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« Processus de construction glocale en Pays basque français :  
les Nouvelles technologies au service de mobilisations participatives territorialisées »

« *Glocal Process in the French Basque Country: territorialized participative  
mobilizations using e-technology to draw local cohesion* »

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## Résumé

Le Pays basque français connaît deux paradoxes : c'est un territoire culturellement identifié qui ne correspond à aucune réalité politique et administrative, en dépit d'une culture politique locale s'exprimant sous des formes originales. Jusqu'à présent, les mécanismes de régulation étatiques sont parvenus à contrôler ces mobilisations spontanées. Toutefois, les impacts de la globalisation (technique et paradigmatique) et l'évolution des modèles étatiques (interne et externe) offrent aux « bassins de vie » des moyens glocaux porteurs de formes alternatives de mobilisations participatives territorialisées.

Dans ce sens, l'Agence Pays basque des NTIC, indépendante dans sa direction de la Communauté d'agglomération de Bayonne-Anglet-Biarritz à qui elle est rattachée, promeut des initiatives de gouvernance localisée innovante, portées par les NTIC. Elle encourage des dynamiques glocales puisqu'elle intègre des mécanismes de la globalisation sur un territoire localisé participant de ce fait implicitement à sa territorialisation identitaire. Depuis 2006, l'aNTIC coordonne la réflexion sur un Label *Pays basque numérique* auquel contribuent des citoyens, des acteurs économiques, des élus et des représentants des administrations déconcentrées et décentralisées... Au-delà de l'objet, cette mobilisation démontre que des processus de gouvernance portés notamment par les NTIC et partagés par l'ensemble des acteurs du territoire peuvent conduire à une action publique concertée, au sein ou au-delà des frontières institutionnelles. Aussi, il apparaît que les impacts de la globalisation permettent à certaines réalités locales de se structurer face à un contrôle étatique limité par les dynamiques multidimensionnelles des pouvoirs (politique et administratif, économique, médiatique...) en s'appuyant opportunément sur des structurations identitaires.

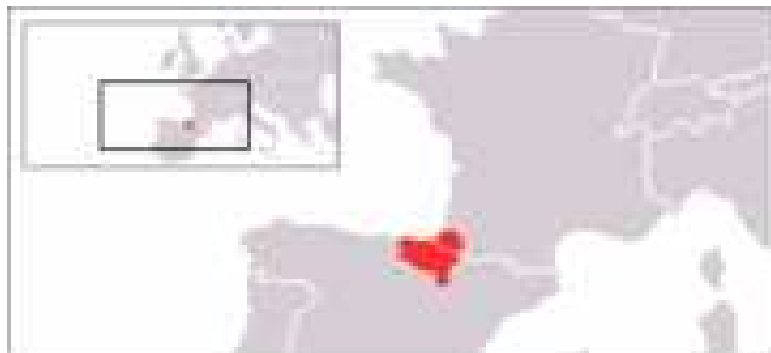
## Abstract

*The French Basque country bears two main paradoxes: the first is that its "historical and cultural" territory has no specific administrative existence in France; the second one is that a dual political culture mixes spontaneous democratic mobilisations and old-fashioned representatives' delegation. That's why traditional local acceptance of the elective political system is very strong whereas alternative and participative democratic movements*

*persistently spread out (Biltzar des maires, "Pays basque 2010"... ) to implement "decentralized" dynamics which are, most of the time, absorbed by a State control process. Nowadays, e-technology and innovative management appear as an additional opportunity. It allows all the supporters of glocal processes over multidimensional limits to defend some collective projects involved in this cultural area.*

*In such a specific political and social context, the aNTIC Pays Basque (Agence Pays basque des NTIC), close to an institutional administration (CABAB: Communauté d'agglomération Bayonne-Anglet-Biarritz) but independent in its management and direction, supports new form of localized governance thanks to NICT. Indeed, this associative structure contributes to "glocal" dynamics if we regard global and local specificities dual by nature but common in their modality. That puts the emphasis on the fact that local forces do not only manage to attenuate the impact of global processes through technical instruments: it can help to promote alternative managements to State edifice; it can allow the identification of an unrecognized territory beside historical nation-state circumscriptions (in this case historically and culturally well identified). For example, in 2007, aNTIC Pays Basque drives Pays basque numérique Label, through an effective e-democratic participation involving Basque citizens, local French representatives and officials in the "policy" process (including, potentially, persons from outside of the French Basque territory). This way, it shows that public actions can be conducted by a local mobilization involving members of the civil society and the administration through governance processes and participative efforts, thanks to NICT support, inside and outside of the nation-state borders.*

## « *Glocal Process in the French Basque Country: territorialized participative mobilizations using e-technology to draw local cohesion* »



Location of the Basque Country

### Introduction

The Basque Country spans both sides of the French-Spanish border. Guipuzcoa, Vizcaya y Alava provinces and Navarre make up the “Spanish Basque Country”, also called “Hegoalde” (the Southern side) which shares character and cultural heritage with the French Basque Country also called “Iparralde” (The Northern side).

In Spain, since 1979, after the Franco Dictatorship, the Basque Country has a Statute of Autonomy that facilitates it to have a Basque Government, a Basque Parliament and indeed a clear identification. In France, there is no political and institutional representative cadre which correspond to Basque territorial reality. The three Basque Provinces belong to the *département des Pyrénées Atlantiques*, which they share with a Bearnaise part. At the regional level in Aquitaine, they do not have any institutional or geographical particularities. That way, they are French and they do not have any particular status if we compare with other French territories.

However, the Globalization and the Europeanization processes invite a consideration of the territories in new terms, sometimes in “glocal” ones. In multileveled systems, the local aspects supported, for example, by a tough identity and culture, offer abilities to build territorial solidarities alternatively with the State limits. The e-mobilization in a specific territory as French Basque Country allows cultural and political collective action alternatively to administrative boundaries. It produces a type of bottom-up mobilization animated by all kinds of local actors: representatives, firms, association. It seems possible to manage decentralized democratic policies alternative to top-down, democratic, institutional shapes.

That is this idea that I will defend: even with the State-locks, Basque collective action is still resisting under the Nation-State building process. Today, through Globalization and Europeanization processes, “glocal” dynamics may find a way to express themselves. In the French Basque Country, the NICT allow new forms of political participation. The example of Basque numerical Label (“Pays basque numérique”) show us new forms of promoting Basque particularities alternatively/additionally with the French characteristics. Consequently, it makes us question about identity and territory within the Nation-State order, within a more globalized world, within NICT endogenous paradigms.

## Part 1: How to decide in the French Basque Country?

The strength of the French State edifice until 20 years is that bottom-up dynamics were most of the time, controlled by Top-down dynamics. The regulation was not only institutional and systemic, it was also cultural through the concept of unicity of the Nation. Nevertheless, French Basque country has kept some autochthonous customs that are now indirectly encouraged by the European Union integration and the Globalization<sup>1</sup>. In other words, the Basque identity could express itself in a Globalized world within Nation-State authority.

### **A. Local political culture background: a resistance under institutional containment**

The political and administrative contexts contrast over both sides of the Pyrenees: Unlike the Spanish Basque territories, the “historical” French-Basque provinces suffer a low institutional visibility and the natural corollary, they are unable to carry out autonomous government policies according to the rest of the French Country. In others words, there is no effective political decentralization locally, fundamentally because there is no identifiable Basque institution. The Basque department Project could answer this institutional failure. But, despite the positive opinion of the civilian society and the local deputies, this task seems to be postponed until later. As Pierre Létamendia said “*The French-Basque country doesn’t present any specificity on juridical plan. Its particularity leads with folkloric and tourist aspects [...]*”<sup>2</sup>. Like other ethno-regionalist movements in France, the first point is that there is a lack of political and juridical cadre, which could allow the development of an own political and democratic Basque scene<sup>3</sup>. There is no “sub-culture territorialized”, which could make sense for the “French Basque people”<sup>4</sup>. So, in the French Basque country, the Basque territories have been integrated, institutionally and culturally, by the Centralist dynamics of the French Nation-State building.

### **1. Basque democratic and alternative mobilization tradition**

The Spanish Basque historical territories have known a large government capacity; their traditional and feudal rights (“fueros”) have been reintegrated... By contrast, in France, Basque country population has assimilated most of the French State paradigm, the French political culture has spread over all the French territories... Even so, as in Brittany, Corsica etc. their marginality in the map of France let their local specificities resist. Basque language (euskara) which has no specific status in the French Constitution survived thanks to citizens mobilizations since the 1960-70’ (Seaska). Basque culture (Dances, songs, sports...) go on being taught in popular associations, and Basque sport federations support this trans-national representation (Country Basque football federation, Basque surf Federation EHSF, Basque pelote, Basque rural sports...). These cultural resistances and revivals are possible because of the works of Basque militants allowed it but not only.

In the French Basque Country, as in the Spanish Basque country, a culture of local collective practices (Maskarada, Carnaval, Charivari...) and democracy still coexist with the State authorities. In the everyday-day life, since the feudal times the local representatives use to congregate the Basque citizens to discuss local questions in popular or Citizens’ assemblies (called “Biltzar”, “Batzar” according to the different historical Provinces...). If we consider

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<sup>1</sup> Canet (Raphël) Duchastel (Jules), *Crise de l’Etat, revanche des sociétés*, Québec, Athéna, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Létamendia (Pierre), « Un nationalisme éclaté : le cas du Pays Basque », in Bidegaray (Christian), *Europe occidentale, le mirage séparatiste*, Paris, Economica, 1997, p. 293.

<sup>3</sup> Izquierdo (Jean-Marie) & Pasquier (Romain), « Les formations ethno-régionalistes en France : une exception européenne », *Pouvoirs locaux*, décembre 2004, n°63.

<sup>4</sup> Ritaine (Evelyne), « Territoire et politique en Europe du Sud », *RFSP*, vol 44, n°1, Février 1994, pp. 81-85.

other forms of solidarities in social economy, as the Cooperatives movement (SCOP movement<sup>5</sup>), French and Spanish Basque country use to create a greatest number of cooperatives than everywhere in Europe... So, specific solidarities, probably dues to the geographical isolation with the States centres explain these kinds of cultural resistance.

Despite the French Nation-State building, they are still alive and coexist and numerous everyday pan-lives: these solidarities deal with local democracy, economy, advertisement as sport, cultural practices... All this take part of the local cultural background which is common with part of the Spanish Basque country. It maintains the identity alive regardless of the acculturation process lead by the Nation-State building in the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

## **2. State answers to Basque mobilization: institutionalization, disinterest or illegitimacy**

About Basque language (euskara) or autochthonous questions as agriculture, French State holds different policies. Empirically, in long-term processes, Basque militancy can be integrated in governance management and their militant organizations institutionalized. on the one hand, their claims are not directly taken into account but marginally they are supported because the local demand is strong. On the other hand, about short-term policies or institutional structure questions, institutional locks block the recognition of alternative actors.

About Basque language, since the 1960'-1970' Basque language is in crisis. It has not been transmitted by the Baby boom Generation. Nevertheless, Basque militants support association schools, called Seaska ("cradle") enlarging the model from the Spanish Basque Country. More than 20 years later, they have been authorized to give class in Basque: in 1989 a first level in basque is conceded. In December 1989, Seaska firms an agreement with the *Ministère de l'Éducation nationale* (Education Ministry) to give Basque classes in Public schools (61 teachers). In the 1990', mixed scholar system is most widely allowed, so French public schools (école publique) can teach Basque language as well as French (Ikas bi: "Learn both")...<sup>6</sup> In October 2005, an *Office Public de la langue basque* is created by State delegates, Regional and departmental representatives, also the *Conseil des élus* from the French Basque country<sup>7</sup>. The linguistic policies are now decided by local governance under the control of State authority and Spanish Basque delegates are also invited. Basque language policies are now institutionalized in the French political system.

About participative uses, the French Basque militants ask for a specific Basque *département*, since the 1960': they are quite loyalist because they do not claim for a new institutional structure but a republican institution within the French State edifice (even if at first in the 1960-70' for some of them it is a way to allege a future independence for the Basque country, via autonomy).

Their long claims have been largely taken into account by the French political challengers as the Socialists (Parti socialiste) in the 1980'. During the Presidential campaign in 1981, Mitterand Candidate promises the creation of a Basque departement to manage better this territory, not yet in term of *décentralisation* (Loi defferre on *décentralisation* will come later, in 1982-1983) but in term of legitimacy (Rocard Declaration in 1973). Once President, Mitterand breaks this promise, local representatives react creating their own association to promote the Basque *department* via legal and democratic system: the *Association des élus pour un*

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<sup>5</sup> SCOT :Société coopérative ouvrière de production, Worker Production Cooperatives Society.

<sup>6</sup> Urteaga (Eguzki), *La politique linguistique en Pays basque*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2004.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.flarep.com/Actualites/OfficePublicJanvier2005.pdf>

*département Pays basque* (AEDPB) in 1981. But, the French administration still denies its legitimacy<sup>8</sup>.

In the 1990', the local representatives are still loyalists with the State institutions : in 1996, the Majors met together in Biltzar (traditional assembly) to defend the creation of a specific *Département Pays basque*: they vote and 63% of them agree with this idea. In October 1999, more than 12 000 citizens demonstrate in the streets of Bayonne to support the creation of a republican institution. At the same time, a public opinion poll from the Institut-CSA demonstrates that 66% of the interviewees agree with the idea and with their representatives... There is no conflict with the very local representatives (Mayors) but yes with the National authorities (Deputies and Government). The bottom-up expression is clearly defined but it is blocked by institutional locks which do not want to hear about it, because of the national unity.

Today, the defenders of a Basque institution ask for a referendum based on local initiative which is new in the French law (since March 28<sup>th</sup> 2003, *Réforme constitutionnelle*): a new platform called Batera (Together) is created in December 2002 to promote the idea: more than 110 associations, representatives of all political parties and citizens from the economical and cultural sectors participate in the movement. In October 2005, once more, the Mayors claim for the creation of a *département Pays basque* for more than 64%. Since 2006, Batera tries to get the signing of 10% of the *département* electorate to ask for a local referendum, accordingly with the French constitution.

Despite the civilian mobilization, the department question is not taken into account more than by the local and national challengers (during the 2007 President campaign: Socialist Royal says that a new institution was not interesting and Left Alternative Bové says that is necessary for the Basque people). Most of the politicians are not interested in this question essentially because of Top-down logics are the real determinants of the politics/policies making in the mainland.

January the 15<sup>th</sup>, 2005, a French Basque syndicate ELB, which have the majority in the French Basque Country since 1995. ELB creates an alternative Chamber of Agriculture, Euskal Herriko Laborantxa Ganbara<sup>9</sup> as a substitute to the *Pyrénées Atlantiques* National Chamber of Agriculture, to protest against the lack of consideration about the local particularities of their territories in term of agriculture<sup>10</sup>. First, the *Préfecture des Pyrénées Atlantiques* tried to forbid its association because the name was written in basque. Second, in October 2005, the *Tribunal administratif* (Administrative Court) takes a proceeding against the Basque Chamber of Agriculture because they considered that it was illegal to obtain funding from the Mayors. In February 2007, 26 Mayors, supported by representatives of the Region Aquitaine, go in for answering the Administrative Court... One more time, alternative ways to approach policies question (agriculture) are still determined by Top down policies, in this case lead by oligopolistic Trade Union (FNSEA)<sup>11</sup>. The alternative Chamber of Agriculture is considered too much unconventional to be legal, even if it appears as a non-public/private structure.

In the French State structure institutional locks are used to control the local demands: about Agriculture, Basque language or institutional claiming, the bottom-up demands are managed by State or put under control of top-down determinants. Even so, local democracy demand is stronger and stronger. It makes the State react and organize the bottom-up demands through original governance kit.

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<sup>8</sup> Chaussier (Jean-Daniel), *Quel territoire pour le Pays Basque ? Les cartes de l'identité*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1996.

<sup>9</sup> ELB is Euskal herriko Laborarien Batasuna: "Unity of the Farmers of Basque country", and Laborantxa Ganbara is "Chamber of Agriculture of the Basque Country" in Basque language.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.herrikoa.com/actualite/ehlg.htm>

<sup>11</sup> Fédération nationale des syndicats d'exploitants agricoles, National Federation Agricol Workers Union.

## **B. French Top-down representation versus Basque local participative democracy**

In France, participative democracy is a new concept in the political sphere. The traditional representative system used to defend the citizens interests in the National parliament (*Assemblée nationale*). Europeanization development, globalization process... marginally change the understanding of the political culture and the role of a top-down political system. Local representations spread over territories and others boundaries (cultural, social, economic...). In the French Basque Country, these changes make governance appear in the 1990' with no specific results in term of policies (i.e. Language...). Today, the process is institutionalized and the Basque militancy as pro-active actors is looking for more concrete projects.

### **1. French participative democracy: a new model**

Today, through the European construction, the encouragement of a Public debate, close to public choices and opinions is largely promoted. Nevertheless, in a Country like France, used to be directed by Top-down policies through omniscient representatives, the notion of Public debate is a new concept that all the citizens do not really appreciate because they are educated to delegate their democratic voice to representatives.

This integration of public debate question has been firstly a reaction to a series of conflicts generated by unilateral Top-down policies, mostly about transport and equipment infrastructure design, in the 1970' and 1980'. Later, the Europeanization process in the 1990' incites the French legislation to follow the rest of the international community. After a widest participation of the Citizens ("Public"), overall in term of information about the ecologic impact<sup>12</sup>, about the access to the administrative documents...<sup>13</sup>, the Europeanization of the French law develops new form of Citizens participation. French citizens are now able to get informed in their territory about the Infrastructural policies<sup>14</sup>. In the 1990', the French juridical system follows the International and European recommendations and begins to promote participative principles on environmental questions. In 1995, in its 2<sup>nd</sup> article, the "Loi Barnier", allows to organize Public debate in the phase of elaboration of the infrastructural project<sup>15</sup>. The *Commission nationale du débat public* (National Commission of the Public Debate) is created in 1996: its secretary is directed by the Ministry in charge of the environmental questions<sup>16</sup>. So, the citizens participation policy is still top-down oriented within the French State. It is organized by the State administration thanks to an independent Commission close to the Ministry in charge of the environmental questions. Things are regulated by State dynamics, under its control.

### **2. The institutionalization of the participative movement**

In term of alternative democracy within the whole French system, the big event has been *Pays basque 2010*<sup>17</sup>. It begins in 1992, thanks to an open-minded delegate of the State, the sous-préfet Christain Sapède who wanted to try a local governance and participative democracy in the Basque Country. This initiative was sustained by the President of the department *Pyrénées atlantiques*, François Bayrou. Meetings have been organized to identify the advantages and disadvantages of the Basque territory. Selected people were

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<sup>12</sup> Loi n°76-629 du 10 juillet 1976.

<sup>13</sup> Loi du 17 juillet 1978.

<sup>14</sup> Directive 85/337/CEE de juin 1985.

<sup>15</sup> Loi du 2 février 1995 relative à la protection de l'environnement.

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.debatpublic.fr/>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.lurraldea.net/>

invited to participate in this territorial check-up: representatives, entrepreneurs, labour Unions, education, state delegates... They make together their own diagnostic during 2 years. Implicitly, it was a kind of recognition of a particularity among internal state limitations. This initiative is institutionalized later: In July 1994, a Development Board (*Conseil de développement du Pays Basque*) is created. In February 1995, a Representatives Board (*Conseil des élus du Pays Basque*) is also created to supervise this democratic flux. In 1997, the Basque territory is recognized as an additional administrative territory, "Pays" with no particular bottom-up competences<sup>18</sup>. After the first enthusiasm, most of the participants of the dynamics are disappointed and quit the representative board<sup>19</sup>. They consider that all the initiatives are falling under a State control process. The institutionalization of the Basque territory alternative is no more attractive.

Since Winter 2005, a new session called *Pays Basque 2020*, also designated to think about the new challenges of the Basque Country is organized: we can see that much more citizens are present<sup>20</sup>. Different kinds of workshops are organized: on infrastructure, education, economy, public health... But most of the people criticize the organization because they don't see what it does mean: "Is it really to make something?" was a question which was often wonder in plenary sessions<sup>21</sup>. Nowadays, the results of the debates are organized by the technique staff to be submitted to different administrations (Region, State...) to get finance. Today, the technique staff is bargaining with the State administration ("Etat-Région" Agreement), in a multileveled relation, its ability to develop territorial strategies.

On the one hand, even if there are citizens' demands of participation in local policies, institutional State locks control the bottom-up offer process. On the other hand, even if Basque people uses traditional participative methods to make the Basque culture resist, the French political culture assign its representatives and State delegates the capacity to translate the local democratic demands. Even so, whereas the Centre of France regards its provinces as an uniform mainland, sometimes its territories are able to keep and develop own political cultures. While in the 1990', the French Nation-State edifice begins to move to more citizens' participation, under the pressure of international juridical normalization, French Basque country, as the Spanish Basque country at this time, involves population in their today-life preoccupation. And as we have seen, little by little things are changing, because of the financial weakness of the French State, because of the Europeanization of the political procedure and also because of the consequences, for Citizens, of the Globalization process.

## Part 2: NICT as a potential alternative to State constrictions

In a geographical area like Basque country with a wide democratic culture but where conservative local powers are still very strong, as we saw with Pays basque 2020 participative and democratic initiatives traditionally take place within the State institutions even if associative dynamics still coexist. In this specific political context, aNTIC Pays Basque emerges as a new actor, as a local contributor to effective citizen participation. It appears as a local promoter of "e-democracy". Since the early 2000, aNTIC Pays Basque is trying, very empirically, to draw own mobilizations through NICT. In 2004-2007, its main actions are about a "Basque Label" that the Local Powers did not manage to organize maybe because they impose top-down policies locally, without negotiating with the involved actors...

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<sup>18</sup> Ségas (Sébastien), *La grammaire du territoire : action publique et développement et lutte politique dans les « pays »*, Thèse en science politique, Bordeaux, Université Montesquieu, Bordeaux 4, 2004.

<sup>19</sup> Ahedo Igor), Urteaga (Eguzki), *La nouvelle gouvernance en Pays Basque*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2004.

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.lurraldea.net/default.php?page=paysbasque2020.php>

<sup>21</sup> This opinion was also told to be very often in *aparte* (participant observation technique).



Its own, with *Pays basque numérique*, aNTIC Pays Basque supports an effective e-democratic participation involving Basque citizens in the public action process.

## **A. aNTIC Pays Basque: a territorial provider within the French political system**

Today, in 2007, the action of aNTIC Pays Basque deals with a wide-open-citizen and territorialized mobilization thanks to e-technologies<sup>22</sup>. The *Agence Pays basque des Nouvelles technologies de l'information et de la Communication* promotes own democratic "e-dynamics", empirically, thanks to citizens participation from the French Basque Country and for actors and citizens of the area<sup>23</sup>. In less than 10 years, this NICT Basque Country Agency passed to be a local promoter of NICT to a territorialized provider of e-initiatives, as the empirical example of "Pays Basque numérique" Label.

### **1. NICT questions the French State administration**

The aNTIC Pays Basque emergence deals with an internal removing within the French policy making due to external determinants. The Europeanization process provokes new form a public action management for the local collectivities (Local administrations). The consequences of this revival is that the public action can be integrated in a global or transregional area and customized to suit national laws and local culture.

As an original para-administration, closer to liberal State than to the French one, and due to the necessity to earn money to defend collective projects, aNTIC Pays Basque is a soft and weak organization: it is a platform which works thanks to public subventions co-financed by the European Union Programs. In the French administrative culture, and its civil servants ("fonctionnaires") used to be paid largely by the State, it supposes new forms of public management which are quite alternative and provocative because this fragility express the financial weakness of the State<sup>24</sup>. Indeed, the decision making cannot be more oriented in a "Top-down" dynamic lead by ideological considerations. That is to say, the State doesn't deal the money, through subventions administrated or negotiated by the French *notables*, to keep its territory quiet in the mainland.

The aNTIC Pays Basque articulates this managerial change<sup>25</sup>. The State supports innovative initiatives accordingly to the Europeanization process and the European directives changing its manners to administrate its territories<sup>26</sup>. One of the determinants is the European subventions, defined by the Göteborg and the Lisbon Agendas even if in France, the European financial supports are dealt by the State delegates and the decision cannot be taken without the agreement of the Administration<sup>27</sup>. However, the European integration supposes the promotion of "bottom-up" initiatives, coming from the basis of the territory,

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<sup>22</sup> <http://www.antic-paysbasque.com>

<sup>23</sup> As in the internet culture, the conflictive Basque identity is not exclusive. Basque identity is considered in a large acceptance. The principal matter is to want to participate in the Basque Country dynamics. These points are negotiated internally: i.e. The place of the Basque Diaspora? The place of the Basque language... That's why I call it e-geographical solidarities integrated in the representation of e-world (cf. website for Basque Diaspora [www.euskosare.org](http://www.euskosare.org)).

<sup>24</sup> Attali (Jacques), « La géopolitique du net », *Revue des deux mondes*, Nouvelles technologies et civilisations, Paris, Février 2001, pp.80-84.

<sup>25</sup> Eisner Gillet (Sharon), Kapor (Mitchell), « The self governing internet-coordinating by design », in Kahin (Brian) & Keller (James) (eds), *Coordinating the Internet*, Cambridge, London, 1997.

<sup>26</sup> For example see the Work of The Queen's Papers on Europeanisation, Queen's university Belfast. In French, Palier (Bruno) & Surel (Yves), *L'Europe en action, L'Européanisation dans une perspective comparée*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2007.

<sup>27</sup> Grewlich (Klaus) « De la gouvernance à la constitutionnalisation », *Piloter la société de l'information*, Paris, Fondation Idate Hermes, 1999, pp.120-127.

thanks to governance technique to understand better the civilian demands. The aNTIC Pays Basque is the expression of such a reality: its existence is not undefined; its existence is linked with a collective project supported by institutions in a governance procedure.

## 2. aNTIC as a glocal provider

In such a context, aNTIC Pays Basque appears to promote the NICT uses in French Basque territory in 1998. It appears very soon because the NICT development in the French public administration will come later than elsewhere in the World<sup>28</sup>. Directed by an innovative and pragmatic director, M De Lara, and an Administration Board composed by around 30 persons coming from the Civil society, aNTIC Pays Basque appears to facilitate the Net culture in the French Basque territory (1999-2002), and since 2002 gets involved in the promotion of Net-economy<sup>29</sup>. Doing so, it also promotes new collective action process like local governance in an empirical procedure.

In the tangible traditional and centralized institutional organization, the local administrative powers hardly implement e-policies because their internal structures are mostly passive. Even so, a localized structure as aNTIC Pays Basque has been able to draw public actions thanks to NICT. It has shown that e-democracy is not only a top-down or a bottom-up movement oriented with/without the State administration.

In French Basque country, the “culture of local democracy” which have been frustrated by the State controls, after a period of enthusiasm during the “Pays basque 2010” and “Pays basque 2020” initiatives, can be expressed in very original terms. Thanks to the associative structure, legitimated by the support of a decentralised administration, people manage to mobilize without expecting the French State authorities to implement “decentralized dynamics”. Nevertheless, aNTIC Pays Basque is not an substitute structure, as could appear The Basque Chamber of agriculture Laborantxa Ganbara<sup>30</sup>. In a multileveled governance situation, aNTIC Pays Basque still bargains with some administrations which promote NICT abilities to develop their performance (Region, French Ministries, European Union...) as an open Basque entity despite any administrative existence, despite local administrative locks and thanks to NICT technique and paradigm<sup>31</sup>.

In this context, even if we consider the structural and institutional weaknesses of the Basque Country, the NICT seem to appear not only as an instrument to make disappear some State limitations but also as an opportunity to change traditional public actions management. In other terms, aNTIC Pays Basque enters in a glocal dynamics, if we regard global and local specificities dual by nature but common in their territorial definition<sup>32</sup>. This probably surpasses the structure itself but, nonetheless it defends local mobilization and European interests within Globalized process<sup>33</sup>. Participating in this changing process, aNTIC Pays basque is also conscious of the necessity to structure local public actions in the Internet

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<sup>28</sup> Bourgeois (Nicolas) & Georgeault, “Les collectivités territoriales se mettent aux nouvelles technologies », *Les Cahiers du Groupe Bernard Bruhnes*, Février 2002, n°8.

<sup>29</sup> Vetraino-Soulard (Marie-Claire), *Les enjeux culturels d'internet*, Paris, Hachette, 1998.

<sup>30</sup> In its internal management and function, aNTIC may be closer to Promoting agency like Antur Teifi in Wales than a more traditional French administration. See <http://www.anturteifi.org.uk/index.html>

<sup>31</sup> About psychological paradigm, see Beau (Frank), « Géopolitique de l'imaginaire », *Les Carnets du CAP*, n°3, Technologies, autumn 2006, pp. 73-85.

<sup>32</sup> Robertson (Roland), « Globalisation or Glocalisation? », *Journal of International Communication*, 1994, pp.33-52.

<sup>33</sup> Soete (Luc) « L'Europe et la société de l'information émergente ; la nécessité d'une innovation politique », *Piloter la société de l'information*, Paris, Fondation Idate Hermes, 1999, pp.75-100.

World<sup>34</sup>. That's why aNTIC Pays Basque investigates new ways, in the crossing of local governance, Net-economy, e-participation and cultural background thanks to Pays basque numérique Label<sup>35</sup>.

## **B. aNTIC Pays Basque leads local e-governance in the French Basque Country**

Firstly, in the late 90', aNTIC Pays Basque began promoting internet utilisations. Today, its activities deal with little and medium firms activities (Information, Economic Intelligence: Abila.net...), about specialized activities (SILOgrafic around creative & media creation...) and e-democracy with the reflexion (2006) and now the implementation (2007) of a Basque Label called "*Pays basque numérique*"... In fact, aNTIC is a little and open-minded structure which surfs over "e-opportunities". aNTIC supervises innovative decentralized managements (cluster policies) in a centralized State as France.

### **1. A Basque Label to defend Basque Numerical property**

"*Pays basque numérique*" supported by aNTIC Pays Basque, which is linked with a Public administration (CABAB: Communauté d'agglomération Bayonne-Anglet-Biarritz) tries to defend e-geographical solidarities, through governance processes<sup>36</sup>. The proposition has been presented for the first time in October 2005, called "Build together a Numerical Basque Country"<sup>37</sup>. In February 2006, the project is presented to the Civil society. The objectives are presented: the will is to define wide territorial strategic perspectives, thanks to a new action-models (*modèle d'action*), as a collective and governance-inspired models and through a collective object the "Numerical Basque Country" Label.

Some physical meetings are organized but a website holds information about NICT, about the project, about its evolution<sup>38</sup>. This first step was the time of observation, when everyone can make its opinions (1, January-September 2004). The second one was the time of exchanges (*concertation*) with the experts and workshops (2, June 2005-April 2005). The third time was the period of propositions and of sharing opinions (3, April-September 2005). The fourth one was the time of the definition: the Values of the mark (a), the communication support (b), the Chart of utilisation (c) (4, October 2005-April 2006). The fifth was the self-management of the Mark (Autonomous agreement comitee... June 2006-December 2006), the official presentation of the mark has been made in January 2007.

The initiative is open to all the individuals or societies who want to defend the project. Delegated ambassadors are chosen to study the candidatures. Candidates are allowed from the associative world, the public administration (collectivités territoriales, Institutions...), firms... All the choices are deliberated. For example, the logo of the mark has been deliberated by e-vote; during the voting process comments were welcome (February-June 2006). During this period, The Basque Chamber of Commerce of Bayonne presented its own and more classical mark "Made in Pays basque"<sup>39</sup>. So round-tables are organized and

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<sup>34</sup> Sassen (Saskia), "Politiques locales et réseaux mondiaux », *Revue des deux mondes*, Nouvelles technologies et civilisations, Février 2001, pp.32-39. See also *Cities and their Cross Border Networks*, London, Routledge, 2001.

<sup>35</sup> Kleck (Véronique), « Numérique & Compagnie, Sociétés en réseaux et gouvernance », Paris, ECLM, 2007.

<sup>36</sup> Arlandis (Jacques), « Internet, les enjeux de la gouvernance », *Piloter la société de l'information*, Paris, Fondation Idate Hermes, 1999, pp.34-73

<sup>37</sup> « Construire ensemble un Pays basque numérique; élaboration de la marque de territoire "Pays Basque numérique », Document de travail, décembre 2005.

<sup>38</sup> <http://www.paysbasquenumerique.net>

<sup>39</sup> The Basque Chamber of Commerce of Bayonne knows a lot of difficulty to implement its territorial-mark that they studied for more than 3 years, fundamentally because they use top-down method, without negotiating with the economical actors their needs.

information is also given to the participants. Concretely it was a mix of effective and physical participation and virtual exchanges.

One aspect seems particularly interesting. In February 2006, every participant was invited to defend its conception of "Basque being". Everyone anonymously express herself or himself through the Net-platform exchange. Some terms were recurrent and needed to be more clearly defined. The aNTIC incited all the partners to work on this. This question which is particularly political and conflictive in the French Basque Country, the question of Basque identity has been very pacifically negotiated. It has allowed an open Basque definitions which is exactly the misunderstanding among Basque people: with persons with restrictive definition, other with wide-open conceptions of the Basque identity. If we extend this thinking, even someone from San Francisco not directly linked with Basque country was able to participate in the initiative<sup>40</sup>. The delegate ambassadors are in charge to regulate these questions accordingly with the collective agreements on the Basque Label.

## 2. A Basque Label to promote Basque e-territory over the e-World

Thanks to the aNTIC Pays Basque, NICT allow Basque *entrepreneurs* to keep on defending an e-territory over French State limitations. It allows to manage own collective actions, culturally close to the governance procedures defended by the European Union and marginally supported by the French administration. In this context, most of them, with intuition, think that the identity is a resource in a competitive territorial market as it is for the merchant market<sup>41</sup>.

The apparent complementarity between the High-tech design of the Spanish Basque Country makes one think about a dragging process for the Low-tech economical design of the French territory. The 2007-2013 Operational programs of the European Union promote transborder solidarities, in terms of economical, civilian... exchanges from both sides of the frontier<sup>42</sup>. The public action must be backed by governance procedures. So the role of transborder/transnational structures established with actors from the Spanish Basque Country could appear as a very attractive opportunity for the French Basque actors who participate in *Pays basque numérique* Label. Nevertheless, until today, even if there are some contacts with Spanish Basque actors, they are quite limited. And in term of NICT uses, the Spanish Basque Country seems to be more developed, because they knew a real Industrial Revolution, because they are much more structured and strategically oriented thanks to their local governmental institutions. For example, the Town Halls, local institutions and Development structures are unified thanks to NICT in specific platform as Garapen ("Development") or sometimes another Development agency as the SPRI<sup>43</sup>. So it is not only the fact of a local governance but overall the fact of a regional policy.

aNTIC Pays Basque shows that localized specific mobilizations about public action around Basque identity (Economic intelligence exchange, territorialized dynamics, Basque language...) is able to structure a territory that State does not want to identify. In a multilevel system, these dynamics are not only alternative to contemporary State policies (French State, local & regional scales, or Spanish and European levels...) in an international context, they also illustrate unusual management in unconventional actions, beyond the traditional states

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<sup>40</sup> The question has been answered, thinking clearly about the Basque from the Diaspora. But this questions provokes some opinions who defended the idea of Basque-Chinese or, even Chinese, if they defend the collective project was allowed to be member of the Label.

<sup>41</sup> « Que nous réserve le numérique ? », *Esprit*, mai 2006.

<sup>42</sup> Harguindeguy (Jean-Baptiste), *Europe Through the Borders? The implementation of INTERREG III-A France-Spain*, EUI, Florence, 2005.

<sup>43</sup> <http://www.garapen.net>; <http://www.spri.es> (Sociedad para la Promoción y Reversión Industrial, Association for the Promotion of Industry)

authorities within the Globalization<sup>44</sup>. The e-mobilization in a specific territory as French Basque Country that the economic actors have totally integrated, thanks to economical identity market, allows cultural and political mobilizations alternatively to administrative boundaries<sup>45</sup>. It produces a kind of bottom-up mobilization (local actors: firms, association...), supported marginally by local agglomeration administration. So, they are able to manage decentralized democratic public actions/policies alternative to top-down democratic institutional shapes.

## Conclusion

In the French Basque Country, the NICT make the local actors, but not political representatives, produce democratic e-policies around their own interests (economic development, language defence...) evading the administrative locking. In a so centralized State like France, others territories with a strong identity culture (French Flanders, Corsica...) get inspired in this alternative way of local management. (Cf "Corse numérique" Label...) and try to promote some decentralized governance their way... To expand this problematic, we can wonder if there is a link between the structure of the State (centralized, decentralized, federal) and specific uses of NICT? Do cultural aspects take other e-mobilizations appearances elsewhere than in the French Basque Country?

## Methodology

*Following social anthropological methodology, the findings for this contribution are the fruit of long-term fieldwork carried out using the method of participant observation and open-ended interviews. I was involved in various participative democracy and governance projects in Basque country (including the Spanish Basque country): I was a member of four Workshops in « Pays basque 2020 » (« Job and economy », « Infrastructures », « Education and research » and « Youth<sup>46</sup>»). I am, of course, a member of « Pays basque numérique » organized by aNTIC Pays Basque; I collaborate on Intelligence, Basque Label, and Small enterprises Group<sup>47</sup> and others innovative projects. More specifically, over the course of 2005 and early 2007, I spent significant time participating in meetings, interviewing actors (representatives, technique staff, directors of the projects, participants, citizens...). This work has made asking people their personal interpretations, experiences and feelings of the work to explain how and why they get involved in those projects. In these contexts, I was able to observe participant behaviour and their interaction with each other as well as with non-members (essentially on this question about Pays basque 2020). General and specific fieldwork research was also backed with academic literature basically in political science, and with local newspapers.*

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<sup>44</sup> Izquierdo (Jean-Marie), « L'expansion transnationale de la question basque », in Canet (Raphël) Duchastel (Jules), *Crise de l'Etat, revanche des sociétés*, Québec, Athéna, 2006, pp.159-176.

<sup>45</sup> « Economie locale et identité culturelle », *Hemen Elkartea*, novembre 2005.

<sup>46</sup> « Emploi, économie, formation », « Infrastructures, déplacements », « Enseignement supérieur, recherche », « Chantier jeune », [www.lurraldeia.com](http://www.lurraldeia.com).

<sup>47</sup> « Intelligence économique », « labellisation », « structuration de l'offre aux PME », <http://www.paysbasquenumerique.net>