that presently are the factors that most divide local inhabitants.

The Partzuergo's organisers have tried to get round this by saying that a sense of Bidasoa-Txingudi belonging, made up of 'difference' and 'plurality', is a greater whole than the sum of its parts and therefore 'naturally' transcendent. This sounds familiar when we consider the EU's own slogan of 'unity in diversity'. However, not everyone may grasp this bigger picture or do so in a uniform way. Moreover, the question of who defines this Bidasoa-Txingudi sense of belonging is itself a politically loaded one. There is also a contradiction between attempts to mobilise public support for further integration, through populist rhetoric about 'being altogether' and 'the need to know each other', and attempts to 'de-politicise' the integration process by focusing only on the legal-rational and 'technical' process that has more to do with history, evolution and destiny.

In this context, it is interesting to note how the sense of European identity expressed by the relatively few local inhabitants who claim to feel such an identity often differs from that displayed in the discourse of the organisers and promoters of the Partzuergo. As we have seen, the Partzuergo's public statements frequently cite 'Europe' as a central concept in the context of cross-frontier cooperation. The European flag and other markers linked with the EU often feature in the Partzuergo's publications and public events. Frequently, in interviews, officials told me how important 'Europe' is in relation to the Partzuergo's contribution to contemporary social, political and economic developments, and how the Partzuergo initiative is an essential part of the 'consolidation of Europe'. Often, too, they stressed the importance of 'Europe', for example in talking about 'the need to remain competitive within the widening economic currents of Europe' and the possibility of benefiting from EU funds.

Among ordinary people with whom I spoke, by contrast, few explicitly mentioned a sense of identification with 'Europe'. Some people even told me they were not keen on the idea of feeling 'European'. Attitudes to Europe frequently appeared to reflect merely a recognition of it as a current social, political and economic reality, without any deeper personal involvement in the 'European project'. Interestingly, this analysis was also expressed to me by many individuals

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<sup>468</sup> This, for example, was repeatedly stated to me by Hendaia councillor Jean-Baptiste Etcheverry.

<sup>469</sup> Hondarribia mayor Borja Jáuregui says this in an interview for Bidasoa-Txingudi magazine, on the occasion of his ascension to the post of President of the Partzuergo, in the December 2001 edition (No.21, P.5). Similar statements were repeated to me in interviews with him, the mayors of Irun and Hendaia and other municipal members of staff involved in the organisation of the Partzuergo.

leading a cross-frontier lifestyle. In fact, the only informant who specifically told me that he felt more of a 'European identity' than any other kind of identity was Patxi García, president of the association for Cross-Border Workers, who lives in Hendaia but has Spanish nationality.

The debate on how best to enable citizen participation in the democratic polity is not a new one, and recent contributors have included Schmitter (1999, 2000), Hoskyns and Newman (2000), and Eriksen and Fossum (2001). In the context of efforts by the European Commission to foster a sense of European identity, one attempt at taking on this challenge has been the Lexcalibur project, aimed at creating a 'European public sphere'<sup>470</sup> by providing a space on the Internet for individuals to voice their opinions about current legislation and policy-making in the EU (Weiler et al., 1996). Such initiatives, however, as MacClancy (2000:16) has pointed out, are likely to be restricted in their impact, catering principally to members of the middle class who are more likely to have the time and resources needed to take part. This risks happening, too, with the Partzuergo: the debate around the idea of Bidasoa-Txingudi space and identification remains essentially political and partial, with the circle of people supporting and constructing it restricted to those for whom such a reality is politically and economically appealing.

As an elite-led enterprise, rather than an elected body, the Partzuergo is ill placed to win popular legitimacy from manufactured symbols.<sup>471</sup> While the elite play an undeniable role in the long-term popularisation of certain understandings of symbolic goods – we have evidence of this for Bidasoa-Txingudi over the last few years – the Partzuergo, if it is to succeed in its project, would do well to open up more to participation by a broader range of local people.

One way of doing this could be through providing the facilities necessary for more active public participation. An example of this was provided by Irun, where a local council initiative to set up a citizens' information service, the SAC, in 1999 was followed in 2000 by the launch of a municipal web site, [www.irun.org](http://www.irun.org) with a series of special public tents on Ensantxe Plaza for free internet access. In January 2002, the municipality launched a so-called Citizens' Forum (*Foro Ciudadano* in Spanish and *Hiritar Forua* in Basque) with the specific objective of "stimulating citizen participation by creating a sort of 'congress' of citizens which enables the gathering of thoughts and opinions on issues that affect the city as a whole".<sup>472</sup> People interested in taking part were required to register before the first session, and participants came from a wide variety of backgrounds, both as individuals and as representatives of local associations. Amongst them were members of Adixkidetuak,<sup>473</sup> an association recently set up by immigrants largely from South and Central America to support each other, who had already taken part in the festivities of the Txingudi Eguna the year before, and representatives of the campaign for the integration of women into the traditional Alarde.

The Forum consisted of five commissions in which participants could voice their opinions about projects concerning Irun such as economic diversification, Irun in the European context with open frontiers and its participation in the Partzuergo and the Euro Hiri. The Forum was designed to

<sup>470</sup> See Risse (2002) for a discussion on the definition of a 'European public sphere'.

<sup>471</sup> This issue has also been brought up by scholars in the social and political sciences with relevance to efforts by politicians, bureaucrats and intellectuals to construct new formal notions of identity such as 'European' (Shore, 2000; Stråth, 2000) and 'transnational' and 'border' (Persson and Eriksson, 2000; Die Erde, 2002). While they all acknowledge the important role played by the elite in the popular adoption of specific symbols, they stress the need to empower citizens with the right to participate in the democratic polity.

<sup>472</sup> "Estimular la participación ciudadana creando una especie de 'congreso' de los ciudadanos que permita recoger sus reflexiones y opiniones sobre temas que afectan al conjunto de la ciudad" (<http://www.irun.org/caste/foro/foropres.html>. My translation from Spanish).

<sup>473</sup> Meaning Comrades or Colleagues in Basque. It is interesting that they should choose a Basque name. I suspect this is part of an effort to demonstrate their attempt to integrate in the locality.

take place over three sessions. In May, a White Paper was distributed to the public featuring some of the ideas voiced and giving details of the discussions and principal conclusions. On the day of the White Book's release, the mayor of Irun, stressed that "this forum does not shut its doors today. Rather, it is the point of departure of an irreversible road towards a more participative city".<sup>474</sup>

What is significant in the context of Bidasoa-Txingudi is the isolated nature of such an initiative, given that matters relating to cross-frontier living, the Partzuergo and the Euro Hiri are also topics of great concern in Hondarribia and Hendaia and a subject of discussion within the Partzuergo. It also remained unclear how the concerns voiced by citizens in this forum would be taken up by either the municipality of Irun or the Partzuergo, leaving an impression among some participants that the forum was little more than a half-hearted effort to involve local citizens and so go beyond a middle-class constituency.

While the organisers of the Partzuergo justify its present structure by arguing that the public 'lacks information' or is 'fearful' or 'suspicious', such assertions stand in contrast to the statements of some other local inhabitants to the effect that "many of us have had strong contact between each other across the frontier since well before the existence of the Partzuergo". The Partzuergo's arguments effectively rule out dissent by redefining opposition to further integration as being due to lack of information or fear, conveniently disguising the fact that politicians within the Partzuergo have their own personal and political interests in this project that do not necessarily go in the same direction as what they preach in public.

The manner in which future change towards a growing identification with a sense of Bidasoa-Txingudi belonging will take place cannot be easily predicted as the process is not uncausal. No single factor determines the readiness of individuals to receive and digest new beliefs about the boundaries of community. What matters is the cumulative impact of a whole series of conditions. But it remains the case, so far, that identification with Bidasoa-Txingudi is more interesting for some than it is for others. If one seeks new opportunities beyond the frontier, or has bigger ambitions for one's social club or association, or wishes to benefit from aspects of state contexts such as living in one state and working in the other – or both – then Bidasoa-Txingudi becomes a relevant concept. At this point, the Partzuergo's projects may benefit only a certain class of people.

Reflecting the complex socio-political context of the Basque Country, Bidasoa-Txingudi continues to be a highly segmented society. Divided by a state frontier and differing traditions and attitudes, by language, social origins and loyalties, its members are as aware of their differences as they are of the features that they share in common. The Partzuergo draws on 'cultural' aspects of identity in an attempt to rally the local population in a non-conflictual way, by talking in terms of a 'Txingudi identity'. But it simultaneously raises new boundaries in its effort to constitute a 'Bidasoa-Txingudi people'. The Partzuergo does not go so far as to recommend certain markers over others in terms of their ability to confirm 'Bidasoa-Txingudiness', nor does it impose specific criteria for who can possess a 'Txingudi identity' and how. Nonetheless, by positing a theoretical 'Txingudi identity', it implicitly raises the possibility of 'non-Txingudi identity' and 'non-Bidasoa-Txingudi people'. In this way, it opens the way for future doubts and tensions between people who think they have a 'Txingudi identity' or feel a 'Txingudi' sense of belonging and those who they think do not. By engaging in this way in the

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<sup>474</sup> "Este foro no cierra hoy sus puertas sino que es el punto de partida de un camino irreversible hacia una ciudad más participativa," quoted from Alberto Buen's speech on 29 May 2002.

same dialectic that it seeks to shun, the Partzuergo runs the risk of reproducing a pattern of inclusion and exclusion.<sup>475</sup>

In this respect, it is interesting to note a qualitative difference in the nature of the various boundaries and markers drawn up by inhabitants of Irun, Hendaia and Hondarribia. In Irun and Hondarribia, we saw how people impose strong markers and boundaries with regard to issues of belonging to their respective towns, relating for example to participation in the Alarde but also to use of space, in the bars and areas that they frequent, and choice of company, notably in the cuadrilla. In Hendaia, by contrast, boundaries and markers were shown to be less pronounced. In practical terms, people using a variety of different markers or using the same markers in different ways are able to take part in the fiestas of Hendaia in a relatively harmonious way. Similarly, there is more mingling in terms of who frequents specific bars and neighbourhoods in Hendaia. While bars such as Txirrimirri, Maitena and Xaia are known for being hangouts for Basque left-wing nationalists, they are also used by other people not engaged in the nationalist movement. Likewise, other bars with no particular identification to a specific group of people, such as the Café de la Bidassoa on the Place de la République, the Café de la Poste behind the town hall, or the Bar Océanic by the beach, are meeting places for a variety of people with different identifications. The same, of course, can also be said about many places in Irun and Hondarribia, but as a general matter my observations produced an impression of less clearly bounded social interaction in Hendaia.

As already noted, the relatively low-key mode of life in Hendaia prompts negative comments from people in Irun and Hondarribia about a perceived lack of community feeling on the French side of the frontier. The relative lack of excitement about the fiestas of Hendaia and the town's general appearance of dullness provoke remarks that 'the gabachos' have little sense of tradition or identity. Such an interpretation, however, is based on these people's own experience and belief of what identity construction is about. Patterns of sociability in Irun and Hondarribia are markedly different to those in Hendaia. Gender segregation, fiesta participation and town attachment all play a much more important role in social life on the Spanish side of the frontier, with the result that the group has a stronger hold on the individual in Irun and Hondarribia than it does in Hendaia. As we have seen in the conflict over the Alarde, it can be risky for people to openly express an opinion – if they dare to have one – in conflict with the majority since this poses the risk of social ostracism. Those wishing to avoid conflict must conform to the way in which markers are used by those around them, with inevitable implications for individuals' sense of self.

In Hendaia, by contrast, the self appears less subordinated to the group. There are no distinct cuadrillas, no traditions given sacred importance, and Basque nationalism is not so extremist. As indicated by the number of associations of various sorts that are active in Hendaia and the existence of twinning arrangements with towns in Scotland and Portugal, community feeling in Hendaia is simply expressed in different ways to that of Irun and Hondarribia. In this more flexible symbolic context, the individual is freer to use markers as he or she wishes for the expression of self as part of the group.

It may appear surprising to compare Hendaia, Irun and Hondarribia in this way, especially when we consider the romantic ideas that many people entertain of social life in Hegoalde as a more warm-hearted, jovial and therefore more open-minded affair. Indeed, the fact that young people from Hendaia have a general tendency to cross into Hegoalde for a night out could be given as

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<sup>475</sup> Again, the risks of this happening in the case of attempts to promote by some kind of 'European identity' has been pointed out by Shore (2000), MacClancy (2000) and Stráth (2000:21).

evidence of the appreciation of Hendaians of 'the Spanish Basque character'. However, their trips to Hegoalde are precisely that – short trips during which they enjoy the exoticism of the social area, before returning to the 'normality' of their home. It is also significant that many Irunians and Hondarribians enjoy living in Hendaia – not only because property is cheaper but also because there is 'peace and quiet', as many put it to me, and perhaps too, I suggest, less pressure for constant social conformism. It appears to be easier for individuals to lead their own lives unconstrained by social conventions in Hendaia than it is in Irun and Hondarribia.

Sökefeld, in his study of the management of the self in situations where potentially conflictive social relations are maintained, concludes that "there can be no identities without selves", having defined "self" as "that reflexive sense that enables the person to distinguish self-consciously between him – or herself and everything else" (1999:424). Amid the clash of conflicting ideological forces in the Basque Country, issues of identity are a source of frequent polemic, imposing constant negotiation and compromise on individuals' expression of the self.

It is significant to note, in this context, that it is the Hendaian delegates in the Partzuergo who are keenest on developing cross-frontier cultural and social projects. Being less attached to certain markers and spending less energy on the drawing up of boundaries, they appear to be more open to creativity and change. In Irun and Hondarribia, by contrast, where certain markers are fiercely defended and boundaries drawn up in their defence, delegates are less interested in developing cultural and social projects, believing that they already have their own culture and don't need to invent any more, and more interested in economic projects. The interest of Hendaian delegates in cultural projects doubtless has much to do with their desire to develop their tourist industry and residential population. Such open cultural projects may help to integrate new Hendaian residents, many of whom come from Irun and Hondarribia.

By contrast, the Hendaia council's lack of emphasis on language policy and its apparent lack of interest in the use of Basque, for example in bilingual road signs, suggests that some markers are not appreciated as important in Hendaia in the same way as they are in Irun and Hondarribia. A similar lack of emphasis on markers and boundaries was revealed in the mixed political composition of the lists of candidates in the 2001 municipal elections council in Hendaia. Kotte Ecenarro's list, for example, included people of a range of political views, something which in the socio-politically tenuous context of Irun and Hondarribia would more likely be a source of conflict than of harmony.

Significantly, popular support for the Partzuergo appears principally to emerge in moments when all three towns are threatened by an outside force, as in the case of the possible extension of the airport, or when there are general economic benefits to be obtained for the area, for example through efforts to develop business and tourism and resolve traffic problems. Does this mean that the Partzuergo should concentrate more on 'practical' areas such as business, tourism and transport rather than on talk of 'culture' and 'identity' in order to gain local support? It is difficult of course to avoid concerns with 'identity' and 'culture' altogether, since any social initiative inevitably leads to self-questioning on the part of its participants: 'why are we doing this?' and 'who are we?' But such questions may be something that individuals, in their engagement with the activities of the Partzuergo, should ask themselves, rather than have the Partzuergo both ask and answer the questions for them.

Certainly, it is only by going beyond current boundaries that the Partzuergo can succeed in winning wide-ranging popular support for its project. But if the Partzuergo wants to be genuinely inclusive, a long-term recipe for its success should include an opening-up to a popular plurality by accepting the contributions of local people to the decision-making process, and by taking a

conscious decision to disengage from the dialectic of a 'need' for 'identity' and 'culture', in order precisely to avoid getting involved in the drawing up of the type of markers and boundaries that we have seen in operation in this thesis.



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