

Historical Background of the Basque Diaspora in Latin America: Integration and Tensions

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Abstract

The formation of the Basque diaspora in Latin America can be divided into several different periods. First, the so-called original diaspora, from the 16th to 18th century, of Basques who were part of the Spanish colonial regime. The second can be traced to the 19th century, consisting of a mixture of impoverished Basque migrants seeking jobs, especially in Uruguay and in Argentina, and of refugees fleeing from the Spanish War of Independence and the Carlist wars. The third wave is identified by, but not only through, the considerable number of refugees from the Spanish Civil War in the 1930's. The fourth wave came during the 1970's, with refugees from the Franco Dictatorship, ETA members and sympathisers. In this paper I will argue that each new wave of migrants brought tension to the diaspora, having the Euskal Etxeak, or Basque houses, as a focus point. The main idea is to analyse the different tensions and political discussions of this set of diasporic waves in Latin America.

Introduction

This paper presents the preliminary empirical findings of an ongoing PhD thesis examining the Basque diaspora in Latin America, more specifically in Argentina and the political and ideological tensions within this diaspora having the Euskal Etxeak (or Basque houses or clubs) as a focal point of analysis.

The objective of this paper is to discuss the historical basis of the Basque migration to Latin America and to present briefly some of the most important or reality shifting moments of the conflicts that have permeated a 600 years long diaspora. Those moments can be identified as generational, found within patterns of migration waves showing that, despite the clear formation of a diasporic identity, the most significant developments at the diaspora were also a reflex of tensions and conflicts in the homeland.

Basque Diaspora and Diasporic Identity

Diaspora can be defined as the «transnational collectivity, broken apart by, and woven together across, the borders

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

[Diaspora can be defined as] collectives of individuals who identify themselves, and are identified by others as part of an imagined community that has been dispersed (either forced or voluntary) from its original homeland to two or more host-countries and that is committed to the maintenance or restoration of this homeland. (Demmers, 2007: 9)

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

It is possible to assume that the Basque Diaspora is a community (Angulo Morales, 2002) of constant construction and re-construction of identities, a 'sum of geographies, times, generations, and individual identities, by-products of liv-

ing experiences and inherit traditions' (Oiarzabal, 2013:21).

This Basques at the diaspora - altogether with Basques in the homeland - form a nation, an ethnonational group (Connor, 1994), a group of people that believe they are related since ancient times, maintaining traditions and heritage and passing it to the next generation, sharing a sense of uniqueness (Smith, 1991) also with the Basques at the homeland, despite the fact that the Basque diasporic identity is much more than a mere reproduction of the homeland identity - though many of the conflicts within the diaspora follow in general lines those of the homeland -, but has added significant elements of the host-nation and also maintained traits long gone or abandoned in the Homeland (Oiarzabal, 2013) and maintaining a culture of ethnical separation or even purity (Zulaika and Douglas, 1996), an 'imaginary coherence' for a set of identities (Hall et al, 2003).

Basque identities were shaped by Basques' own experiences of migration and its complex interrelation with nation-state building processes taking place throughout the American continent. The ethnic politics of Basque identity construction spread throughout the American continent by the establishment of immigrant associations and the work of ethnic leaders in diaspora communities. (Oiarzabal and Molina, 2009: 701)

This Basque imagined community (Anderson, 2005), or imagined transnational community (Appadurai, 1997), is made up of individuals that may never meet each other, from Bilbao to Buenos Aires or San Francisco and Reno, but

the imagine themselves as members of the same ethnogroup, sharing common traits, despite the differences. "The different Basque diasporic groups preserve their ethnic identities by considering and 'imagining' themselves as a part of a global Basque ethnic community" (Totoricagüeña, 2004:10), therefore, they feel like members of the same Basque nation or ethnonational group (Connor, 1994) and it has lasted for centuries and through different migration waves, de-territorialised (Ortiz 1999, 2004, Haesbaert, 2002, 2004).

Despite political and ideological differences, as well as nationalistic points of view, Basques in the Diaspora kept seeing themselves as one group, one nation, forming a Diaspora or Diasporic Identity (Totoricagüeña, 2004:147; Oiarzabal, 2013:28) that synthesises or combines both the Basque and the host-country identities in a transnational way (Vertovec, 1999), meaning that relates Basques both socially, economically and culturally within multiple boundaries and societies. As Oiarzabal (2013:92) mentioned, 'the self-perpetuation of Basque identity in the Diaspora is very much based on the pride and affection for assumed characteristics, such as uniqueness or singularity of such an identity'.

The Basque diasporic identity is a (re)configuration of both the homeland - 'ancestral ties, kinship relations, common language of communication, historical and imaginary memories and religious beliefs' (Gautam, 2013:7) - and the host country identities, the ideal of being Basque as well as being a member of the host society. It is the idea of integration, but not of losing its

culture, of having multiple or transnational consciousnesses (Sorensen, 1995: 107). Basques are physically connected to their host-countries, yet they remain psychologically and emotionally connected to their Homeland.

According to Totoricagüeña (2004:102), the Basques managed to work with their ethnic identity altogether with the civic identity, the one of the host-country. The ethnic identity as the defining basis of Basqueness is still emphasized within the diaspora, the more civic identity has now become the centre of the homeland nationalism (Totoricagüeña, 2004: 54).

During the second half of the 19th century Basque Houses or Euskal Etxeak were founded, structures that did not existed before, as Basques tended to organise themselves within the Real Sociedad Bascongada de Amigos del País, that served as a mostly economic but also political lobby towards the American colonies and also within religious entities, such as the Orden Tercera de San Francisco (Alvarez Gila, 2010) or the brotherhood of Nuestra Señora de Aránzazu (Aramburu Zudaire, 2002) and aid and beneficial institutions (Muru Ronda, 1999:100, Cava Mesa, 1996:137-139).

Diaspora associations create transnational networks that maintain varying degrees of personal, institutional, cultural, social, economic, political and business ties with the homeland and with other countries where there is a Basque presence: a globe-spanning network of attachments and allegiances. (Oiarzabal and Molina, 2009:699)

Basques founded the Euskal Etxeak not only as sort of clubs for them to gather, but also as institutions to help those in need, specially the newcomers looking after a better life. In this sense, Basque clubs or houses - and in some places even hotels - are a place to experience home or to simulate environments of homeland (Totoricagüeña, 2004: 148) and a «place of sociability of the members of the Basque community», (Caula et al, 2002:55). To some extent, they also tended to emulate homeland politics and even political disputes in political party and ideological lines, despite some local and unique characteristics.

The Euskal Etxeak were a form to strengthen ethnonational ties, as Eriksen (1993, 68) noted, «social identity becomes most important when it becomes threatened, which is often related to some kind of change, such as immigration». The Euskal Etxeak - both the ones founded by Foralists, Carlists and those who came from Europe during the 19th century and those founded later by nationalists in the 1940's and so on - will play a central role during the 20th century of focal point of many tensions, political debates and conflicts.

Tensions within different waves of Basque migrants were something quite common in the diaspora, but we can observe at least three specific moments or major tension points, each coinciding with the shift in migration patterns and the arrival of a new ideological approach to the Basque question, rights and even identity that can also be understood as inter-generational conflicts of new migrants challenging the domination of a previous or older group:

1. The arrival of Basques after the Carlist Wars, the War of Independence and so on during the 19th century that brought a fuerista ideology non-existent before within the diaspora. It was also a moment where the construction of the Spanish identity was being built and also the so called sub-national or peripheral identities within Spain (see Oiarzabal & Molina, 2009).

2. The arrival of members of the PNV that brought with them the nationalist Aranist ideology opposed to the previous fuerista ideology at the end of the 19th century brought up more tension within the diaspora while they attempted to spread their ideology and also started taking over the direction of the Euskal Etxeak, not without a fight. The nationalist ideology of the PNV and their members will permeate most of the lives of the diaspora and of the Euskal Etxeak during the 20th century.

3. During the 1970s the wave of a consistent numbers of left-wing nationalists will threaten to if not actually challenge the PNV domination over the diaspora.

During the following years conflicts will arise due to political and ideological differences on the view of the Basque path towards independence that will lead to splits within the Euskal Etxeak. The formation of a Basque government during the 1980s - with almost uninterrupted PNV dominion - and the internet on the 1990s and later will give a boost to the conflicts as in on hand the Basque government will fill the Euskal Etxeak with money and promises, on the other hand the internet will allow the left wing nationalist organisations to spread their ideology.

It is important to note that this is not in any way an extensive list, nor is there any intention in resuming centuries of migration and tensions in just three cases, but those are the most visible and, to some degree, profound conflicts that led to paradigm shifts within the diaspora.

Overview of the Basque Diaspora and First Wave

During the Spanish Colonial period, Basques enjoyed leading positions all over the American colonies (Bilbao and Douglas., 1975) constituting themselves as a self-aware ethnic group (Douglass, 2006) and formed migration chains (Aramburu Zudaire, 2002) that were based on cultural peculiarities and an 'ancient and strong tendency towards mutual union of those originated in Vasconia, based in turn on a consciousness of its collective identity and communitarian singularity'.²

The influx of Basques to the Americas before the 19th century was mainly of political and economic leaders of the colonial empire, as well as traders and merchants in many important and key cities (Morales, 2002) such as Havana, Potosí, Buenos Aires, etc and their number might be bigger than what is supposed (Aramburu Zudaire, 2002).

The factors that led thousands of Basques to migrate towards the Americas afterwards, not only as representatives of the political elites and the Castilian Crown (Douglass, 2006) were many, but it is worth mentioning that there was a growing need for labour in the so-called 'new world'. Leaders of colonies in the Americas, such as the

Río de la Plata (now Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay and parts of Bolivia and Peru), searched for men to go deep into the territory in order to create villages, commercial outposts and to take possession of the land that, up until that point, belonged to various indigenous populations.

Additionally, after the independence of Argentina and Uruguay (but also of Colombia, Venezuela and elsewhere in the Americas), the new leaders sought to secure the rule of the newborn states by populating vast areas such as the Pampas (vast area of north-eastern Argentina and most of Uruguay) thus, many Basques migrated there to work with cattle and on agriculture colonies (Douglass, 2006).

Amongst other reasons for fleeing the Basque Country were the many conflicts within Spain and France at that time, such as the Napoleonic Wars, the First (1833-39) and the Second (1872-76) Carlist Wars and the 1848 Revolution on the French side as well as, years later, the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) and the Francoist dictatorship (Totoricagüena, 2004).

I believe that we can identify four different yet overlapping Basque migration waves, which I seek to analyse on the following pages. The periods are:

First, the so-called original Diaspora from the 16th to 18th century of Basques who were part of the Spanish colonial empire, and already analysed in this first section, possessed the main characteristic of being a wave made up mostly of Basques who took part on the Spanish Empire enterprise as administrative figures or leading traders and merchants.

The second can be traced to the 19th century, a wave of impoverished Basque migrants seeking jobs, especially in Uruguay and in Argentina, and also of refugees from the Spanish war of independence and the Carlist wars. The first and second waves overlap at some point during the independence of the many American countries and the borders of each wave, or phase, cannot be precisely defined as the process of substitution of the migration of Basque elites for peasants and later of Basque refugees as the process took over a century. During this period, the *Euskal Etxeak*,³ or Basque houses, started to be founded and they will be further analysed.

The third wave can be described as the one of refugees from the Spanish Civil War in the 1930's and the role of the members of the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV) which brought some tension to the Diaspora while politicising it.

The fourth wave is again a wave of refugees, but now mostly left-wing ones, during the 1960s and 1970s. Members of ETA, families of political prisoners and any left-wing nationalists persecuted back home. It was a wave with less human displacement, but with significant ideological repercussions in the years to follow.

It is important to have in mind the difficulties of identity maintenance a member of a Diaspora faced while dispersed, away from home, and with sporadic or even no contact with the Homeland.

The Second Wave

Y es que el asociacionismo vasco siempre estuvo en íntima conexión con movimientos políticos, en concreto con el carlismo y con el nacionalismo. En sus centros, los vascos hicieron práctica política activa, siendo muchas veces escenarios de agrias disputas. Aparte fundaron entidades exclusivamente políticas, con el fin de difundir las ideas nacionalistas de Sabino Arana entre la colonia establecida en Argentina. Fue también muy importante la participación de vascos en la organización y divulgación de la ideología carlista en la República. (Ortiz, 1996:128)

The main or most visible theatre of disputes and tensions between the so-called 'old Basques' and the second wave Basque migrants were the *Euskal Etxeak*, many of them founded on the second half of the 19th century as aid institutions and spaces of sociability or even sociality (Maffesoli, 1996), understood as set of practices that go beyond the state rigid social control, a being-together that is independent of a goal to be achieved (Maffesoli, 1996).

Tensions arose within such houses as newcomers from the wars in Europe came carrying political agendas or ideologies that were not an issue or relevant for the 'old Basque migration' (Douglass, 2006: 35). The new migrants brought a political discourse, as well as a sense of 'basqueness' that was completely distant from the mostly 'Latinized' (Douglass, 2006:35) old Basques that were for a long time away of the homeland, sometimes for generations.

A struggle for power within the newborn *Euskal Etxeas* took place, in some

cases with serious fractures, also in geographical lines, with Basques from *Iparralde* (France), *Hegoalde* (Basque Country) and *Nafarroa* (Navarre) organising themselves in their own groups or houses, which was the case of Mexico City and its Casino Español, Centro Vasco and Basque club of the Federal District (Oiarzabal, 2013).

During this period the Spanish identity was being built, with little success according to de Pablo, Mees and Rodríguez (1999). On the other hand, the nation building of Spain 'supported local and regionally based ethnic identities in order to reinforce the roots of national identity among the population' (Oiarzabal and Molina, 2009: 703).

In other words, during the 19th century, despite the weak penetration of Spanish institutions in, for example, the Basque Country up to the Carlist Wars, the Spanish identity itself contained local or sub-national identities or even regional identities (Álvarez Gila, 1996:175) as parts of the Spanish one (Oiarzabal and Molina, 2009), the idea of a civic Spanish identity carried within the Basque own ethnic identity - as well as a Catalan or Galician ethnic identities.

According to Núñez Seixas (2004:53) the 19th century Spanish state had a 'lack of efficiency in its nationalizing process' expressed by an 'inefficient educational system, [...] a national army based in a discriminatory and classist military service, a scarce diffusion and a lack of consolidation of its own nationalist symbolism' and an inefficient administration of the state. Due to such problems, adds Núñez Seixas, the 'social use of languages different from Castilian

persisted with great force' leading to cultural movements for the promotion of regional languages and identities.

The Spanish identity, thus could be initially understood a civic one not opposed to the ethnic Basque, but complementary, 'an ideological synthesis' (Núñez Seixas, 2004:53), not without moments of tensions and conflicts during the process of nation and state-building of Spain.

In historical perspective statebuilding has generally been a coercive and often a violent process. Statebuilding involves imposing a unified, centralised state and subjugating peripheral regions, securing border areas and imposing regulation, institutions, taxation and control. This has been a violent process because it threatens the interests of recalcitrant actors and it encounters outlying resistance which must be suppressed. It is also often accompanied by violent processes of national and ethnic exclusion. The consolidation of national political projects – including national identity – is a related process that has often been accompanied by significant instability as groups with vying political visions compete for control of the agenda. (Newman, 2013: 141).

As mentioned, despite the conflicts over the *Fueros* issue - that became the starting point of the so-called 'Basque Question', according to Oiarzabal and Molina (2009) -, 19th century Basques still adopted the Spanish-civic identity, as it is important to note that the main idea of the *Laurak Bat* founders was not the one of independence from Spain, rather of the restoration of the previous legal arrangement, of the *Fueros*, that gave broad internal liberty for the

Basques within Spain. It is not a mere curiosity that the official name of the *Laurak Bat* was, at the time of its foundation, *Sociedad Vasco-Española Laurak Bat* or Basque-Spanish Society (Ortiz, 1996:128).

Ezkerro (2003) will describe that the main or first reason for the foundation of the *Laurak Bat* of Buenos Aires (The Four in One, meaning the union of the Basque historical regions of Navarre, Gipuzkoa, Araba and Bizkaia, all of them in the Spanish state) in 1879 was to “manifest from the ‘ethnic unity’ of the four historical territories of the south of the Pyrenees, the ‘protest’ against the ‘constitutional unity’ imposed by the armed violence” or the suppression of the *Fueros* by Spain following the Carlist Wars (Cava Mesa, 1996:144).

In other words, the foundation of *Laurak Bat* was, itself, a manifesto against the abolition of the *Fueros* (Cava Mesa, 1996:143), a strong and direct political statement. In the following years new tensions will arise with yet another shift within the diaspora, with the pression of the nationalists in favour of an *Aranist* approach rather than purely *foralist* that would provoke ruptures (Cava Mesa, 1996:146).

In Uruguay, the local *Laurak Bat* (founded in 1876) faced in just six years after its foundation a split when a small group decided to leave the club to found a new one, promoting the abolition of the *Fueros* and opposing the idea of a Basque unity (Irigoyen Artetxe, 1999:79).

The Spanish-American War of 1898 may be a key turning point for Spain, but for most Basques, or at least for the migration waves, there were other

more significant turning points (Irianni Zalakain, 2000), also the number of Basques that migrated to the Americas during the 19th century until the 30s of the following century, in conservative numbers, reached 200 thousand people (Tápiz, 2002:181).

It is true that there is an overlapping of waves, from the first to the second, as the independence of the many countries in America happened not in the same year, but within a century long period of time, also refugees from the Carlist War, for instance, starting arriving on the first half of the 19th century. We can say, with some degree of certainty, that the second wave started while the ‘old Basques’ of the first wave were still acting as protagonists. The tension between these two waves will arise specially on the second half of the century, lasting up to eve of the 20th century.

What differentiates the first and second waves is the political refugee characteristic and the peasant characteristic (Douglass, 2006:71), much unlike the members of the previous wave that enjoyed status and normally went to the Americas willingly.

Although, according to Douglass (2006) many of the Basque refugees from the Carlist wars and so on, that were skilled, had a profession such as of doctors, lawyers, etc, found themselves in better positions within the host societies in Latin America (not only due the long standing presence of Basques that could receive them and make arrangements, but also because of the language, as all of them spoke Spanish), but the majority of migrants was made up of un-

skilled and semiskilled peasants 'seeking a better future in a new land' (Douglas, 2006:71) and hoping to «remain peasants against the advance of the big cities and the urban modernization»⁴ (Álvarez, 2002:30).

Nationalists Arrive

On the beginning of the 20th century the ideas of Sabino Arana - the founder of the modern Basque nationalism in the 19th century - arrived in the Diaspora by the hands of Basques that were both migration for economical reasons, but also to work as propagandists of the Aranist ideology (Tápiz, 2002:183). Basque nationalism became yet another source of tension within the Diaspora community and the Euskal Etxeas that led to fractions and even the foundation of rival ones in Mexico City and Buenos Aires (Douglas, 2006: 35). Also the type of migration shifted once again.

No longer impoverished peasants went to America, but now many political refugees from the Spanish Civil War (Álvarez, 2002:30,56), many of them with connections to the PNV (Spanish Nationalist Party founded by Arana), but also others with ties to the Spanish Communist Party and so on forming a new and political wave of migrants different from the previous two waves, of colonial elites to poor peasants and political refugees that weren't at all nationalists, as seeking the independence of an imagined Basque Country.

The following years, over 150 thousand Basques flew from the Basque Country to the Diaspora, most of them to the Americas, influencing directly on the process of identity construction and

identity maintenance of the old Basque migrants. The number of political exiles was bigger than ever, as were the tensions brought by them. The new patterns of migration shifted from the one of economic hardship to, in the twentieth century, political oppression greater than the one experienced at the second half of the 19th century.

The 19th century migration wave was mostly made up of peasants (although with a significant amount of migrants escaping wars and conflicts within Spain), while the 20th century wave was made up mostly by city workers and of nationalist ideology individuals.

Considering specifically the nationalist migrants, Tápiz Fernandez (2002:183) divides in three the periods or phases in which the nationalist ideals of the PNV members reached, developed and settled in the Diaspora, the first one from 1903 to 1910, a 'moment of growth and development of the nationalistic ideal in the Americas'⁵, the second from 1910 to 1920, a regression of such ideals and, finally, from 1920 to 1936, the full implementation of the nationalistic ideals, almost as a preparation of the many refugees to come from the Spanish Civil War.

Only in the 20s the PNV started to grow in the Diaspora (as well as in the Basque Country itself). It is important to recall, as does Tápiz Fernandez (2002), that the growing of the PNV and of the nationalist ideology was not linear and it was an 'imported' phenomenon, meaning that it was born in the Homeland and brought to the Diaspora that, after some years and a certain amount of pressure, started to create roots and to dominate.

It is important to note that the *PNV-Vistas* first took control of the Euskal Etxeas and then started expanding to the colonies of Basque migrants, a movement that was somewhat easier than the previous, as the ideal of a Basque nation and identity was already part of the ideology of mostly Carlists Basques (Alvarez Gila, 1996)

The Basque Houses were, at that point, on the one hand a sort of aid centre for those in need, and on the other hand a club for Basques to share and perpetuate their 'Basqueness'. With the arrival of nationalistic political-minded Basques, mainly members of the 'old Basques' disliked the idea of turning the Basque houses also in propaganda centres for the resistance against Franco as well as for the independence of the Basque Country.

A struggle for power began, with 'old Basques' trying to keep the houses as they were, a safe haven, and the newcomers trying to turn them into political strongholds for pressuring Spain and the host countries to act against Franco and to assure the 'ancient rights' of the Basque people.

The idea of ethnonational and identity maintenance of the first Euskal Etxeak, public spheres or centres for the dissemination of Basque culture, music, history and etc was somehow subverted by newcomers with ties to the PNV and with nationalistic/Aranist ideology that demanded more from the diaspora.

They turned the Euskal Etxeak into political strongholds for pressuring Spain and the host countries demanding a politicisation, an ideological commitment to the independence of the Basque country that went further ahead of the

simple defence of the former status quo, or the Fueros. The defence of the Basque identity was, at that point, starting to become defence of the independence of the land of the Basques, from Araba to Lesser Navarre, from Hegoalde to Iparralde and Navarre and that would settle definitively during the Spanish Civil War on the 1930s.

As Oiarzabal (2013:167), noted, 'During the 1930s and onward, Diaspora associations and communities were influenced by thousands of Basques who were forced into exile as a result of the Spanish Civil War and World War II. This implied a certain degree of Basque nationalist politicization'.

[...] homeland politics are found 'embedded' in diaspora discourse or identity, culture, and homeland. The diaspora political discourse is exemplified by means of multiple cultural and folkloric activities and symbols. The so-called diaspora's 'cultural' ethnonationalist dimension makes assertions that are political in nature. In other words, this dimension disguises to some extent manifestations or expressions of Basque nationalism. (Oiarzabal, 2013: 171)

It is interesting that in the 1970s most of the Euskal Etxeas changed their statutes to impose some 'non-political' or 'apolitical' status to them (Totorigüena, 2004:75) when of the arrival of left-wing political refugees, many of them of Abertzale ideology.

New Nationalists

Excluding Australia, the PNV had the advantage of a developed network and established communications with diaspora Basque centres, and the majority of Civil War exiles were familiar with PNV names, strategy and goals. The ETA disagreement with the PNV, and subsequent splits within ETA, confounded an already extremely complex nationalist movement. The change in rhetoric of the New Left to class struggle and class identity rather than ethnic and cultural struggle and identity was not well received by Basques who had not lived in the provinces perhaps for decades. (Toticagüeña, 2004:75)

The majority of the third wave migration wave was made up mainly of Basque nationalists with connections to the PNV that fought against Franco and that arrived at the Diaspora with a few of the Basque institutions abroad (Basque clubs) already on the hands of sympathizers that, during previous years, as I mentioned in the previous section, clashed with members of the previous wave(s) and seized control of many Euskal Etxeas.

Those were the ones who competed for the control of the Euskal Etxeas in their exile against the Basques from the previous waves in terms of imposing nationalistic ideals, despite the fact that members of both waves tended to be Christian conservatives as well as *integratedistas*.

The fourth wave, on the other hand, was made up almost entirely by left-wing refugees that were also in general nationalists or Abertzale, with some sort of link to ETA (*Euskadi Ta Askatasuna*,

or Basque Land and Freedom) or ETA members as well as a small percentage of exiles still fleeing from the Francoist regime and a few running from ETA itself.

ETA was, according to Granja Sainz (2000:76), the result of the radicalization of a younger generation that would put an end to the PNV monopoly, to say, of the Basque society (Granja Sainz, 2002:179), and that would be successful in creating 'a community with a totalizing vocation (2002:180). The PNV kept its hegemony over the Basque Country population, the same happened to the diaspora, but now faced a challenge with a more radical group disputing the same spaces.

Among those spaces, were the Euskal Etxeas. One of the main difficulties of ETA exiles were not only the fact that PNV was already well implanted all over the diaspora, but as well its ethnic instead of racial ideal of Basqueness (Granja Sainz, 2000) and, of course, due to the socialist ideals of those exiles instead of the catholic/conservative ideology of the PNV.

[...] the Basque diaspora is reifying the Basque nationalist project of building a nation-state based on an imagined ancestral territory formed by seven historical provinces under the nineteenth-century nationalist motto of *Zazpiak Bat*. (Oiarzabal, 2013:154)

As mentioned in the previous section, during the 1970's some of the Euskal Etxeas changed their statutes to impose some 'non-political' or 'apolitical' status to them (Toticagüeña, 2004:75), in other words, they kept defending to

some degree the independence of the Basque Country on the lines of old Aranism sometimes, in more a 'modern' way, but forbade the political activities of the newcomers, generally left-wing nationalists or *Abertzales*.

According to Totoricagüena (2004:94-96) during the 1990s one way for homeland political groups such as the Herri Batasuna (the radical left wing party of that time) to communicate with the diaspora was through sending e-mails and publications to the Euskal Etxeas for it, then, be distributed among members, but many times the material was simply deleted or destroyed by the, then, PNV-led clubs.

Excluding Australia, the PNV had the advantage of a developed network and established communications with diaspora Basque centres, and the majority of Civil War exiles were familiar with PNV names, strategy and goals. The ETA disagreement with the PNV, and subsequent splits within ETA, confounded an already extremely complex nationalist movement. The change in rhetoric of the New Left to class struggle and class identity rather than ethnic and cultural struggle and identity was not well received by Basques who had not lived in the provinces perhaps for decades.

(Totoricagüena, 2004:75)

It is important to keep in mind that the migration wave of the 70s is not as big in terms of the number of arrivals as the previous ones, but it was, anyway, consistent in a sense that it created visible tensions even today in the Euskal Etxeas and on the diaspora itself as it imposed a need to take a political stand in oth-

erwise so-called 'apolitical' institutions (Oiarzabal, 2007; 2013) - despite the fact that most if not all Basque organisations claim a territorial unity that is part of a nationalistic ideology, an imagined community with nationalist ideals and goals of independence.

The Euskal Etxeas are political institutions per se and they have also been used or manipulated by consecutive PNV-led Basque governments since the end of the Franco dictatorship (Oiarzabal, 2007:110-125) sometimes as proxies for the spread of the PNV view of Basque nationalism, other times as 'ambassadors' of the Basque Country or simply as a tool for propaganda, to show, for instance, that Basque Country is more than ETA and that Basques are a peaceful people.

Younger members of the Euskal Etxeas, refugees and sympathisers of ETA's struggle putted pressure on the Euskal Etxeas to support the fight of the Basque group - considered also a fight for the Basque Country and the Basque people - and that triggered consistent pressure from local governments, some with ties to the Spanish Francoist regime of the posterior democratic regime. The political activities of some of the "radical" members of the diaspora and of the euskal Etxeas started creating embarrassment and trouble for the directors of the clubs (Totoricagüena, 2004).

Oiarzabal (2013:180-181) gives us an example of the political tensions within the Euskal Etxeas for the support of some of its members or organisations within its structure by describing the expulsion of the Eusketxe (*Eusko Kultur Etxea*, or Basque Culture House) of the premises of the Laurak Bat in 2004.

According to Oiarzabal the Eusketxe, an umbrella for the Ekin editorial and the Euskaltzaleak (Basque-language initiative), was evicted from the Laurak Bat, in Buenos Aires, after decades due to the support of the group for left wing 'radical' nationalist ideology and Basque political prisoners (ETA and alleged ETA members).

Dictatorial regimes in Argentina and Uruguay supplied daily reminders to Basques in those countries of how life in homeland continued. Worldwide attention to the plight of the Basques as an oppressed people lent credence and justification for ETA actions. However, soon media coverage focused on ETA activities themselves, not the rationale or objectives behind them, leading host-country populations to equate Basques with violence and terrorism, a burden that diaspora Basques everywhere have had to carry. (Toticagüeña, 2004:77)

Groups such JO TA KE Rosario, Asociación Venezolana de Amigos de Euskal Herria (Venezuelan association of Friends of the Basque Country), Asociación Diaspora Vasca (Basque Diaspora Association), the Euskal Herriaren Lagunak (Friends of the Basque Country), the Red Independentistak (Independentist Network) among others have, for decades, online and offline, if not competing, sharing space and the minds of the Basques in the Diaspora, promoting a more radical nationalistic agenda, maintaining ties with the Basque Nationalist or Abertzale left wing parties in the homeland and spreading support for Basque political prisoners.

Conclusion

The Basque clubs were initially safe havens and aid centres for Basques in which they were able also to promote their language, culture, dances - their identity - to newer generations and also worked as a place for those who were born in the Basque Country to feel home among equals.

The first tensions came, in some cases like the Euskal Etxea of Montevideo, just a few years after its foundations, Basques who felt more or just alike Spanish ended up splitting and founding their own clubs, Basques from the French side (or Iparralde) or from Navarre also, in some cases, sought to create their own institutions.

The initial pledge for respect of the Fueros soon changed for a more nationalistic approach and within a period of time of less than 50 years the Euskal Etxeas were in general connected or under the influence of the PNV and their ideology. Then, new nationalists came around, new ideas and a different view of the needs of the Basque Country and its independence process, sometimes a more radical approach, but in general Basque clubs in Latin America tended to welcome refugees and sustained long debates on the 'ETA issue', many times disagreeing with the Basque government in condemning or not the group or its political violence.

From the basic promotion/maintenance of ethnonational identity (Connor, 2004) to proxies of the Basque government (not without tensions and disputes) and spaces for the promotion of a diasporic identity and of homeland-diaspora politics, the Euskal Etxeas are not only the reflex of the homeland,

but also autonomous and in constant move and evolution entities that, for sure, reflect the complicated and special relationship between homeland and diaspora.

It is also important to mention the role of the internet (Oiarzabal, 2013) in helping the process of maintaining the Basque identity, as well as in on hand strengthening diaspora-homeland ties and on the other hand promoting even more politicisation of the Basque diaspora members (Tsavkko Garcia, 2014.1).

With the process of the end of ETA and in the midst of a long process of disarmament and international verification (despite the lack of interest on the side of the Spanish government) the Basque diaspora tends to change once again, or more profoundly, as well with the influx of migrants escaping from the deteriorating economic conditions of Europe and more specifically of Spain and the Basque Country.

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Notes

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- 2 In the original: "antigua y arraigada tendencia a la unión mutua de los originarios de Vasconia, basada a su vez en una conciencia de identidad colectiva, de singularidad comunitaria" in Álvarez Gila, Oscar and Morales, Alberto Angulo, *Las migraciones vascas en perspectiva histórica* (s. XVI-XX) (Bilbao: UPV/EHU, 2002), 158.
- 3 *Euskal Etxea* is the singular version, while *Euskal Etxeak* the plural.
- 4 "continuar siendo campesinos frente al avance de las grandes ciudades y del proceso de modernización urbano".
- 5 " momento de crecimiento y de desarrollo del ideal nacionalista en América"