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Boundaries and Place

European Borderlands in Geographical Context

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Contents

List of Figures and Tables	vii
Acknowledgments	ix
1. Learning from Europe? Borderlands in Social and Geographical Context <i>Jouni Häkli and David H. Kaplan</i>	1
Part I. Boundaries in the New Europe	
2. The 'Civilisational' Roots of European National Boundaries <i>John Agnew</i>	18
3. Changing Geographies of Scale and Hierarchy in European Borderlands <i>Julian Minghi</i>	34
4. Euroregions in Comparative Perspective <i>Joanna M. M. Kepka and Alexander B. Murphy</i>	50
Part II. Change in the 'Established' Europe	
5. Transboundary Networking in Catalonia <i>Jouni Häkli</i>	70
6. Integration and Division in the Basque Borderland <i>Pauliina Raento</i>	93
7. Asymmetrical and Hybrid Identities in the Northern Italian Borderlands <i>David H. Kaplan</i>	116
8. Common Spirit in the Upper Rhine Valley? <i>Susanne Eder and Martin Sandtner</i>	141

9. Urban Borderlands and the Politics of Place in Northern Ireland <i>Anna-Kaisa Kuusisto-Arponen</i>	159
Part III. Change in the Emerging Europe	
10. Place, Boundaries, and the Construction of Finnish Territory <i>Anssi Paasi</i>	178
11. An Emerging Borderland in Eastern Slavonia? <i>Mladen Klemencic and Clive Schofield</i>	200
12. Galician Identities and Political Cartographies on the Polish-Ukrainian Border <i>Luiza Bialasiewicz and John O'Loughlin</i>	217
13. Place and Discourse in the Formation of the Northeast Estonian Borderland <i>Joni Virkkunen</i>	239
14. Symbolic and Functional Balance on Europe's Northern Borders <i>Kristiina Karppi</i>	255
Index	273
About the Contributors	284

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Chapter Six

Integration and Division in the Basque Borderland

Pauliina Raento

European integration has increased and diversified human exchange across the continent's internal boundaries. Following the gradual erasure of control over the borders between the European Union member countries, the international boundaries are losing their previous functional significance. In the process new margins and centres, and new 'transitional spaces' (Thrift 1983: 94) between them, are emerging on the map of Europe. In this new geography, regions stand apart from one another because of their residents' interaction and mobility rather than because of political and administrative delimitation and demarcation (Raento 1998: 111).

An example of this development is the case of the Basque borderland in the Western Pyrenees, around the boundary between Spain and France. This boundary is often referred to as 'one of the oldest and most stable boundaries in western Europe' (Sahlins 1989: 1). It was agreed upon in 1659 in the Treaty of Bidasoa but was not demarcated until the Treaties of Bayonne (in Basque, Baiona) some two hundred years later (Sahlins 1989: 26–60, 238–66). Today this boundary divides the seven historical Basque provinces into two states. In Spain, the Basque Autonomous Community and the Foral Community of Navarra (Nafarroa) form a part of the state's network of autonomous regions. In France, the three Basque provinces belong to the department of Pyrénées Atlantiques and the Aquitaine Region (see figure 6.1). Ninety percent of the 2.9 million residents of the seven provinces live on the economically more diverse Spanish side. The largest urban centre in the area is metropolitan Bilbao (Bilbo), with

900,000 inhabitants. An estimated one-fifth of the total population in the region speaks Euskara, the Basque language.

There is a strong legacy of both division and integration in this borderland. Its people have a long history of residence in the area and are known for their unique language and distinct cultural traditions (Gallop

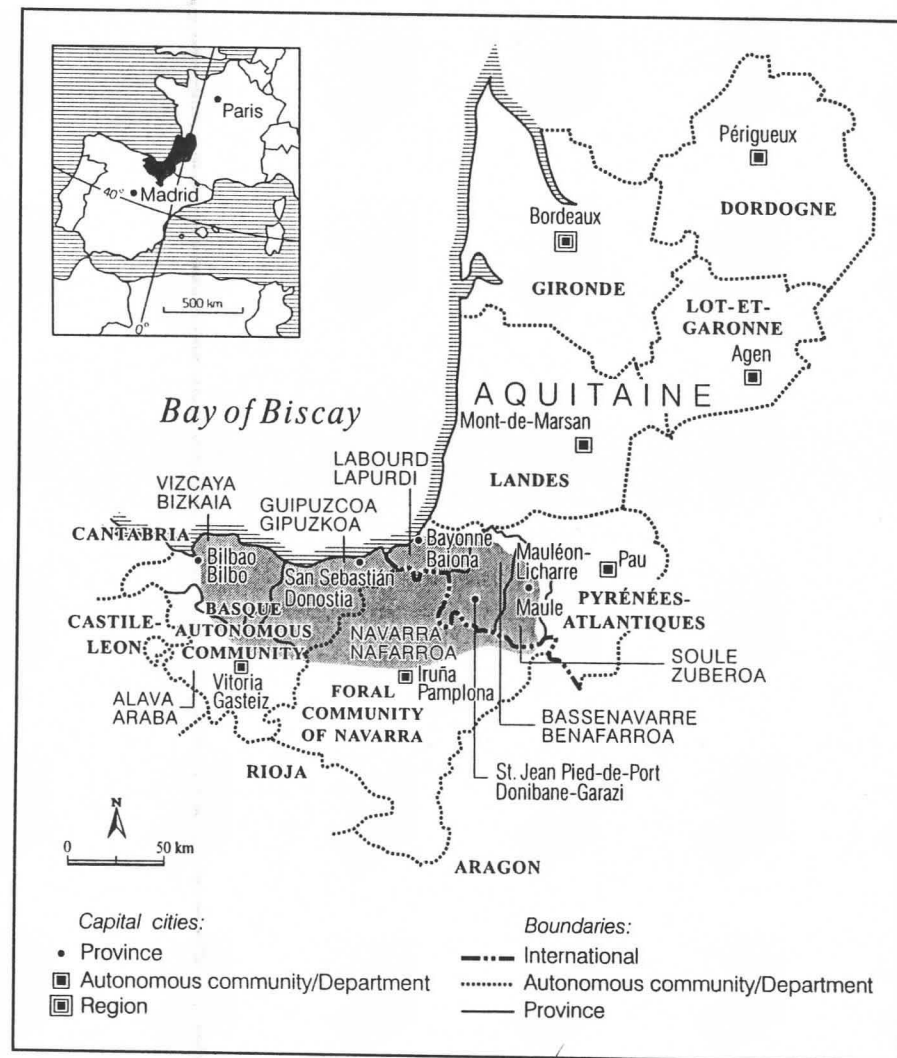


Figure 6.1. Current Politico-Administrative Division of the Historical Basque Territory in Spain and France

Note: The shaded area indicates the contemporary geographical core area of the Basque language.

1970; Ott 1981; Collins 1986). Basque politics has attracted international attention for over a century; the minority population's strong sense of ethnocultural and linguistic distinctiveness has supported political resistance against the Spanish and the French state, giving rise to a Basque nationalist movement in the late nineteenth century and its armed offspring, Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA), in the late 1950s (Payne 1975; Corcuera Atienza 1979; Clark 1979, 1984). Basque political identities and opinions about acceptable methods and goals for this resistance have varied, however, leading to internal conflicts within (and among) the three principal political groups: the radical nationalists, moderate nationalists, and non-nationalists. Other contested topics include the status of Euskara and the economic imbalance between urban and rural areas.

Provincial and local distinctiveness, changes in national policies of Spain and France, and the subsequent shifts in the nature of the international boundary have further contributed to the notably complex character of Basque politics and society. For example, the closure of the international boundary during the dictatorship of General Francisco Franco (1939–1975) emphasised the differences between the strongly industrialised and more populous Spanish Basque Country and the predominantly rural, sparsely populated French Basque Country. Spain's membership in the European Union in 1986, eleven years after Franco's death, added a continental context that emphasised economic issues over political conflict in Basque borderland society. The legacy of politico-administrative divisions still dictates many details and the degree of success of the continental processes in the area.

This chapter examines selected processes of contemporary integration and shows how historically and regionally based tensions have the potential to undermine these processes. Recent developments in the Basque borderland are approached from the perspective of multiple layers of centres, peripheries, and boundaries. The discussion portrays the historical Basque region not only as an international borderland but also as consisting of several internal cores and peripheries of political ideology, economy, and culture and ethnicity. The spheres of influence are mediated by transitional spaces—their own borderlands. It is argued that connecting the area's internal heterogeneity to the regional, national, and continental contexts of inquiry, and their interdependency, is crucial for understanding the progress of continental projects at the local and regional levels. The discussion draws on the assumption that explanations of the contemporary processes of differentiation and unification require a look at their historical development.

BASQUE BORDERLAND SINCE 1986

The death of General Franco in 1975 launched the political transition process in Spain. Control by force gave way gradually to a series of accommodations, including institutional, political, economic, and cultural concessions towards the country's ethnoculturally distinct peripheries and, in general, increasing individual rights. Since 1986, after the inclusion of Spain in the European Union, the French-Spanish boundary has become increasingly open, and some of the old patterns in exchange have paradoxically been reversed. In addition to the increase in traffic of people and goods across the border, many businesses in the area have relocated to the Spanish Basque coast and its emerging innovation clusters near the principal urban centres. These processes have emphasised the significance of local processes and continental political contexts in the evolution of the Basque borderland.

The European Union has played an active role in the shaping of the Basque economy, particularly since the 1990s. On the Spanish side, the EU has focused on developing and diversifying industrial infrastructure and production. Additional emphasis has been put on improving the quality of polluted industrial environments. In both Spain and France, the focus has been on improving the economic diversity of agricultural and tourism areas. Most of the projects have been co-funded by local, regional, and national governments. The increasingly international character of Basque transportation networks and local regional integration encouraged by the continental change of context exemplify this development.

Internationalization of Transportation and Trade

The European Union's role has been particularly visible in developing transportation networks in the Basque borderland. This focus draws on the advantageous location of the area within the European economic context (see figure 6.2). The Basque Country forms a central part of a corridor that connects the principal urban centres of the Iberian peninsula to the industrial core regions of Central Europe. Cargo from Spain and Portugal is transported to Central Europe by means of Basque road and railroad networks, and access to the French high-velocity train network (TGV) from the border town of Hendaye (Hendaia) allows passengers to reach Paris in roughly five hours. In addition, the Basque borderland is well connected to Spain's most important growth centres on the Catalanian and Cantabrian coasts, which have benefited greatly from EU expansion in the Mediterranean sphere. The historical links of Basque merchants, bankers, and industrialists with each of these regions have

been strong and active for centuries (Douglass and Bilbao 1975: 56–58; Basurto 1989).

In this network, Basque ports, especially Bilbao as a part of the Atlantic corridor, play a crucial role (Basurto 1989). In 1998, the Port of Bilbao was the second most important port in Spain after Algeciras in the southern part of the country (*Basque News* 1998: 2). More than 200 regular shipping lines, 130 of which are in Europe, connect the port with 500 ports worldwide (*Memoria anual* 1996 1997: 146–67). Bilbao is also well linked by road and railroad with the major urban centres of the Iberian peninsula and the rest of Europe. For example, by road, Madrid is four hours away, and Barcelona can be reached within six, Paris within eleven, and Milan within twelve hours. Roughly 4 million people reside within a two-hundred-kilometre radius of the port and 16 million within four hundred kilometres (*Port of Bilbao* 1997: 3).

The decline of the handling of raw materials since the closure of large

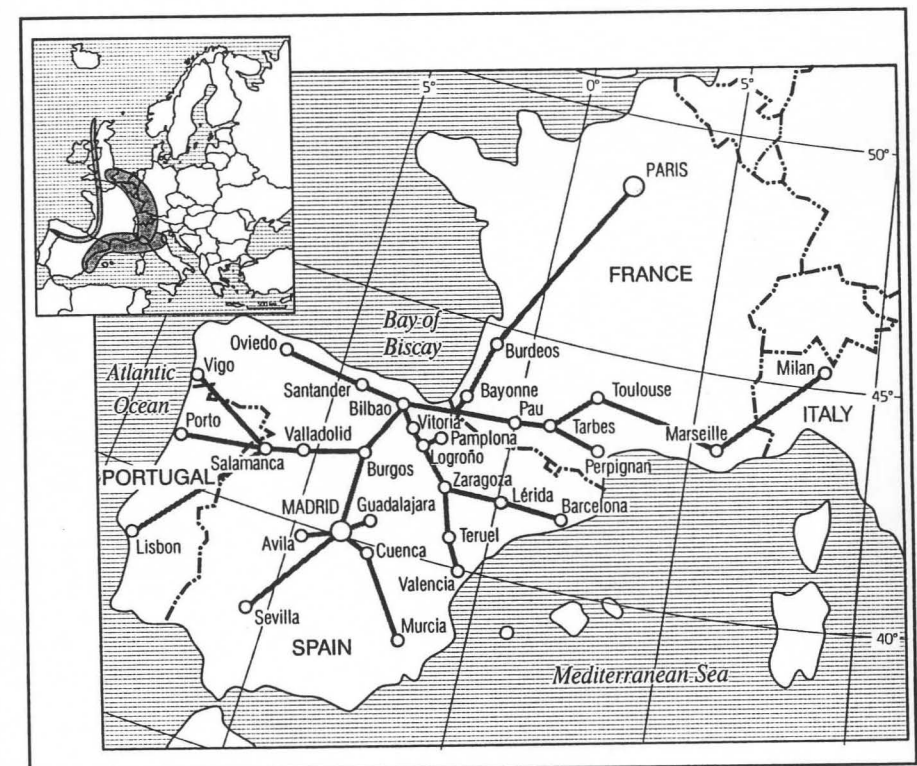


Figure 6.2. Basque Borderland within the Spanish and the European Economic Contexts

Source: Port of Bilbao 1997: 3.

iron and steel plants in the Bilbao area in the mid-1990s shifted the port's focus towards other sectors, most notably container traffic. This change of emphasis has led the port to seek an expansion of its hinterland towards Madrid and Zaragoza, southeastern France, and northern Portugal, thus enhancing the networks of other sectors of the Basque economy as well (Ugarteche 1997). In addition, special collaboration agreements have been established with Central European ports, including Rotterdam in the Netherlands and Emden in Germany (*Memoria anual 1996 1997*: 17). Of the products that pass through Bilbao, 94 percent are either going to or coming from foreign markets. Over one-half of this exchange is with Atlantic European countries, most notably Britain, Bilbao's leading market. Asia's share is 17, America's 16, and Africa's 12 percent of the foreign exchange (*Basque News* 1998: 2).

The search for new markets and outside investors includes an ambitious port expansion project (see figure 6.3). Crucial to the completion of this project has been the EU's financial participation, together with local, regional, and national governments. The first phase of the project, from 1991 to 1998, added surface area to the port and reorganised its logistic activities to accommodate new functions and to attract new customers.



Figure 6.3. Port of Bilbao

The first phase of the expansion (1991–1998) tripled the port's surface area by claiming 1.5 square kilometres of land from the sea. The second phase, launched in 1998, adds another 250,000 square meters of surface area to the port (*Basque News* 1998: 1). Photo by author, September 1997.

The second phase, launched in 1998, adds more space, particularly to the port's cargo and container facilities. The expansion of Bilbao's port has promoted other infrastructural improvements in the area, especially in road construction. Many of these projects have been at least partially financed by EU funds (*Memoria anual 1996 1997*; *Basque News* 1998: 1–2).

The improving network has increased international transportation companies' interest in the Basque borderland. Particularly attractive is the area's cost-effective flexibility as a hub for diverse forms of transportation. For example, the Spanish and the French central governments and the national railroad companies have actively sought ways to promote this diversity, with EU support. To improve the existing links among sea, road, railroad, and air connections, it is being recognised that more seamless co-operation of the local, regional, and national authorities is needed. Locally, the task requires new infrastructure and technological know-how. Particular attention must be directed to overcoming problems caused by the different rail gauges used in the two countries (*BT* 1995, v.2: 7–8).

The facilities in the immediate border zone have improved considerably. One of the most important achievements is an international transportation centre, ZAISA, designed for the consolidation, distribution, and storage of merchandise by international transportation companies (Lorenzo Barahona 1997). The French high-velocity train network is to be extended in the 2000s. The increased selection of service links to the region's airports, most notably to Bilbao's Sondika, Biarritz, and Fuenterrabia (Hondarribia) (see figure 6.4), also promotes passenger traffic

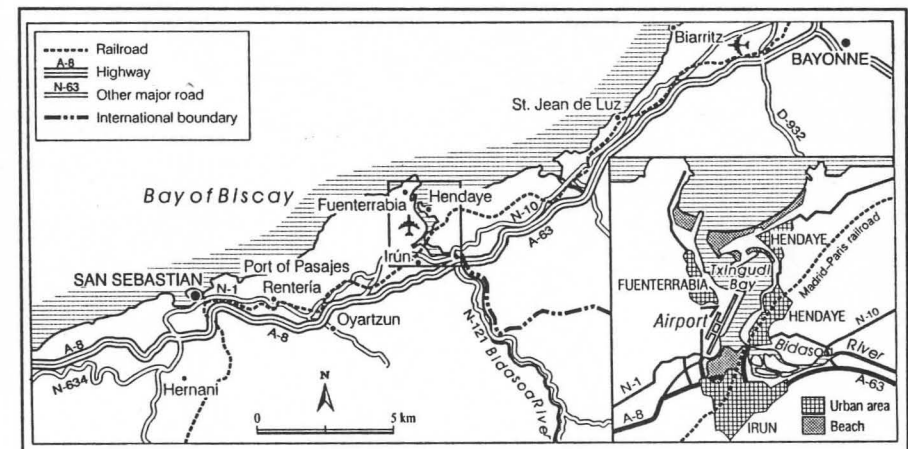


Figure 6.4. Constituent Urban Centers of the Bidasoa-Txingudi Eurodistrict and the San Sebastián-Bayonne Conurbation

(Ugarteché 1997; *BT* 1997, v.5: 11). The growth benefits the entire area, but the direct impact of the development is likely to be most notable on the French side of the border: Activities related to the transfrontier traffic of merchandise already account for one-third of Aquitaine's economy (*BT* 1995, v.2: 7). Furthermore, favourable real estate and land prices and political tranquillity compared to the Spanish side have encouraged small- and medium-sized enterprises to (re)locate on the French side of the border.

Local Integration: The Bidasoa Bordertowns

The European Union's visible involvement in nationally significant regional projects has raised local hopes concerning the long-term development of the border area. An illustrative example of new development is the evolution of the three border towns on the Bidasoa River, Irún (Irun) and Fuenterrabia in Spain and Hendaye in France, into a functionally unified urban zone of almost 100,000 people along the San Sebastián (Donostia)–Bayonne conurbation (see figure 6.4). Becoming a player in the regional and continental urban network, according to François Jacqué, president of the Bayonne Chamber of Commerce, is seen as 'the only way of being on equal terms with the great European metropolises' (*Le Monde*, 5–6 September 1993, cited in Anderson 1996: 122).

One motivation behind the need to elevate the border towns to 'equal terms' with regional and continental urban centres is the dramatic economic decline of the three towns in the early 1990s. The abolition of customs between Irún and Hendaye in January 1993 left hundreds of people unemployed and changed the local economic profile and traffic flows, being amongst the clearest examples of negative economic impacts of continental processes in the Basque borderland (Anderson 1996: 122; Raento 1997a: 244–45). During the latter half of the 1990s, the local economy recovered gradually, particularly on the Spanish side. The openness of the international border and the growth of the region's industries increased merchandise traffic across the border and stimulated cross-border shopping in the area. According to one study, 67 percent of the shoppers from France to the Spanish Basque Country come from within 70 kilometres of the border. They shop in Irún, in the supermarkets of Oyartzun (Oiartzun), and in San Sebastián, where tourism has experienced a new boost. A considerable proportion of the shoppers include 'recreation' as one motive for crossing the border (*Informe anual 1996* 1997: 95). The improved access between the border towns, active nightlife, and extended hours of operation of bars and restaurants on the Spanish side attract young people from the French side on weekends. This has increased the

formation of mixed, multilingual social groups in the area (Lorenzo Barahona 1997).

In the 1990s, the money spent on either side of the border fluctuated strongly with the currency exchange rates, but the total income carried from France to Spain was generally inferior to the amount spent by the Spaniards in France. This was due to the economic and demographic imbalance between the two regions and, to some extent, to the type of products purchased. For many Spanish Basques, relatively low real estate and grocery prices made residential relocation to the French side attractive in the first half of the decade. With the strengthening of the franc this trend has slowed down. The introduction of a common currency, the Euro, may change some of the cross-border shopping patterns, but local entrepreneurs believe that many shoppers will follow the behaviour adopted in the 1990s (Lorenzo Barahona 1997).

New borderland organisations emerged in the 1990s in support of the new development. The need to defend local interests in the continental context and to guarantee local support for economic integration led to the creation of the Bidasoa Txingudi Eurodistrict in 1993 (*BT* 1995, v.0: 3–6; 1996, v.4: 7–11). Its creation was based on local and regional initiatives and the drafting of a strategic regional plan on the Spanish side in the same year. The district's activities are co-ordinated by *Agencia de Desarrollo del Bidasoa* (ADEBISA), a regional development agency with headquarters in Irún. ADEBISA works in close co-operation with the municipal authorities of Irún and Fuenterrabia, which provide technical support. Hendaye, the third centre of importance within the district, has joined many of the projects and participates in the planning process, but limited political and financial support from Aquitaine's regional government undermines its power to act (Lorenzo Barahona 1997). The slow introduction of legal structures for the Eurodistrict also weakened initial progress (*BT* 1996, v.3: 10).

The European Union funds roughly one-fifth of the projects co-ordinated by ADEBISA. The Basque autonomous government covers 40–45 percent of the costs, and the rest is shared by local governments, the historical commercial district (*comarca*), and, occasionally, the central government in Madrid (*BT* 1995, v.0: 14–15; Lorenzo Barahona 1997). An example of these projects is the improvement of local access across the border: In addition to a train, the three towns are now connected by bus and ferry. Regional awareness is being raised by new trilingual media that include a radio station and a magazine published by ADEBISA. Particular attention has been paid to, and EU funding has been sought for, environmental projects (*BT* 1995, v.1: 13–14; 1997, v.5: 4–9) and promotion of tourism, with special emphasis on the region's beaches and its historic role

as a rest stop for pilgrims on their way to Santiago de Compostela in north-western Spain (BT 1995, v.1: 7–8; 1995, v.2: 11–12). European funding has also included energy and transportation.

Many practical problems that complicate locally promoted integration arise because of the need to address multiple administrative levels. Until March 1995, there were no formal transfrontier agreements between Madrid and Paris, which confused the implementation of projects that involved both the Spanish and the French Basques. In the case of ADE-BISA and its efforts to co-ordinate the Eurodistrict, governmental bodies that directly influence local activities include municipal governments, regional district administrations (*comarcas* in Spain, *cantons* in France), the provinces of Guipúzcoa and Labourd (Lapurdi), the governing bodies of the Basque Autonomous Community in Spain and of the *département* of Pyrénées Atlantiques and the Aquitaine Region in France, the central governments in Madrid and Paris, and the administrative and governmental bodies of the European Union. Problems have arisen from different bureaucratic styles and technical sophistication, and communication has been 'very difficult' at times, even at the local level (Lorenzo Barahona 1997). Further complications are due to continuing failures to produce compatible high-quality maps of the border region, and, in particular, of the San Sebastián–Bayonne conurbation and its development. Particularly damaged by these difficulties have been projects regarding infrastructure and environment (Unzueta 1997).

INTERNAL BORDERLANDS WITHIN THE BASQUE COUNTRY

Internal grievances have handicapped Basque borderland integration and international aspirations, particularly on the Spanish side. There are several problems not foreseen by administrators or by scholars who have examined national and continental development without connecting it to other geographical scales. To understand these problems, a look at the internal heterogeneity and formation of internal borderlands within the Basque borderland is necessary. Portraying 'the Basque borderland' as a uniform whole is somewhat misleading, since a locally and regionally sensitive approach reveals a series of distinct cores and peripheries within the region.

Cultural, ethnic, and historic links, including such elements as a common language (see the historical development of the Basque language area in figure 6.5) and cultural and social customs, tie the Basque borderland together (Gómez-Ibañez 1975: 24–42), but the seven historical

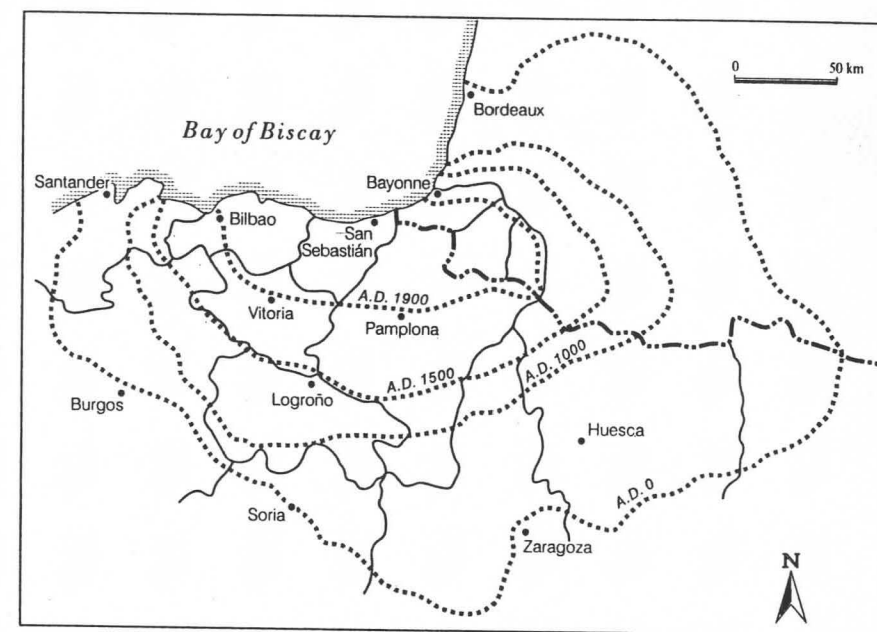


Figure 6.5. Territorial Evolution of the Basque Language

Source: *Conflicto lingüístico en Euskadi* 1979: 219.

Basque provinces also contain a great physical variety and related traditional lifestyles. The fisherman's coast, the shepherd's mountains, and the farmer's southern plains each have a distinct history of lifestyle and local economy (Douglass and Bilbao 1975: 13–16; Raento 1996: 204–15). Likewise, there are strong regional contrasts of demography (see figure 6.6) and industrial history and development. Whereas the densely populated coastal zone in Spain industrialised rapidly in the nineteenth century, the process did not reach the sparsely settled interior of the Spanish Basque Country or the French provinces until some half a century later, when the primary urban zones were already facing a new phase of industrial and urban expansion. Whereas on the coast the industries are relatively evenly dispersed and there are several large centres, many of the small villages of the interior still depend on agriculture, and industrial production is highly concentrated in principal urban centres. The legacy of the 1970s and 1980s economic crises and European integration are currently changing the profile and location of Basque industries, however.

In addition to demography and economy, the seven provinces are divided culturally, linguistically, and politically. Most of Guipúzcoa, east-

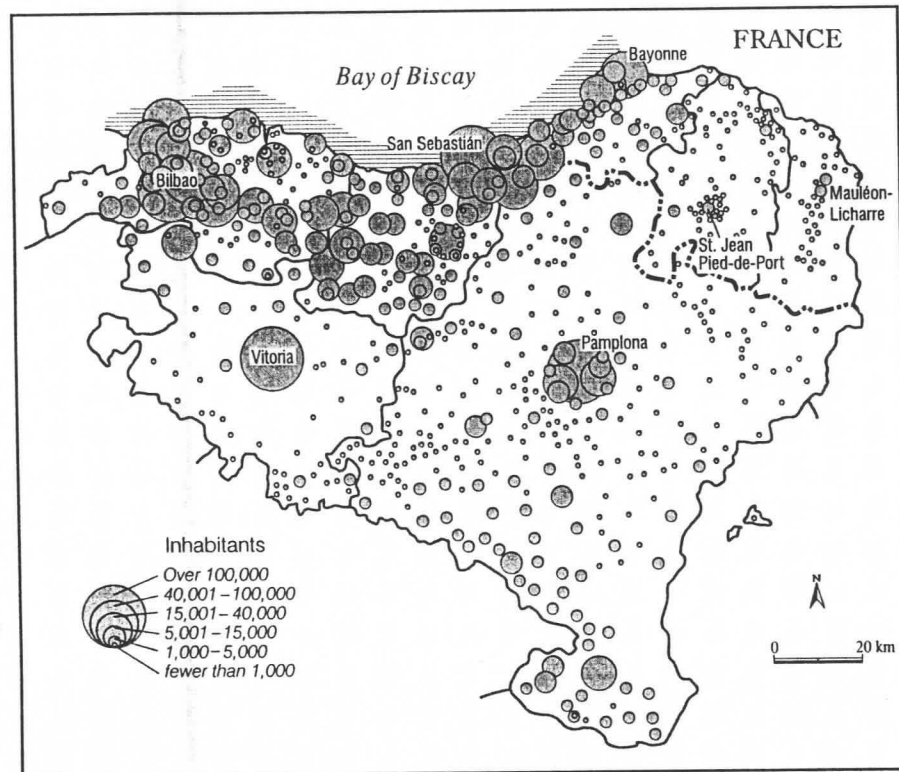


Figure 6.6. Distribution of Population in the Basque Provinces

Note: Roughly 91 percent of the area's total population resides on the Spanish side of the border.
Source: *Euskal Herriko Atlas* 1994: 144–55.

ern Vizcaya (Bizkaia), northern Navarra, and the mountainous rural inland of the French provinces are predominantly Basque speaking and display many cultural features usually identified as 'Basque'. Spanish and French dominate in urban centres, but the role of the Basque language may be locally significant, especially in strongly nationalist neighbourhoods. Generally, however, the principal coastal cities constitute voids on the Basque linguistic map. In turn, Spanish dominates the southern inland of the Spanish Basque provinces. Particularly in Spain, the Basque-speaking area forms the core of political resistance against the state (cf. figures 6.1, 6.5, and 6.6). This core spills over to the French Basque coast, where Basque nationalism finds support especially in the urban centres.

Due to these divisions, 'the coast and the interior stand apart' (Raento 1999: 225). The same divisions along rural and urban, Basque-speaking and French- or Spanish-speaking, and nationalist and non-nationalist lines

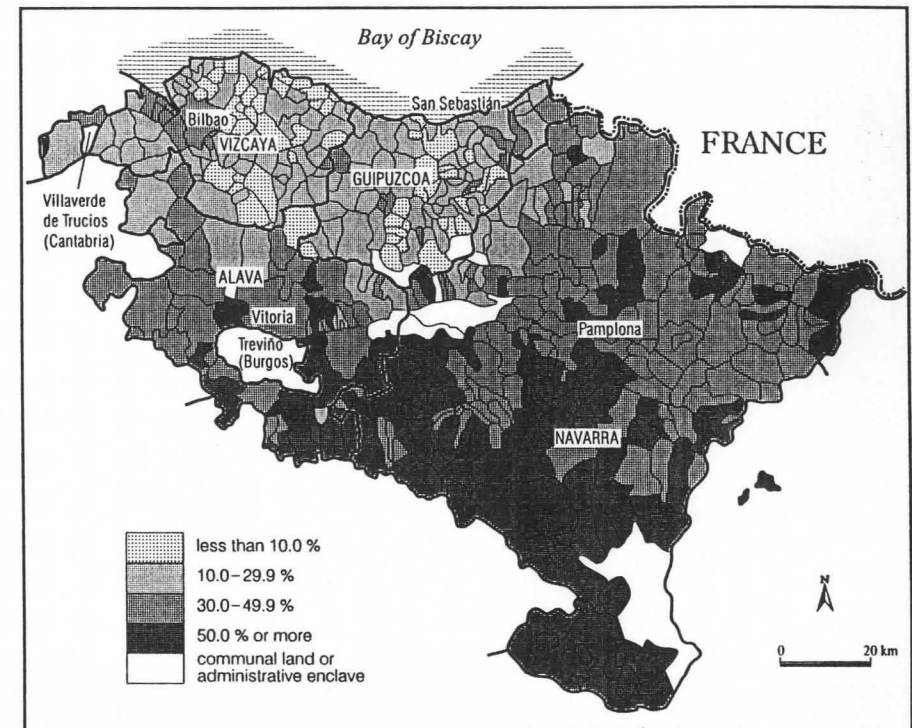


Figure 6.7. Basque Support for the Spanish Constitution in 1978

Note: The map shows the percentage of affirmative votes counted from the electoral roll in the Referendum of 6 December 1978.

Source: *Deia* 1978: 19; *Referéndums y elecciones generales* 1986: 5–11; cited in Raento 1996: 152, see 153.

are present locally, within urban centres and provinces. These differences create internal hearts and relative peripheries of political and linguistic activism, identity, and conflict that are not related to administrative boundaries. Nevertheless, they affect, and are shaped by, people's understanding and acceptance of the formal division. The complex transitional zones where different political and cultural influences and worldviews meet and are contested can be understood as borderlands within the borderland. These multiple realities complicate the functionality of the administrative regions and discourse between segments of Basque society.

Some of the disputes have become important markers of perceived inferiority and have led to provincial and urban antagonisms (Raento 1999: 225–27). Well-known is the antagonism between Bilbao, the region's economic power centre with a considerable Basque nationalist presence, and the rapidly growing Vitoria (Gasteiz), the administrative capital of the

Basque Autonomous Community, characterised by multifaceted, overlapping, and ambiguous cultural and ethnic identities and conservative, non-nationalist politics (Rivera Blanco 1990; Hendry 1991). Despite the legal arrangements that allow the constituting provinces of the Basque Autonomous Community to decide their internal matters, a considerable amount of the real economic and political power lies in densely populated Bilbao and its surroundings. With all its influence, however, Bilbao suffers from prolonged economic difficulties and has not been able to recover from them as expected, whereas Vitoria has evolved into a booming and prosperous city that has greatly benefited from Spain's membership in the EU. Furthermore, as San Sebastián continues to enjoy the reputation of being 'the Basque cultural capital' despite the challenge put forward by such large projects as the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao (Zulaika 1997), *Bilbainos* have developed a sense of profound loss. Subsequently, echoes of the provincialism and localism typical of Basque politics in the late nineteenth century have re-emerged onto the scene (Raento 1996: 215–37; Corcuera Atienza 1979; Rivera Blanco 1990).

In the Spanish Basque Country's southern provinces, territorial antagonisms are represented by provincially defined, non-nationalist political parties. Especially in the 1990s, they posed a serious challenge to Basque nationalists and both diversified and heated the Basque political scene. Consequently, Basque nationalists were forced to modify their previously uniform message to make their agenda equally appealing in the different parts of the claimed historical territory. Challenged by the increasing competition over political power and space, radical nationalists, in particular, sought new, place-sensitive and place-specific alternatives for approaching people in these internal borderlands. The representatives of Alava, Navarra, and the French Basque provinces thus acquired more power within the radical nationalist organisation, and electoral and street campaigns were modified to show greater sensitivity to local circumstances (Raento 1997b: 201, 1999: 227–28).

The changing patterns of radical nationalist tactics can also be seen as an indicator of the need to protect the nationalist heartland in the changing context of minority nationalism in Europe. For example, coastal towns within this core area have constituted 'a relatively protected environment' for Basque nationalist sentiment to evolve. Here, daily communication and flows of information have been relatively uniform in terms of the ideological macroproject presented by the symbolic and operative centre. Consequently, each local experience and political response to increasing regional, national, and international exchange is explained by 'the relative geographical location of each "micro-world"' (Raento 1999: 225). In other words, whereas the small towns of Guipúzcoa lie within the radical

nationalist core area of political activism and support, identity, and symbolic expression, the villages of southern Alava are located in the cultural and political zone of transition with more intervening influence from the Castilian and 'Spanish' cultures. Due to their historical development, many parts of the southern Spanish Basque Country are 'closer' to Madrid than to the nationalist heartland on the coast (Raento 1996: 251; cf. Raento and Watson 2000) (see figure 6.7). In the attempt to unify the claimed territory internally, nationalists are constructing a more solid outer boundary against outside influences and attempting to strengthen the Basque Country's role as an independent actor at the continental level.

UNITY AND DIFFERENCE IN BASQUE HISTORY

Further explanations of the tensions between the pursuit of integration by authorities and actors who do not conform to the formal politico-administrative definitions of Basque territory can be sought in history. The socio-cultural unity and local links across the region are reflected in local historical perceptions of the borderland and of the nature of the international boundary. In the Basque language, both the French and the Spanish sides are commonly referred to as *beste aldea*, 'the other side'. To avoid censure and to maintain 'objectivity' in a politically charged environment, academic discourse during the Franco years in Spain talked about the 'continental' and 'peninsular' Basque Country when referring to the region as a whole (Leizaola 1996: 97). In the contemporary context, the border is erased by the terms *Iparralde*, 'the North', and *Hegoalde*, 'the South'. Radical nationalists, in particular, prefer the unifying terminology, although these names are commonly used without a Basque nationalist connotation.

Central to understanding this way of erasing the dividing line is the Basque concept of *muga*, which refers to the boundaries of locally negotiated territorial arrangements (Douglass 1978: 39–40; del Valle 1994: 72–79, 83). The concept marks both an end point—a specific location in space or time—and a limit; *muga* can refer to a border, boundary, or frontier. Historically, boundaries between villages and agreements over local rights of pasture or water have been marked by a *mugarri*, a boundary stone, agreed upon by all the involved parties. Some of these agreements were confirmed by a specific ritual, some of which are still celebrated today. The importance of the agreements was further underscored by severe punishments, even death, for the unauthorised removal of boundary markers and was reflected in the subsequent myths and beliefs regard-

ing these markers (Leizaola 1996: 95; Gómez-Ibañez 1975: 45–48; Barandiarán 1984: 145–47).

With the gradual establishment of the border between Spain and France, many of these local arrangements became 'international treaties' as the new politico-administrative boundary coincided with the pre-existing divisions (Douglass 1978: 47; cf. Sahlins 1989). They maintained their local character, however, and continued to be renewed even during periods of armed conflict between Spain and France (Leizaola 1996: 93; cf. Sahlins 1989). Following the demarcation of the border in the nineteenth century, the two states introduced new regulations and taxes regarding movement and trade across the boundary. To avoid these sanctions, local people developed sophisticated networks of contraband, which were particularly significant during warfare and political oppression (Gómez-Ibañez 1975: 125–26). Smuggling of goods began to diminish in the 1960s as the Franco government's fear of external influences and the closure of the border relaxed somewhat, but illegal trade of American cigarettes across the border continues today (Gómez-Ibañez 1975: 126; Leizaola 1996: 98).

Many of the elements of differentiation that characterise the Basque borderland today draw from specific spatio-temporal political contexts. Since its creation almost 350 years ago, the boundary between Spain and France has shaped political and administrative realities and social, cultural, and economic profiles of the two Basque regions. As has been the fate of many minority languages throughout the world, the Basque language has gradually given way to the usage of Spanish and French (see figure 6.5), and the two languages have differentiated Basque vocabulary (Douglass and Bilbao 1975: 13–14). Many borderland residents define themselves as 'French' or 'Spanish' Basques (Linz 1982; Lancaster 1987; cf. Sahlins 1989). In the nineteenth century, the French nation builders' search for a unitary, modern state led to infrastructural development in the Basque periphery and elsewhere, whereas this ideal was not implemented in Spain before the twentieth century. Thus, 'the French side of the borderland developed earlier and more completely than the Spanish' (Gómez-Ibañez 1975: 89). The twentieth century brought wealth and population growth to the Spanish side, whereas the French provinces suffered from economic hardship and emigration, thus emphasising the demographic imbalance between the two regions (see figure 6.6). A Basque nationalist movement emerged on the Spanish side of the border in the context of rapid industrialisation, immigration and cultural conflict, and emerging nationalist sentiments elsewhere in Europe. The movement's message of a unified Basque territory lacked similar appeal on the French side of the border, where demographic, social, cultural, and economic

conditions were remarkably different (Jacob 1994; Raento 1997a: 241; see also Payne 1975; Corcuera Atienza 1979; Clark 1979; 1984).

Examining the historical differentiation of Basque nationalist sentiments and national identities illuminates particularly well the roots of contemporary difficulties for co-operation in the borderland. The explanation is usually sought in the structural and historic differences of the Spanish and French states (Linz 1982; Lancaster 1987). According to this perspective, 'Paris has been a strong core in a strong centralised state,' whereas Spain's capital city has been inferior in relation to economically powerful peripheries. Madrid has thus sought to control its territory by force, whereas Paris's 'softer' approach towards minorities has discouraged peripheral particularism (Raento 1997a: 242).

Exploration of history before the twentieth century suggests that these state-centred arguments do not alone explain the political differentiation of *Iparralde* and *Hegoalde*. Any confrontation between the Spanish Basques and Madrid is preceded by a conflict in the French Basque Country (Raento 1997a: 242). The French Revolution of 1789 terminated the French Basque *fors*, local rights and privileges, and the new administrative layout of France in 1790 made the three Basque provinces a part of the department of Basses-Pyrénées against local wishes. The unrest during the Age of Terror forced thousands of French Basques into exile to Spain and created strong feelings of distrust and bitterness towards the central government (Jacob 1994: 1–38).

The French Basques confronted the central government over local rights and privileges almost one hundred years earlier than the Spanish Basques, in a context where the first national(ist) *state* in general was only taking its first steps (Weber 1976; Sahlins 1989). Ethnicity and national identity had not yet become politicised as they did in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Walker Connor's (1990) argument that any *nation* was unlikely to exist before the nineteenth century supports the view that the political context of the late eighteenth century was not ripe for a nationalist 'Basque' sentiment to develop.

In turn, the Spanish Basques lost their *fueros* in 1876, when romanticism and emerging national(ist) sentiments swept the continent and the Basque coast was undergoing rapid industrialisation and immigration. Basque nationalism emerged in the late nineteenth century in Bilbao as a defensive reaction by the local middle class (Corcuera Atienza 1979). Thus, in stimulating Basque particularism, the temporal context of oppression in relation to the political macroenvironment and local processes seems to have been more important than the content of the central government's minority policy. Even if the process was equally shocking on both sides of the border, its results were quite different (Raento 1997a: 242; see also Linz 1982: 343).

Historically, the focus on the state and on the national centre-periphery relationship fails to explain the overall development of the Basque borderland, but this approach gains relative weight in the examination of the Franco years in Spain. Franco's oppressive policy made Paris sympathetic to Basque and other minority exiles from Spain in the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939). The short-lived Basque autonomous government, created during the war, and its representatives in Paris and Bayonne, enjoyed diplomatic status in France (Clark 1979: 74–76). Many Basque cultural and political organisations relocated across the border and received aid from French Basque organisations and international bodies. For the estimated 100,000–150,000 people who left the Spanish Basque Country for France in the 1930s, the support from this network was crucial in establishing 'a functional community' and organising resistance against the government in Spain (Clark 1979: 84, see also 80–106; Legarreta 1984: 51–98). All the exiled Spanish Basque groups in France 'were clearly oriented towards Spain' (Elton Mayo 1974: 125) and, following the tradition of unity, maintained clandestine contacts across the border.

In Spain, General Franco's policy radicalised the Basque nationalist movement (Clark 1979: 153–87; 1984). For Basque nationalists, the international boundary represented Spanish and French 'colonial rule' over the borderland minority (Krutwig 1973). The new radical nationalism that emerged in the 1950s and 1960s, and the armed ETA in particular, gave new importance to the territorial integrity of the Basque people and used slogans such as '4 + 3 = 1' and 'Seven in One' to underscore the goal of territorial unification of the historical provinces. Basque nationalists in both states made an emphasised distinction between the concepts of *frontera* ('a division imposed by the states') and *muga* ('a Basque territorial arrangement based on negotiation'). The ideological difference between these two concepts was expressed by a contemporary radical nationalist as an explanation of the old Basque tradition of contraband and the significance of the French provinces as a political refuge during the Franco years: 'The mountains, rather than dividing, unite the people, and the *frontera* is nothing more than a result of a confrontation that the people themselves have never had' (cited in Raento 1996: 272).

The French provinces provided important operational support and shelter for ETA from the 1960s to the 1980s. Basque mariners and contrabandists helped the organisation ship weapons and people between the two countries. For Madrid, the new radical nationalist message and lack of respect for the closed border made the Basques particularly untrustworthy and led the central government to try to secure its territory by enhancing control over the boundary and to demonstrate its power over the minority (Douglass and Zulaika 1990: 245–46).

Paradoxically, despite the cultural and political repression, World War II had led to a new industrial expansion in the Basque provinces. The closure of the international boundary made impossible the extension of Spanish Basque industries into France. This would have possibly been welcomed by the French Basque population, troubled by emigration and disagreements with Paris over the desirable direction of tourism development on the coast (Elton Mayo 1974: 130–31; Anderson 1996: 122). Francoist Spain's limited contact with the European Economic Community harshened the impact of the 1970s oil crises on Spanish Basque industries and complicated the subsequent structural transformation and recovery (Raento 1997a: 244).

Despite the difficulties caused by the political situation, the economic problems of the two regions would not have been 'cured by the removal' of the dividing line, as has been speculated (Elton Mayo 1974: 129). The development of large heavy-industry production units would not have erased the demographic imbalance between the rural and urban areas of the French provinces or resolved the long-term structural difficulties of agriculture. Locally and regionally, however, the two regions would have most likely benefited from more exchange. For example, the French side produced milk in excess of local needs, while there was 'a large but unsatisfied demand in Spain across the frontier for dried milk-powder, processed cheese and other milk derivatives' (Elton Mayo 1974: 133). Instead of being able to export the milk or some refined products over the strictly controlled international boundary, the French Basques had to sell it to other parts of France over longer distances, thus losing income.

The international boundary had a clear moral effect on the Basques as well. Through a rigid control over flows of information and the external boundaries of the state, Franco's government sought protection from outside influences. The goal was to maintain Catholic values of the Spaniards against the secular evils of France, and to 'protect' the people against political and sexual 'vice' (Grugel and Rees 1997: 128–56). To many Basques, the curfew and the subsequent difficulties of crossing the border meant a complication of daily life and social relations in the borderland.

CONCLUSION: THE LEGACY OF DIVISION

European integration has brought wealth and economic opportunity to the Basque borderland. The running of affairs in the Basque borderland, however, is complicated by both local and regional antagonisms and the legacy of national and international division. Together, they add to a long

list of problems for the smooth progress of integration in the local and regional contexts.

At the state level, the first formal transfrontier agreement between Madrid and Paris was not reached until 1995, which complicated projects between the Spanish and the French Basques. Practical incompatibility and heavy bureaucracy continue to harm cross-border regional projects today. Some state-level disputes are related to European integration, such as the widely publicised disagreement between Madrid and Paris about fishing that has led to friction between Basque fishermen of the two countries. Nor have the increased contacts across the border erased the division of political and cultural affiliations into 'Spanish' and 'French' Basques. In the eyes of Basque nationalists, the continuing 'state colonialism' over the minority people is confirmed by the occasional closure of the border (Leizaola 1996: 91) and the two states' 'anti-terrorist' activities in the border zone.

In spite of the high hopes for a better economic future in integrating Europe through such processes as the improvement of trade and transportation networks and local economic co-operation, residents of the Basque borderland fear that local realities are ignored or misunderstood in the implementation of continental projects. In *Iparralde*, many are afraid of further marginalisation of the already peripheral region. For example, the relocation of industries across the border has raised concerns regarding the possibility of local interests being overrun by the more powerful Spanish Basque economy and its continental supporters. In *Hegoalde*, entrepreneurs doubt the EU's intentions regarding the restructuration of the Spanish Basque economy. Local workers, in particular, are afraid of the worsening of the already difficult job market in the area (Raento 1997a: 244).

Cultural co-operation suffers from complications specific to the region and its cultural and political evolution. In spite of new international contacts and the EU's support for minority cultures in the continental context, the concerns have remained local. Among the most serious dilemmas are disagreements over the definition and promotion of 'Basque culture', because this controversy is particularly personal in nature and touches an essential constituent of the Basque identity, reminding people of the difficulty of accommodating regional and cultural differences in the historical territory. This dilemma's continuous presence in the local media reflects the politically heated atmosphere of the region and emphasises the challenge posed by the internal heterogeneity and frictions of the historical Basque territory.

Indeed, segments of the borderland itself have differing interests that complicate the implementation of macro-scale projects and attempts to

construct unity. Especially on the Spanish side of the border, the long history of provincial self-government, internal heterogeneity, and persistent regional stereotypes and prejudices arouse suspicion regarding region-wide aspirations. Promotion of new co-operation or single projects by one region are often interpreted as attempts to increase one's share over the others. Provincial co-operation and joint projects between the Basque Autonomous Community and the Foral Community of Navarra are at times difficult to promote and accomplish. Shared efforts of the two autonomous communities have been complicated further by state-level legislative disagreements over acceptable relationships between regional administrative entities—a dispute that reaches back to the conflict between the Spanish central government and minority nationalists over the Spanish Constitution of 1978 (Raento 1996: 138–54, 1997a: 244).

These legacies of division in the Basque borderland suggest that although 'physical barriers have been erased, the mental ones still exist' (Lorenzo Barahona 1997). The multilayered complications regarding regional co-ordination and political co-operation in a single region provide a pessimistic picture of the success of the so-called Europe of Regions in its ideal form. The Basque case suggests that to understand these complications it is necessary to examine how local and regional realities condition national and continental projects and how these, in turn, shape local and regional expectations and behaviour. The Basque case adds particular importance to the understanding of multiple, interdependent, and overlapping centres, peripheries, and transitional spaces that may or may not be tangible and are relevant on several scales of inquiry. Their examination draws attention to the problems of conventional definitions of regions in the changing Europe. The Basque case shows clearly that borderlands and their boundaries cannot be taken for granted or be discussed solely by drawing from existing politico-administrative units. If the conventional understanding of Europe's centres, peripheries, borderlands, and borders is not challenged, some of the new processes of exchange may be seriously misunderstood or even slip by unnoticed.

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