

**GIVING VOICE TO LANGUAGE:  
BASQUE LANGUAGE ACTIVISM AND THE POLITICS OF EDUCATION REFORM  
IN FRANCE, 1969-1994**

by

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Kai A. Heidemann, PhD

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Over the past several decades there has been a wellspring of political debate in Europe regarding the rights of linguistic minorities in education. Perhaps nowhere has this transnational debate sparked more controversy than in France where the notion of linguistic rights has been negatively construed by many political authorities as antithetical to the republican model of universal public education. Despite such enmity a host of ethnolinguistic activists in France have been laboring for decades to transform education from a site of exclusion into a vehicle of empowerment. In this dissertation I explore the mobilization dynamics that characterized a minority language schooling initiative within the French Basque Country from 1969 to 1994. Drawing on qualitative case study data, I pay particular attention to the struggles, strategies and successes of Basque language activists affiliated with a community-based schooling association known as ‘Seaska’. Building on social movement theory, I argue that Seaska gradually accrued the support of reluctant policy-makers by mobilizing an influential repertoire of discursive, organizational and performative strategies. Throughout my discussion I show how these strategic practices allowed Seaska to cope with an enduring tide of political opposition, seize upon several windows of political opportunity and gain increasing levels of recognition within the political arena. By way of conclusion I consider future avenues for conducting comparative research on minority language activism in educational settings beyond the French Basque context.

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this dissertation I explore how non-governmental actors work to reform state-level education policies from within the civic realm; i.e. education reform from below. More specifically, I examine how a community of Basque speakers in southwestern France worked to achieve greater levels of recognition and self-determination within the public education system. Drawing on the sociological study of social movements (Snow, Soule and Kriesi 2004), I theorize on the struggles that faced a community-based schooling movement in the French Basque Country as well as the strategic forms of solidarity and resourcefulness that sustained this grassroots initiative for several decades. Within this context, my particular topic of concern is minority language activism. Rarely taken up for analysis by sociologists, minority language activism is a form of collective action through which a group of linguistic minorities works to achieve increased rights, resources and respect within a political system such as through the implementation of bilingual education policies (Fishman 1991' May 2001). While such mobilization initiatives are chiefly motivated by and centered on issues of linguistic vitality, it is crucial to keep in mind that these campaigns are rarely simply and solely about language per se. Indeed, as I will demonstrate in this dissertation, minority language activism in the French Basque Country has embodied a much broader political conflict concerning the democratic logic and limits of public education within the French nation-state.

Throughout this dissertation I examine how local-level efforts to revitalize the Basque language in France led to the building of a community-based schooling network and how the expansion of this grassroots schooling initiative became interwoven with state-level politics of education policy and reform. My concern, however, is less with how Basque activists sought to change existing public schools, than with how they built alternative forms of bilingual schooling and sought to gain state-level support for these privately-run grassroots institutions. As such, I explore the ways in which the Basque struggle for educational self-determination challenged the traditional divide between ‘public’ and ‘private’ schooling in France. In this context, my primary theoretical objective is to theorize on the political agency of Basque language activists; i.e. their capacity to influence state-level political processes and decision-making.

Focusing on the years 1969 to 1994, I pay particular attention to the mobilization strategies deployed by Basque language activists as they worked to gain state-level recognition for a privately-run network of bilingual schools, known as ‘ikastolas’ [literally meaning ‘places of learning’ in Basque]. By ‘state-level recognition’ I mean symbolic and material forms of support acquired from governmental actors or agencies. Through an analysis of qualitative case study data, I ultimately argue that Basque activists were able to garner empowering forms of state-level recognition by employing a repertoire of discursive, organizational and performative strategies. The systematic deployment of this strategic repertoire, I argue, ‘worked’ in the sense that it allowed activists to cope with enduring forms of political opposition as well as tap into instrumental moments of political opportunity. Borrowing from the work of Charles Tilly (2006), I define a ‘strategic repertoire’ as a dynamic assortment of context specific practices through which social movement actors consciously work to achieve long and short-term objectives given the particular resources they possess.

The French Basque Country offers an especially interesting case to explore the educational reform efforts of minority language activists because the French state is notorious for its historical reluctance to permit let alone promote the use of minority languages in the education system (Cohen 2000; Fenet 2004, Judge 2007; Safran 1999). Such political reluctance has applied almost equally to speakers of regional languages such as Basque and Occitan, as well as to speakers of migrant languages such as Arabic and Berber. Although some notable provisions for the teaching of minority languages in public schools began to surface in the 1990's as a consequence of Europeanization (Trenz 2007), relative to most European states the French Republic has remained staunch in its refusal to ratify any kind of legal framework that implements a system of formal rights to minority language speakers (Wright 2002, 2007). Nevertheless, despite this enduring legacy of political non-recognition, it is important to realize that the past several decades have been witness to a proliferation of minority language activism among grassroots actors within French civil society (Jaffe 1999; MacDonald 1989). Although such grassroots activism has surfaced within some migrant communities, the struggle for ethnolinguistic recognition has been most vocal and enduring among speakers of regional languages in places such as the Basque Country as well as in Alsace, Brittany, Corsica and the Occitan-speaking regions of the south. In each of these contexts, schooling has been the most prolific and instrumental site of mobilization and claims-making. The French Basque Country offers an especially compelling case to explore as it was the first area where school-based language activism emerged within France at the end of the 1960's. By theorizing on the emergence and expansion of the ikastola schooling movement in the French Basque Country from 1969 to 1994 I also raise questions of sociological concern regarding the political struggles,

strategies and successes of similar ethnolinguistic campaigns that have transpired in other parts of France.

## **1.1 EDUCATION AS A VEHICLE OF MOBILIZATION: THE IKASTOLA SCHOOLING MOVEMENT**

In the spring of 1969 a small group of parents in the French Basque Country<sup>1</sup> founded the first bascophone pre-school, or 'ikastola'. Directly inspired by a similar initiative in existence across the border in the Spanish Basque Country<sup>2</sup>, these pioneering actors were deeply concerned with the extensive pace of Basque language loss and unambiguously construed the ikastola as a vehicle of ethnolinguistic revitalization. Eventually adopting the organizational identity of 'Seaska' [literally meaning 'cradle' in Basque] the efforts of these actors would generate increasing levels of support from the Basque public and by the 1990's the ikastola network would metamorphose into a comprehensive private education system encompassing all levels of formal learning. Through the years as the ikastola system expanded in size and scope, Seaska's cultural aim of promoting processes of ethnolinguistic revitalization would overlap with the political objective of gaining state-level recognition.

By September 1974, just five years after the founding of the first ikastola in the city of Bayonne, Seaska was operating seven more pre-school programs and had opened its first

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<sup>1</sup> The French or 'northern' Basque Country is a linguistico-culturally defined geographical territory located in the far southwestern corner of France. It is historically defined by three 'provinces', known in Basque as *Lapurdi*, *Behoa-Nafaroa* and *Zoule*. Unlike the Spanish or 'southern' Basque Country, the Basque territory of France remains administratively un-recognized within the French nation-state. Rather, the French Basque Country or '*Pays Basque*' is subsumed within the larger *Département de Pyrénées-Atlantiques* which is subsumed within the even larger *Région de l'Aquitaine*.

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion on the history of the ikastola movement in the Spanish Basque Country, see Lopez-Goñi 2003.

primary-level ikastola. Subsequently, by 1979 the popularity of the ikastolas had surged and there were nearly 400 students enrolled in some 13 schools which had been further expanded to include several more primary schools. A few years later during the summer of 1982, concrete plans were being laid for Seaska's members to begin operating an ikastola that would address the early stages of secondary-level schooling, or '*collège*'. Shortly thereafter, the stage was set for the opening of a bascophone high school or '*lycée*' for the 1988-89 school years. Fast forwarding to academic year 1991-92 Seaska would be running a fully comprehensive system of over 20 bilingual schools wherein around 120 teachers were working with just over 1,000 students in all academic subjects and across levels of instruction. Thus in the period of two decades the community of men and women forming base of Seaska's membership had built up an alternative bilingual education system existing in parallel to the state-run institution of public schooling; certainly no small task. This trajectory of growth would continue over the next two decades and today, as of summer 2010, Seaska oversees 25 ikastolas with a total enrollment of just over 2200 students.

With the institutional growth of the ikastola schooling system over the 1970-80's, Seaska would become transformed from a relatively clandestine and experimental entity largely disengaged from the political process, into a highly politicized social movement organization locked in a strategic and contentious relationship with the French state. At the core of this instrumental and often volatile political relationship was Seaska's struggle to gain increasing levels of recognition and support from the French Ministry of National Education [MNE]. Between the particularly influential years of 1969 to 1994 Seaska's relationship with the French state underwent three catalytic phases: i.e. stages of political claims-making whereby a profound shift occurred in Seaska's organizational stance toward the French state. These phases included:

a phase of transition to elementary schooling, a phase of contentious claims-making on the French state and a phase of collaborative negotiation with state-level policy-makers.

**Table 1.1** Growth in the number of ikastolas operated by Seaska and the number of students enrolled in ikastolas, 1969-2010 (Source: Archival data obtained from Seaska in 2007 and [www.seaska.net](http://www.seaska.net), accessed April 28 2010)

<b>Year</b>	<b>Schools</b>	<b>Students</b>
<b>1969</b>	1	12
<b>1975</b>	8	249
<b>1980</b>	13	405
<b>1985</b>	15	564
<b>1990</b>	18	991
<b>1995</b>	20	1657
<b>2000</b>	22	2013
<b>2005</b>	23	2197
<b>2010</b>	25	2238

The first catalytic phase emerged in 1974 when Seaska’s members decided to begin operating ikastolas in the realm of primary schooling. Prior to this time Seaska had only been operating pre-schools and had very little need to interact with state-level education authorities given that education for children under the age of six in France is neither compulsory nor stringently regulated by educational authorities (Auduc 2002). In short, any civic association in France is free to open a private pre-school on the grounds that it is approved by municipal authorities. For the first several years of Seaska’s existence there was no plan to operate primary schools and thus no need to engage with the state beyond what was minimally needed at the local level. However, upon making the collective decision to move beyond the realm of pre-schooling

and develop a privately-run network of primary schools, Seaska's members were obliged to seek out the approval of the MNE as well as follow state-level guidelines on private schooling and submit the ikastolas to periodic inspections. Hence, after 1974 Seaska's identity and agenda changed dramatically in that the ikastola movement officially crossed over into the political arena whereby activists were forced to navigate the institutional landscape of state-based educational policy-making.

A second catalytic phase for the ikastolas emerged in the early 1980's. While this phase did not take shape at a very precise moment in time as in 1974, the materialization of this phase was also defined by a notable shift in Seaska's stance toward the French state. In short, in the aftermath of François Mitterrand's election as the first Socialist president of the French Republic in 1981, Seaska's members launched into a high-profile mobilization campaign geared toward the acquisition of comprehensive state-level support for the ikastolas. As will be elaborated upon later, Mitterrand's election prompted a shift in Seaska's stance because he was the first presidential candidate to articulate explicit rhetorical support for the formal inclusion of regional minority languages in French public schools. Energized by Mitterrand's supportive rhetoric, Seaska's members perceived his election as an opportunity and entered into a heightened phase of mobilization and protest geared toward achieving a fully-fledged public status for the ikastolas. This was a radically re-defining moment for the ikastola movement in that Seaska's members were now striving to incorporate their privately-run network of bascopphone schools into the institutional framework of the public education system.

A third catalytic moment for the ikastola movement surfaced when Seaska entered into an experimental convention with the French Ministry of National Education in 1989. Originally this had been a tentative agreement reached through protracted negotiations between Seaska and

the MNE. Adopting a legal provision that had been most frequently reserved for the purposes of religious schooling, the 1989 convention essentially posited that the state would provide a limited amount of material assistance to the ikastola system in exchange for increased involvement in and regulation of Seaska's educational activities. The particularly sluggish and strenuous process of evaluation that characterized the duration of this tentative convention was ultimately successful and in 1994 Seaska entered into a more permanent and comprehensive 'contract of association' with the MNE.<sup>3</sup> Seaska's acquisition of this contract was a highly climactic and re-defining event for two reasons.

First, the contract constituted a comprehensive legal validation of the ikastolas in the eyes of the French state. After years of criticism and condemnation made by a variety of political opponents, the contract of 1994 was a long-awaited or sanctioning of Seaska's immersive model of bilingual schooling at the uppermost echelons of educational policy-making in France. In short, Seaska's pedagogical integrity and professionalism had been both publicly acknowledged and legally authenticated, thus helping ikastola proponents to counter-act the fountain of ideological accusations being made against Seaska's purportedly nationalistic agenda.

Second, the contract of 1994 also brought a much-needed influx of economic subsidies and technical assistance into the financially struggling ikastola system. Most importantly, Seaska's entry into a contract with the state meant that the salaries of many ikastola teachers would become fully paid for through an allocation of public funds. The resources provided through this agreement covered roughly 33% of Seaska's budget and thus freed members up to

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<sup>3</sup> In France, the status of private schools operating 'under contract of association with the state' is roughly equivalent to that of 'charter schools' in the United States; i.e. they operate through a mix of public and private resources. Furthermore, while the amount of state-level funding received by schools under contract of association varies with each separate convention, French law states that such funds cannot exceed 49% of total operating costs (Auduc 2002).

invest their time and labor in funding other projects linked to improving and expanding the ikastola system. In addition, through the 1994 contract the French state also put funds into place that led to the development of the very first Basque language teacher training program in France. Hence, the convention of 1989 and the subsequent contract of 1994 were important political outcomes for Seaska because they effectively transformed a controversial network of private schools operating on the cusp of legality into an established system of community-based schools that was fully sanctioned and partially sponsored by the national state.

## **1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

It would be difficult not to see the institutional expansion of the ikastola system during the 1970-80's and Seaska's acquisition of state-level support in 1989 and 1994 as a success story. From a single preschool in 1969 to a comprehensive state-sanctioned educational system in 1994, the men and women behind the ikastola movement did a remarkable job of mobilizing the resources needed to keep the schooling network going and growing through time. In addition to their constant struggle for state-level support, the development of the ikastola system entailed a tremendous amount of 'everyday' work on the part of Seaska's members. This labor included a wide range of practices, such as working to: recruit and retain students; train, hire and pay Basque-speaking teachers; establish and upkeep school buildings; acquire bascophone textbooks and teaching materials; develop bilingual curricula; implement and evaluate experimental pedagogical techniques; keep parents actively involved; publish promotional literature; organize open-houses and fund-raisers as well as make sure that all of this could be reproduced year after

year. In short, the grassroots process of mobilizing the symbolic and material capital needed to keep the ikastolas running let alone growing was colossal and inspirational.

From a sociological perspective the grassroots emergence and expansion of the ikastola schooling movement in the French Basque Country as well as Seaska's protracted quest for state-level recognition invites three lines of inquiry.

The first and most central line of questioning asks: what explains Seaska's entry into a state-level contract in 1994? Was this contract the accumulated effect of years of successful strategizing on the part of activists, or was the contract a product of changes and expanding opportunities in French policy-making? In other words, was the contract an outcome of Seaska's increasing political resourcefulness, or was it the by-product of transformations within the French political system?

A second line of questioning emerges directly from the first and asks: how and why did Seaska's members work to gain recognition from the French state? This two-part question inquires more specifically into the mobilization objectives and tactics that fueled Seaska's efforts to generate governmental support between 1969 and 1994. Above all, this line of inquiry strives to understand what led ikastola proponents to make instrumental claims upon the French state in the first place as well as what kind of strategic practices activists deployed in their pursuit of political recognition.

Finally, a third line of inquiry on Seaska's struggle for political recognition points to macro-level factors and asks: how were Seaska's efforts to gain state-level recognition influenced by the ideological and institutional contours of the broader political system? This line of questioning seeks to identify the ways in which Seaska's struggle to accrue support from educational authorities in France was variously facilitated and restrained by processes, policies

or events existing within the wider political environment. In other words, how did macro-structural factors of opportunity and constraint shape Seaska's grassroots campaign for political recognition?

Throughout this dissertation I use these three lines of inquiry as a way to explore the mobilization struggles, strategies and successes that characterized the ikastola schooling movement in France. Building upon the sociological study of social movements (Snow, Soule and Kriesi 2004), I focus my attention on a 25 year span of mobilization that starts with the moment of Seaska's emergence in 1969 and ends with Seaska's attainment of a contract of association with the French Ministry of National Education in 1994.

On the one hand, I draw on resource mobilization theory (Edwards and McCarthy 2004; Ganz 2000; McCarthy 1996) to argue that Seaska's path toward political recognition from 1969 to 1994 was paved by three inter-locking sets of strategic practices. These include: [i] discursive strategies geared toward intra/extra-movement processes of communication and meaning-making, [ii] organizational strategies geared toward managing and maximizing movement-based infrastructure, and [iii] performative strategies geared toward reproducing and displaying the identitarian solidarity of movement participants. In brief, I argue that the deployment of these inter-connecting practices by Seaska's members allowed them to gradually generate two interlinking forms of political recognition: symbolic recognition and material recognition.

Seaska's accrual of symbolic recognition consisted largely of rhetorical support voiced by state-level actors and agencies positioned at various levels of French government, ranging from the municipal, communal and departmental to the regional and national. The attainment of such symbolic recognition was achieved by Seaska on numerous occasions, for example, when individual politicians or policy-makers variously endorsed the ikastola movement in the press,

responded to Seaska's letters/phone calls in a relatively positive manner, participated in a public event orchestrated by Seaska, or deliberated with Seaska's leaders in a seemingly collaborative fashion. Although these various kinds of rhetorical endorsement from political authorities did not always or even often lead to concrete forms of material support, Seaska's members construed the accretion of such symbolic recognition as small victories in a broader struggle to achieve ideological resonance and legitimacy within the French political arena.

Seaska's accrual of material recognition entailed the attainment of direct financial and/or technical assistance from various levels of the French state. Although such material recognition was most notably sought after and obtained from the Ministry of National Education it was also attained from agents/agencies at the municipal or regional levels of government. Material recognition generally came in two forms: episodic and systemic. While episodic forms of material recognition were more common and consisted of single or one-time allotments of assistance from the state, systemic forms of material recognition were less common and entailed the creation of more or less stable and routinized flow of state-level support. The most notable example of systemic recognition achieved by Seaska was the convention of 1994. Examples of episodic recognition include moments such as when Seaska first gained permission from the state to operate primary and secondary schools in the private sector in 1974 and 1982 respectively as well as when the French Ministry of Culture allocated several financial grants to Seaska between 1983 and 1985.

On the other hand, I also draw on political process theory (Koopmans 1999; Kriesi 2004; Meyer 1999; Tilly 2006) to show how Seaska's mobilization strategies were shaped by external factors of political opportunity and constraint. In this context, my aim is to show how the ikastola

movement was both positively and negative influenced by the ideological and institutional contours of the broader political landscape.

With respect to the context of political opportunity, I argue that Seaska's path toward symbolic and material recognition was enabled by the unfolding of two transformative events that significantly altered the structure of power within the broader political landscape. These events were: [1] the rise of a semi-autonomous Basque government in Spain after 1979, and [2] the ascension of a Socialist government in France after 1981. In regards to the former I show how the emergence of the Autonomous Basque Community of Spain in 1979 led to the creation of Basque language normalization laws in 1982; policies mandating the inclusion of Basque across all levels of education so as to stimulate linguistic revitalization. The implementation of these policies presented Seaska with an empowering moment of political opportunity in two ways: by bolstering the ideological resolve of ikastola proponents in France and by motivating Seaska's members to forge instrumental linkages with Basque language activists in Spain.

In addition I show how the ascension of François Mitterrand and the Socialist Party to French government after 1981 was an opportunity that helped to bring Seaska increased levels of ideological legitimacy and institutional leverage within the political arena. In short, Mitterrand and the Socialist ran their presidential campaign around several thematic platforms that were of immediate strategic interest to Seaska, namely supporting the revival of France's regional languages and decentralizing the national system of educational policy-making. Fueled by events in Spain, Mitterrand's electoral victory in 1981 motivated activists to escalate the scope of their claims-making on the state and pressure the administration to make good on their campaign promises. This escalation gradually led to Seaska gaining increased access to the polity and entering into negotiations with policy-makers; a process that eventually led to the contract of

1994. By evaluating and actively engaging with political events in France and Spain, Seaska's members were able to convert several converging moments of political opportunity into a series of tangible outcomes.

Subsequently, in discussing the context of political constraint I focus my analysis on two dynamics: ideological opposition and institutional obstructionism. With respect to the former I show how Seaska's claims for recognition were consistently met by state-level education authorities with a mixed response of disregard and delegitimation. While disregard basically entailed authorities ignoring Seaska's claims for recognition, delegitimation entailed the production of narratives that variously portrayed Seaska's mobilization agenda as an irrational, illiberal and/or irredentist endeavor. In addition, I also discuss how Seaska negatively experienced the machinations of state-level power through two forms of institutional obstructionism: the containment of Seaska's range of action within the domain of private education, and the cooptation of Seaska's educational agenda within public schools. By looking at these ideological and institutional forms of state-based constraint my aim is to show how Seaska's strategies of recognition were crafted in an effort to deal with political opposition as well as realize political opportunity.

### **1.3 ORGANIZATION OF THE DISSERTATION**

The remainder of this dissertation is organized in the following manner. In the second chapter I provide some historical background on the landscape of language politics in France and elaborate in greater detail on the expansion of the ikastola movement from time of Seaska's founding in 1969 to Seaska's acquisition of a state-level contract in 1994. In this context, my

aim is to show how the ikastola movement emerged as a form of resistance against the state-based legacy of linguistic nationalism in France.

In the third chapter I discuss theories and concepts from the field of social movement studies in order to present the analytical foundations upon which my research rests. Here, I devote most of my attention to the project of bridging the paradigms of resource mobilization theory (e.g. Buechler 1993; McCarthy 1996) and political process theory (e.g. Kriesi 2004; Meyer 1999). Although these two theoretical ‘camps’ already share a common intellectual genealogy, I argue that clear conceptual linkages between these paradigms remain analytically disjointed. Despite such problems, however, I contend that the central insights of resource mobilization and political process theories can be synthesized by placing the analytical spotlight on the strategic practices of social movement actors; i.e. the specific forms of labor through which grassroots actors work to realize a particular set of objectives given the variety of obstacles they face. Through an analysis of strategic practice or ‘praxis’ I argue that sociologists can engage in a form theorization that avoids perpetuating the string of false dichotomies that have plagued social movement analysis such as the antinomies between structure-agency, culture-politics and subjectivism-objectivism (Jasper and Goodwin 1999).

In the fourth chapter I elaborate upon the methodological approaches used in the development and implementation of my research design. In addition to discussing the logic of the temporal parameters chosen for this study (1969-1994), I emphasize my use of the ‘grounded theory’ approach in carrying out my qualitative and historical case study of the ikastola movement (Corbin and Strauss 2005). I devote this chapter to discussing the triangulation of several data sources: analysis of interviews conducted with Seaska’s members, analysis of texts published by Seaska, analysis of media coverage concerning Seaska’s activities, and

participation-observation in events orchestrated by Seaska. In addition, I also discuss some of the problems, caveats and limitations linked to my methodology.

In the fifth chapter I discuss the first decade of Seaska's existence from 1969 to 1979 so as consider how and why Basque activists gradually shifted their stance toward the French state from one of aversion and avoidance to one of confrontation and engagement. In this context, I emphasize two events: Seaska's entry into the field of primary schooling in 1974 and the French state's controversial closure of an ikastola in 1977. A primary aim of this chapter is to show that while state-based opposition to the ikastola movement restrained its institutional growth, this political opposition also galvanized the identitarian solidarity of ikastola proponents and bolstered their ideological resolve.

In the sixth chapter, I explore how and why Seaska's protracted efforts to gain state-level recognition in France were enabled by the rise of a semi-autonomous Basque government in Spain between the years of 1979 to 1986. I pay particular attention to how the transition to democracy and the unfolding of educational and linguistic policies in the Spanish Basque Country encouraged Seaska's members to initiate a collaborative relationship with actors across the border. Through processes of exchange and diffusion this cross-border relationship gradually led to a strategic northward influx of symbolic and material resources for Seaska and the ikastola movement. The primary aim of this chapter is to show how the unfolding of external political events in Spain had a positive impact on Seaska's struggle for recognition in France, albeit in a manner that was largely initiated and mediated by ikastola proponents on the ground.

In the seventh chapter, I examine how the ascension of François Mitterrand and the Socialist Party to French government further empowered Seaska's campaign for state-level recognition between the years of 1981 and 1986. In this context, I pay special attention to two

enabling factors: the accommodating stance of the Mitterrand government toward the inclusion of regional minority languages in public schools, and the administration's gradual implementation of policies geared toward a decentralization of national education system. The primary aim of this chapter is to show how external events and transformations in the French political system facilitated Seaska's capacity to gain increasing levels of state-based recognition, albeit in a manner that was mediated and extracted through the actions of ikastola proponents rather than through the willingness and benevolence of governmental policy-makers

Subsequently, in the eighth chapter I focus on the period between 1986 and 1994 to consider how Seaska's leadership engaged in a sluggish process of contentious debate with French educational authorities that ultimately led up to a collaborative convention with the Ministry of National Education. In this context I focus on how an organic structure of representative leadership emerged as Seaska struggled to make tangible gains within the political arena. In particular I show how ikastola proponents struggled to gain a form of state-level recognition that would not entail compromising too much of Seaska's organizational autonomy and control over the ikastola schooling system. One of the main points of this chapter is to illustrate how Seaska's members combined a dynamic process of internal deliberation and reflection with continual publicity and protest as they tried to negotiate a 'good deal' with a seemingly reluctant group of state-level authorities. Another main point of this chapter is to show how Seaska's members viewed their entry into a convention with the Ministry of National Education as a victory that was characterized by a considerable but temporary amount of compromise.

Finally, in the ninth chapter I conclude by theorizing on the struggles and strategies that characterized Seaska's pursuit for state-level support from 1969 to 1994. In this context I argue

that Seaska's long and winding path toward political recognition was paved by three overlapping sets of strategic practices: [1] discursive strategies geared toward infra/extra-movement patterns of communication; [2] organizational strategies geared toward strengthening/managing movement infrastructure, and [3] performative strategies geared toward maintaining/bolstering the solidarity of movement participants. In brief, by putting these three interlinking and mutually reinforcing forms of strategic practice into motion, I argue, ikastola proponents were able to cope with a continual tide of political opposition, exploit several empowering windows of political opportunity and gradually accrue increasing amounts of political recognition; i.e. ideological and institutional recognition within the arena of educational policy-making. I then conclude my discussion by suggesting a general blueprint for future research on the topic of ethnolinguistic mobilization in education that draws on the analytical tool-kit of social movement theory while also expanding upon it by bridging it to scholarship on minority rights and education reform.

#### **1.4 AIMS OF THIS DISSERTATION**

The aims of this dissertation are threefold. First and foremost, this study sheds important light on how social movement actors target education as a vehicle of cultural and political empowerment. There has been very little sociological scholarship that bridges social movement studies with the sociology of education (cf. Binder 2002), and as a consequence there is very little understanding of how schools become mobilized as important sites of resistance and self-determination among actors who have historically experienced educational systems in terms of marginality and exclusion.

Second, this study illuminates the under-explored phenomenon of minority language revitalization; i.e. collective action geared toward the cultural and political empowerment of a marginalized linguistic group. As language does not, indeed cannot, exist in separation from the lives and experiences of people (Blommaert 1999), efforts to revitalize a minority language must be seen as an attempt to influence the identities and ideologies of social actors and not ‘simply’ language *per se*. This is to say that language activists strive to change the way people utilize languages as well as what it means to speak these languages and be members of a minority language speech community (Bourdieu 1991). Unfortunately, social movement scholars have yet to broach the subject of minority language activism. Because much of the work on minority language politics has evolved within the academic fields of sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, and policy studies, there is thus little understanding for the modes of collective action adopted by linguistic minorities in their quest for increased rights, resources and respect in public domains such as education. By bringing a social movement perspective to the phenomenon of minority language revitalization, this dissertation breaks new ground.

Third, this study sheds light on the mobilization practices deployed by social movement actors as they work to endure forms of political opposition and seize moments of political opportunity. Much of the literature concerned with issues of political power and governance in the social movement literature has emphasized how power shapes social movement activities in structuralist terms, rather than on the agency of social movement actors as they experience, evaluate and engage with systems of governance. By focusing on the political labor of minority language activists in the French Basque Country, this study illuminates how social movement actors engage in grassroots processes of resource mobilization so as to overcome experiences of

political exclusion, and convert moments of political opportunity into lasting forms of political recognition.

## 1.5 DEFINITION OF SOME KEY TERMS

Synthesizing extant definitions in the literature (della Porta and Diani 2005; McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996; Tarrow 1998), I define a '*social movement*' as an organized and enduring form of collective action whereby solidaristic networks of grassroots social actors challenge a given set of power relations on behalf of a certain population so as to realize and/or resist broader-level forms of cultural, political and/or economic change. Because the primary set of power relations of concern in my exploration of the ikastola movement are linked to the French state, I define '*the state*' as an exclusive and multi-leveled arena of political decision-making whereby the ideological norms and institutional procedures for the exercise of governance over a territorially defined populace are continually established, legitimated and enforced (Peters and Pierre 2006). Furthermore, I define '*governance*' in its democratic form as the concerted efforts of elected and appointed authorities to variously steer and coordinate the perceived interests of the public they putatively represent (ibid).

In addition, I define a '*social movement field*' as a particular institutional domain or segment of society whereby the activities of a social movement have been systematically and strategically directed over an extended period of time, such as the mass media, the education system, or the judicial realm (Crossley 2002:178-9). Further drawing on previous scholarship (Lofland 1996) I define a '*social movement organization*' as a relatively formalized and non-state-level associative entity based within the civic realm whose primary rationale for existence

is the furtherance of a broader social movement agenda. In addition, I define ‘*activists*’ as the individual participants who invest their personal time and energy (i.e. labor) to promoting the aims and objectives of a given social movement organization. The focus of this dissertation is on Basque language activists who shaped the *ikastola* movement from 1969 to 1995.

Based upon these definitions, the type of social movement under investigation in this dissertation can be regarded as an ‘*ethnolinguistic revitalization movement*’; i.e. organized and enduring forms of mobilization simultaneously geared toward resisting processes of ethnolinguistic degeneration and realizing processes of ethnolinguistic resurgence. By ‘*ethnolinguistic*’ I mean forms of collective identity which are predominantly expressed and constructed through knowledge and use of a particular ancestral language. Building upon scholarship from sociolinguistics (Fishman 1991; Williams 2005) and linguistic anthropology (Hinton 2003), ethnolinguistic revitalization movements can be seen as working to engender three forms of vitality among ethnic communities experiencing processes of linguistic decline: demographic, symbolic and institutional. At the core of revitalization, *demographic vitality* refers to increasing the amount of people who actively speak a minority language. Efforts geared toward bolstering *symbolic vitality* refers to increasing the value, prestige and loyalty associated with knowing and speaking a minority language. Finally, efforts aimed at building *institutional vitality* refer to increasing the presence/use of minority languages in sectors of the public sphere, such as schools, mass media, the market, the legal system and public policies in general.

Finally, a key concept at work in this dissertation is that of ‘*recognition*’. Through the years, this Hegelian concept has come to figure quite prominently in social and political theory (Taylor 1995; Fraser and Honneth 2003) as well as in the field of social movement studies (Hobson 2003). Indeed, social movements have often been defined as ‘struggles for recognition’

(Hobson 2003; Nash 2010). While the term recognition has been conceived in fairly broad terms and there is much on-going debate over how scholars can achieve maximal analytical utility from this concept (Thompson 2006), there is a general consensus that the notion of recognition is intellectually linked to the study of multiculturalism, identity politics and minority rights. Within this context, recognition essentially refers to justice-based claims made upon power holders by marginalized social groups- ethnic, sexual, religious, etc- seeking to transcend historical experiences of stigmatization and disempowerment. As noted by Fraser and Honneth (2003:7) “here the goal, in its most plausible form, is a difference friendly world, where assimilation to majority or dominant cultural norms is no longer the price to be paid for equal respect”. While acknowledging that the conceptual basis of recognition is rooted in the quest for increased autonomy, justice and equality among minorities, for the purposes of this study, I explicitly define recognition in an emic fashion; i.e. in accordance to how the notion was evoked and understood by Basque language activists affiliated with the ikastola movement in France. In this light, I define recognition or ‘*reconnaissance*’ in French and ‘*ezagutze*’ in Basque as a claim for ideological respect and material backing for the ikastola schooling network from the French state. Hence, recognition here refers explicitly to the acquisition of state-level support or patronage.

In sum, with these definitions in hand, Seaska can be regarded as a particular social movement organization working to further the aims of the broader Basque language revitalization movement in France by working to gain state-level recognition for a network of bascophone schools and whose efforts thus challenge the historical relations of power that have defined the governance of formal education in France.

## **2.0 FRENCH NATIONALISM AND BASQUE LANGUAGE LOSS**

Social movements are born from specific historical circumstances and over the course of mobilizing campaigns social movement actors often understand and present themselves as making history. As collective quests of empowerment, social movements typically come to life as concerted attempts among marginalized groups seeking to overcome entrenched legacies of marginalization, disenfranchisement and discrimination. Understanding the historical conditions that perpetuate such relations of inequality and exclusion is crucial to understanding the goals and tactics that fuel social movements well beyond their moments of initial emergence. Any inquiry into the dynamics of an ethnolinguistic revitalization initiative such as the ikastola schooling movement in the French Basque Country necessitates an understanding of the factors that led to processes of ethnolinguistic marginalization in the first place. In the case of the French Basque Country- as with countless other situations of minority language loss in Europe- the story of linguistic degeneration leads us to consider how the assimilatory logic of state-based nationalism and the homogenizing legacy of universal public schooling in France had a negative impact on the linguistic vitality of Basque. In this chapter I consider the historico-political context from which the ikastola schooling movement eventually emerged in 1969, paying special

attention to the role of language planning<sup>4</sup> in the formation of the modern French nation-state after 1789.

## **2.1 REPUBLICAN NATIONALISM AND LINGUISTIC ASSIMILATION**

Over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the sociolinguistic landscape of the French Basque Country underwent a dramatic transformation. While most people at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century spoke Basque almost exclusively, by the end of the 20<sup>st</sup> century only a minority continued speaking the language with any sort of regularity and proficiency. For example, sociolinguistic surveys conducted in the French Basque Country during the 1990's revealed that less than 25% of the population, roughly 60,000 persons, had 'active linguistic competence' or fluency in Basque (Oyharcabal 1999:63). These contemporary statistics stand in stark contrast to the sociolinguistic situation over a century earlier when a linguistic survey conducted by the French government in 1866 estimated that only around 10% of elected mayors in the Basque region of southwestern France could demonstrate oral fluency let alone literacy in the French language (Jacob 1994:42). What accounts for this usurpation of Basque? What explains the decline of Basque and the concomitant rise of French over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century? More importantly why did a situation of sustained bilingualism not become a prevailing feature of French Basque society? The answer to all these questions lies in the tumultuous formation and consolidation of the modern French nation-state after the French Revolution of 1789.

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<sup>4</sup> For my purposes here I define 'language planning' has been defined as "deliberate efforts to influence the behavior of others with respect to the acquisition, structure or functional allocation of their language codes" (Cooper 1980 as quoted in Ager 1999). State-based language planning thus refers to governmental efforts to influence the linguistic behaviors of the citizenry.

The French Revolution of 1789 brought about the beginning of the end for a thoroughly entrenched monarchical-clerical power structure in France. Many of those leading the movement against the *Ancien Régime* in France had rallied under the ideological banner of ‘republicanism’; a philosophical extension of modern liberalism which basically stipulates that ‘the people’ have a fundamental right to exercise their sovereignty and self-determination through a democratic system of government (Howarth and Varouxakis 2003;Ch.1). Because the republican notion of democracy was based upon a unifying notion of ‘the people’, a fundamental task of the emergent republican nationalist movement in France was to create the French nation. Or, as infamously stated by French historian Eugen Weber, the political task faced by republican nationalists after 1789 was “to transform peasants into Frenchman” (Weber 1976). Of course, given that the monarchical-clerical power holders were not keen on abdicating the throne in the name of democracy, the republican movement would face a long uphill battle.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, the revolutionary republican challenge to the monarchical base of power in the name of democracy was significant because it entailed a profound shift in the ideological link between language and governance. Whereas linguistic pluralism and diversity had largely facilitated the logic of monarchical rule, it came to be regarded as an obstacle to republican nationalists. As Penelope Eckert (1980) has written:

Until the Revolution of 1789, there was no official desire to teach French to the peasants; on the contrary, it was understood that if the rural population learned French they would be able to leave the land, where they were needed to guarantee the food supply of France...With the Revolution came the resolve to teach French to the entire population in the interests of democracy, to encourage popular participation in government (Eckert 1980:1057)

During the highly volatile period that followed the French Revolution, the high levels of linguistic diversity that defined French society became viewed by republican nationalists as a serious impediment to winning over and unifying the peasantry in the fight to overcome the entrenched hegemony of the *Ancien Régime*. After seizing power in 1789 and drafting the Constitution of the First French Republic in 1791, republican nationalists made some of their first calls to establish national linguistic unity through the development of a mandatory and monolingual system of education for citizenship (Auduc 2002). Although such a system would not see the light of day until nearly a century later, it is important to see this moment as the initial linking of nationalism to education in the name of democracy.

For example, the Marquis de Condorcet articulated some of the earliest and best known plans for the development of a universal system of education during the revolutionary era in France (Auduc 2002). Linking the project of universal schooling directly to the realization of a sovereign and democratic nation-state, Condorcet explicitly argued that such a system should be based upon the sole use of French so as to prevent the corrupting forces of the ‘inadequate’ and ‘barbaric’ languages spoken by the rural peasantry such as Basque or Occitan in the southwest (Goyenetxe 1976). In this context, the learning of French became literally construed as a vehicle of modernity, rationality and progress whereas regional languages became stigmatized as anachronistic and backward. Language was thus both symbolically and practically important to the construction of the modern French nation-state.

In seeking to rid the Republic of the dilemma of linguistic diversity, the newly empowered advocates of the republican revolution such as Condorcet sought to ‘liberate’ the

peasantry by ‘enlightening’ them with the virtues of the French language<sup>5</sup>. The discourse fueling this emergent ideology of linguistic nationalism is nicely illustrated, for instance, in a famous address given to the revolutionary government in 1794 by the abbot turned republican Henri Grégoire:

We have revolutionized government, laws, customs and habits, costumes, commerce and even thought; so let us revolutionize language...Federalism and superstition speak Breton, emigration and hatred of the republic speaks German, counter-revolution speaks Italian, and *fanaticism speaks Basque*. Let us destroy these instruments of damage and error (Quoted in Ager 1999:25, italics added).

However, because the First Republic was so short-lived and rural resistance to republicanism remained quite stiff for much of the early-to-mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, the project of linguistic assimilation was very slow to come to fruition. Indeed, the use of Basque in southwestern France persisted well after the language had been formally declared an enemy of the state by Grégoire in 1794. As James Jacob (1994:39) writes:

Despite the lofty aspirations of the Revolution...by the beginning of the French Third Republic in 1870, travelers to the Basque territories would have seen much the same cultural milieu...where the social order revolved around the church, the Basque clergy remained the primary ethnic elite and Euskara [the Basque language] continued to be the main language of the marketplace, catechism and everyday life.

In the century following the Revolution of 1789 a vociferous domestic war would be fought within France as the clerical, monarchical and bonapartist opponents of the Revolution

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<sup>5</sup> The version of French that eventually became known as the ‘national standard’ or ‘high French’ is actually based upon the regional dialect of central France, or Ile-de-France (Ager 1999).

would fight to maintain their political authority over French territory (Mendras and Cole 1988; Weber 1976). In the Basque territories, the primary opposition to the ideals of the Revolution came from the clerical elite who negatively perceived the liberal nationalism of the republicans as a force of moral and cultural corruption (Jacob 1994). A period of political resistance by the clergy thus emerged within the Basque region that prevented republicanism from achieving a stable basis of support in the southwestern corner of France; a particularly strategic area given the border with Spain where clerical and monarchical opposition to republicanism was robust. As such, the implementation of assimilatory language policies by the French state in the Basque Country would have to wait until an effective and centralized system of state-based governance was put into place during the Third Republic (1870-1940).

During the Third French Republic the development of the Jules Ferry Laws of 1881-82 contributed to the rise of public schools across the rural periphery of France. The process of bringing a secular and monolingual system of public schooling to the Basque Country, as in other regions of France, entailed considerable clashes and conflict with clerical elites. In traditional Basque society, the Church had long served as a political center of community life with the clergy often taking on a decision-making role very similar to that of a mayor (Jacob 1994). As such when the Republic brought municipal levels of state-based governance into the Basque Country, the will to impose new laws and policies among the people very often collided with the established authority of the anti-republican clergy. The saying '*euskaldun, fededun*/He who is Basque is a believer', for instance, became a common rallying cry for the Basque clergy as they worked to mobilize the faithful against republican laws on mandatory secular schooling (Jacob 1994: 39).

Language was a powerful symbolic marker of Basque ethnicity. In the context of conflict with state-level authority, the Basque language became a unifying vehicle for the clergy as they worked to rally the support of their parishioners in a fight to preserve Basque cultural traditions that were often framed as being rooted in the Catholic Church. This simultaneous politicization of religion and language, however, only bolstered the political will of state-level authorities to purge the Republic of clerical and linguistic loyalties in the Basque region. Hence, the public use of and fight for Basque became negatively equated by French political authorities with a reactionary and dangerous brand of parochial conservatism.

The dismantling of the clergy's power within the Basque region became an explicit object of governmental action at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Jacob 1994:51-55). This process paralleled a broader execution of anti-clerical politics and implementation of laws separating church and state in France around 1905 such as the placing of heavy restrictions upon the freedom of religious schooling. The dismantling and depoliticizing of the influential role played by clergy in the French Basque Country took shape through several stages.

The first step was through the implementation of a Republican-friendly and francophone head bishop in the Diocese of Bayonne, the historical center of Catholic authority in the French Basque Country (Jacob 1994:51). Second, was a national decree from within the French Catholic church that, "French would be the only language permitted in the teaching of the catechism" (ibid:52). Third, was the increase in disciplinary actions adopted by the newly appointed bishop against clergymen who actively voiced anti-statist sentiments and continued to use Basque in public sermons, including imprisonment and expatriation (ibid). As a result of these three processes playing out in the years leading up to the arrival of the Great War in 1914, a realization gradually spread among many Basque clerics that they could not win a two-tiered struggle

against the strong central authority of the secular French state and the French Catholic Church (ibid:53). There was a lack of both cultural and political opportunity and as a consequence of the decline in ethnic mobilization, many Basques fell into what James Jacob (ibid:53) calls an “apolitical form of religious conservatism” wherein French became the vehicle of worship and Basque receded even further into the periphery of people’s lives.

Part of the effectiveness of the republican education system in perpetuating the demise of Basque during the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was in the policing of language within schools by teachers. The Jules Ferry Laws of the 1880’s had created a system whereby middle-class school teachers- usually civil servants from Paris or the provincial capitals- were brought into rural villages where regional languages such as Basque were still widely spoken by parents (Weber 1976). As part of an emergent middle class, teachers often held considerable public status in rural areas, wielded considerable influence over local politics and as a result held the respect of many parents and were esteemed by many students (Mendras and Cole 1988). Moreover, these teachers often envisioned their job as part of a broader civilizing mission geared toward ‘liberating’ rural children from the perceived ‘backwardness’ and ‘poverty’ of their peasant environment. In this light, the eradication of regional languages from the lives of students was typically viewed by teachers as integral to helping them become rational and productive citizens of France. Monolingual instruction was thus the strict chosen method with little to no tolerance for students using regional languages on school grounds. As Annie Noer (1988) notes about the teaching methods of the era,

French was the only language accepted; the child who spoke their mother tongue was severely punished. A ‘symbol’ was suspended from the neck of a guilty child. The symbol was of some regional and rural context: a clog, a flat stone, a bolt, broken crockery...to rid themselves of it, the unlucky student had to

denounce one of his fellow students, and the last student to hold the 'symbol' was punished (Noer 1988:26, translation mine)

The role of the education system in promoting Basque language loss did not unfold overnight as a steamroller of domination fueled from above by a series of laws implemented in Orwellian-like fashion by teachers pounding in the doctrines of the Republic. Indeed, many public school teachers often made the project of 'linguistic purging' a part of their pedagogical repertoire not out of hatred and spite for peasant children but out of a humanistic concern for their perceived well-being; i.e. many school teachers honestly believed that regional languages were detrimental (Mendras and Cole 1988:106).

As the francophone institution of the public school came to supplant the local church as a predominant site of learning and socialization for Basque youths, the use of French gradually came to supplant that of Basque in many communities, leaving the immediate home-family nexus as the last refuge of Basque. Ultimately, however, as Eugen Weber (1976) points out, the 'successes' of the French school system in transforming 'peasants into Frenchmen' lay in peasant families construing the education system as an important asset to their children's lives. He writes:

What made the Republic's laws so effective was not just that they required all children to attend school and granted them the right to do so free. It was the attendant circumstances that made adequate facilities and teachers more accessible; that provided roads on which children could get to school; that above all, made school meaningful and profitable, once what the school offered made sense in terms of values and perceptions...it was only when what the schools taught made sense that they became important to those that they had to teach...when what the schools said became relevant to recently created needs and demands that people listened to them; and in listening also heeded the rest

of their offerings. People went to school not because the school was offered or imposed but because it was useful (Weber 1976:303).

In short, over the course of the early to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, knowledge of standard French brought with it newfound opportunities for Basque peasants to achieve socio-economic mobility in an economic landscape that was slowly shifting from the local agrarianism of family farming to larger scale agricultural and industrial production. Within an increasingly impoverished Basque rural periphery the impetus to adopt French was thus not only fostered within the school but by what schooling stood for; i.e. escaping rural poverty. In this context, a hierarchy emerged between Basque and French whereby the criterion of value was based upon a utilitarian logic as well as a nationalistic one.

In sending their children to francophone schools with the hope of improving their life circumstances in the future, parents played an active role in the devaluation of the Basque language not simply by praising the value of French but by embracing an ideology of contempt for Basque as ‘useless’ and ‘worthless’. This is evident by the simple fact that the emergence of French-Basque bilingualism during the 20<sup>th</sup> century became the eventual mechanism of Basque language loss rather than of Basque language maintenance. French symbolized mobility, prestige and belonging within a modern nation while Basque symbolized rural poverty and economic stagnation tied to a decaying and undesirable peasant lifestyle. However, this had nothing to do with the intrinsically poor value of Basque, but everything to do with its planned and systematic exclusion from nearly all aspects of the public sphere. As sociolinguist Colin Baker writes: “[t]he language of the poor and of the peasant is not the language of prosperity and power...when a minority language is *seen* to co-exist with unemployment, poverty, social deprivation and few amenities, the social status of the language may be negatively affected” (Baker 2001:69, italics added).

It is important to add that the pace of Basque language loss was greatly exacerbated over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a consequence of mandatory military conscription and extended periods of inter-state warfare between France and Germany (Izquerido 2001). From the outbreak of the Great War in 1914 to France's capitulation under the Nazi's in 1940, tens of thousands of adult men from the rural Basque region served as foot soldiers in the French armed forces. The participation and frequent deaths of Basques in periods of military conflict often helped to stimulate the construction of a French national identity among family members back home in the Basque Country. With many people's fathers, husbands, grandfathers, sons, brothers and cousins either dying or becoming seriously maimed in the name of sovereign French nationhood, notions of 'French-ness' took on increasing meaning and value for family members living in the towns and villages of the Basque Country (Izquerido 2001). The cultivation of such sentiments of national identity thus further elevated the prestige of speaking French while further perpetuating the distance between Basques and their ancestral language.<sup>6</sup>

In sum, the decline of Basque in southwestern France over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was intimately tied to macro-level processes of nation-state formation that had been initiated during the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. The rise of a national education system, the erosion of a peasant economy, the political downfall of the Basque clergy, and the implementation of military conscription all contributed to the creation of a linguistic hierarchy whereby the broader significance and status of French gradually displaced the narrowing function and value of Basque. The World War II era had nurtured a strong sense of French national identity in the Basque Country. As the instability of the Fourth French Republic gradually transitioned to the

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<sup>6</sup> The experiences of northern Basques in the French armed forces can be readily contrasted with that of southern Basques in Spain who engaged in a protracted and bloody civil war against the national state from 1936-39, thus reinforcing their regional language identity rather than stigmatizing it; helping to account for the greater preponderance of bilingualism in the Spanish Basque Country (Hoffman 1996).

relative constancy of the Fifth Republic in 1958 only a minority of the population living in the Basque territories was actively maintaining their use of the Basque language let alone working to promote its resurgence (Oyharçabal 1999). Although much had changed since the Revolution of 1789 and the introduction of public schools in the 1880's, the legacy of linguistic nationalism seemed to remain alive and well by the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## **2.2 THE CONTINUITY OF LINGUISTIC NATIONALISM IN THE AGE OF MULTICULTURALISM**

One of the most profound challenges to the enduring legacy of linguistic nationalism in the Fifth French Republic has been the process of Europeanization; i.e. the formation of a more or less unitary system of transnational governance among European states. As a founding and influential actor in the project of European integration, the French state has often found its historical approach to the issue of linguistic diversity thoroughly at odds with other steering member states, such as Germany, the Netherlands and Spain (Trenz 2007; Williams 2005). A look at the past several decades of European integration reveal that while the French national state has made some political adjustments it has largely resisted European pressures to formally implement a transnational framework designed to promote and protect historically un-recognized languages, such as Basque (Judge 2007; Wright 2000).

One of the most influential minority language policy initiatives to have emerged from the project of Europeanization has been the Council of Europe's 1992 'Charter for Regional and

Minority Language’, or ETS Proposition #148<sup>7</sup> (Trifunovska 2001). As part of a broader valorization of cultural diversity in an increasingly integrated European public sphere, the ongoing debates surrounding the Charter have essentially circulated around the question of whether or not language constitutes a fundamental dimension of universal human equality, and if so then to what extent do national governments have a moral duty to provide institutional support for speakers of minoritized regional languages. As part of the concern for bringing increased institutional support to minoritized language communities, education as surfaced as one of the most central arenas of policy-making in the Charter on Regional and Minority Languages (Trifunovska 2001). Given the historical role ascribed to public schooling in promoting literacy and processes of linguistic standardization across the European nation-state system (Wright 2000), the targeting of education by the Charter’s architects and advocates can be seen as a strategic effort to deconstruct the nationalist legacy of assimilatory language planning and policy-making.

Perhaps nowhere in Europe has the emergent transnational debate on the Charter and the minority language rights issue in general sparked more political controversy, public debate and academic analysis than in France. (Ager 1999; Cohen 2000; Fenet 2004; Judge 2007; Safran 1999; Wright 2007). In brief, the very notion of ‘linguistic rights’ as well as ‘minority rights’ more generally has been continually construed by a broad host of influential governmental authorities and public intellectuals in France as anathema to the ‘universal’ and ‘culture-blind’ traditions of republican political culture. The European push for linguistic rights was once described by former Socialist Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Chévenement, for example, as a “political Pandora’s Box” that “under the guise of a seemingly innocent cause” would ultimately

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<sup>7</sup> The Council of Europe’s website for the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages can be found at: [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/minlang/textcharter/default\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/minlang/textcharter/default_en.asp).

“bring about the balkanization and ruin of our Republic” (*Le Figaro*, 4/11/1999). Although a cadre of high profile actors have emerged in support of the European campaign to support the recognition of regional languages, such as former Prime Minister Lionel Jospin and former President François Mitterrand, these voices have been persistently drowned out by powerful critics on both the Left and Right who construe the movement for linguistic rights as a stealthy re-invention of the very forms of ‘ethnic nationalism’ that have threatened the unanimity and sovereignty of the French Republic since its revolutionary founding in 1789 (Ager 1999). Hence, despite France’s central and leading role in promoting the transnational project of European integration, the enduring legacy of linguistic jacobinism has precluded or at least paused any mainstreaming of the linguistic rights movement in French political arena.

The republican repudiation of the transnational movement for linguistic rights within French politics is nicely illustrated, for example, in a public statement made by Nicolas Sarkozy during his presidential campaign in March 2007. Addressing comments from a journalist regarding the Council of Europe’s push to have France formally ratify the ‘European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages’, Sarkozy replied:

I do not want to see that tomorrow a European judge who has an historical experience with the so-called problem of minorities that is quite different from ours can then decide that a regional language must be considered as a language of the Republic with the same status as French...I am convinced that in France, a country of liberty, no minority is oppressed and that it is thus not necessary to give European judges the right to decide on a topic that constitutes our national identity and has absolutely nothing to do with the construction of

Europe...Minorities should not harass the majority just because they are the majority.<sup>8</sup>

This brief excerpt is telling of the ideological resistance to linguistic rights within mainstream French politics in at least four ways. First, Sarkozy's statement shows a clearly problematic linkage between the issue of language rights and notions of nationhood. In particular, the sanctity and specificity of French nationhood is seen as threatened by the transnational push for linguistic rights. Second, it shows a patent denial that experiences of linguistic marginality and exclusion exist within France. Third, it shows how the issue of linguistic rights is regarded as completely immaterial to the process of governance. Finally, it shows how the claims of linguistic minority groups are perceived as an irrational and unfounded form of harassment.

When and where state-based actors such as former Ministers of Education François Bayrou and Jack Lang have come forward 'in defense of' regional languages they have done so most often by lamenting the decline of these languages rather than advocating their resurgence (Giordan 2008). The continually weak and largely rhetorical nature of political support for regional minority languages in France was clearly evidenced, for instance, in a recent parliamentary proposal to amend Article One of the Constitution of the Fifth Republic during the spring and summer of 2008. While the application of this amendment shows an accommodating shift in French language politics, the specific way in which it was applied clearly demonstrates an ongoing resistance to the linguistic rights movement.

Eventually receiving a majority vote of approval, Article 75-1 under Title XII of the French Constitution was a ground-breaking amendment that recognized the status of regional

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<sup>8</sup> Cited from [www.droitspournoslangues.org](http://www.droitspournoslangues.org) on 4/19/2007, translation mine.

minority languages for the very first time in the history of the modern French nation-state (*Le Figaro* 6/26/2008). In a patent show of rhetorical ambiguity and political flaccidity, however, the amendment reads simply: “*les langues regionales appartiennent au patrimoine de la France*/regional languages are part of the patrimony of France”.<sup>9</sup>

On the one hand, this constitutional initiative was ground-breaking in that it was a state-level recognition of the existence of autochthonous languages in France, and that their existence constitutes rather than convolutes the historical integrity of the French nation-state. In this light, the amendment was publicly applauded by advocates of the linguistic rights movement both within France and beyond its borders ( *L’Humanité* 7/27/2008). On the other hand, however, it was also quite clear to language rights activists that the nature of the amendment would not lead to any immediate concrete legal changes in France’s language policies. This is because only Article II, not Article XII or any other section of the French Constitution addresses all and any legal matters concerning language policy in France (Wright 2007).

Reinforced in 1994 through the passing of the Toubon Act, Article II Title I of the French Constitution has remained totally unchanged after the addition of Article 75-1 under Title XII in 2008. To date, the French Constitution unambiguously states that “*La langue de la Republique est le français*/ the language of the Republic is French”.<sup>10</sup> This not only means that the French state is under no obligation to provide institutional support to any language other than French, but more importantly that certain forms of institutional support for non-French languages may be considered un-constitutional or illegal. By explicitly avoiding an amendment of Article Two and

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<sup>9</sup> Quoted and translated from <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/html/constitution/constitution2.htm#vide>. Accessed on April 12, 2010.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted and translated from <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/html/constitution/constitution2.htm#vide>. Accessed on April 12, 2010.

inserting the provision on regional languages under Title XII<sup>11</sup>, governmental authorities strategically skirted the ‘problem’ of linguistic rights while still managing to look supportive of the issue by inscribing it into the constitution. Ultimately, the extraordinarily brief and ambiguous wording of Article 75-1 was little more than a passive symbolic recognition of the presence of regional minority languages on French territory and set no legal precedent for the state to actively promote minority languages in contexts such as education, commerce or the media.

Moreover, in the immediate aftermath of the amendment, the prestigious French Language Academy made a public statement condemning the initiative as “a defiance of simple logic, a denial of the Republic, and a misunderstanding of the constituting principles of the Nation and the objective of policy”, further arguing that such a proposal “has no place in the Constitution”.<sup>12</sup>

On a final note, it is crucial to mention that when Article 75-1 was debated and eventually put forth by the Parliament in 2008, France had been recently rotated into the seat of presidency for the European Union. As support of minority language rights is both normalized within and supported by E.U-level agencies<sup>13</sup> as well as by the Council of Europe, the creation of Article 75-1 under the watch of an administration (the Sarkozy presidency) that had vocalized its opposition to the doctrine of linguistic rights strongly suggests that Europeanization is perhaps forcing the French state to adopt an increasingly more accommodating stance on the

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<sup>11</sup> Title XII of the Constitution of the Fifth French Republic defines the sub-national collectivities that comprise the French Republic, i.e. municipalities, communes, departments, regions and overseas territories.

<sup>12</sup> Quoted from an article in the Associated French Press: “*L’Académie française contre l’inscription des langues regionales dans la Constitution*” 6/18/2008. Accessed via [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) on, April 12, 2009, translation mine.

<sup>13</sup> Clear evidence of EU support for minority languages can be seen in Article 22 of the 2000 ‘European Charter of Fundamental Rights’, see [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/default\\_en.htm](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/default_en.htm).

issue, as suggested by some policy scholars (Grin 2003; Safran 1999; Trenz 2007). In short, a transnational structure of political opportunity has emerged that is opening up new platforms and possibilities for grassroots language activists in France to advance their agendas. Nevertheless, the largely ineffectual and symbolic nature of the 2008 amendment clearly shows that governmental resistance to the minority language rights issue remains controversial despite France's integration into the 'new' Europe. Moreover, France remains as one of two remaining member states of the Council of Europe to have not ratified the Charter for Regional or Minority Languages<sup>14</sup>.

### **2.3 MONOLINGUAL STATE, MULTILINGUAL NATION**

Although France has long been characterized by a resolutely monolingual state, it has never been a monolingual nation. The multilingual status of French civil society is attested to by two factors: the persistent use of minority languages by members of the public and the contemporary effervescence of minority language activism.

In spite of the French state's legacy of linguistic assimilationism regional minority languages such as Basque and Occitan in southwestern France have continued to be passed down through the generations, albeit in a severely diminished capacity that makes their long term sociolinguistic future somewhat precarious (Coyos 2005). The persistent use of regional languages in France was politically acknowledged in 1999 when linguist Bernard Cerquiglini released his final report to the Chirac administration on the status of minority languages in

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<sup>14</sup> The only other state to have refused the ECRML at the time of this writing was Turkey.

France. After several years of investigation, Cerquiglini and his team of researchers estimated that there were at least 2.5 million persons within metropolitan France who possessed oral proficiency in one of seven regional languages still being spoken on French territory: Alsatian (~150,000), Basque (~60,000), Breton (~500,000), Catalan (~150,000), Corsican (~240,000), Flemish (~100,000), and the Occitan languages (~950,000)<sup>15</sup>. Moreover, a state-sponsored survey of the French public in 2008 showed that nearly 70% of citizens polled felt that the state should do more to support regional languages (Sud Ouest, 6/23/2008). Hence, the multilingual reality of French society is evidenced not only by the existence of millions of minority language speakers but also by a public endorsement of governmental action on their behalf.

In addition, despite the French state's *de jure* opposition to promoting linguistic pluralism, the notion that France is a *de facto* multilingual nation is further evidenced by decades of grassroots activism geared toward the cultural revitalization and political recognition of regional minority languages in France (Jaffe 1999; Judge 2007; McDonald 1989). From Brittany to Corsica and from Alsace to the Basque Country, an array of social movement actors across France has been mobilizing for decades against the grain of republican political culture in order to bolster the status and vitality of historically marginalized and declining languages. In short, these actors have mounted a challenge to the monolingual logic of French governance and struggled to build a multilingual nation-state. While such ethnolinguistic mobilization has typically been associated in the French political imagination with the secessionist aspirations of 'radical' nationalist political parties, such as *Enbata*, *Iparretarrak* and *Herri Batasuna* in the Basque Country or the *Frente di Liberazione Nazionale Corsu* in Corsica, it is crucial to point

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<sup>15</sup> The official text of the 1999 *Rapport Cerquiglini* can be found on-line at: [http://www.dglf.culture.gouv.fr/lang-reg/rapport\\_cerquiglini/langues-france.html](http://www.dglf.culture.gouv.fr/lang-reg/rapport_cerquiglini/langues-france.html). It should be cautioned, however, that figures on minority language use in France are estimates based on self-reported survey data. Such data are problematic because the actual or 'true' level of fluency for speakers who claim proficiency is not readily clear.

out that minority language rights advocacy in France as elsewhere in Europe has never been the sole property or product of regionalist movements for political autonomy (Nic Craith 2006).

Since the 1960's one of the most prolific and instrumental sites of ethnolinguistic activism in French society has come not from the formal lobbying of nationalist political parties but from within the field of 'associative' or 'community-based' schooling (Judge 2007; Trezn 2007).<sup>16</sup> Some of the most influential minority language schooling associations to have emerged in France over the past several decades include: *Seaska* [Basque language, est. 1969], *Diwan* [Breton language, est.1975 ], *Bressola* [Catalan language est. 1977], *Calandreta* [Occitan languages, est.1979] and *ABCM-Zweisprachigkeit* [Alsatian languages, est.1992]. These five grassroots schooling associations are all defined by their use of an immersion model of bilingual education whereby French is present but the minority language is emphasized as the primary medium of instruction and learning. While some of the participants in these schooling associations have and continue to enthusiastically embrace nationalist ideologies linked to political secession and autonomy, such agendas have remained peripheral and largely removed from the objectives of linguistic revitalization and education reform upon which these schooling initiatives are overtly founded. In fact, the five minority language schooling associations mentioned above have all been rather unambiguous in their mission to develop a stronger collaborative relationship with the French Ministry of National Education; an agenda clearly not compatible with secessionism.

Pointing out the existence of school-based language activism in French civil society is a crucial because scholarly treatment of the minority language issue in France has overwhelmingly focused upon the realm of state-level policy-making (Ager 1999; Cohen 2000; Judge 2007;

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<sup>16</sup> Associative schooling is a semi-public niche for education in France that is similar to that of the charter school system within the United States; i.e. private schools eligible for governmental funding (Auduc 2002).

Safran 1999; Wright 2007). As a consequence very little scholarship has addressed the mobilization struggles, strategies and successes of social movement actors who have been laboring to generate increased rights, resources and respect for linguistic minority groups within France (cf. Jaffe 1999; McDonald 1989). By looking more closely and more seriously at the strategic claims and practices of social movement actors, important insight can be gained on how grassroots language activists are challenging the enduring logic of linguistic jacobinism from within the civic realm and contributing to the formation of a broader transnational movement for linguistic rights in Europe.

## 2.4 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this chapter has discussed how historical processes of nation-building and state sponsored linguistic nationalism in France have contributed to the marginalization and decline of Basque since the latter part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. I have shown how the process of linguistic degeneration in the Basque Country was a gradual process whereby many Basque speakers internalized an ideology of contempt for their ancestral language. Bolstered by processes of public schooling at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this ideology of contempt was rooted in a broader state-based project of linguistic assimilationism. The decline of Basque was fueled by a lack of ethnolinguistic mobilization over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This was in great part due to a lack of political opportunity for activists and the rise of a strong French national identity within the Basque Country. From this context, the ikastola movement can be seen as emerged in the 1960's as a renewed and concerted attempt among Basques to transcend a

political legacy of linguistic subordination by re-shaping the boundaries of education and re-defining the linguistic logic of governance from below.

### 3.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

From a sociological perspective, the practices of social actors always take shape under certain conditions and within certain parameters. Understanding the dynamics of these influential forces is thus a key to understanding the logics, limits and potentials of human agency (Bourdieu 1990). In this light, an enduring challenge of sociological analysis is to neither overstate nor neglect the constraining influences of the larger social environment while also neither over-exaggerating nor refuting the autonomy and voluntarism of social actors. Thus, while the growth of the ikastola schooling movement and Seaska's pursuit of state-level recognition between 1969 and 1994 can be seen as having been intrinsically shaped by the agency of grassroots actors (i.e. their identities and interests), it is important to recall that the practices of ikastola proponents were inevitably shaped by broader-level relations of power (i.e. opportunities and constraints).

In this chapter I outline the theoretical framework that underlies my investigation of Seaska's mobilization struggles, strategies and successes. In particular, I focus my attention on two inter-linked theories within the field of social movement studies that best address the dialectic between structure and agency: resource mobilization theory (McCarthy and Zald 1977; Edwards and McCarthy 2004) and political process theory (Kriesi 2004; McAdam 1982). While the former places analytical attention on the mobilization practices of social movement actors, the latter sheds light on the broader context within which mobilization practices take shape. After discussing the analytical origins, premises, promises and pitfalls associated with resource

mobilization and political process theories, I argue that taken together these two perspectives offer enormous potential for theorizing the practices that propelled the ikastola movement forward as well as the forces that held it back.

### **3.1 RESOURCE MOBILIZATION THEORY**

Resource mobilization theory arose as a particularly dominant approach in the study of social movements during the 1970-80's (Crossley 2002; Nash 2010). Its emergence was largely an attempt to understand the cycle of contentious mobilization associated with civil rights activism, anti-war protests, feminism, environmentalism and ethnic identity politics. The rationalist underpinnings of the theory arose in great part as a critical response to previous approaches that had theorized social movements from a socio-psychological angle (Turner and Killian 1987). Much of the work in the earlier phases of social movement scholarship had often focused on the rise of Fascism and National Socialism in Europe during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and come to the conclusion that social movements were irrational and often dangerous forms of collective behavior spawned by the conformist mentalities of disaffected actors living in situations of material deprivation. From such a perspective, social movements were often either implicitly or explicitly theorized in Durkheimian terms as arising from situations of collective anomie brought about by 'dysfunctional' aspects of modernity (Opp 2009: Ch.5). Taking serious issue with the conclusions of such scholarship, researchers pioneering the field of resource mobilization theory during the 1970's such as Anthony Oberschall (1973) and John McCarthy and Mayer Zald (1977) essentially made their mark by making two central arguments.

The first argument put forth by resource mobilization scholars that distinguished their work from the behaviorist perspective of previous researchers was that social movements are calculated and instrumental attempts among marginalized peoples to achieve political empowerment (Buechler 1993; Crossley 2002; Opp 2009). Eventually becoming the basis for how scholars would define social movements, this assertion not only presented social movement actors as thoroughly rational agents engaged in highly strategic forms of collective action but also portrayed the protests and disruptions often generated by social movements as having a potentially democratizing rather than dangerous effect on the political system. In my analysis of Seaska's mobilization efforts between 1969 and 1994 I adopt this premise to argue that the ikastola movement is a strategic and concerted attempt among the bascoophone minority in France to democratize the public education system, rather than an illiberal manifestation of radical ethnic nationalism or apolitical expression of ethnic nostalgia.

A second foundational argument laid out by early resource mobilization theorists blazed a new path in social movement studies by arguing that the existence of grievances and deprivation among a particular population were a necessary but not sufficient cause for the emergence of social movements (McAdam et al 1996; Opp 2009). While the existence of inequities and inequalities is a nearly ubiquitous feature of human history, they argued, the emergence of enduring social movements is a much more limited and exceptional phenomenon. This premise set the stage for a host of future research aimed at identifying the variety of factors that explain the emergence of social movements and the reasons people have for joining them (Crossley 2002). In my exploration of the ikastola movement I back this premise by pointing out that while most Basques in France may support the campaign to revitalize their ancestral language, only a relatively small proportion of these persons engage in the committed practice of language

activism. As such it is not merely a generalized concern about language loss that explains the rise of the ikastola movement, but rather the capacity of a specific group of actors to take decisive political action in order to ‘save’ their language.

Working from the view that social movements are strategic forms of collection action, the basic guiding premise of resource mobilization theory is that the viability and efficacy of any social movement initiative is highly contingent upon the ability of participating actors to generate empowering forms of symbolic and material capital; i.e. ‘resources’ (Edwards and McCarthy 2004). While symbolic resources may include a wide array of assets that are rather difficult to quantify such as ideological legitimacy, identitarian solidarity, and tactical expertise, material resources tend to include a narrower host of fairly tangible assets such as the inflow of finances, the number of committed participants and the intensity of their participation. In my exploration of the ikastola movement I draw on this premise of ‘resource-dependency’ to focus my discussion on why and how Seaska’s members labored with strategic determination to garner one particularly empowering and dynamic type of resource: state-level or political recognition<sup>17</sup>.

In my analysis of the ikastola movement, I construe the resource of ‘state-level recognition’ in fairly broad and dynamic terms as the empowering forms of symbolic and material support acquired by Seaska from any particular governmental agent or agency that contributed to the development of the ikastola schooling movement. While symbolic recognition basically entails Seaska’s attainment of rhetorical or discursive backing from state-level sources, material support entails Seaska’s acquisition of state-based financial or technical assistance. However, it is important to note that while Seaska’s acquisition of political recognition in its material form was always preceded by the accrual of symbolic recognition, the presence of

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<sup>17</sup> Throughout my discussion I use the terms ‘state-level recognition’ and ‘political recognition’ interchangeably.

symbolic recognition did not always or even frequently lead to Seaska's accrual of material recognition. In other words, while there was no occurrence of state-level authorities providing funding to the ikastola without previously having voiced some sort of rhetorical endorsement, it was par for the course that most of Seaska's rhetorical endorsements from political power-brokers did not lead to the dispersal of economic backing. Indeed, although the crux of Seaska's struggle early on was to generate symbolic recognition from the state, I will show that as the years wore on and Seaska gained increasing rhetorical support from a variety of political authorities ikastola proponents labored vociferously to convert their stock of symbolic recognition into tangible forms of material support.

Additionally, I construe political recognition as a nebulous and fungible resource characterized by its degrees of intensity rather than by its mere absence or possession. In other words, state-level recognition has many forms. On the one hand, political recognition in the form of symbolic or material recognition can be minute and fleeting. For example, during the early part of the 1980's a growing host of municipal and departmental politicians in the Basque region had publicly stated their support for the ikastola movement in the regional press. However, as Seaska's members began shifting their mobilization objective toward an integration of the ikastolas into the public education system, a slew of authorities withdrew their support arguing that the ikastolas should remain private schools. On the other hand, however, the attainment of political recognition in its material or symbolic form can be grandiose and enduring. This is best illustrated when the French Ministry of National Education entered into a long-term contract with Seaska in 1994 that would cover nearly half the costs of running the ikastola system.

In addition to political recognition being an instrumental asset that is accumulated by social movement actors in incremental terms, I argue that once accrued it is a resource that can

be periodically drawn upon by grassroots actors in creative and empowering ways. This entails a process whereby actors are able to build on their ideological legitimacy so as to negotiate with authorities in the hopes of gaining an institutional footing within the political arena. For example, during the late 1970's and early 1980's a growing host of municipal authorities in the Basque Country increasingly expressed their support for Seaska's mobilization agenda in public forums and found ways to help the ikastola movement by providing both small-scale funds and housing for schools. Seaska's accrual of political recognition locally became a strategic asset for garnering symbolic and material forms of state-based support from higher levels of authority, such as at the departmental and regional levels of French government.

With a fairly broad conceptualization of resources at the center of analysis, resource mobilization theorists have asked three orienting sets of general questions: What kind of resources do social movement actors pursue and accrue? How do social movement actors amass and deploy certain kinds of resources? How do social movement actors transform resources into outcomes? Focusing on Seaska's pursuit of political recognition I speak to these questions in my analysis of the ikastola movement by looking at the reasons and methods that fueled Seaska's quest for state-level recognition as well as the empowering outcomes linked to Seaska' accrual of state-level recognition.

One approach to the question of how actors mobilize resources in the pursuit of a common agenda has come from the so-called 'mobilizing structures' concept (McAdam et al 1996: Ch.1). This concept basically focuses on how processes of resource mobilization are shaped by the meso-level forms of organization adopted by social movement actors; i.e. organizational structure influences how resources are mobilized. This is why so much research has come to focus on the central place of social movement organizations (SMOs) within broader

social movement fields or industries, such as environmentalism or minority rights (Lofland 1996). Scholars working from the so-called ‘mobilizing structures’ perspective have often argued both explicitly and implicitly that grassroots actors develop a certain ‘path-dependency’ based upon the organizational forms they adopt (McCarthy and Zald 2002). In this light, the more or less formalized modes of organization adopted by social movement actors are regarded as having direct bearing upon what types of resources are accrued, how these resources are garnered, and how resources are put to strategic use. For my purposes I will seek to explain how Seaska’s organizational structure as a community-based schooling association had strategic bearing on how activists worked to gain political recognition.

One of the primary analytical tasks taken on by researchers working in the resource mobilization tradition has been to explain the source or origins of resources (Edwards and McCarthy 2004). In this context, scholars have traditionally homed in on two contexts. On the one hand, scholars have considered how movement actors work to garner ‘external’ resources from the sectors of the broader society within which they are embedded, such as by attaining the patronage of political elites or empathy of the general public (McAdam 1982). On the other hand, scholars have looked into how social movement actors generate ‘internal’ resources in an endogenous manner such as by creating schemas for effectual leadership, founding an association or articulating an empowering narrative (Morris 1984). However, it is important to point out that the analytical distinction between ‘internal’ and ‘external’ resources is highly problematic given the fungibility or convertibility of many resources (Edwards and MacCarthy 2004). In other words, the accrual of certain external forms of capital such as political patronage can often beget the production of other internal forms of capital such as member loyalty and vice versa. The convertibility and exchange of some forms of capital into other new forms thus

produces a chicken-and-egg dilemma for scholars whereby it is difficult to identify the ‘true’ or ‘original’ source of many resources. The point is that research on resources must take into account the processes through which certain kinds of resources are converted into other kinds of resources as such processes of ‘conversion’ are precisely what give resources their strategic value. A salient goal of social movement analysis in more recent years has been to understand the micro-level practices and organizational mechanisms involved in this process of conversion (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001). For example, it has been argued that an increase in the amount of passive public support for a social movement organization does not automatically empower mobilization efforts unless and until such inert support is converted into a modicum of active participation and commitment (Beckert 1999). Focusing on this issue of fungibility, I concentrate part of my analysis on how Seaska’s strategic pursuit and deployment of political recognition was intimately linked to the accrual and exploitation of other resources, such as the inter-subjective solidarity of activists and the discursive resonance of their claims.

Irrespective of where resources ‘truly’ originate, however, scholars have tended to agree that the wider the variety of resources a social movement is able to accrue, the more likely the movement is to realize both short and longer-term aims (Edwards and McCarthy 2004). In other words, it helps to have a diverse pool of resources that activists can draw from (Ganz 2000). Conversely, it follows that movements unable to muster a minimal assortment of resources will often find it difficult to expand let alone maintain their mobilization efforts because they rely on a narrow range of resources. Unfortunately, because the literature is short on studies of initiatives that have failed to mobilize a modicum of resources, little is known about the minimal threshold needed to keep SMOs going and growing. Nevertheless, by engaging in qualitative work scholars can probe social movement leaders and participants to inquire into the strains and

stresses involved with mobilizing resources. Such an approach can shed important light on how resource thresholds are perceived by grassroots actors. In my discussion of the ikastola movement, for instance, I will show how financial issues were a constant source of consternation for Seaska during the 1980's given that the expansion of the schools had outpaced the influx of funding needed to sustain their growth, thus making the acquisition of state-level recognition even more strategic for the ikastola movement.

Two additional issues of concern for resource mobilization theorists have been the issues of leadership and organizational complexity. The latter of these issues often deals with quandaries associated with degrees of bureaucratization evidenced by SMOs and the so-called 'Iron Cage of Bureaucracy' (Clemens and Minkoff 2004). In this context, scholars have long debated whether high levels of bureaucratic formality, such as a centralized and hierarchical system of decision-making, have a positive or negative impact on the ability of SMOs to realize their social change agendas. While some have argued that increased formalism and professionalism decreases the overall effectiveness of a mobilization initiative (Piven and Cloward 1977), others have argued that in some cases it increases the capacity of SMOs to gain political influence (Gamson 1990). A broader look at the literature, however, has shown that the impact of organizational complexity on SMO effectiveness varies and is dependent upon the particular agendas being pursued by actors and the fields within which these actors are located (Clemens and Minkoff 2004). In the context of the ikastola movement, for instance, I will show how increasing bureaucratic complexity and formalism became an empowering resource rather than a constraining liability in Seaska's quest for state-level recognition. I will argue that the value of organizational formalism had everything to do with Seaska's position in the educational

sector, a form of mobilization vastly under-theorized by social movement scholars (cf. Binder 2002).

Another branch of research on the organizational dynamics of social movements has been concerned with issues of leadership (Morris and Staggenborg 2004). While part of this work has addressed the strategic role often played by charismatic individuals such as César Chavez and Martin Luther King, a productive direction in contemporary scholarship has addressed the issue of how effective leadership resides in the use of leadership teams or groups (Ganz 2000). In this context, scholars have been working to understand how SMO members develop schemas for engaging in processes of collective deliberation and decision-making and why certain schemas become more valuable than others in the pursuit of movement-based objectives. My research on the ikastola movement contributes to this latter aspect of the literature on leadership in that it shows how Seaska was founded upon an inclusive, democratic and group-based system of decision-making comprised of issue-based committees and agenda-setting councils.

Much of the research in the tradition of resource mobilization theory has tended to focus on the study of organizational dynamics and the role of material resources, particularly in the form of economic and human capital (Opp 2009). As such, a great deal of the ‘classic’ literature linked to resource mobilization theory has been rightly criticized as presenting an overly materialistic account of social movements that neglects the study of cultural processes (Buchler 1993). Nevertheless, such criticisms have become rather antiquated as the spread of the so-called ‘cultural turn’ in sociology during the 1990’s ushered in a productive wave of theorizing on the mobilization of symbolic and discursive resources (Nash 2010). Central to this area of research has been research on rhetorical production of ‘collective action frames’ (Johnston and Noakes

2005; Snow 2004) and the social construction of collective identities (Melucci 1996; Hunt and Benford 2004).<sup>18</sup>

On the one hand, research on ‘frames’ and the process of ‘framing’ has been generally concerned with understanding how social movement campaigns rely heavily upon the production of narratives and rhetoric which work to legitimate and motivate forms of collective action (Snow 2004). Research on framing processes has shown how social movement actors dispense enormous amounts of time and energy to the task of building ideological consensus and commitment. Such processes take shape in an infra-movement manner amongst social movement actors as well as in an extra-movement fashion geared toward a broader audience of supporters, skeptics and challengers (Johnston and Noakes 2005). In this context, framing is about the forging of a collective vision for movement participants and winning over the hearts and minds of people in the broader society. Building on these insights, I will show in my discussion of the ikastola movement that a vast majority of the labor invested by Seaska’s members was directed toward the production of discursive resources or ‘frames’. In addition, however, I will also argue that the practice of framing is both parcel and product of other forms of discursive labor, such as focused deliberation, informal debate, critical reflection, and strategic negotiation. As such the concepts of ‘framing’ and ‘frames’, I contend, should not be used as a ubiquitous blanket term that refers to all and any type of discursive resource deployed by social movement actors.

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<sup>18</sup> While scholars concerned with symbolic processes of framing and identity have not always explicitly or even emphatically claimed to be a part of the resource mobilization tradition (Nash 2010), research on framing and collective identity has clearly demonstrated how social movement initiatives depend heavily upon the successful accrual of symbolic resources such as consensus, legitimacy and solidarity. Indeed, in some instances it has been argued that the organizational form adopted by actors and their accrual of material resources must be theorized as the outcome of ideational processes of interpretation, learning, knowledge production and meaning-making (Conway 2006; Gillan 2007). As such, I consider the concepts of framing and collective identity as building blocks of resource mobilization theory along with organizational structure and material capital.

On the other hand, scholarship on collective identity has shown how the (re)production of inter-subjective notions of solidarity, loyalty and belonging are central to the emergence, expansion and trajectory of all social movements (Hunt and Benford 2004). In this light, identity is perhaps a resource *par excellence*, for without it social movements lack a crucial component of the unitary basis that is needed for sustained collective action (Melucci 1996). The goal here, of course, is to understand what brings a group of actors together to form identitarian bonds and how such notions of collective identity are systematically reproduced and reinforced through time. Building on this line of inquiry in my study of Seaska and the ikastolas, I will show how powerful forward-looking notions of ethnolinguistic destiny as well as notions of a shared past helped to bring astounding levels of commitment, dedication and engagement to the ikastola movement for decades.

The notion that the accrual of symbolic as well as material resources is imperative to achieving relatively effectual and enduring processes of mobilization begs the question of how resources are accrued and put to use. If and when a pool of resources has been accumulated by a group of actors then how and why does the possession of these resources allow actors to realize certain goals? This line of inquiry switches the focus from identifying the different types of resources and their origins to understanding the forms of labor through which resources are mobilized toward a particular end. In other words, it is instructive to move from the study of ‘resources’ to the analysis of ‘resourcefulness’ (Ganz 2000). In my analysis of the ikastola movement I echo this insight by focusing my discussion explicitly on the resourcefulness of Seaska’s members in generating political recognition and putting it to use; i.e. the ‘everyday’ labor of activists.

While understanding the process of resource mobilization sheds important light on the agency behind Seaska's quest for state-level recognition, it is important to remember that the agency of social movement actors is never a wholly un-fettered expression of free will. Rather, the capacity of actors to influence the world around them is always shaped to some degree by the broader landscape of power relations within which their actions is embedded (Bourdieu 1990). This brings me to discuss the place of political process theory in my investigation of the ikastola schooling movement.

### **3.2 POLITICAL PROCESS THEORY**

Political process theory emerged as an extension of resource mobilization theory during the 1980's and has since become one of the most dominant strains of social movement theorizing to date (Jasper and Goodwin 1999; Koopmans 1999; Kriesi 2004; McAdam 1996; Meyer 2004). Since its appearance, political process theory has basically been oriented around the macro-level project of theorizing the context or environment within which social movements are embedded and how aspects of the political environment have important bearing on the capacity of actors to mobilize resources. Thus, political process theory is not a rejection of resource mobilization theory, but rather a constructive critique of what some scholars saw as a glaring gap in the theory; i.e. a failure to account for how social movements are influenced by external configurations of power, especially the state (Jenkins 1985; McAdam 1982; Tilly 1978)<sup>19</sup>. Given that my exploration of the ikastola movement in France is explicitly concerned with the question

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<sup>19</sup> This is why some scholars refer to political process theory as 'resource mobilization theory, part two' (Zald and McCarthy 2002). For my purposes, however, I construe the two theories as highly complementary but utterly distinct due to their relatively disparate analytical foci on agency and structure.

of how Seaska worked to gain state-level recognition, the realm of political process theory offers a highly useful analytical lens that harmonizes rather than clashes with my use of resource mobilization theory. In short, it is not possible to understand how and why Seaska's members worked to gain state-level recognition without understanding how their efforts were both inspired and influenced by structures of state-level power.

Rather than take a bottom-up and actor-centered approach to explain how social movements are generated and sustained through time, political process theory favors a top-down and state-centric approach to explain the (re)production of social movement tactics and trajectories (Hooghe 2008). From this vantage point, the guiding premise of political process theory is that when social movement actors strive to achieve political empowerment their mobilization practices are inevitably shaped by the ideological and institutional relations of power that dominate the political system within which the movement is embedded (Birnbaum 1988; Koopmans 1999; Kriesi 2004; Tarrow 1998). In my analysis of the ikastola movement in the French Basque Country from 1969 to 1994 I adopt this perspective so as to consider how the mobilization strategies of Seaska's members were indelibly shaped by their experiences of and engagements with the broader political landscape around them, particularly state-level policies on schooling and language.

The potential influence that the political system has on the trajectory of a given social movement campaign is theorized in the political process perspective as holding both positive and negative qualities (Koopmans 1999; Opp 2009; Ch.6). On the one hand, the political system presents social movement actors with various kinds of obstacles and opponents which impose constraints on local-level processes of resource mobilization. On the other hand, however, the broader political environment can also offer social movement actors a variety of tactical

openings, influential allies and new resources that empower the mobilization process. The crux of political process theory is thus to explain how exactly the political system variously facilitates and/or constraints a particular social movement agenda (Meyer 2004).

In my analysis of the ikastola movement, I draw on the premise regarding the negative and positive influences of state power to consider how Seaska's pursuit of political recognition was continuously thwarted by various forms of state-level opposition as well as sporadically empowered by several windows of political opportunity. In this context, for instance, one of the primary findings in my research is that the negative dimensions of state power had positive consequences and vice versa. On the one hand, state-level opposition to the ikastola movement had the effect of bolstering the solidarity and resolve of most activists rather than frustrating them to the point of quitting. On the other hand, as activists began collaborating with governmental officials during the latter part of the 1980's, they found themselves dealing with dilemmas of political co-optation and loss of organizational autonomy.

One of the main factors often taken under consideration in much of the political process scholarship is the so-called 'opportunity structure' or 'structure of political opportunity' (Kriesi 2004; McAdam et al 1996). This concept can basically be defined as the relative permeability or conduciveness of a political system to the claims of a particular social movement (Koopmans 1999). The argument that emerges from this foundational concept is that the existence of opportunity structures within a political system has a decisively positive effect on the viability of social movement campaigns. Some of the factors influencing the presence or emergence of opportunity structures have been shown to include: the historic responsiveness of governmental authorities to civil society actors, the overall stability of governmental institutions, the intensity of governmental centralization; the prevalence of ideological rifts between political elites, the

propensity of a government for repression against challenges to its authority; and the extent to which a national state is integrated into a transnational system of governance (Tarrow 1998, 2005). In my investigation of the ikastola movement, for instance, I will draw on the concept of political opportunity structure to explore several factors that enabled Seaska's struggle for state-level recognition, such as the implementation of de-centralization policies in France by the Mitterrand administration after 1981 and the rise of a semi-autonomous Basque government in Spain after 1979.

In addition to identifying the various sources of political opportunity, scholars have also identified two basic forms of opportunity structures: static and dynamic (Smith and Fetner 2009). On the one hand, static opportunities are relatively stable and enduring aspects of the political system that can help to propel social movement agendas forward, such as the regular timing of election cycles or the broad distribution of political authority. In my discussion, for example, I will show how the historical niche of associative schooling in the French education system provided Basque language activists with the crucial opportunity to launch the ikastola movement in the private sector in 1969. On the other hand, dynamic opportunities are characterized by relatively sporadic or unique moments that arise within a political system and which can facilitate social movement actors, such as the outbreak of a political scandal or the introduction of a new policy reform. In my analysis of the ikastola movement, for instance, I will show how the historical transition from dictatorship to democracy in Spain in the late 1970's provided ikastola proponents with a unique opportunity to begin forging a strategic and empowering cross-border relationship with actors in the Spanish Basque Country.

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While much attention has been afforded to the concept of 'opportunity' in the political process literature, far less consideration has been devoted to the notion of political 'threat' or 'opposition' (della Porta 1996). As such, the literature has tended to focus largely on the question of how systems of state-based governance can have a positive or enabling effect on social movements rather than on the issue of how state power thwarts or stalls grassroots mobilization efforts. One consequence of this neglect is that there is little understanding for the political factors that variously compel social movements into generalized processes of decline or, more importantly, for the types of political factors which can force grassroots actors to alter their mobilization aims and tactics. In my exploration of the ikastola schooling movement, I speak to this gap in the literature by homing in on the concept of political opposition so as to illustrate how Seaska's mobilization efforts were constantly forged as strategic responses to a continuous

tide of political antagonism and obstructionism exerted by state-level actors and agencies that were hostile to Seaska's 'basco-centric' educational agenda.

In recent years political process theory has come under increasing criticism for its excessive structural bias, narrow focus on the state as a primary center of power, and nebulous definition of the term 'opportunity' (Armstrong and Bernstein 2008; Jasper 2004; Jasper and Goodwin 1999; Opp 2009). Moreover, these critics have argued time and again that scholarship in the political process tradition has too readily neglected the agency of social movement actors as well as the symbolico-cultural practices that underlie the process of mobilization, such as framing and collective identity. Political process theorists have responded to these criticisms by emphasizing that structures of opportunity and threat are not wholly objective features of the political system, but also constituted by the inter-subjective perceptions of social movement actors on the ground (McAdam 1996; Meyer 2004; Opp 2009; Tarrow 1996). Despite this somewhat delayed acknowledgment of the basic principle of social constructionism (Harris 2007), however, some critics have maintained that the structural approaches inherent to political process theories have "reached the limits of their utility" (Jasper 2004:1).

Considering that most political process theorists have devoted so much of their time to analyzing macro-institutional contexts so as to explain how the machinations of political power impact the timing, trajectory and overall viability of social movement campaigns, the accusation of structural determinism is not only well-founded but un-surprising (Kurtzman 2004). In other words, we should not be terribly stunned to find that scholars focused on issues of structure have ended up doing exactly that. Moreover, it is crucial to remember that the structural angle inherent to political process theory originally emerged as a 'corrective' to the perceived under-emphasis of external political conditions in the resource mobilization perspective and its implicit

over-reliance on the voluntarist tenets of methodological individualism (McAdam 1996:24). In short, political process theory was a sort of Marxian reminder that while social movements may be the product of individuals making rational decisions and following strategic courses of action, the choices faced and paths blazed are not spontaneously forged within a vacuum (Meyer 2004). Social movement goals, tactics and even outcome, argue political process theorists, have a certain path-dependency that can only be understood by analyzing the ideological and institutional contours of power within the broader environment; i.e. ‘structural; constraints’. In this light, social movement actors are regarded as strategic actors navigating a broader landscape of opportunities and opposition. The mobilization of resources is thus a key part of this process of strategic navigation and must be theorized accordingly as a reactive response to broader-level conditions as well as the product of inter-subjective skill, ingenuity and creativity (Schneiberg and Lounsbury 2008).

### **3.3 CONCLUSION**

In this dissertation I draw on resource mobilization theory (Edwards and McCarthy 2004) to show how Basque language activists affiliated with Seaska worked to accrue increasing amounts of political recognition; i.e. symbolic and material forms of patronage from the French state. In particular, I argue that the organizational, discursive and identitarian resources crafted endogenously by Seaska’s members provided them with the strategic capacity needed to acquire the external support of governmental authorities. In this context, my work sheds important light on the strategic linkages that exist between different kinds of resources as well as how the fungibility of resources is a source of empowerment for social movement actors. In addition, I

continue the legacy of conceptual bridge-building in the social movement literature (Meyer 2004) by bringing research on resource mobilization into dialogue with political process theory so as to consider how Seaska's resourcefulness was both positively and negatively shaped by broader-level political contexts and events linked to state-based power. In this context, I argue that political opposition to the ikastola movement took on two forms: ideological gate-keeping and institutional obstructionism. Additionally, I argue that the emergence of two nearly simultaneous political opportunities empowered Seaska's ability to gain state-level recognition: the implementation of decentralization policies in France by the Mitterrand administration after 1981, and the emergence of a semi-autonomous Basque government in Spain after 1979. Throughout my discussion of how the ikastola movement was shaped by political opposition and opportunity, however, I focus my attention on the inter-subjective practices of activists rather than on objective qualities of the political landscape per se. In this way my work sheds important light on the agency of social movement actors and the socio-cultural processes through which actors experience and engage with the 'physics' of political power.

It is my contention that by bringing political process theory into a closer and more explicit dialogue with resource mobilization theory, contemporary criticisms about the structural bias of the political process perspective can be dealt with while still retaining its key insights about the centrality of power. Stated differently, placing the focus on how actors work to mobilize particular resources in particular ways also allows us to see how these practices of resource mobilization are both positively and negatively shaped by structural factors. Hence, in my analysis of the ikastola movement I strive not only to transcend the problem of structural determinism in political process theory and the dilemma of methodological individualism but to overcome the sociological penchant for dichotomizing the relationship between structure and

agency (Bourdieu 1990). I do so by focusing on the variety of objectives, obstacles, opportunities and outcomes that characterized Seaska's quest for state-level recognition from 1969 to 1994. In this context, I pay particular attention to the sets of practices deployed by ikastola proponents as they worked to navigate political opposition and seize upon political opportunities as well as how they worked to convert various forms of political recognition into empowering and enduring outcomes.

## **4.0 METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1 RESEARCH DESIGN**

To understand the mobilization struggles and strategies behind Seaska's enduring pursuit of state-level support between the years of 1969 and 1994, I adopted the logic of 'case study research design' (Snow and Trom 2002; Yin 2003). Case study research has been defined in general terms as in-depth empirical analysis focusing on single cases or variants of a relatively bounded social phenomenon with the intent of generating a richly detailed and perhaps explanatory account of this phenomenon through the utilization of multiple methodologies (Snow and Trom 2002:147). The general type of phenomenon under investigation in this qualitative case study is a social movement; i.e. an organized and enduring form of collective action geared toward realizing and/or resisting forms of social change on behalf of a given population (Crossley 2002; della Porta and Diani 2005). The form of social movement under investigation in this case study is the under-explored domain of minority language movements: i.e. forms of collective action geared toward empowering the social, cultural and political status of a marginalized and putatively 'endangered' linguistic community.

In order to bring a detailed discussion to a particular phenomenon, case studies necessitate parameters (Snow and Tram 2002; Yin 2003). The primary parameters for this case study are defined in two ways: population and time period. For the purposes of this study, I limit

my discussion to a population of activists affiliated with the one and only minority language schooling association in the French Basque Country, '*Seaska*'. All data collected in this study were garnered so as to gain insight on the experiences and practices of Seaska's members.

In addition, I limit my analysis of Seaska and the ikastola movement to a specific time frame: 1969 to 1994. My decision to work within the parameters of this specified timeframe was based on Seaska's official founding as an educational association in the spring of 1969 on the one hand, and Seaska's entry into a formal convention with the French Ministry of National Education in the summer of 1994. In short, by choosing this specific 25 year time span of mobilization my intent was to establish analytic parameters with clear starting and stopping points. Although Seaska's quest to achieve increased state-level support did certainly not end after 1994, at the time of this writing the 'official' political status of the ikastola system in France has remained within the terms and conditions stipulated in the historic convention. Thus, for the purposes of this study I have construed the 1994 convention as a point of maximal political recognition for Seaska and as an outcome of mobilization in need of explanation.

#### **4.1.1 Fieldwork**

In pursuing my analysis of Seaska's campaign for state-level support in France, I engaged in eight months of fieldwork in the French Basque Country from October 2007 to July 2008. Building on preliminary research conducted in 2000, 2002 and 2004, I relied on pre-existing contacts to gain rapport with persons who had been or still were actively involved with Seaska and the ikastola movement. I secured housing and based my research activities in the city of Bayonne; the largest urban center in the French Basque County and the site of Seaska's

headquarters. Moreover, Bayonne's proximity by rail to the larger city of Bordeaux allowed me quick and periodic access to the electronic media archives at the *Université de Bordeaux-III*, where I had been awarded entrée by the *Laboratoire d'Analyses des Problèmes Sociales et Actions Collectifs* within the Department of Sociology. Upon my immediate arrival to the field site, I quickly re-established working relations with Seaska's members namely a handful of teachers, administrators and parents. By snowballing, these informants then led me to other persons who then variously led me to more persons and so on and so forth. In addition, to being informants these actors also helped me to gain access to Seaska's archives; a crucial source of data in this study. While I formally incorporated 28 persons into my case study, it is important to note that my informal interactions with dozens of other persons in the French Basque Country helped to inform my analysis.

During fieldwork I employed a range of qualitative methods which were geared toward the collection of data, and the subsequent analysis of this data. A primary reason for using qualitative methods was to understand the inter-subjective expectations and experiences that drove Seaska's members to deploy a strategic stance toward the French state between 1969 and 1994. In short, I sought to understand how Seaska worked to gain political recognition as well as why they were engaged in this concerted and enduring struggle in the first place. Moreover through the use of multiple qualitative methods or "triangulation," I sought to increase both the cogency and validity of my findings (Blee and Taylor 2002:111). These methods included: semi-structured and informal interviews with activists (n=41), discursive analysis of texts published by Seaska such as newsletters and brochures (n=253), discursive analysis of newspaper articles concerning the ikastola movement (n=278), and participant-observation in 9 public events orchestrated either by or for Seaska (n=160 hours). In the remainder of this chapter I discuss the

methodology employed in the construction and execution of my case study as well as some caveats that resulted from execution of the research design.

## **4.2 DATA COLLECTION**

### **4.2.1 Interviewing**

One of the primary methods used in my research was interviewing. In particular, I relied on semi-structured and informal methods of interviewing (Blee and Taylor 2002; Rubin and Rubin 2005). I personally conducted all interviews and the primary language of communicative interaction in these interviews was always French (See Appendix A). In total, I conducted 40 semi-structured interviews with 28 persons, 12 of whom were interviewed twice. Those persons interviewed a second time were asked different sets of questions and it is for this reason that I count them separately. All semi-structured interviews were recorded on a digital device and then transcribed in French by a professional transcription service in Bayonne. Semi-structured interviews ranged in length from 45 to 120 minutes, they averaged around 60 minutes.

The 28 semi-structured interviews I conducted followed a generalized script of questions in each and every case so as to systematically collect data on specific issues and contexts. Because my concern was largely with the time period from 1969 to 1994, my interviews were predominantly retrospective in nature; i.e. I asked people to reflect upon experiences and events linked to their past. During interviews, I worked to elicit a broad array of information on the ikastola movement but focused much of my energy on getting people to talk about Seaska's relationship to the French state. As such, I asked both pointed and general questions about 'the

state' (See Appendix A). These questions stemmed from four broad themes: objectives, strategies, obstacles, and outcomes. From these themes I would then develop codes and categories used to answer my guiding research questions of how and why Seaska worked to gain state-level recognition. Relative to each of the four themes, I would engage in three phases of questioning: generalist, particularistic, and critical.

The generalist phase involved making broad inquiries so as to let participants interpret my questions as they wished. In the context of objectives, for example, I asked: 'During the time of your involvement with Seaska, what would you say were some of the main projects being under-taken?' The particularistic phase directed participants to specific issues or events from the past. With respect to the theme of strategies, for instance, I asked something along these lines: 'You mentioned that during your involvement with Seaska from 1978 to 1989 there was considerable effort made to gaining support from the Ministry of Education, what would you say were some of the main tactics used to accomplish this aim?' Finally, during the critical phase of questioning I took on a sort of devil's advocate role to respectfully challenge some of the normative claims or assumptions made by interviewees. This took place at the end of an interview whereby I asked something along the lines of: 'You mentioned that during the time of your participation, the authorities often criticized Seaska for being too radical, but wasn't the objective of recognition quite revolutionary?'

In addition to conducting 28 semi-structured interviews it is important to add that I also conducted informal interviews with 15 of the 28 persons whom I also interviewed in a semi-structured format. These generally took on a more casual form of "extended conversations" with activists on a given set of topics (Rubin and Rubin 2005:Ch.6). These informal types of communicative exchange were not recorded and complemented the more structured format of

interviewing by bringing in an added layer of meaning and perspective. The insights generated through these informal interviews generally surfaced ‘organically’ through relaxed discussions that I had with activists whom I met during times of participant-observation.. My informal interviews were neither recorded nor transcribed. Rather, I attempted to re-construct the insights gleaned from the interview by taking extensive notes at some point after the extended conversation so as to capture main themes, ideas or statements. In general, I tended to inquire into the same themes explored in semi-structured interviews, but usually let the participant shape the course of the conversation so as to let him/her take on the role of ‘expert’. Such moments were crucial in giving me insight into the political points of view and ideological dispositions of Seaska’s members as well details about their specific experiences.

Taken together semi-structured and informal interviewing is a method well-suited for conducting qualitative research on the variety of inter-subjective dispositions, interests, identities, narratives, motivations, experiences and expectations that bond actors in social movement organizations (Blee and Taylor 2002). My interviewees consisted of 15 men and 13 women whose ages varied from 22 to 68. All of these persons identified quite comfortably with the label ‘activist’ (literally in French either ‘*activist[e]*’ or ‘*militant[e]*’) and were selected precisely because of their deep involvement with, commitment to and familiarity of the ikastola movement. All persons had been or still were highly active members of Seaska at some point since its founding in 1969. While most of these persons included ‘professional’ activists employed by Seaska as teachers or administrators, others included ‘weekend’ activists who were parents that volunteered considerable amounts of personal time and energy to the ikastola movement. I chose to interview these actors primarily because they were key informants whose comprehensive experiences with Seaska made them very knowledgeable and conversant about

the organization's struggles, strategies and successes vis-à-vis the broader French political system. During interviews, for example, I asked people to elaborate upon their thoughts and opinions about the political landscape as it related ethno-educational mission of Seaska. I also asked them to identify and discuss any specific encounters and interactions which they might have had with state-level actors, policies or institutions (See Appendix A). In this light my goal was to understand how activists had experienced as well as evaluated and engaged with the broader political landscape that the ikastola movement was embedded within.

#### **4.2.2 Archives**

As a way to qualitatively analyze Seaska's contentious campaign for state-level recognition between 1969 and 1994, I collected primary data from Seaska's organizational archives. In total I collected 253 texts from Seaska's archive. These texts included: promotional flyers/brochures, informational newsletters, organizational charters and mission statements, public press releases, letters to political authorities as well as a small sample of notes taken by members during past meetings. Gaining access to these archives was extraordinarily helpful to my research but also relatively difficult and problematic. On the one hand, certain elements within the archives are guarded from the public given that Seaska's long-running efforts to procure increasing support from the French state has generated persistent criticism and hostility from an array of social and political opponents. In this light, the administrative staff was often uncertain of what exactly could be made accessible to me for my research, and thus chose to offer me limited access to bits of pieces. As such, there were many gaps in the data because the sample did not follow a clear and consistent chronology. Thus for example, while I collected a

great deal of promotional literature related to the period of 1986 to 1994 when Seaska was in a high-profile process of negotiation with the MNE, I had far less promotional literature from the period of 1969 to 1977 when Seaska was in a far more clandestine stage of mobilization and first forging a strategic stance toward the state. On the other hand, difficulties in accessing Seaska's archive also stemmed from the fact that there was a great deal of personal information embedded within the vast amounts of notes taken during the myriad General Assemblies and meetings of the Executive Ikastola Council. In this context, administrators were simply reluctant to hand over information that revealed the names and identities of past or present members without their consent. As a result, I was given access to a sporadic array of notes from a handful of meetings that had taken place only in the year leading up to Seaska's 1994 entry into a convention with the MNE.

Despite difficulties of access and chronological gaps in the information obtained, Seaska's archives ultimately yielded three of my most fruitful sources of data: newsletters, promotional literature, and organizational charters.

Newsletters consisted of informational texts published by Seaska largely for the consumption of members. These provided me with enormous insight on how ikastola proponents construed the issues, dilemmas, objectives, and obstacles facing the ikastola movement as well as the variety of tactics and successes that characterized Seaska's mobilization efforts between 1969 and 1994. Because the ikastola movement evolved so drastically during this 25 year period, the frequency and format of these newsletters varied enormously through time. Some of the earliest newsletters in 1969 and 1970, for example, were very simple one or two page flyers with no images, written on type-writers, xeroxed, and distributed during meetings. These newsletters were often intended as updates on issues of concern, such as updates on the financial situation,

announcements of upcoming fund-raisers or proposals for new pedagogical programs. By 1975, however, as the ikastola network grew into the field of primary schooling, the newsletters took on a more polished appearance and contained a great deal more information. Printed in bulk on black and white newspaper format but with a colorful cardboard cover, Seaska's newsletter became distributed to members monthly and made available to interested members of the public for the price of one franc. By this juncture the newsletter was not only used to convey internal information to parents and teachers, but also to disseminate general information about the ikastolas to the general public. By the early part of the 1980's Seaska regressed to a simpler and cheaper newspaper format as a consequence of severe financial strains. The monthly and even sometimes bi-weekly publication of the newsletters, however, did not cease. By the end the 1980's publishing technologies had advanced quite rapidly and Seaska was able to print the monthly newsletter in a full color magazine format; a format it continued up to and beyond 1994. It is also important to note here that Seaska launched its website in 1999. Because the parameters of my study ended in 1994, I did not analyze Seaska's use of e-media. These data shed important light on the big issues, projects and questions being discussed and debated by ikastola proponents through the years.

In addition to newsletters, promotional literature such as brochures, were an important source of data. These texts were generally published by Seaska as small leaflets or flyers providing general information on the ikastolas for purposes of recruitment. As with newsletters, the quality and format of Seaska's promotional literature changed considerably between 1969 and 1994. In short, early brochures were simple in their design, but began to increase in complexity and color through the 1980's. These documents provided me with important data on

how Seaska constructed narratives or ‘frames’ about the ikastola movement in order to generate participation from the public.

Finally, another key source of data I obtained from Seaska’s archives was organizational charters. These texts were generally published as mission statements that defined the various organizational objectives, philosophical principles, operating procedures and institutional norms which Seaska’s members should abide by so as to organize their actions in a cohesive, effective and more or less influential manner. My investigations revealed that Seaska had only developed three 3 such charters between 1969 and 1994. The first was created as at the time of Seaska’s inception as an educational association in 1969, the second was established when Seaska began operating primary schools after 1975 and the third was established shortly after Seaska entered into a convention with the French Ministry of Education. Each charter essentially built on the last one, so that in effect these are three updated versions of one original document. These texts offered me enormous insight on how Seaska’s members sought to institutionalize the ikastola movement- i.e. render permanency to the ikastolas- by defining specific tropes, rules and codes for practice.

### **4.2.3 Newspapers**

As an extension of content analysis (Neuendorf 2005), the method of ‘political claims analysis’ (Koopmans and Statham 1999) is a productive way to explore the extent to which social movements achieve visibility in the public sphere as well as the discursive content of the publicity generated by social movement actors. Another important set of data in my study stem from a political claims analysis of 278 newspaper articles collected from two regional

newspapers based in southwestern France: *Enbata* (n=81, 1969-1994) and *Sud Ouest* (n=197, 1974-1994).

Enbata is a weekly bilingual French-Basque newspaper that is strongly associated with the Basque cultural and political movement. Enbata was once an official organ of a Basque nationalist political party of the same name. Through the years, however, it has become a very unique and highly respected chronicler of news related to French Basque politics and society. Given Enbata's consistent coverage of virtually all forms of Basque ethnic mobilization in France and Spain, it offered an especially rich and insightful archive on Seaska's mobilization efforts. Indeed, throughout its history whenever Seaska has sought to articulate public claims or make 'official' statements to governmental authorities, Enbata has consistently been the first choice. To collect data relative to Seaska and the ikastolas in this newspaper I thus made personal contact with editors at their main office in Bayonne. Upon providing full disclosure of my research project, I was awarded total access to Enbata's archive: a tightly packed storage room wherein all previous issues of Enbata were housed in files dating back to 1951. Although I was not permitted to leave the offices with any archival materials, I was given a seat at a desk and allowed to make use of a copy machine. For approximately seven days I went to Enbata for several hours to comb individual issues for mention or coverage of the ikastolas. This led me to accumulate 81 articles related to Seaska between 1969 and 1994.

The newspaper *Sud Ouest* is the largest circulating daily in southwestern France. Founded as a left-of-center newspaper in 1944, *Sud Ouest* is made up of 22 local editions that correspond to the eight departments that comprise the administrative region of Aquitaine. Among these I focused my data collection on the edition targeting the Basque region; '*Edition Pays Basque*'. To collect articles pertaining to Seaska and the ikastola movement I used two

approaches. On the one hand, I conducted a series of keyword searches on a digital media archive available at the *Université de Bordeaux-III*. This method allowed me to rapidly collect news stories that contained the words Seaska or ikastola in the title of an article. However, because the digital archive only began after 1988, I also had to conduct a far more laborious manual search of Sud Ouest archives at the municipal public library in Bayonne. Because Sud Ouest is a daily paper and my analysis stretched back to 1969, it was simply not possible to flip through nearly twenty years of press in search of individual articles. As such I employed a technique which I dub ‘purposive cluster sampling’. In this technique I deduced information from interviews and Seaska’s archives to isolate particular episodes of time when Seaska would have been likely to generate visibility in the press as a consequence of having engaged in some form of public action, be it contentious or celebratory, and went looking for groups or clusters of articles relative to this time period. Thus for example, from Seaska’s members and archives I knew that activists had escalated their claims-making efforts on the state in the spring of 1982 about a year after Mitterrand’s election in May 1981. Working with this information I selected a sample of newspapers from a cluster of around 12 weekend editions of Sud Ouest that spanned from April through June of 1982. Looking through these editions I was able to isolate several news stories about Seaska that would then sometimes also point me toward stories published earlier that same week. This method was long and laborious but eventually fruitful in that it allowed me to garner newspaper coverage about Seaska that stemmed neither from the Basque nationalist press nor from Seaska’s indigenous publication efforts.

#### 4.2.4 Participant-Observation

In addition to interviews and texts, data for this study were also collected using ethnographic methods of participant-observation (n= 60 hours). This method has been defined as the direct involvement in and examination of episodes of human interaction by a researcher so as to gain access to and information about social phenomena that would otherwise be unavailable from the standpoint of a non-participant (Jorgensen 1987). In the context of social movements, participant observation is highly useful for ‘uncovering’ the everyday meanings and experiences that characterize the activist milieu as well as for and ‘seeing’ how these meanings and experiences emerge in relation to broader structures and processes of concern to activists, such as ‘government’ or ‘the state’ (Lichterman 2002).

During my fieldwork in France I conducted participant observation in 11 public and semi-public events orchestrated by Seaska between October 2007 and July 2008. These events included street marches, open houses, fund-raisers, extra-curricular activities for students, and parent-teacher meetings. During involvement in these episodes I generally took notes in a small portable notebook when the situation permitted such writing, and only after the event would then sit down to re-capture the dynamics of the event in greater detail. The forms of my participation varied from event to event. For example, during meetings I was almost always a passive observer, listening not only to what issues were under discussion but how they were being discussed. Because of Seaska’s community-based structure meetings tend to take on the shape of a group-based deliberation whereby parents, teachers and representatives of different schools would voice their concerns. In another example, however, during the several street marches I attended I was both observer and participant. Present from the onset to the conclusion of the 4 ½-hour march I helped people un-pack banners and placards from cars, hand out flyers and engage

in the post-march clean-up. During this time I gained tremendous insight on the experiential dimensions of the myriad marches engaged in by ikastola proponents through the decades. My time in such events was crucial to the research process in two ways.

First and foremost my presence helped me to cultivate amiable ties with ikastola proponents. By participating, being involved and generally taking pleasure in the events, I was able to show activists that my interest in the ikastola movement was more than just academic, it was genuine and humanistic. Second, the conversations I had with activists during events and the ability to watch and listen as they participated in the ritualistic events that defined their membership in the ikastola movement, I was able to glean a great deal about the emotional attachments and highly personalized commitments these actors had made. In short, by being there with activists I could better understand some of the passion that has fueled their activism for decades.

It is important to note however, that because participant-observation cannot take place in the past, and that this dissertation focuses explicitly upon a particular historical era- from 1969 to 1994- the utility of data obtained through the method is largely indirect and secondary to this dissertation. While still germane it is not under explicit discussion. This is to say that data garnered through participant-observation helped me to make sense of other data obtained through interviewing and textual analysis of Seaska's archives and newspaper coverage. For example, by participating in a street march organized by Seaska for the ikastolas in 2008, I was able to understand just a little bit more about the emotionally charged feelings of solidarity that people described about demonstrations held back in 1978. Or, by taking part in an open house event in Hendaye in 2007, I was able to learn a little something extra about what activists meant when they said Seaska was working to realize a 'community-based' or 'cooperative' model of

‘democratic’ education back in 1987. In short, participant observation in the present (2007-08) bolstered my capacity to better interpret and analyze data about the past (1969-94).

### **4.3 DATA ANALYSIS**

In analyzing and interpreting case study data on the mobilization struggles, strategies and successes of the ikastola movement in France I employed the qualitative logic of the grounded theory method (Corbin and Strauss 1998, 2005; Kelle 2005). This largely inductive method of qualitative inquiry led me to follow six sequential stages of analysis: organizing, memoing, coding, categorization, concept-building, and theorization. While much of this process took place using the qualitative software program known as ‘Atlas.ti’, I also had to rely on manual analysis due to the fact that certain archival and newspaper data were only available in hard-copy format.

#### **4.3.1 Organizing Data**

The first stage of my analysis entailed a general process of organizing my data. This involved delimiting and defining my data into general thematic clusters that addressed my research question from different angles. Organizing data into separate and discernible analytical contexts simply allowed me to better access and cross-reference information from different data sets, such as interviews and newspaper articles. This process took shape both within data sets and across them. For instance, while some newspaper articles I analyzed were in the format of

editorials published by Seaska's members or by critics of the ikastola movement, others were in the format of descriptive accounts of Seaska's claims/actions written by syndicated journalists. This led me to organize newspaper data into general contexts related to authorship of newspaper articles. In another example, my interviews took place with activists whose terms of membership in Seaska varied. While all persons had been or still were active members of Seaska, an initial look at interviews led me to split activists into two basic contexts- paid employees and voluntary members. And, in yet another example, I organized my data into a chronological order so as to understand how Seaska's struggle for recognition evolved across different points in time. This aspect of organizing the data eventually allowed me to see Seaska's campaign for recognition as having undergone several distinctive phases between the years of 1969 and 1994: emergence (1969-1974), extension (1974-1977), expansion (1977-1982), escalation (1982-1988) and recognition (1988-1994).

#### **4.3.2 Memoing**

The second stage of analysis entailed a process of memoing. This involved a fairly unstructured and exploratory phase of taking notes and general brainstorming about what the data seemed to be telling me. This process of memoing was a crucial early step in forcing me to keep my analysis of the data in relatively close dialogue with my research objectives; i.e. to theorize on how and why Seaska's members worked to gain recognition from the French state. Through the process of memoing I engaged in a continuous reflection with my own analysis that was both creative and critical. On the one hand, memoing invited me to think about how the data might link up with extant literature. On the other, memoing forced me to see analytical gaps and

inconsistencies that were either the result of my own process of data collection or the consequence of misguided theoretical assumptions of what I thought I would find. It was through memoing that I began to familiarize myself with the data, make linkages with my research question, place my findings in dialogue with extant literature and make note of important or surprising findings. This process often paralleled the process of open coding.

### **4.3.3 Coding**

In the third stage I engaged in two interlinking phases of coding: open and substantive. Coding can be defined as the process of converting ‘raw’ empirical data into useful analytical concepts (Corbin and Strauss 2005:66).

Often taking place in close conjunction with memoing, the process of open coding entailed an initial sweep of data to extrapolate central themes and findings and transform them into “sensitizing concepts” (Blumer 1954); i.e. an orienting concept that emerges in the early stage of qualitative analysis through which the analyst gains an initial sense for what the empirical data is revealing about a social phenomenon. It was at this phase, for instance, that I learned from my interviews that activists had persistently adopted a very conscious strategy of discursive production or ‘framing’ in their efforts to gain state-level recognition. I thus coded all interview data related to the crafting of public claims and frames as ‘discursive labor’. From this I was able to develop sub-codes related to discursive labor that was outwardly oriented toward countering opposition and establishing legitimacy within the political arena, and more inwardly directed discursive labor that took place among activists as they reflected upon issues and evaluated their situation.

Subsequently, I moved into a more analytical and less descriptive phase of ‘substantive coding’; i.e. deriving concepts from the data that would help provide more definitive explanations of specific social relations, actions or contexts. It was at this more challenging stage of analysis that I began to focus on trying to understand practice and process rather than merely placing abstract referential labels on ‘static’ clusters of data. Another way to say this is that I worked to develop concepts that would better help me understand the agency driving Seaska’s mobilization efforts. One key result of this rigorous phase of substantive coding, for example, was that I began to better understand Seaska’s mobilization strategies as concerted responses to systematic experiences of marginality within and exclusion from the political arena. In other words, through coding I learned that strategy was an outcome of struggle. Subsequently, I moved into a more analytical and less descriptive phase of ‘substantive coding’; i.e. deriving concepts from the data that would help provide more definitive explanations of specific social relations, actions or contexts. It was at this more challenging stage of analysis that I began to focus on trying to understand practice and process rather than merely placing abstract referential labels on ‘static’ clusters of data. Another way to say this is that I worked to develop concepts that would better help me understand the agency driving Seaska’s mobilization efforts. One key result of this rigorous phase of substantive coding, for example, was that I began to better understand Seaska’s mobilization strategies as concerted responses to systematic experiences of marginality within and exclusion from the political arena. In other words, through coding I learned that strategy was an outcome of struggle

#### **4.3.4 Categorization**

In the fourth stage of analysis I moved into a process of ‘categorization’; i.e. establishing relationships between groups of concepts. If codes are the building blocks of qualitative analysis in that they form the bedrock of interpretation, then categories are assemblages of codes into conceptual nodes or families. This process of abstraction helped lead me to a higher stage of comprehension and clarification regarding the question of how Seaska worked to achieve state-level recognition. In this context, for example, I moved from identifying all the different forms of ‘strategy’ mobilized by Seaska to thinking about linkages or overlaps between strategies. Here, I began to understand how Seaska’s discursive strategizing was reciprocally linked with fund-raising and networking strategies. The pursuit of these latter strategies was an outcome of discursive reflection on the part of activists and in turn the outcomes realized through fund-raising and networking then influenced successive moments of reflection in the form of activists evaluating the perceived utility or success of these strategies a posteriori.

#### **4.3.5 Theorization**

In the fifth and final stage of data analysis I then transitioned into the crucial process of ‘theorization’; i.e. generating hypotheses that explain patterns in the data vis-à-vis my research question(s). In this context I made important decisions about how to ultimately interpret the relationship between concepts and categories so as to formulate a set of propositions regarding how and why Seaska’s campaign for political recognition between 1969 and 1994 was a more or less ‘successful’ endeavor. The labor involved in this challenging process was aided

considerably by maintaining a close dialogue with extant theories on social movement dynamics, namely ‘political process theory’ (McAdam 1982; Kriesi 2004). It was in this intersectional moment of inductive and deductive reasoning, for instance, that I came to the conclusion that while Seaska’s ability to gain state-level recognition was significantly influenced by ‘external’ structures of political opposition and opportunity, Seaska’s incremental acquisition of state-level recognition was ultimately the result of the grassroots strategies devised by activists to effectively endure the tides of opposition and seize upon moments of opportunity. Because this final stage is constituted in the discussion section of this dissertation I will preclude from further exemplary discussion.

#### **4.4 LIMITS OF THE RESEARCH DESIGN**

##### **4.4.1 Representativeness**

A limitation of all case study research is related to the representativeness of the case to the broader phenomena it claims to illustrate (Yin 2003). As such, it is difficult for me to make general theoretical statements or propositions about minority language schooling initiatives in other parts of France let alone in other parts of Europe based upon my analysis of Seaska and the ikastola movement in the French Basque Country. Nevertheless, case study research design is well-suited for purposes of analytic generalization; i.e. to refine and build upon existing theories (Yin 2003:10). As such, by placing my analysis of the ikastola movement in dialogue with extant social movement theory my goal is to expand analytic understandings of the strategies adopted

by social movement actors as they labor to challenge the logic and limits of state-based governance.

#### **4.4.2 Timeframe**

Because my analysis stops in the summer of 1994, another limitation of my case study is that it does not offer a more contemporary account of the ikastola movement. This is problematic because in the years following 1994 transnational processes of Europeanization placed increasing pressure on the French state to adopt legislative initiatives recognizing the rights of minority language speakers, particularly in the education system. In addition, it is important to note that the size of the ikastola network continued to experience dynamic growth after the contract of 1994, almost doubling in size to over 2200 students by 2010. It would thus be insightful to explore the extent to which Europeanization has become strategically relevant and influential for Seaska's mobilization efforts in terms of opening up a political opportunity structure.

#### **4.4.3 My identity**

My ethnic, national, linguistic and gendered identity had important consequences for my research. First, as someone with familial and social connections in the Basque Country my general access into the activist milieu was facilitated. My personal connections with friends and family allowed me considerable access to past and present members of the ikastola movement. Second, as a speaker of French I was able to communicate smoothly with activists and read the bulk of activist literature considering that it was published bilingually. Third, however, because I

do not speak or read Basque beyond a very elementary level there were serious limitations to my fieldwork, such as not being able to understand what was said at certain meetings or being unable to read certain texts published by/about Seaska. Fourth, as a permanent resident of the United States of America, my research interests initially raised some suspicion among a small handful of activists who feared I may be masking an undisclosed political agenda against Basque ethno-cultural mobilization. Finally, as a man I was able to gain *entrée* into many contexts that may have been more difficult to enter as a woman, but also experienced difficulty when entering other contexts. Such difficulties arose in a few situations when I was interviewing younger female teachers who felt visibly uneasy speaking about their experiences and ideologies with an older man whom they did know.

## **5.0 THE FORMATION OF A STRATEGIC STANCE TOWARD THE STATE: FROM EVASION TO ENGAGEMENT, 1969-1979**

One of the most central and defining features of the Basque schooling movement in France has been its relationship to the French state. For the activists behind this grassroots schooling campaign, ‘the state’ is many things, wears many faces and is a virtually inescapable facet of their mobilization efforts. On the one hand, the state is an historical source of injustice, a primary target of grievances, an unyielding aggregate of adversaries, and a persistent mechanism of obstruction. On the other hand, however, the state is also a vital stock of support, an instrumental object of claims-making, a crucial network of allies, and an essential source of empowerment. In short, Basque language activists have come to construe the French state as both a gate-keeper thwarting their efforts and a gate-way to realizing their goals. In the next three chapters of this dissertation I explore this relationship in greater details, focusing on how Basque language activists struggled to gain recognition from state-level authorities.

In this chapter I explore Seaska’s initial emergence as a social movement organization so as to consider the question of why Seaska began pursuing state-level recognition. Drawing on qualitative case study data, I pay particular attention to how Seaska’s stance toward the French state transitioned from one of general disengagement to one of strategic engagement. My discussion starts with Seaska’s formal founding as a pre-schooling association in the spring of 1969. I show how Seaska’s founders initially sought to maintain a very low public profile and

minimized their interactions with the French state so as to obtain the right to operate the ikastolas solely as privately run pre-schools. In this context, I argue that Seaska's members largely avoided engaging with the political process for practical as well as tactical reasons. Subsequently, I consider how Seaska's proponents began to forge a more instrumental and contentious relationship with state-level authorities in 1974 as a consequence of their desire to extend the ikastolas beyond pre-schooling and into the state-regulated realm of primary education. More specifically, I discuss why Seaska's decision to start operating privately-run primary schools unleashed a tide of state-level opposition. In this context, I show how Seaska's struggle for state-level recognition began to emerge around 1974 as a concerted fight to achieve discursive legitimacy within the political arena. My discussion then ends with an examination of a high profile and catalytic protest event that erupted in October 1977 as a result of the closing of a primary-level ikastola in the town of St. Palais by the Ministry of National Education [MNE]. I argue that while this institutional exercise of state-level opposition thwarted the growth of the ikastola movement it also had an empowering effect on Seaska's members by galvanizing their ideological resolve and identitarian solidarity. Hence, in addition to showing why Seaska's members began forging a strategic stance toward the state during the 1970's, my main goal in this chapter is to show how the constraining dynamics of state-based power had a positive as well as negative impact on the ikastola movement. In short, while state-level repression thwarted the organic development of the ikastola schooling system in French Basque society, it also helped foster a strong and empowering collective identity for ikastola proponents.

## 5.1 THE GESTATION PHASE, 1969-1974

The best way to describe Seaska's initial stance toward the French state would be as a generalized position of disengagement. In other words, Seaska's pioneering members largely wanted to avoid interaction with state-level authorities and maintain a distance from the political arena. Seaska's members did not publicly challenge or engage with state-level authority during its first five years of operation. While activists were bonded by their collective resentment of the French state's prejudicial policy of excluding Basque from the public education system, Seaska's members did not begin making instrumental claims upon governmental authorities until the spring of 1974 when they would attempt to enter into the realm of primary schooling and experience state-level opposition. In fact, until that decisive and transformative moment, Seaska's pioneering members explicitly sought to maintain significant distance from the political arena. The reasons for Seaska's initial stance of avoiding relations with the French state were both practical and tactical.

First, Seaska was only operating pre-schools during the first five years of its existence. This meant that Seaska's members had little need to interact with state-level authorities because privately-run pre-schools in France require no governmental oversight beyond initial approval at the municipal level. Under the 1901 French law of associationalism, civic associations are free to create and administrate pre-school programs for children under the age of 6 (Auduc 2002). It was not until the spring of 1974 that Seaska would begin to contemplate entering the state-regulated realm of primary schooling; i.e. the formal education of children above the age of six. This means that the only involvement Seaska would have with the state between 1969 and 1974 was with municipal authorities, some of whom were bascophone and most of whom were either supportive or ambivalent of Seaska's efforts to build a pre-school in their town. Hence, during

the first few years, Seaska's members did not engage with the French Ministry of National Education in great part because there was no need for them to do so. As noted in retrospect by Manex, one of Seaska's pioneering members: "Originally, the [ikastola] project was based completely outside of the state because it was limited to pre-schooling which is not taken very seriously...It was only later when the educational programs began to progress [into primary education] that it became impossible for us to avoid working with the authorities and this was when that they [governmental actors] began working against us" (Interview B-1).

A second reason for Seaska's initially apolitical stance was that for the first few years the actors involved with the ikastola project were primarily concerned with much more immediate and practical issues of running a pre-school. After Seaska had been formed as an association in the spring of 1969, the future of the ikastola project in France was far from clear or certain. Seaska's early meetings were largely focused on logistical questions related to the acquisition of proper housing, finding qualified teachers, attaining bascophone teaching materials and recruiting parents who were willing to place their children in an experimental setting. In this context, Seaska's founders were not sure if the first ikastola in France would succeed let alone if the schools would become the popular phenomenon that they were becoming across the border in Spain. As noted by Clarice:

In the beginning, it was all very experimental. We had no sense of where things would go or if more ikastolas would be created...it was tentative, *a moment of gestation*, not a time for making big claims...Our thoughts were on practical things, finding a proper facility and obtaining good teaching materials, these sorts of things...There was no political strategy as such. It was impossible to anticipate the future, to predict how many people would join us or who would oppose us" (Interview B-8, italics added).

Seaska did not readily engage or immediately confront the French government in part because activists were more focused on the short-term objective of turning their ideas about bascophone schooling into the reality of the ikastola. There was uncertainty in their actions; a pervasive ambiguity about what the future would hold that prevented activists from taking on a more clearly articulated state-oriented agenda. A more explicit political stance would only emerge later when the network of ikastolas became fairly stable and Seaska's representatives came to see themselves as spearheading something akin to a social movement. Collective identity thus became an essential component of Seaska's mobilization strategy.

The third and perhaps most important reason that Seaska's founders wanted to maintain an apolitical stance was to avoid any potentially repressive backlash from governmental authorities. Hence, on a more tactical level, Seaska avoided engaging with the state for fear of opposition precisely because they knew such potential for reprisal existed. At the core of activist consternations about the possibility of state-level repression was a notion of misrecognition; i.e. an apprehension that the ikastola initiative would be misunderstood and mislabeled by political authorities as an extension of Basque radicalism and secessionism.

Seaska's initial strategy of skirting the potential for misrecognition and problematic political encounters was based on a broader climate of suspicion and criticism surrounding Basque ethnic activism and organizations in France. Throughout the 1960's, public displays of Basque solidarity coupled with political claims-making within France were negatively interpreted by political elites and members of the lay public as illegitimate expressions of ethnic radicalism (Jacob 1994). This was largely due to the rising tide of militancy and violence associated with Basque ethno-political mobilization across the border in Spain where some groups, such as the notorious *E.T.A.*, were challenging the legitimacy of the Franco dictatorship

via an armed struggle. The rise of a northern faction of E.T.A. in France- *Iparretarak*- fueled political concerns within the Gaullist government of Valery Giscard d'Estaing that the nationalist movement was spilling over into French Basque Country. Thus, even though France had taken a pro-Basque stance toward the situation in Spain and Basque nationalism had historically only attained a relatively weak presence in France, there was still trepidation among French authorities on both the Left and Right that the waves of ethnic contention and militancy sweeping the Spanish Basque Country during the 1970's would stir up separatist aspirations among northern Basques. Moreover, through the years waves of Basque political refugees had come into France seeking safe-haven from the harsh anti-Basque laws pursued by the Spanish dictatorship. While the French state had endorsed the presence of these Basque asylum-seekers, there was still worry among the ruling Gaullists that these southern expatriates would sow the subversive seeds of radical nationalism (Jacob 1994).

Knowing that French officials were on the look-out for signals of separatist activity and because several members were refugees from Spain, Seaska's founders did not want to call too much public attention to their actions. Hence, Seaska operated in a fairly clandestine manner, keeping a low public profile and limiting its efforts to highly localized social networks of people who largely knew one another. In the eyes of activists, too much initial publicity might induce governmental authorities to interfere with the growth of the ikastolas and it was crucial to avoid any public affiliation with separatist politics, in spite of the political allegiances of some ikastola supporters. Such aversion toward Basque political militancy is nicely surmised by Seaska's founder, Clarice, in a retrospective interview she had with the Basque newspaper *Enbata*:

We had to move quite cautiously. The political environment was very tense and there was considerable suspicion surrounding our actions...But, we were running a school, not a political party, this distinction was very, very important. I told people that if the ikastolas

were to succeed and to be treated seriously as schools, we could not send out a political message about independence or autonomy because this was not our objective, even if many of us were *abertzale* (lit. 'nationalist' or 'patriot')...Our project was primarily about promoting the Basque culture and language, and above all about education, literacy and pedagogy...Everyone was welcome but people had to leave their political ideologies at home, that is what we agreed upon...The potential for political conflict was always present, like a pressure on top of us; we felt like it was only a matter of time before someone knocked on our door (Document B-87, *Enbata* April 10, 1977).

As conveyed by Clarice's statement, from the onset Seaska was deeply concerned about managing its identity as an educational organization dealing with cultural and linguistic issues rather than a political entity concerned with questions of autonomy and independence. By emphasizing a putatively 'apolitical' agenda and de-emphasizing affiliations with nationalist politics, Seaska's members were struggling to preempt any potential misrecognition or backlash among governmental authorities. The will to dissociate the ikastola project from radical nationalist politics would become a defining but rather unmanageable element of Seaska's mobilization campaign for years to come. At this early stage of mobilization, however, it reflects a strategic concern for the potential exercise of political repression by the French government, thus showing how state-based power helped to constitute Seaska's agenda from the get-go.

By the summer of 1970, Seaska had established a handful of ikastolas and its thirty-some members would begin to turn much of their collective attention to the task of creating a more explicit and cohesive organizational agenda. The creation of several new ikastolas and a growing community of participants gave activists a greater sense of having created something more permanent and with this sense came the need to address longer-term needs and issues. In September, Seaska's members held a meeting in order to create a mission statement that could subsequently be articulated to the broader public. According to one retrospective rendering of

this assembly (Garat 2005: 91-92), Seaska's proponents put forth six unifying principles that would define the organization's identity and agenda for years to come. These principles were: [i] to establish the pedagogical integrity of the ikastola programs; [ii] to institute the near exclusive use of Basque within the ikastolas; [iii] to ensure the professionalism of ikastola teachers; [iv] to declare the use of progressive pedagogical methods in classrooms; [v] to implement a cooperative and community-based structure of decision-making; and [vi] to define Seaska as a secular and inclusive organization. Each of these principles would consistently come to define Seaska in the decades ahead and provide Seaska's proponents with a common reference point for their future actions in the political arena. Through the articulation of these principles Seaska's founders would assemble the framework of their strategic repertoire. It is at this point that a formal concern with the long-term processes of resource mobilization thus became a systematic point of concern for Seaska, albeit not yet in a manner that would include the pursuit of state-level recognition. Nevertheless, by looking at the organizing principles adopted by Seaska's members in the early stages of mobilization it is possible to discern why they would eventually forge a strategic and confrontational relationship with the French state. In short, Seaska's defining features would constitute a challenge to the state's authority on the democratic logic of public education as well as its authority on linguistic matters within the education system.

The first of the operating principles put forth by Seaska's pioneering members in early 1970 sought to authenticate the ikastola as a formalized schooling program but without explicitly labeling the ikastolas as 'schools'. This seemingly incongruous distinction was a difficult but necessary task. On the one hand, publicly labeling the ikastolas as schools would have placed Seaska's educational activities under the watchful and regulatory eye of the Ministry of National Education [MNE]. This was a move that members wanted to avoid because they were weary that

the state would not formally sanction a bascophone education program, even at the level of pre-schooling. In other words, they were worried that the nearly exclusive linguistic focus on Basque would be used as a rationale to deny Seaska the legal permission it needed to open a school. The ikastolas were thus officially declared in the municipal registry as “educational centers for the promotion of Basque language and culture” (Document B-1, *Sud Ouest* May 25, 1969). The ‘official’ label placed on the ikastolas was thus as non-formal schools operating outside the realm of governmental regulation. The literal use of the word ‘school/école’ was tactically skirted by Seaska’s founders for legal reasons so as to avoid or at least minimize state-level interference in their affairs.

On the other hand, however, Seaska’s members faced a conundrum as they wanted their pedagogical mission to be taken seriously by the local Basque public and avoid having the ikastolas misrecognized as informal day-care facilities. As noted by Clarice in retrospect: “Our objective was above all educational, not recreational” (Interview B-8). Thus, even though the official status of the first ikastolas was that of non-formal pre-schools, the architects of the ikastola project unambiguously construed their project as formalized, structured and professional. They felt that the children in the programs had to begin formal instruction in Basque at a very early age in order to combat the displacement of Basque in the broader education system that they would eventually enter. Moreover, because all primary schools in the region only utilized French as a medium of instruction, Seaska’s founders envisioned the ikastola program as a preemptive tool against the monolingual society that awaited children. In this light they argued that a fully-fledged early literacy program in Basque was necessary. The ikastola was thus un-officially designated as a formal school in Seaska’s promotional literature and among members so as to establish the reality that the ikastolas were a site where children could

learn to read, write, think and speak in Basque, not merely learn traditional Basque songs and dances. As noted, for instance, in one of Seaska's first promotional leaflets published bilingually:

The ikastola is a school in the fullest sense of the word. The ikastola is not a nursery, a recreational center or a seat of folkloric pastimes. The materials and personnel within the ikastola create a modern and progressive learning environment where the language and culture of the Basque people is respected both intellectually and culturally. The programs of the ikastola provide a foundation for the academic and emotional development of our children... The school is a very important step in the renaissance of Euskara across all domains of public life in the Basque Country...In the Northern Basque Country Seaska is unique in providing educational resources for the Basque people. (Document B-19, *Zer ikastolan da?/Qu'est-ce que c'est l'ikastola?*, September 1972).

Thus, even though Seaska did not publicly declare the ikastolas as schools, member's still actively discussed and construed the ikastolas as genuine bona fide schools. The discrepancy between what was legally reported on the books and what was formally agreed upon by movement participants was not seen as a contradiction but a tactical necessity; i.e. it was a strategic response to a political context perceived as inherently unaccommodating. The efforts of activists to establish the pedagogical formalism of the ikastola schooling system would, however, eventually become pivotal in Seaska's pursuit of recognition by the latter part of the 1970's. By this time Seaska's struggle for state-level recognition would come to hinge heavily upon the capacity of activists to establish the integrity and credibility of their educational programs to lawmakers so as to shake the notion that the ikastolas were a subversive instrument of ethno-political radicalism. In this context, the quality and professionalism of Seaska's educational services and personnel would be a constant source of contention between activists and the state. In short, the quality of the curriculum in the ikastolas would be under constant scrutiny and criticism by education authorities.

A second and fundamental operating principle put forth by Seaska's founders stated that the Basque language would be the exclusive language of learning, instruction and communication within the ikastola. This established the ikastola as the first immersive-style minority language schooling program in France, as discussed in Chapter One. This was intended to differentiate the ikastolas from other educational programs where a modicum of Basque was introduced to students in the form of traditional songs and dances or the learning of simple phrases, such as '*egun on/good day*' and '*eskerrik asko/thank you*'. In addition, by defining the ikastola as a bascophone space, Seaska's architects also concomitantly defined the ikastolas as a zone whereby French would only rarely be used. This decision was regarded as critical to promoting the process of linguistic revitalization. As explained in one of Seaska's earliest newsletters:

Our children live in an environment inundated with the French language. Our language has declined through a process of debasquization perpetuated by an education system deemed 'free' and 'secular'...Today Euskara lives in muted seclusion, isolated from our lives and remote from those of our children...The ikastola fights against this hostile linguistic climate through the employment of a program of total immersion in Euskara...In the ikastola, the Basque language is alive, it is not a language entombed in a museum or the language of an intellectual elite; it is a living language for all the Basque people" (Document B-17, *Ikastolak*, May 1970).

Through a potent rhetoric that both criticizes the dominance of French and bemoans the marginalization of Basque, Seaska's founders defined the ikastola as a weapon against Basque language loss, a safe-haven against the linguistic hegemony of French and as a keystone to the future and well-being of a broader Basque ethnic community. Each of these foundational tropes would serve to ground and guide Seaska's advocacy of the immersive-model bilingual education through the years. Seaska's persistent defense of the immersion-model would work to reinforce

its organizational identity as a unique and progressive educational initiative serving the needs of the Basque public. In the years ahead, however, Seaska's commitment to immersion-style minority language schooling would prove to be a major point of confrontation with state-level authorities who interpreted Seaska's 'suppression' of French as pedagogically irrational and politically seditious.

A third organizational principle put forth by Seaska's founding members sought to establish the professionalism and expertise of ikastola teachers. As an extension of the first principle, Seaska's proponents attempted to define the personnel in charge of classroom activities as neither nannies nor informal aids but as qualified, proficient and experienced teachers. This was an important claim because the status of teachers was directly related to Seaska's efforts to substantiate the integrity and formality of the ikastola system. As noted by Clarice, Seaska's principle founder:

[I]t would have been difficult for anyone, including ourselves, to see the ikastolas as credible schools if the persons in charge were not trained and capable teachers...there was no institute or training center in France from which we could find people. And so, it was principally up to us to develop the proper resources and to recruit qualified people...Some of us had experience as educators and that was useful but others had never worked in a school and it was quite new for them. But even for those with some experience in education, in the beginning everything that we were doing had never been done in France before, it was a tabula rasa" (Interview B-8).

Because there was no teacher training program within France that could prepare bascoophone instructors, Seaska needed to account for how teachers would be recruited and trained. In this context, Seaska largely had to develop their own resources but also profited enormously from their ties with Spanish or Southern Basques. These ties yielded important resources for the budding ikastola movement in France, particularly with respect to the provision

of technical assistance and human resources. Although this will be discussed in far greater detail in Chapter Five, it is instructive to touch upon it briefly here.

As mentioned in Chapter One, the ikastola movement in Spain had served as an ideological blueprint for Seaska's members when they decided to launch a bascohone pre-schooling initiative within France. Looking to their southern counter-parts for both insight and inspiration, periodic exchanges and meetings were arranged by Seaska with members of the southern ikastola movement so as to learn about bilingual teaching methods as well as to acquire bascohone teaching materials. Thus, Seaska did not completely start from scratch as actors in Spain provided important technical advice and resources to Seaska's pioneering members in the formative years of the ikastola movement. These contributions from the south were relatively limited, however, by political realities separating the French and Spanish nation-states. In short, because of the anti-Basque policies pursued by the totalitarian government of General Francisco Franco in Spain and its virulent policing of cross-border exchanges between Basques, Seaska's links with southern activists remained sporadic and weak until the rise of Spanish democracy at the end of the 1970's (Pérez Agote 2006).<sup>20</sup>

In addition to benefitting from cross-border ties, Seaska's teacher training capacity benefited greatly during its early years from the presence of former ikastola teachers in the Southern Basque refugee community living within France. For example, when the first ikastola opened its doors in Arcangues, the acting teacher, Larisa, had been an ikastola teacher for several years in Spain prior to her family's forced migration to France. Larisa had already received

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<sup>20</sup> It is important to note that the border between France and Spain was highly securitized during the last two decades of the Franco dictatorship as a consequence of a political escalation in the Basque nationalist movement. During this time many Spanish Basque nationalists had fled to live in France so as to flee persecution and seek asylum. While the French government had typically granted most of these persons refuge, the presence of thousands of southern Basques in southwestern France was a situation often viewed by French authorities with trepidation. Thus, policing of cross-border exchanges between Basque activists was also a French affair, albeit not nearly as militarized as it was from the Spanish side (Jacob 1994).

training and had first-hand experience at teaching in a bascophone environment. She put her credentials and skills to work for Seaska in a manner that the other members would learn from. Seaska would use this knowledge to create a commission of members dedicated to the issue of teacher training. Through meetings and workshops this commission would build information and craft resources intended to establish a teacher training program unique to the ikastolas. With time, as the situation in Spain would transition from dictatorship to democracy Seaska's pedagogical commission would establish teacher training apprenticeships in the ikastola system across the border, as I will discuss further in Chapter Five.

Populated by a community of highly motivated ikastola parents and teachers who were deeply concerned about the sociolinguistic vitality of Basque, Seaska's pedagogical commission generated instructional methods and materials in a manner that drew overtly on existing resources from the Spanish Basque Country as well as in ways that emerged organically during workshops and meetings. Members of the commission would gather periodically to review academic literature on bilingual education, selectively adapt materials being used in mainstream schools run by the French state, exchange ideas based on experiences in the classroom and at home, and consult a wide range of outside 'experts' so as to eventually piece together training programs for the ikastolas. Through the years, the practices of the commission would become a central working part of Seaska. The development of a teacher-training program would allow the ikastola project to grow beyond the first school in Arcangues and by 1975 Seaska would have a team of almost two dozen teachers. In addition, by establishing the professionalism and credibility of ikastolas teachers, Seaska would also be well-poised to be recognized by the state as a capable, committed and above-all resourceful grassroots organization that would not go away as a result of state-level obstructionism.

The fourth operational principle put forth by Seaska defined the primary pedagogical approach within the ikastola system as being based upon ‘new’ methods of ‘cooperative’ and ‘active’ learning that were significantly inspired by the scholarly writings of the French educational philosopher and practitioner Célestin Freinet (1898-1966). In this context, Seaska’s pedagogy was deemed ‘novel’ not only for its use of the immersion-model of bilingual education but also in the sense that Seaska largely rejected the pedagogical methods endorsed by and utilized in the national education system. As explained by Eloïse, a former ikastola teacher:

In that era, republican [public] schools used a very conservative method that approached the relationship between students and learning in a singular, mono-logical manner which was considered universalist and this method left little place for the individuality or creativity of students. The national [education] program originated with the Jules Ferry Laws of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and so, of course, a century later it was terribly out of date... It was incompetent with its mechanical emphasis on the memorization of knowledge, the supreme authority of instructors and the passivity of students...The ideas of Freinet, as adopted by Seaska, these ideas were intended to create a more dynamic and self-motivated learning experience for students” (Interview B-17).

Seaska's adoption of Frenetian pedagogy was construed as emphasizing ‘cooperative’ and ‘active’ forms of learning in several ways. First, the relationship between student and teacher must be based on the concept of multi-vocality (Beattie 1998). In this context, learning emerges through dialogue and deliberation between students and teacher rather than through the mono-vocal dissemination of knowledge from teacher to student. Students are seen as active participants in their own educational experiences as they work in partnership with teachers in the building and carrying out of curricula. The role of teachers here is to provide opportunities and spaces for children to discover knowledge on their own individual terms rather than to evaluate the accuracy of their learning through standardized testing. Second, the cooperative and active

nature of Freinetian pedagogy was also based on the involvement of parents in the educational experiences of their children (Beattie 1998). In this context, the school is perceived as a place that is built with the collaboration of parents thus helping to reinforce the linkage between school and home. This home-school link is seen as crucial for building a successful and rewarding educational experience because it reinforces the relevance and continuity of learning beyond classroom activities. This connection between home and school environment also helped tremendously to create a vibrant movement culture by ensuring a relatively high level of participation among movement constituents, suggesting the existence of a unique climate of activism within education-based social movement fields.

At the time of Seaska's emergence in the early 1970's, their use of Freinetian pedagogies placed the ikastola project within the broader context of an emergent alternative educational movement in France as well as within other post-industrial Western democracies more broadly. As part of the broader wave of reform initiatives sparked by young educators during the 1960's, a rallying cry of these education reform movements was to 'change schools in order to change society, change society in order to change schools' (Beattie 1998). Within France, the so-called 'new' or 'experimental' education movements were linked to relatively un-orthodox and progressive pedagogical philosophies of various educational practitioner-scholars, such as Célestin Freinet but also the Marxist thinking of Paulo Friere and the liberation theology-inspired works of Maria Montessori.

While many of the ideas behind these progressive education movements would eventually become mainstreamed in French public schools, during the conservative Gaullist era of the early 1970's these initiatives remained peripheral and controversial. In particular, rightward-leaning representatives of the French Ministry of National Education [MNE] along

with powerful teachers unions on the Left, such as the highly influential *Syndicat Nationale des Instituteurs* [SNI] saw such alternative education philosophies as a patent threat to their authority. These opponents believed in the tried and true integrity of the highly uniform republican schooling system and criticized proponents of the reform movements as either misguided or malevolent attempts to destroy the universal model of public education by fragmenting it into “a constellation of educational programs where a flood of countless seemingly innocent private interests will overrun the unitary principles of education for democracy and equality” (Document B-27, *Enbata*, November 1975).

For Seaska’s founders, adopting alternative and experimental pedagogies thus had several strategic consequences. First, it positioned Seaska as part of a broader wave of educational reform movements and this positioning helped to legitimate Seaska’s public credentials as a formal and qualified schooling organization. This helped to convey a message to parents that while the ikastola project was new and fairly tentative, it was neither invented out of thin air nor built from a house of cards; Seaska’s pedagogical genealogy was based in a broader context of alternative educational scholarship and activism. Another strategic, albeit relatively unintended consequence of Seaska’s claim to pedagogical alterity, however, was that it positioned the ikastola movement in a relatively antagonistic relationship with state-level authorities from the get go. By embracing pedagogical philosophies deemed ‘un-orthodox’ and ‘subversive’ by the state, Seaska was rejecting or at least criticizing methods endorsed by the MNE as ‘antiquated’ and ‘ineffective’. Hence, this stance of alterity would only further politicize and complicate Seaska’s efforts to gain governmental support farther down the road.

The fifth operational principle set forth by Seaska’s founders established the ikastola system as founded upon a ‘community-based’ and ‘cooperative’ structure of decision-making.

On the one hand, the ikastolas were construed as community-based schools in the sense that they were considered as an organic or grassroots institution built by and for the local community rather than a political institution imposed by and for the French state. On the other hand, the ikastolas were also founded upon the notion of cooperative education. This stressed the idea that the structure of authority within the ikastolas would be collectively comprised and democratically exercised by the people directly involved, i.e. parents, teachers and to some degree students. As noted by Peio, a former ikastola teacher and long-time member of Seaska:

The idea of the ikastola was born from our desire to create a model of schooling that reflected our lives, and that valorized our culture and language. The education system of the state constructs a barrier between the Basque people and our culture, and because of this barrier we and our children are alienated from our own language and identity...In the French [public education] system the parents are on the periphery, they are excluded and bureaucrats make all the decisions. If you don't agree with something or want to make a change, forget it because you have little control over anything; it is a very centralized system...To maintain the link to our culture Seaska has constructed a more democratic school where we are not isolated, because in this system the parents work very hard to play a central and important role (Interview B-9).

As an extension of the fourth principle, the fifth principle of building a community-based and cooperative schooling system characterized the ikastola project as a part of a broader wave of grassroots education reform initiatives within France seeking to promote a decentralization of the national education system. The zeitgeist behind such grassroots schooling efforts was to democratize the education system by allocating greater levels of influence and authority to local community members as well as by incorporating regional languages, histories and cultures into the educational curricula. Seaska's founders were thus not only critical of the French state's exclusion of Basque in public schools but also disillusioned with what they saw as an

unresponsive, stagnant and excessively bureaucratized system of state-run schools. By ascribing a locally-based and collaborative structure to the ikastola system, Seaska positioned parents and teachers as the authors of their own educational enterprise, thus laying the ground for an effervescent sense of community oriented around the ikastola movement and the revitalization of Basque. Such grassroots vivacity would prove central to Seaska's future mobilization efforts as it would oblige ikastola supporters to devise effective methods of working together as a more or less unified collective entity. Ultimately, Seaska's capacity to both maintain and wield its organizational solidarity in times of economic distress during the 1980's would prove crucial in winning the first state-level contract by 1989.

Finally, the sixth principle defined Seaska as a secular and inclusive organization. The principle of secularism was meant to make clear to the public that the ikastolas were not in any manner affiliated with religious education, and especially Catholic schooling. The French Basque Country is a staunchly Catholic region, and Seaska's declaration of secularity was to become part of its identity as a novel and progressive educational organization. While the Catholic Church had played a historical role in promoting the Basque language in France in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Jacob 1994: Ch.2), Seaska's members did not want to establish any explicit ties with religious authorities. For Seaska's members, the Church was too conservative in its attempts toward linguistic preservation and too strongly tied to folkloric enactments of Basque ethnicity. "It wasn't that we were against religion or the church" remembers Clarice, the primary initiator behind Seaska's inception, "but Catholicism was not a part of our project. We were open and welcomed people with religious attachments but it was clear that we wanted to construct a secular learning environment completely free of catechism" (Interview B-8). This principle of secularity would later become crucial when Seaska began making claims upon the state for

increased recognition and support. In brief, Seaska would argue that the non-religious nature of the ikastolas further warranted their incorporation into the public sector. In addition, Seaska's efforts to define the ikastola system as 'inclusive' related to at least three contexts: religion, class and political ideology. First, the principle of inclusiveness was meant to counter any lurking criticisms from Catholic leaders concerning the motivation behind Seaska's explicitly secular agenda. The notion that Seaska was inclusive was intended to signal that while Seaska did not pursue religious instruction it did not harbor anti-clerical sentiments and persons of faith were more than welcome to participate.

Second, the principle of inclusiveness was also meant to counter class-based accusations articulated by teachers unions and politicians that Seaska was building an elitist schooling system. In this context, Seaska would always go to great lengths to assure that any form of tuition and fees paid by parents would remain very low and highly affordable so as to ensure participation from as broad a segment of society as possible. Third, Seaska's identity as an inclusive organization was also meant to counteract allegations that the ikastola network was catering to and recruiting from a very limited political demographic: young Basque nationalists of the far Left. In this context, Seaska wanted to ensure participation from any and all persons who were interested in the status of the Basque language regardless of their political affiliations or ideologies. As noted earlier, Seaska would thus continually labor to portray itself as an apolitical entity and struggle endlessly to distance the ikastola movement from the ideas and activities of Basque secessionists. This third aspect of inclusiveness would be a perpetual source of conflict between Seaska's members and the state-level education authorities who opposed the expansion of the ikastola movement let alone its integration into the public sector.

In sum, from the spring of 1969 to the summer of 1975 Seaska's gestational phase of mobilization would be defined by two prevailing characteristics that had bearing upon their future relationship with the French state. First, activists would collectively portray and position themselves as an 'apolitical' organization. This had two meanings. On the one hand, it meant that activists did not initially intend to make any claims upon the French government for recognition or support. Seaska's original intentions were to develop and operate a regional bascofone pre-school system wholly within the private sector. On the other hand, by claiming an apolitical identity Seaska's founders also sought to distance themselves from the state-oriented secessionist agendas of a broader ethno-nationalist movement emerging on both sides of the Basque Country.

Another important characteristic of the gestational phase for Seaska was the development of an organizational mission statement based upon a series of operational principles. In this context, Seaska put forth six principles that laid the ideological and institutional foundations for how members would proceed beyond the pilot school created in Arcangues. On an ideological level, the founding mission statement established the terms by which Seaska wanted to be acknowledged and recognized by political authorities, i.e. as a professional, proficient and progressive educational organization dedicated to the revitalization of the Basque language. On an institutional level, the principles behind Seaska's mission statement provided members with a common framework to coordinate their actions, manage resources, and build the infra-structure they needed to secure their organizational unity through time. All of these characteristics would prove simultaneously instrumental and problematic for Seaska in 1975 when members would make the collective decision to enter the state-regulated realm of primary schooling.

## 5.2 THE EXTENSION PHASE, 1974-1977

Toward the end of the academic year 1974-1975, Seaska would start entering into a new phase of extension. In part this phase was marked by a gradual growth in the size and scope of the ikastola schooling network. By the summer of 1975 the ikastolas encompassed 16 pre-schools in 12 towns that served around 225 students and employed at least 20 teachers. During its first six years operation, Seaska's base of active membership had grown from a handful of parents to a network of over one hundred families. No longer did Seaska's architects construe their efforts as tentative or experimental. In relative terms: the ikastolas were thriving beyond their initial expectations. At the start of the school year in autumn of 1974 Seaska's concerns had been heavily focused on effectively managing the ikastolas in existence and opening more ikastolas. In addition, however, the process of institutional growth was also defined by the extension of Seaska's political claims.

By the spring of 1975 Seaska's members began thinking more lucidly about taking the steps needed to expand the network of bascophone schools into the context of primary education. This move would bring them into a more direct and confrontational relationship with state-level education authorities, thus effectively eroding any pretensions toward a wholly apolitical stance. As recalled by Clarice, Seaska's acting president at the time: "Our motivation was simple, many of the children had followed the pre-school system to its end, there was not one single Basque [primary] school for them to go to and so we started down the path to build one...a political affront was not only inevitable but necessary to enter this new stage" (Interview B-8).

In order to operate primary schools, Seaska had to obtain the approval of municipal authorities. Moving into the realm of primary schooling meant that Seaska was declaring itself as an association positioned within the sector of private education. Yet, Seaska still avoided

publicly declaring the ikastolas as ‘schools’ in order to circumvent a potential conflict with the MNE. A passing statement made by a representative of the MNE in the regional press, for example, foretold of the prospective conflicts facing Seaska. This governmental spokesperson had described the ikastolas as utilizing a “savage pedagogy” and declared: “it is a good thing that these ikastolas are not named as schools, because if this were the case they would be shut down” (quoted in Garat 2005:113). With such threats looming on the horizon, Seaska made a strategic choice to continue referring to the ikastolas under the more ambiguous label of ‘centers for the promotion of Basque language and culture’. This strategy of ambiguous labeling would eventually prove ineffective, however, particularly as Seaska sought to initiate educational programs at the primary level. Because French law posits that education is compulsory for all children by the age six, if Seaska wanted to offer educational services to children beyond the age of six, then ikastolas would have to acquire the formal status of ‘schools’, rather than ‘cultural centers’.

The main piece of legislation dealing with the creation of association-run private schools within France during the 1970’s was based on laws originally enacted in 1886 and reformed in 1959. In short, French law on private schooling required Seaska to undertake a two-step process. First, Seaska would have to propose its project to the mayor of the town wherein the ikastola would be situated; a form of approval largely independent from the Ministry of National Education. This entailed pinpointing an adequate location for the school as well as explaining the substance and objectives of the educational program. If the two dimensions of the first step were approved by the mayor’s office, then the second step was to post a public notice announcing the creation of the ikastola for a period of 30 days. During this month-long period, members of the general public could protest the opening of the ikastola upon reasonable grounds based on “poor

values and/or hygiene” (Garat 2005:109). The second part of this process would ultimately prove most problematic for Seaska.

Seaska created a team of persons- including two lawyers- to deal with the proposed opening of two ikastolas in the towns of Anglet and St. Jean de Luz for the following autumn 1975. These locations were chosen in great part because of housing issues, but also because of the cooperative nature of municipal authorities in these areas. In the weeks following Seaska’s initial requests and public notices, the organization received a letter from the regional representative of the MNE, inquiring into the nature and intent of Seaska’s activities. Along with sending a dossier on Seaska’s pedagogical programs, activists responded to the MNE by stating that “[i]t is with great astonishment that we received your letter as we are an association under the Law of 1901 and our activities do not fall under the domain of the National Education program” (quoted from Garat 2005:107, translation mine). Another exchange occurred between Seaska and the MNE, whereby authorities requested more information and materials which were duly provided by activists. Ultimately, without much intervention by the state and with great excitement on the part of activists, Seaska simultaneously inaugurated two ikastolas in Anglet and St Jean de Luz September 1975. While these ikastolas were somewhat limited in that they offered students only the first year of primary schooling, the idea was to keep expanding with each new school year. Together these two bascophone schools had an enrollment of around 60 students, many of whom had been the original participants in Seaska’s pre-schooling programs. The debut of these schools was marked by considerable elation among Seaska’s core founders. As recalled by Manex, one of Seaska’s first members: “It was really an historical moment for all us. In effect, it was the very first time [primary-level] education programs would be conducted completely in Basque within French territory...There was a feeling of possibility and hope but

also of insecurity because the state was always there over us like dark clouds announcing a very big storm”(Interview B-1).

However, the initial letter sent by the MNE in 1974 would foreshadow a coming tide of political intervention, antagonism and obstructionism. This political opposition would come primarily from two fronts: the largest and most influential union of public school-teachers in France: SNI (*Syndicat Nationale des Instituteurs*), and educational policy-makers affiliated with the regional headquarters of the MNE in both Bayonne and Bordeaux. Collectively, these two sets of actors would aggressively oppose Seaska’s entry into the domain of primary education.

As appendages of the central government in Paris, the MNE’s sub-national representatives in Bayonne and Bordeaux were appointed not elected officials. As Gaullists put into place by then president Georges Pompidou these policy-makers were strict adherents of republican ideology and firmly opposed to the project of minority language schooling; viewing it as a fundamentally irrational and illiberal project. Any use of Basque within any sector of the national education system, it was argued, should be strictly limited in scope so as not to conflict with the ‘proper’ learning of French and should only be undertaken under the direction of the central state, not grassroots actors with ‘questionable’ political motives. In particular, Seaska’s near exclusive use of Basque as a medium of education was negatively construed by the regional rectorate of the MNE in Bayonne as a “preposterous schema” that “will only lead these children to future impasses by depriving them of equal opportunities” (Document B-19, *Enbata*, November 22 1975).

In addition to the MNE, the public school-teachers union SNI would pose the most serious long-term threat to Seaska because of the strong base of support for unions in the French Basque Country and its political clout with the Left. In this context, it should be noted that SNI

was more strongly opposed to Seaska's aspirations to build an alternative education system in the private sphere rather than to its ethnolinguistic agenda. In its newsletter of October 1977, for instance, SNI would state its position:

We hold and affirm with force that we cannot accept the creation of an educational service in parallel to the public system, as the results would not align with the secular aspirations we have always held. In addition we also affirm with equal force another principle that must be upheld: the teaching of regional languages and cultures should be conducted through the public sector and not through the development of a parallel service in the private sector (Document B-46, *Enbata*, October 3 1977).

SNI's representatives negatively interpreted the expansion of the ikastolas as a patent threat to the universal framework of public education in France. SNI argued that Seaska was working against an inclusive model of democratic schooling by creating unregulated and experimental schools within the private sector; an agenda which SNI derided as an elitist and divisive form of communitarianism. In short, SNI had few qualms with Seaska's pre-school programs but wanted above all to keep Seaska out of primary schooling. Moreover, the influential teachers union was less opposed to the idea of integrating some Basque into the public education system, but still remained skeptical that 'too much' Basque would corrupt the learning of French (Liralu and Lichau 2005). In addition, union representatives pointed out that the Deixonne Law of 1951 had allowed for the creation regional language programs in public schools, and that any experimental bilingual initiatives should emerge through the more professionalized channels of the MNE, rather than through experimentation by 'laymen' in the private sector. The main point of SNI's opposition here was in a private schooling system promoting a divisive brand of ethnic communitarianism. "By allowing such initiatives to flourish today", argued SNI in an editorial, "tomorrow we will have to justify the creation of a multitude

of separate schools for drawing, dancing, and music all operating under the cover of seemingly justifiable and noble causes...This is contrary to the universal and egalitarian system of public education that we have and will always endorse” (Document B-38, *Enbata*, March 13 1976).

For the duration of the 1975-76 school year, the emerging tide of ideological opposition toward Seaska’s agenda would not translate into any direct attempts to shut down the ikastola system; i.e. state-level opposition to the ikastolas remained discursive. Nevertheless, Seaska still had to defend itself against this increasingly potent tide of rhetorical criticism. In particular, Seaska had to respond to the argument by state-level opponents that bilingual education should be left in the hands of ‘qualified’ parties; an argument which implicitly discredited Seaska’s pedagogical personnel as incompetent. In addition to pointing out that most of the people behind Seaska’s pedagogical programs held university degrees from France or Spain, Seaska responded to state-level accusations of incompetence with two key claims.

First, Seaska argued that since the creation of the Deixonne Law in 1951 the state has falsely and deceivingly portrayed itself as working to promote Basque in the regional public school system. Activists pointed out that the use of Basque was limited to several hours per week; hardly enough to promote revitalization at the societal level let alone ensure literacy among individual students. In its newsletter of fall 1976, for example, Seaska claimed that in spite of the Deixonne Law the MNE “has completely failed to fulfill its service to the public as it has not responded to the basic needs of the Basque people with respect to the teaching of their language and culture” (Garat 2005: 118). In this context, Seaska argued that its existence was fully legitimated by the absence of proper state-level provisions which thus made the ikastola “the sole institution within France that currently fulfills a truly public educational service for the Basque people” (ibid). The articulation of such a position signaled a crucial shift in Seaska’s

organizational identity; activists were now prepared to publicly label the ikastolas as schools in the formal sense, rather than day-care facilities for pre-schoolers.

A second key claim put forth by Seaska in response to its opponents was that the ultimate and explicit objective of the immersive pedagogy used in the ikastola system was bilingualism. In this context, Seaska wanted to make it clear that they harbored no intentions whatsoever of preventing students from gaining literacy in French. This is illustrated in a 1976 newspaper interview that was conducted by Enbata with Seaska's president, Clarice:

Our aim is not to re-create the faults inherent to the monolingual national [education] system in France...The goal of the ikastola system is to help create persons who are bilingual in the fullest sense of the term, which means that students have equal mastery in both French and Basque. This aim should be distinguished from that of simply building a bilingual school or classroom where language instruction is defined by a division of labor; 3 hours for French and 2 hours for Basque, for example. Simply put, this method is not effective...Because Basque has receded from our society, it must be prioritized as the base language from which young children learn all subjects. Once this base is assured, then French can be gradually introduced, otherwise its dominance is intrusive to the aim of bilingualism (Document B-18, *Enbata*, February 21 1977).

These two sets of claims were periodically articulated by Seaska either through the local and regional press or through their own newsletters and brochures. These claims were rejoinders intended to invalidate the criticisms being articulated by both the MNE and SNI. On the one hand, Seaska's opponents argued that it should let state-level specialists administrate bilingual programs. Seaska countered this point by arguing that the state had willfully avoided and unjustly postponed any integration of Basque in schools for decades. On the other hand, the MNE and SNI argued that Seaska's prioritization of Basque would harm student's knowledge of

French. Seaska countered this point by arguing that the overt aim of the ikastolas was to engender literacy in both French and Basque.

Up through the end of the 1976-1977 school year Seaska's struggle for recognition from the state had largely been fought on a discursive terrain whereby activists sought to legitimize the ikastolas as credible schools so as to obtain permission to operate freely within the private sector. Seaska was not yet making the bolder and more contentious set of claims aimed at integrating the ikastolas into the public sector. This shift in stance was, however, right around the corner.

### **5.3 THE POLITICIZATION PHASE, 1977-1979**

By the summer of 1977 Seaska was operating nearly 20 schools, including the two new primary schools in Anglet and St Jean de Luz. In addition to managing the lurking climate of political suspicion surrounding the ikastolas, Seaska's members had their hands more than full dealing with managerial and financial issues. The co-operative and community-based design of the ikastola system meant that Seaska was essentially creating everything from scratch and relying on maximal participation by members to accomplish the heavy-lifting. Although some technical and material assistance was coming in from across the border in the Spanish Basque Country, the highly unstable political climate in now post-Franco Spain meant that such support was highly sporadic and largely symbolic.<sup>21</sup> The resources thus needed to keep the ikastolas

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<sup>21</sup> Although the Franco dictatorship ended in 1975, the transition to democracy in Spain was slow to emerge and characterized by a highly unstable and conflict-ridden period in the Basque Country where the battle for political authority was being fought out between left-wing nationalists and conservative advocates of a constitutional monarchy (Pérez Agote 2006).

going and growing required enormous commitment and dedication from parents and teachers.

As recalled by Clarice:

It was exhausting but also incredibly motivating. We worked everyday of the week without end, but there was never any thought of stopping because we were inspired by the progression of everything and the contributions of everyone involved...people donated enormous amounts of time but also material things that we really needed like desks, paper, pencils, food and transportation of the children...We always worked with a shortage of money and we were quickly going into debt but we kept moving forward. It was hard but we knew we couldn't stop (Interview B-8).

In dealing with the managerial and financial issues inherent to building an alternative grassroots education system, Seaska's core leadership- i.e. administrators and teachers- was constantly speaking out to its active base of members, i.e. parents. On the one hand, part of this infra-organizational communicative process entailed the production of motivational rhetoric intended to remind parents of their central role. This is illustrated, for instance, by the following excerpt from a newsletter published in spring of 1977: "Unfortunately, the situation in France means that we Basques cannot look for help from a government that has treated our language and culture in the schools with contempt for so long...It's up to all of us to make Seaska work. There is no other option: We must invest our time and our sweat as well as our money" (Document B-29, *Ikastolak*, Spring 1977). On the other hand, infra-organizational communication also entailed processes of collective deliberation and reflection on the part of Seaska's membership. This was characterized, for example, by periodic meetings that become known as 'General Assemblies'. During these assemblies all members were expected to attend in order to listen and learn about impending topics and problems as well as to participate and weigh in on how issues should be approached. According to a summation of one such assembly in spring 1977, some of the issues being dealt with included: the absence of sufficient instruction materials, paying the

back-salaries of ikastola teachers, arranging for the transportation of students, the amount of volunteer labor expected from new parents, and the opening of a new primary school.

By mid-summer 1977 Seaska was ‘channeling its solidarity’ in order to open a primary-level ikastola in the town of St. Palais. The proposed and ultimately unsuccessful opening of this ikastola would become a catalytic event for Seaska, propelling activists head-first into a confrontational relationship with state-level authorities and teachers unions. As summarized by one activist directly involved with the school’s projected unveiling: “I would say that the situation at St Palais was a decisive moment. Everything changed for us afterwards; we entered a new stage...everything became more conflictual, more politicized” (Interview B-1).

With the help of some municipal authorities in the summer of 1977, Seaska had located a piece of land where they could erect some pre-fabricated housing. The idea was to start things off in the pre-fab units and then build something more permanent further down the road. The process was initiated in July and quickly received approval from municipal authorities by August. Seaska was using the other two primary schools as a model and as far as activists were concerned they were doing everything by the book. As put by Clarice: “There was always this halo of suspicion around us and we didn’t want to invite any problems...We followed the regulations and even had some lawyers helping us” (Interview B-8). Following the approval of the mayor’s office, the 30-day public notice was posted by Seaska regarding the proposed opening of the new ikastola. On the eve of the final day of the notice and a few weeks before the slated start of the school year, a regional representative of the MNE made a formal declaration of opposition against the opening of the St. Palais ikastola citing “inadequate sanitary conditions due to a lack of running water and the absence of a fence around the premise ensuring the safety of children” (Document B-39 *Enbata*, September 3 1977). This opposition was also echoed by

SNI's spokespersons who criticized Seaska's members as being "irresponsible" and setting a "dangerous precedent" (*ibid*). Although Seaska's lawyers rallied to try and help the cause, the ceremonious opening of the school was ultimately cancelled as the opposing parties carried far too much weight. At roughly the same time representatives from the MNE also began an inspection of the two primary-level ikastolas already in operation in Anglet and St. Jean de Luz, implicitly threatening to shut these schools down as well. By late September, Seaska's members thus found themselves under pressure and effectively cornered by a powerful set of governmental policy-makers and the most prominent union of public school teachers. The existence of the entire primary school system was now in danger of being delegitimated and dismantled.

However, in the immediate wake of the closing of the ikastola in St. Palais and at the same time that Seaska was being publicly condemned by SNI, there was a broad collective outpouring of support for Seaska from the regional public. The 'official' reasons of sanitation and safety that were given for the closing of the school in St. Palais were interpreted by many of Seaska's supporters as false pretenses masking the state's ideological opposition to bascoophone schooling. As noted by one anonymous supporter in the Basque newspaper *Enbata*:

The rector M. Mazurie has said that the facility suffers from unsanitary conditions due to a lack of running water and a fence. Toilets and a fence? These issues are easily solved and reveal the deceptive tactics which the state will use to discriminate against the Basque language and culture...This is not simply a political attack upon Seaska, it is an affront by the French government against all the Basque people" (Document B-41, September 17 1977).

This rhetoric was characteristic of the collective resentment articulated by many of Seaska's members and supporters when the ikastola was closed. They were not merely

suspicious of the motivation behind the MNE's opposition, but certain that the closure of the school in St Palais was a political action intended to put an end to the budding ikastola movement.

However, rather than reel back from intimidation and threats, the St Palais experience galvanized and motivated Seaska's proponents. Activists became more vocal and began publicly articulating a much more explicitly contentious stance toward state-level opponents. Seaska's initial desire to adopt an apolitical agenda was put on the backburner as a result of the pressure placed upon them by their political challengers. Within days of the St Palais incident, Seaska began making public statements through the regional press in order to articulate its position, unpack its motivations, explain its objectives and above all condemn the standpoint of their opponents as unreasonable and unjust. For example, in one of the first statements published by Seaska in the weekly newspaper *Enbata*, "the incident at St Palais" is methodically chronicled, the words of the MNE representative are quoted verbatim, French law on private schooling is explained and the closure is ultimately described as a "declaration of war against the Basque people" (Document B-42, *Enbata*, September 24 1977).

These attempts to communicate to the public would come constitute Seaska's first organized efforts to deploy a publicity campaign geared toward countering the tide of state-level opposition. Such publicity campaigns would become a staple of Seaska's strategic repertoire in the years ahead and this would be the first. Because Seaska's opponents were constantly attacking the credibility and legitimacy of the ikastola system, activists had to respond to these accusations through a continuous process of framing. "As a minority, we could never afford to be silent" recalled Yvette, a former ikastola parent, teacher and ex-president of Seaska: "above all I would say that our struggle yesterday and today has been a struggle to *verbalize*; to be

comprehended by authorities. Seaska has constantly been pre-judged and discounted from the start; we have always been obliged to defend ourselves” (Interview B-14, italics added). October 1977 thus became a definitive moment because it marked a cognizance among activists that communication and public relations would play a fundamental role in their struggle against the accusations and obstructionism wielded by Seaska’s influential challengers. Their struggle for recognition was thus a struggle to achieve legitimacy within the political arena; i.e. to have their ethno-educational agenda acknowledged and validated rather than discredited and dismissed by policy-makers.

In the weeks following the premature closure of the St Palais ikastola and the launching of Seaska’s informational campaign, the organization received hundreds of letters of support from people not directly involved with the ikastola network, including journalists, intellectuals, public school teachers from the region as well as politicians and newspaper editors from the Southern Basque Country. Hence, not only were Seaska’s members up in arms about the MNE’s decision, but sympathetic members of the Basque public were expressing their solidarity with Seaska as well; a factor that only further energized activists; i.e. public support became a strategic resource tied to the accrual of state-based recognition. In the weeks following the closure of the ikastola in St Palais a steady stream of letters and phone calls began flooding the regional offices of the MNE in protest; a factor that only helped to strengthen Seaska’s quest for political legitimacy by lending the organization a broader based base of popular support from non-members.

The truly transformative and catalytic moment for Seaska, however, would arise on the first day of October 1977 when an estimated 3,500 protesters took to the streets of Bayonne, the largest urban center and historical ‘capital’ of the French Basque Country. Days before Seaska

had issued a public statement calling for its supporters to demonstrate their solidarity. Published in several newspapers and distributed as leaflets to the public, part of this statement read as follows:

It has become necessary to publicly express our protest against the decision to close the ikastola primary school in St Palais...We neither seek to provoke hostility nor perturbation. Our attitude is guided solely by the will to save the ikastolas, because at this moment it is the only method to save the Basque language...Our march will be purely pacifist and undertaken in silence. Through this silent march...we want to show to the public authorities our determination, calm, serenity, tranquility and pacifism in going all the way to end of our objective to assure the opening of ikastolas whether they are pre-schools or primary schools (quoted and translated from Garat 2005: 112).

This call to arms and the protest that it spawned on October 1, 1977 is tremendously revealing of the emergence of Seaska's strategic repertoire in several ways. First, it marks the debut of the street protest, a tactic that Seaska would periodically come to rely on in a variety of ways for decades to come. Protests would be central in Seaska's political strategizing because they would exhibit the organization's capacity to generate and wield a demographic presence within the public sphere. In this light, Seaska's commitment to pursue its agenda could be both heard and seen by political authorities. Seaska's ability to gain presence through protests would help to display the organization's putatively 'popular' base of support in the civic realm, thus reinforcing Seaska's identity as a democratizing initiative.

Second, Seaska's orchestration of a street protest demonstrates that its representatives were fairly certain that they could mobilize a sizeable population of people in support of their agenda. In fact, Seaska was totally shocked when over 3,000 persons participated in the march. "We thought perhaps 1,000 at the most" recalled Clarice, "we were completely surprised and captivated by the actual attendance" (Interview B-8).

Third, Seaska's call to undertake the march in silence and its insistence on the pacifistic nature of the march was also illustrative of their desire to maintain distance from the militancy and violence characterizing ethno-nationalist mobilization in the Basque Country. In the post-franco transition to democracy in Spain, the nationalist struggle for power had led to many protests in the Southern Basque Country whereby violent clashes emerged between nationalist protestors and provisional police forces from Madrid. Above all, Seaska wanted to avoid any semblance to these events and focus attention on the educational agenda at hand, thus making an explicit call to supporters to refrain from any physical confrontation with French police who, activists believed, would be waiting for things to turn violent. As remembered by Yvette, "There was some worry that things might turn bad, aggressive...The goal was, above all, to show our solidarity, to tell the authorities that the Basque public was united for the ikastolas...We [protestors] knew nothing would be gained by breaking windows because this is precisely what they [political opponents] were waiting for, then they could say 'Look! You can't trust these Basques, they are fanatics'" (Interview B-14). The protest in Bayonne was thus crucial in defining Seaska's contentious stance toward the state, but also crucial in how this contention was being enacted; i.e. through non-violence.

In addition to fueling the emergence of discursive strategies of communication, the incident at St Palais was a catalyst because it stimulated activists to utilize performative strategies of public protest for the very first time. On the one hand, through the regional press as well as through the publication of its own materials Seaska could discursively articulate its ethno-educational agenda on its own terms and thus try to maintain ideological distance from the more radical factions of the Basque ethno-political movement. Foremost, however, was Seaska's

aim to speak on its own terms so as to discredit the criticisms of its opponents; i.e. SNI and the MNE.

On the other hand, through public demonstrations Seaska's supporters could enact and exhibit their loyalty to the ikastola movement thus bringing the physical presence of ikastola proponents into the public sphere. While discursive strategies- 'framing'- were crucial for Seaska to articulate its claims and grievances to the public, such performative strategies were vital for Seaska to demonstrate its social base of support to political authorities. Coupled with discursive strategies of communication, such performative strategies of protest effectively linked Seaska's organizational agenda to a broader community of citizens who actively claimed the ikastola movement as their own. These findings help to illustrate the strategic linkages between different types of mobilization practices and underscore the need for analysts to highlight these relationships so as to better theorize the construction of mobilization repertoires (Tilly 2006).

## **5.4 CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the remainder of the 1977-78 school year would not witness the re-opening of the ikastola in St Palais, nor the opening of any other ikastola for that matter. Under scrutiny from the MNE and criticism from SNI, Seaska's growth entered into a brief period of stagnation. This static period was limited, however, to the creation of new ikastolas and not to the recruitment of new participants. In fact, by the start of academic year 1978-79, Seaska's base of membership reached over 600 persons and the ikastola network was bigger than ever with nearly one dozen schools serving nearly 400 students (Document B-168, *Seaska*, September 2001). With 10 pre-schools and two recently created primary schools operating at full capacity Seaska

had waiting lists for the 1979-80 school year. Not only had the St Palais affair catapulted Seaska into the political arena, but it had brought a surge of participants into the ikastola movement. This increasing support was interpreted by Seaska's founding members as nothing short of a positive and encouraging signal to continue their efforts and not back down from state-level threats.

While the political resistance and antagonism Seaska had experienced would neither decrease nor disappear in the years ahead, the expanding network of people committed to the ikastola movement would provide Seaska with an empowering sense of possibility. Seaska's community of supporters would be the lifeblood of the ikastola system as they would provide the social and economic capital needed to keep the community-based schools going and growing. In addition, Seaska's broadening base of support from the public would also prove crucial in legitimating the ikastola movement as a democratizing initiative within the political arena. The strategic solidarity that had been triggered for Seaska through the St Palais affair would be further buoyed by the emergence of democracy in the Spanish Basque Country after 1979, and the arrival of a relatively accommodating Socialist government in 1981.

## **6.0 OPPORTUNITY FROM THE SOUTH: HOW THE RISE OF THE AUTONOMOUS BASQUE COMMUNITY OF SPAIN EMPOWERED THE IKASTOLA MOVEMENT IN FRANCE, 1979-1986**

In this chapter I consider how Seaska's struggle for state-level support was empowered by a series of political changes and events that took shape across the border in the Spanish Basque Country. Drawing on the social movement literature, I construe these events as political opportunity structures; i.e. aspects of the broader political system that become positively perceived by grassroots actors as strategically relevant for and potentially empowering to their mobilization agenda (Crossley 2000:105-112). Focusing on a particularly influential and transformational episode in Seaska's mobilization campaign from 1979 to 1986, this chapter explores how the ikastola movement in France was enabled by the rise of an autonomous Basque nationalist government in Spain at the close of the 1970's. I limit the bulk of my discussion to a seven year timeframe that immediately follows the emergence of the Spanish Basque government in the fall of 1979 and which leads into Seaska's incorporation within the transnational Ikastola Confederation in the spring of 1985. I focus on this time period in order to illustrate how events in Spain inspired Seaska's members to both expand and escalate the terms of their mobilization agenda within France, and how events in Spain encouraged Seaska's members to cultivate strategic transnational ties with ikastola proponents across the border. I argue that political opportunities did not merely 'spill over' into France from Spain and thus

impact Seaska ‘from above’, but rather that opportunity was grasped by Seaska’s members as they evaluated and then engaged with events across the border in a more or less instrumental manner. Here, I show how a repertoire of discursive, organizational and performative practices was mobilized by ikastola proponents so as to maximize the strategic nature of their relationship with Basque language activists in Spain.

This chapter is organized as follows. First I provide a brief historical sketch of how the emergence of an autonomous government in the Spanish Basque Country during the fall of 1979 brought about the creation of Basque language laws in 1982 which then in turn led to a gradual institutionalization of the ikastola system in the Basque Provinces of Spain, a process that culminated in the creation of the Ikastola Confederation in 1985. I draw on both primary and secondary data to explore how political transformations in Spain had an empowering effect on Seaska’s mobilization campaign during the early part of the 1980’s.

## **6.1 THE RISE OF EUSKADI AND NORMALIZATION OF THE IKASTOLAS IN SPAIN**

During the latter part of the 1970’s Basque cultural and political nationalism in Spain was reaching a climatic momentum (Lecours 2007; Perez-Agoté 2006). In the aftermath of the death of General Francisco Franco in 1975, the Spanish state was in a state of flux and for the first time in nearly 40 years Spain was positioned to transition from dictatorship to democracy. In the Basque Country, after decades of governmental repression, underground activism and political violence, a broad array of nationalist actors were vying for regional political power. About a year

after a new Spanish constitution and national state were unveiled by transitional authorities in 1978, the Basque Country (excluding Navarra) became transformed into an autonomous political community which became officially known as ‘*Euskadi*’. The rise of Euskadi meant that for the first time since the end of the Second Spanish Republic and the outbreak of Civil War in 1936, citizens in the Basque Provinces in Spain (Alava, Guipuzcoa and Viscaya) were living in a semi-sovereign sub-national polity within the Spanish nation-state.<sup>22</sup>

Ultimately the Basque Nationalist Party (BNP) emerged as the dominant player in Spanish Basque politics and began to take over the reins of the autonomous government by 1980. Staying true to the ethnolinguistic tenets of Basque nationalist ideology, one of the BNP’s earliest programmatic objectives was to implement an aggressive set of public policies intended to stimulate the revitalization of the Basque language, or ‘*Euskera*’. Soon after rising to power in 1979-80, the BNP thus began to target the educational system as a central arena of linguistic policy-making. By 1982, a series of legislative acts were put forth by the Basque government known as ‘The Basic Law on the Standardization of the Use of the Basque Language’, also more commonly referred to as Basque language normalization policies. These legislative initiatives not only gave Euskera co-official status with Spanish in Euskadi but also made the learning of Euskera obligatory at all levels of education, including both public and private schools. The two key points of this legislative act were as follows:

- The Basque Language, the language of the Basque people, shall, together with Spanish, be recognized as an official language of education in the Basque Country, and all the inhabitants of the Basque Country will have the right to know and use both languages.

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<sup>22</sup> Prior to the Civil War the Basque Country had long enjoyed a status of relative autonomy within Spain that was historically linked to a foral system dating back to the Middle Ages (Lecours 2007).

- The public institutions of the BAC [Basque Autonomous Community] will guarantee the use of both languages and regulate the measures and means necessary to guarantee their knowledge.

With the creation of Basque language normalization laws in 1982, a three-tiered model of bilingual schooling emerged: Models A, B and D [NOTE: there is no letter 'C' in Basque]. The distinction between these three models was defined by the varying degree of emphasis on the use of Basque as a medium of instruction. At the weakest level of D, for instance, was a system of 'minimal bilingualism' whereby Basque had to be incorporated into at least 25% of the educational curriculum, most often in the form of second language learning courses. At the time, most of the schools that adopted this system were private schools populated by the children of wealthy and upper-middle class families whose origins were from outside the Basque Country. At the middle level of B was a system of 'balanced bilingualism' whereby the curriculum was evenly split 50/50 between Basque and Spanish. This was the most widespread program put to use in most public schools and which thus affected the majority of the student population. At the most intensive level of A, however, was the 'immersion model' of bilingual education that prioritized the use of Basque across all curricula. This model was explicitly based on the bilingual programs that had been developed within the original ikastola schooling movement in the Basque province of Viscaya just prior to the outbreak of the Civil War in 1936 and then re-initiated during the early 1960's.

The ikastolas were originally developed in the Spanish-Basque province of Viscaya during the 1930's by a group of intellectuals variously aligned with the nationalist movement (Lopez Goñi 2003). The motivation behind the development of the first ikastolas largely centered on at least inter-locking issues: [1] the poor performance of bascofone students in Spanish-language schools, [2] the gradual socio-linguistic decline of Basque among younger generations,

[3] the persistent exclusion of Basque in public schools by state-level planners, and [4] the near total disregard among educational policy-makers for fostering bilingualism. Although a serious shortage of trained bilingual teachers as well as a deficiency in bascophone instructional materials, severely hampered the ability of the pioneering actors to get the ikastolas up and running, a small network of ikastolas began operating around the cities of Bilbao, Vitoria and San Sebastian between the years of 1931-1939.

With the outbreak of Civil War in 1936 and the installment of Franco's militaristic government in 1939, a repressive series of anti-Basque policies were put into place that vociferously opposed the use of Basque in any educational institution, public or private. The General Education Act of 1945, for instance, mandated the use of Castilian as the sole language of instruction in all Spanish schools, thus prohibiting the use of Basque or other regional languages such as Catalan and Galician. As a consequence of such linguistic bans most ikastolas were shut down while a few went on to operate in a strictly clandestine manner (Lopez Goñi 2003). Nevertheless, it was during this dark era of ethnolinguistic prohibition that the ikastolas became powerful symbols of a broader Basque struggle for ethno-national survival and sovereignty. While an estimated 569 students were enrolled in the covert ikastola programs in 1965, for example, by 1975 there were over 20,000 ikastola students across the Spanish Basque Country (Lopez Goni 2003:673). By contrast, in 1975 Seaska was just embarking on its struggle to gain entry into the realm of primary education and there were just over one dozen ikastolas serving around 280 students, most of who were preschoolers in France.

Although governmental sponsorship of the southern ikastola system contributed immensely to its rapid expansion in Euskadi, it is vital to remember that this growth depended mostly on the commitment of grassroots actors to actually open and operate such schools in

specific communities. The collective investments and dedication that fueled this effervescence is nicely described by Iñes Lopez Goñi (2003) in her historical account of the ikastola movement in Spain:

This process [the ascension of a Basque nationalist government] gave an impulse to the origins and subsequent strengthening of the ikastolas which, with no prior planning, nonexistent material resources, no previous educational initiatives and no experimental phase, began to spring up in the 1960s throughout the whole of the Basque Country... In most cases it was parents who, with the assistance of other groups, often young people intent on working for the Basque language and culture, gathered together sufficient numbers of children and, without further ado, set up their own ikastolas (2003:672).

In the final years of Franco's reign in the early 1970's, the persistent growth and popularity of the ikastolas, despite official political sanctions against them, led to their legalization; i.e. the ikastolas became recognized private schools and were no longer forced to operate underground. This moment of reluctant recognition was part of the declining dictator's efforts to placate an increasingly unstoppable and popular surge of Basque nationalism that had begun to sweep the region with increasing vigor during the late 1960's (Perez Agoté 2006:133). By the formal end of Franco's regime in 1975 the ikastolas would emerge from the dictatorship as public icons of Basque endurance and resistance against the cultural and political hegemony of the Castilian state. As such, as the BNP became installed as the primary governing party within Euskadi there was little debate as to whether the ikastola system would be recognized and supported by the regional government.

Fueled by the implementation of language revitalization policies in 1982-83, the ikastola system in Euskadi became rapidly normalized and integrated into the Basque educational system. After gaining such strong governmental backing, ikastolas began sprouting up in both rural and

urban neighborhoods across the Spanish Basque provinces of Alava, Guipuzcoa, Viscaya and Navarra. By 1987 the entire ikastola network in Spain would become united into a confederation of several hundred ikastolas that served nearly 80,000 students across all levels of education from preschool through the final stages of secondary schooling (Lopez Goñi 2003). It was also at this time that Seaska and the northern ikastola system in France would become incorporated into the confederation, albeit on largely symbolic terms given the vastly disparate laws governing Basque language education in France and Spain.

The flow of governmental subventions to the ikastolas in Spain became crucial to stimulating their growth and development over the course of the 1980's. Almost overnight the ikastolas became transformed from a loosely linked underground network of schools operating in the shadow of authoritarianism to a tightly-knit state-sponsored organization on the leading-edge of the Basque language revitalization movement. Moreover, the rapid influx of funding from the Basque government immediately transformed the ikastolas from un-recognized entities operating in the private sphere to a legitimate part of the public education system.

Political recognition of the ikastolas as a part of the Basque public schooling system in Spain, however, was only partial in the sense that public funding did not cover 100% of expenses. While most basic resources such as school buildings, utilities, transportation, teacher salaries and certain textbooks were covered by public funds, all other aspects of the ikastola programs had to be covered by the provincial-level ikastola federations. Thus for all intensive purposes, after 1982-83 the ikastolas in Euskadi became semi-public entities that were regulated by but not fully accountable to educational policy-makers. The rationale for retaining this semi-public status lay primarily in the fact that the majority of actors behind the ikastola movement wanted to retain a very strong level of institutional self-determination. Thus, unlike mainstream

public schools in Euskadi, the ikastola system was built upon a ‘cooperative’ structure of decision-making. In this light, the ikastolas were based upon a community-centered model of ‘democratic schooling’ whereby parents and teachers kept considerable authority over the form, content and delivery of education. While much of the logic behind this community-based structure was to assure high levels of participation and involvement by parents, it was also a defensive and proactive posture taken on by local Basques in order to fend off the return of any potentially excessive and intrusive centralism by the Spanish national state (Agote-Perez 2006: 135).

In sum, during the years immediately following the rise of an autonomous Basque government in 1979 a series of public policies were quickly put into place by the ruling BNP in order to stimulate the revitalization of the Basque language within Euskadi<sup>23</sup>. These language policies had a tremendous impact on reforming the institutional logic of the entire regional education system. As part of this reform process, the once underground and subversive ikastola schooling network became officially recognized by the Basque government. This political recognition brought an inflow of public subsidies to the ikastola system, and rapidly contributed to its institutional expansion and consolidation. Although integrated into the public sector, however, the ikastolas retained a distinctive community-based structure of decision-making, and thus maintained a high level of locally-based organizational autonomy that is much more akin to private schools. The recognition and expansion of the southern ikastola system during the 1980’s as well as preservation of its institutional autonomy would all have important consequences for the much smaller and still emergent ikastola movement across the border in France.

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<sup>23</sup> It is significant to note that over the course of the 1990’s, the Basque government in Spain began systematic efforts geared toward promoting the linguistic revitalization of Basque in France. These efforts became highly influential for Seaska by the latter part of the decade, and by 2001 came to constitute an estimated one third of Seaska’s budget (*Sud Ouest*, 5/26/2010)

## **6.2 HOW SEASKA'S MEMBERS STRATEGICALLY ENGAGED WITH EVENTS IN EUSKADI**

The political developments that took shape in the Spanish Basque Country from 1979 onwards had several empowering effects on Seaska and the ikastola schooling movement in France. One the most immediate of these effects was the fostering of a highly motivating sense of collective agency among Seaska's members, i.e. a group-based sentiment that actors could feasibly expand the size and scope of the ikastola movement in France. Subsequently, after the southern ikastolas began to experience political normalization in 1982-83 Seaska's members began to seek out and forge strategic linkages with the ikastola system in Spain. These 'southern ties' gradually yielded influxes of material support for the northern ikastola movement and culminated in Seaska's incorporation within the Ikastola Confederation in 1985. This transnational relationship was further boosted by novel policies that had been recently introduced by the European Community so as to promote inter-regional development across the continent.

The development of strong political support for the ikastolas in Spain during the early 1980's was positively perceived by Seaska's members and bolstered their collective resolve to pursue increased state-level recognition for the ikastola network within France. Many activists firmly believed that despite a drastically different political climate in France, the normalized status of the southern ikastolas could somehow be reproduced and adapted to fit the situation of the ikastolas in France. The spread of this empowering sense of possibility among Seaska's

members is nicely captured, for instance, in the words of Koldo, a former ikastola parent who was highly active with Seaska from about 1976 to 1988:

The end of Franco's authoritarian government was certainly a very important episode in the history of Seaska. It had a big influence on our collective spirits [lit. '*nos esprits collectifs*']...I think that much of the grandiosity behind this moment for us [Seaska's members] was in the hope that it symbolized for the Basque struggle in the north [France]...It demonstrated that even under the worst of circumstances, under the repression of anti-Basque policies during Franco, the loyalty of the Basque people to its ancestral language and culture could not be asphyxiated...If the ikastolas could bloom within the brutal climate of Franco, then they could certainly do so in France despite the hostility of the Jacobin environment" (Interview B-9).

Koldo's reflection on Seaska's '*esprit collectif*' in the early 1980's shows how the unfolding of events in Spain had a motivating effect on ikastola proponents in France. Activists in France looked to events in Spain as a sign of encouragement to pursue a similar agenda and procure similar results. This inspirational effect emerged as activists collectively witnessed their compatriots in Spain experience the same type of political validation that Seaska had only recently and quite timidly started seeking out in France since the St. Palais protests of 1977 (See Ch.5).

Thus while Seaska's aim of achieving state-level recognition had started to surface in the late 1970's, events in Spain helped to make this political objective a much more central and dominant part of Seaska's mobilization agenda. Just as the southern ikastola movement had been the blueprint for Seaska's founding in the spring of 1969, so too did institutionalization of the ikastolas in Spain during the early 1980's then further motivate Seaska's members to expand the political scope of their mobilization agenda. As summarized by Pantxika, a retired ikastola teacher as well as former ikastola parent:

It was really a remarkable and inspirational moment...We looked at what was happening on the other side, in cultural and political terms, and we thought that history was being constructed right before us...We said that we Basques in the north cannot simply look on passively and applaud while our language remains silenced in our schools over here. After St. Palais, this was really a kind of indication that signaled to us that it was time to start moving our asses before our language disappears! (Interview B-21).

The emotional force behind Seaska's experience of collective inspiration lay largely in the fact that many activists had previously embraced a Pan-Basque identity and thus saw the ikastola movement in France as intrinsically bound to the history and destiny of the ikastolas in Spain. In short, Seaska's members generally viewed themselves as part of the same movement and as pursuing the same objectives as fellow ikastola proponents in Spain; i.e. revitalization of the Basque language through schooling. As such, the institutional triumphs of the ikastola movement in the Spanish Basque Country were perceived as a concomitant triumph for Seaska. This sense of concomitant triumph, however, was experienced in a largely indirect manner among Seaska's members. In other words, the sense of inspiration was characterized by a notion of latent potential which had to be seized by activists. As recalled by Clarice, one of Seaska's founders and long-time president:

There was a great deal of enthusiasm and anticipation on our part, it was even festive I would say...The grandeur of the transformations in the south had a big impact on us...Our solidarity was reinforced and we felt that things here [France] could also change...It was simply impossible, of course, to know how things would turn out at the time... but what was absolutely unthinkable at that moment was for Seaska not to act (Interview B-8).

The powerful sense of possibility and the pressing 'need to act' that took hold of Seaska's membership in response to events across the border were forged from the camaraderie and

connection that these actors felt with the ikastola movement in Spain. This cross-border solidarity was the product of two pre-existing factors.

First, as described in Chapter Three, Seaska was explicitly founded upon and modeled after the southern ikastola initiative. Hence from the get-go there was a clear ideological link between the ikastolas in France and Spain. This ideological linkage is captured in an article from a newsletter published in 1985 by Seaska several years after recognition of the southern ikastola system in Euskadi had taken place:

We are one movement separated by two different and contradicting political systems...The transition from fascism to democracy in *Hegoalde* [Spain] is a beacon for our struggle against a Jacobin system that strangles the development of ikastolas in the north [France]...Our compatriots in the south offer us the message that political changes must be created from the solidarity of peoples. If we wait on the benevolence and generosity of French elites we will wait for an eternity (Document B-112, *Ikastolak*, Winter 1985).

In this representative discursive snapshot, it is possible to see how Seaska's leadership perceived the ikastola movement as a unified ethno-educational initiative that remained disproportionately under-developed as a consequence of its division by two separate and often idiosyncratic systems of governance. Moreover the expansion of the southern ikastola movement in Euskadi was praised for its perseverance and a call was made for Basques in France to follow the lead of their southern counter-parts.

A second factor facilitating an instrumental bond between the northern (French) and southern (Spanish) branches of the ikastola movement was the influential role and presence of numerous Spanish Basques within Seaska's rank and file. At the time the ikastolas in Spain were being normalized and sponsored by the Basque government in the early 1980's, at least 1/4<sup>th</sup> of Seaska's members and more than half of ikastola teachers in France were Basques from

Spain. Many of these southern Basques had been living in France under the official status of political refugees until the end of the Franco regime led the French government to end its decades-long policy of accepting Basque refugees at the end of the 1970's. As active and founding members of Seaska, southern Basques embodied the cooperative link between north and south. When democracy emerged in Spain some of these actors returned to the families they had left behind when they fled the Franco regime, but many others stayed on as they had created new lives in France. Both those members of Seaska who returned to Spain and those who remained in France would become vessels of cross-border communication and exchange between the northern and southern factions of the ikastola movement. After the rise of Euskadi, the presence of Spanish Basque both past and present would help to concretize the ideological link between Seaska and its southern counter-parts as well as help to transform this ideational linkage into a material exchange. Remembering this moment, Clarice recalled:

After some time there were many productive exchanges...The border was opening and we were able to go and meet and speak with people working in ikastolas on the other side; to work together on ideas and methods...These exchanges were important for us, very influential...Because of anti-Basque politics, those [ikastola proponents] in the south had been working in isolation from those of us in the north...the ability to work with our colleagues on the other side, this was extremely beneficial because we lacked so many basic materials, we were nearly broke and they provided some important forms of assistance...Sometimes these were very simple things like books but they also helped us raise money to help us build new ikastolas (Interview B-8).

Hence, in addition to cultivating an empowering sense of hope and possibility among Seaska's members, the demise of the Franco dictatorship and the rise of an autonomous Basque government in Spain during the early 1980's also facilitated the formation of strategic cross-

border interactions and exchanges between the ikastola movements in France and Spain. Although an ideological connection between ikastola proponents in France and Spain had already been in existence from the moment Seaska's founders initiated the ikastola project in France in 1969, the authoritarian political climate in Spain had rendered this a largely symbolic relationship. The Franco government had long been critical of France's acceptance and sheltering of Basque political refugees and thus maintained a stringent policy of monitoring border crossings and stifling transnational exchanges between Basque organizations for fear of nationalist conspiracy and plotting against the Spanish state.

With the rise of democracy and a semi-autonomous government in Euskadi after 1979, policing of the boundary between France and Spain was relaxed and cross-border interactions between the northern and southern branches of the ikastola movement increased. The formation of such transnational ties would become highly instrumental to Seaska's mobilization campaign over the course of the 1980's by creating an influx of much-needed resources from the much larger, more established and relatively affluent ikastola system in Spain. This northward flow of first technical and then financial assistance began around 1983 as ikastolas in the Basque Provinces of Spain were becoming recognized and supported through policies developed by the autonomous Basque government. By 1985, however, Seaska's transnational relationship with the southern ikastola system became fully formalized when the ikastolas in France became incorporated into the newly formed Ikastola Confederation/ *'Ikastolak Konfederazioa'*. The Confederation had been originally created in 1983-84 so as to synchronize and consolidate policies affecting ikastolas in Spanish Basque provinces of Alava, Guipuzcoa and Vizcaya. On the one hand, Seaska's initial inclusion within the Ikastola Confederation was a symbolic gesture by policy-makers in Euskadi who wanted to express their solidarity with the ikastola movement

in France and attempt to cement a transnational relationship with Seaska. This was especially important to Seaska because it signaled the willingness of actors in Euskadi to establish a collaborative and above all assistive relationship with the relatively ‘weaker’ movement in the north. In this context, actors on both sides of the border embraced the notion that the struggle to revitalize Basque was a shared transnational phenomenon which transcended geo-political borders.

On the other hand, however, it is important to note that Seaska’s inclusion within the Ikastola Confederation became legally formalized in 1985 in some part thanks to relatively novel policies that were being developed by the European Community (later the European Union) and the Council of Regions so as to promote increased collaboration and exchanges across state borders. Thus while the Ikastola Confederation was created by the Basque government in Euskadi and Seaska was initially included in the Confederation on somewhat tentative and informal grounds, Seaska’s position within this transnational entity was aided by the early stages of Europeanization. Although I did not collect data relative to Europeanization for this particular timeframe<sup>24</sup>, it is important to note that the ‘relaxing’ of the border between France and Spain was largely economic in nature and geared toward stimulating inter-state commerce, rather than promoting ethno-cultural solidarity among Basques. This is because the highway and railroad systems linking France and Spain along the Atlantic Basque coastline are the main artery along an otherwise mountainous border region which links the Iberian Peninsula to the rest of Continental Europe. Today the border zone between Hendaye, France and Irun, Spain is characterized by tremendously high levels of congested commercial traffic. It would not be until the 1990’s that such trans-national cultural initiatives would emerge between the northern and

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<sup>24</sup> Because the data I collected regarding Seaska’s relationship to the process of Europeanization focused on the period 1997 to 2007, they have been excluded from this dissertation as they fall outside the 1969-1994 timeframe.

southern territories of the Basque Country as a consequence of European integration, particularly through initiatives developed by the Council of Europe (Urteaga 2007).

Seaska's inclusion within the Ikastola Confederation had at least four immediately empowering effects for the ikastola movement in France: [1] it provided Seaska with access to teacher training programs facilities in Euskadi, [2] it allowed Seaska to acquire bascoophone textbooks and instructional materials from educational publishing houses in Euskadi, [3] it allowed actors from Euskadi to lend periodic forms of technical assistance to Seaska's ceaseless fund-raising efforts, and [4] it paved the path for direct financial investment in the development of the northern ikastola system by the Basque government in Euskadi<sup>25</sup>.

### **6.3 GAINING ACCESS TO TEACHER TRAINING IN EUSKADI**

One particularly influential exchange that emerged from Seaska's incorporation into the Ikastola Confederation was the ability to utilize teacher-training programs and facilities in Euskadi. Because no such formal facilities existed within France until the early part of the 1990's, this was a highly instrumental resource for Seaska. These type of exchanges generally involved ikastola teachers and teachers-in-the-making from France traveling and living in Euskadi for a period ranging from several days to several weeks in order to gain pedagogical training and experience working in a bascoophone schooling environment. Teachers from France would spend part of their time in Spain working closely with another more experienced teacher

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<sup>25</sup> In my research I was unable to gather specific and reliable data on how much money from the Ikastola Confederation was actually invested in Seaska between 1985 and 1994. Nevertheless, information obtained from interviews suggests that the annual sum fluctuated somewhere between 10-25% of Seaska's total operating budget, i.e. roughly somewhere between 20,000-50,000 francs or 3,000-6,500 euros per year based on exchange rate after conversion in 1999 ([http://coinmill.com/FRF\\_calculator.html](http://coinmill.com/FRF_calculator.html)).

in the classroom of a particular ikastola, and spend the rest of their time gaining familiarity with pedagogical theories and methods linked to bilingual education. At the time, the theories and methods being developed by ikastola proponents in Euskadi and fully sponsored by the Basque government were on the leading-edge of bilingual education research (Lopez Goñi 2003). Given the absence of such resources in France, Seaska's ability to participate in and learn from this unique applied research agenda was extremely beneficial to the development of the ikastolas in France.

During the early 1980's French education officials were only starting to debate the merits of the immersion model of bilingual education and were deeply divided over whether such methods of intensive minority language instruction should be used in French public schools let alone actively sponsored by the state (Leralu and Lichau 2005). As I will discuss in the following chapter the emergence of these debates was a result of the ascension of the Socialist administration of François Mitterrand after the spring of 1981. Moreover, it was not until 1993 that any component in university-based teacher training programs anywhere in France was made available to prepare teachers to work in a bascophone system. As such, Seaska had simply always been obliged to develop its own teacher training programs. This most often took the form of summer training camps, known as '*ikasteguiak*', wherein teachers would devote much of their summer holidays to learning about bilingual pedagogies, developing bilingual materials and exchanging ideas about running bilingual classrooms. In short, prior to Seaska's collaboration with and integration into the Ikastola Confederation in Spain, the training of ikastola teachers was a process which had largely been developed organically by teachers themselves. The capacity for these teachers to go and work with the more resource-rich facilities across the border

in Euskadi was an instrumental opportunity that greatly improved Seaska's pedagogical and curricular foundations.

Nevertheless, Seaska's participation in teacher training program in the Spanish Basque Country also proved to be a major dilemma. In short, Seaska's inclusion in the Ikastola Confederation became regarded with suspicion and criticism by certain educational authorities and actors who had remained decisively opposed to the ikastola movement since its origins. For example, in the autumn of 1986 the large and highly influential public school teacher unions, le *Syndicat Nationale des Instituteurs* [SNI] issued a formal statement criticizing Seaska's teaching staff for their putative lack of 'proper' credentials, questioned their 'professionalism' and raised doubts about their 'intimacy' with nationalist actors in the Spanish Basque Country (Document B-101, *Enbata*, September 14, 1986). SNI's leaders had previously regarded Seaska's the grassroots development of un-official and thus un-regulated teacher training programs as an 'un-ethical defamation' of accreditation programs built by the Ministry of National Education. The fact that Seaska was now sending ikastola teachers to Spain for training basically added fuel to the fire and threw Seaska's professional integrity further into the flames. For Seaska's members, however, there was no other option precisely because of the French state's continuing failure to establish 'proper' training facilities for minority language teachers at regional universities in Pau or Bordeaux. Indeed, such programs would not surface until after Seaska entered into a contract with the Ministry of National Education in 1994. As noted by one ikastola teacher:

From the beginning there was no alternative for Seaska but to design these [teacher training] programs on our own. Nothing else existed. We had to build everything with our own hands. Certainly, this allowed us to be very creative and independent, but it was really not sustainable or even desirable because there was just not enough of a financial base to build such programs in a manner

that would be effective in the longer term...We were fortunate to have help from the other side [Euskadi], this is indisputable, but our priority was to establish a system of reliable public resources for the teachers here (Interview B-18).

As Seaska began to seize the opportunity to send teachers to Euskadi where the teacher training facilities were much more formalized and resource-rich, this move not only bolstered the quality of the northern ikastola system, but also showed to French officials that if no such resources were going to be made available to Seaska's teachers, then the organization would simply continue to send its teachers across the border for their training. In short, the provision of teacher training facilities in Euskadi did not simply contribute resources to Seaska, but also demonstrated Seaska's resourcefulness to its political detractors and opponents in France. In addition, the formation of instrumental ties in Euskadi also boosted the confidence of Seaska's members by showing them that there were options and alternative routes to sustaining the ikastola system despite the French state's reluctance to support their agenda.

#### **6.4 GAINING TEACHING MATERIALS FROM EUSKADI**

Another important exchange that surfaced between the northern and southern factions of the ikastola movement during the 1980's was the distribution of textbooks and teaching materials to Seaska from bascophone publishers based in Euskadi.<sup>26</sup> This exchange of resources was especially important for Seaska at this juncture because the organization suffered from a severe

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<sup>26</sup> Given that the ikastolas in Euskadi operated in Basque and Spanish, the majority of instructional materials that were most generally sought after by Seaska were unilingual not bilingual. In some cases, however, bilingual Spanish-Basque materials from Euskadi were the only things available and thus creatively adapted and applied to fit classrooms in the French-Basque context (Garat 2005).

shortage of bascophone teaching resources in France; a critical deficiency for Seaska that members had largely worked to overcome through their own creative labors.

By the time the ikastolas in Spain had become normalized in 1982-83, the ikastola network in France had expanded across the entire realm of primary education and into the initial years of secondary schooling, i.e. ‘*collège*’ or middle school. In September of 1983, for instance, there were 14 ikastolas serving nearly 700 full-time students in 10 different towns, more than twice the number of students that had been enrolled a decade earlier. This expansion meant that there was an increased necessity for bascophone instructional materials. And, because Seaska had always created many of its own bilingual resources, it soon became functionally impossible for Seaska to keep up with the pace of its own growth. While the French-Basque publishing house ‘*Ikas*’ had always been instrumental in working with Seaska to issue and distribute its self-designed materials nearly free of cost, by 1983 the amount of materials Seaska needed began to outpace its means of production. In many cases, individual teachers would gather over the weekends and holidays to design lesson plans and curricula from scratch. This would entail a major investment of time as well as money as lesson plans had to be constantly reproduced each year and successively re-adapted to fit different grade levels. As one of Seaska’s contemporary pedagogical administrators noted in retrospect about this time period:

It was a difficult era. The people in my position thirty years ago did not have the economic means or the academic resources for bilingualism that we have at our disposal today; they built everything themselves! This is a remarkable accomplishment...In terms of [instructional] materials Seaska’s relationship to the confederation [of ikastolas in Euskadi] was very valuable at that time because I think it prevented the financial crisis from turning too severe and helped to keep people’s spirits alive (Interview B-22).

The possibility of gaining second-hand materials from ikastolas in Spain as well as obtaining first-hand materials directly from large educational publishers across the border thus became crucial in allowing Seaska to keep up with its growing enrollments. And, as illustrated in the aforementioned interview excerpt, the relief provided through Seaska's acquisition of teaching materials from the south helped to fuel a collective sense of possibility among activists. Moreover, Seaska's ability to acquire instructional resources from Euskadi further helped to show its resourcefulness to those authorities who remained opposed to the idea of awarding state-level recognition to the ikastolas throughout the 1980's.

## **6.5 PARTICIPATION OF SPANISH BASQUES IN SEASKA'S FUND-RAISERS**

An additional result of strategic interactions between the northern and southern ikastolas came in the form of direct participation in and contributions to Seaska's fund-raising efforts by actors from Euskadi. This basically entailed an increasing demographic presence of southern Basques in public events orchestrated by Seaska to garner finances for the ikastolas in the French Basque Country. Perhaps most notable among these fund-raising events was a large festival known as '*Herri Urrats*' [lit. 'The people's path' or 'path of the people'].

Inaugurated in 1982 as a way to raise money to build Seaska's very first secondary-level ikastola, Herri Urrats became transformed into an annual fund-raising event intended to help generate resources for the northern ikastola system. The idea behind Herri Urrats was brought to life by a group of ikastola parents who looked across the border for their inspiration. Every year in Euskadi each Basque province would organize a festival honoring the ikastolas within that

region. On the one hand, these festivals were intended to bring members of the ikastola community together to celebrate and reinforce their solidarity. On the other hand, these festival were also designed to raise finances to help pay for specific projects that were not covered by public resources. When Seaska first adopted this idea to raise funds for the construction of a new ikastola in the summer of 1982, a wave of several hundred southern Basques crossed the border to participate in a two-day weekend festival that would attract an estimated 3500 persons. The participation of Basques from Spain was not only in the form of revelry but also in the form of volunteering their labor to help in the cooking, vending, cleaning and general management of events. Indeed, when planning Herri Urrats the committee of Seaska's members appointed with this novel task relied considerably on the experience and know-how of their colleagues from the south. As noted by Marie-Claire, a former ikastola parent who claims to have directly participated in nearly every Herri Urrats since 1982:

Yes, each year they [southern Basques] form a very big part of the attendance [at Herri Urrats]. This was always the case even from the beginning...their role has been especially important. And this is not only because they have been helping us to put up the stands, assemble stages, cook food and practical things like that, but also because their presence, their physical presence at Herri Urrats has been a vindication of our struggle in the north where we have continually fought against this culture of silence that surrounds what the politicians like to call 'the Basque question' or 'the question of regional languages' (Interview B-4)

Or, consider also the words of Txomin, another former ikastola parent who claims to have participated in Herri Urrats since its inception:

[Herri Urrats] has become a vibrant context for Basques from the two sides to express our total solidarity with the ikastolas and for the cultural movement that

it represents. This type of solidarity between north and south was nearly impossible under Franco...I think it [the presence of southern Basques] really had a positive effect for Seaska in the beginning years because the ikastolas were still young and developing here... Things like Herri Urrats, where Basques from both sides could assemble, these moments helped show us the real force behind our solidarity, and I think this solidarity with the south is a big reason why the ikastolas were able to grow without the same kind of political support that one finds on the other side... (Interview B-12).

Because the original Herri Urrats festival was so successful in harnessing the solidarity of ikastola proponents from both sides of the border, after 1982 Seaska transformed it into an annual event geared toward raising funds for the entire ikastola network. With each passing year the event grew in size and a decade later by 1992 attendance at Herri Urrats had grown to an estimated 15,000 participants, many of whom were ikastola supporters from Euskadi. As touched upon in Marie-Claire's words, the presence and participation of southern Basques in events such as Herri Urrats has been important in bolstering collective sentiments of solidarity and possibility among Seaska's members.

## **6.6 FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FROM EUSKADI**

Another strategic resource that resulted from Seaska's interaction with the southern ikastola system came in the form of financial investments. Because of limitations in my research, the frequency and quantity of these contributions is unclear. During my investigations I was not able to access Seaska's financial records and thus able to discern how much or even how often Seaska acquired financial assistance from the Spanish Basque Country. Even in interviews

people were often reluctant to discuss financial information or simply had no idea about the details concerning transactions that took place back in the 1980's. Nevertheless, in interviews with people who had been active with Seaska during 1980's there was periodic reference to 'investments' or 'contributions' from Euskadi that were made via the Ikastola Confederation. As noted by one activist: "[Seaska's inclusion in the Ikastola Confederation] allowed for important forms of investment to be made from the other side, and this was extremely useful in the 80's because we were completely broke and still trying to obtain a contract from the [French] state" (Interview B-17). Another former administrator with Seaska recalled the importance of these contributions: "Money from the south went to buying desks or paying electric bills, simple things like that...I don't know exactly when this started but the first contributions varied a great deal, from several hundred francs here to several thousand francs there. It was an important source of financing for us because we were in debt and had no type of help from our own government...The Confederation was influential because, along with our [fund-raising] efforts here, it helped us to survive a very difficult time" (Interview B-22).

While my investigations were not able to clarify the precise quantity of finances yielded by through Seaska's membership within the Ikastola Confederation, it is clear that cross-border financial exchanges became both normalized and formalized after 1985. Seaska's strategic inclusion within the Ikastola Confederation, I argue, was a product of three processes.

First and foremost, it was the result of Seaska's members reaching out across the border to establish contacts and work with their southern colleagues. Second, it was the result of influential political actors in Euskadi embracing a transnational agenda for the ikastola movement even though the bulk of their efforts were concentrated squarely on the situation in the Southern Basque Provinces. Finally, Seaska's formal integration into the Ikastola

Confederation in 1985 was also the result of novel policy initiatives created by the European Community which were aimed at creating zones of transnational cooperation.

## **6.7 CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, this chapter has shown how ikastola proponents in France exploited and strategically engaged with political events in Spain. In particular I showed how political normalization of the ikastola system in the Spanish Basque Country inspired Seaska's members to escalate the terms of their mobilization agenda within France. In addition, I demonstrated how this moment of heightened ideological resolve motivated Seaska's members to seek out and cultivate strategic transnational ties with ikastola proponents across the border. Finally, I illustrated how Seaska's cultivation of ties with ikastola system in Spain gradually led to its inclusion within the Ikastola Confederation, a process that contributed to a strategic influx of material resources from the Spanish Basque Country. Ultimately, by emphasizing the disposition of French Basque activists toward historic events in Spain, I demonstrated how political opportunity did not 'spill over' into France from Spain, but rather how opportunity was grasped by Seaska's members as they subjectively evaluated and actively engaged with events taking shape across the border.

## **7.0 OPPORTUNITY FROM THE LEFT: HOW THE ASCENSION OF A SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT EMPOWERED THE IKASTOLA MOVEMENT, 1981-1986**

This chapter focuses on a five year period of mobilization that starts with Francois Mitterrand's successful bid for the French presidency in 1981 and ends with Seaska's claims for recognition being formally rejected by the Ministry of National Education [MNE] in 1986. In particular, I demonstrate how activists perceived Mitterrand's election as an opportunistic moment to intensify their claims-making efforts on the French state. I show how several aspects of Mitterrand's electoral platform helped to bolster the visibility and legitimacy of Seaska's ethno-educational agenda and thus inspired activists to engage in a heightening of protest and advocacy throughout the 1980's (See Figure 1). Intended to draw state-level authorities into a process of deliberation and negotiation, this wave of mobilization was predominantly characterized by [i] highly orchestrated publicity campaigns, [ii] peaceful street demonstrations and [iii] contentious protest events such as the squatting governmental offices and blocking of highway traffic. Drawing upon an analysis of newspaper articles, organizational archives and interviews, I illustrate how these forms of mobilization were consistently adopted by ikastola proponents as a way to gain increased political recognition; i.e. symbolic and material support from the French state. By way of conclusion, I demonstrate how this wave of protest began to recede around 1986 when Seaska entered a relatively stagnant and initially unproductive series of negotiations with the MNE. These talks came to an abrupt and frustrating end in 1986 after

sub-national elections shifted the pendulum of French politics back toward the Gaullist Right. By this point, however, Seaska had attained a strategic level of footing within the political arena, and educational policy-makers eventually continued to pursue talks with ikastola proponents.

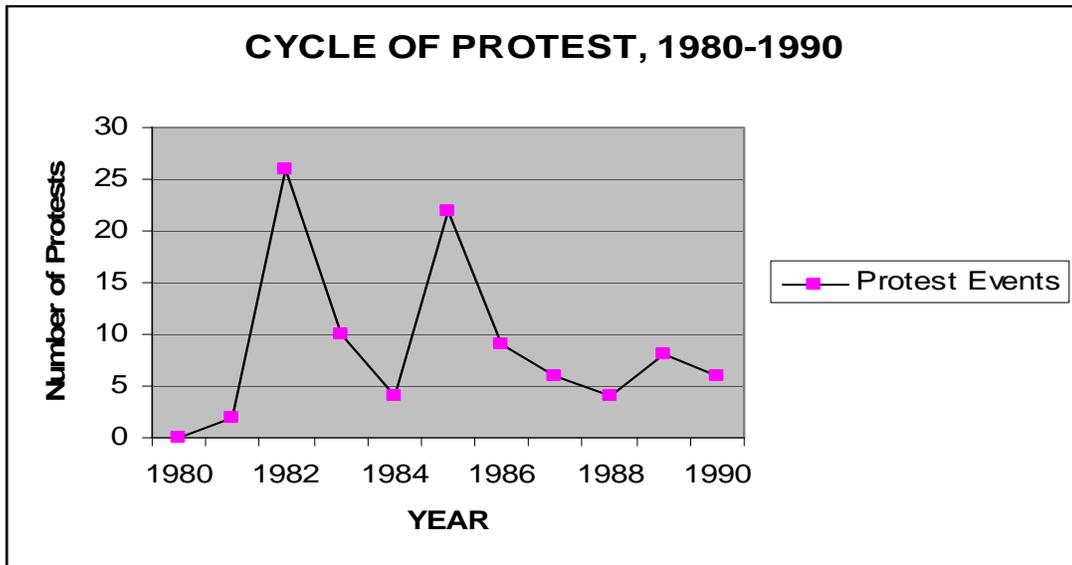


Figure 7.1 Cycle of Political Protest Pursued by Seaska, 1980-1990

## 7.1 THE POLITICAL PENDULUM SWINGS LEFT AND OPPORTUNITY EMERGES

In the year preceding the French presidential elections in the spring of 1981, the Socialist candidate François Mitterrand ran a campaign intended to dethrone the entrenched legacy of Gaullist political parties since the founding of the Fifth French Republic in 1958. Mitterrand's campaign against incumbent Valéry Giscard d'Estaing and his ultimately successful bid for the presidency was an immensely historic and transformative event in French politics that had a decisive impact on Seaska and the ikastola movement. This impact was brought about in great

part because it was the first time that the *Parti Socialiste* [‘PS’] had gained control over both the executive and legislative branches of French government thus creating enormous potential for institutional reform. While Mitterrand and the Socialists had worked to distinguish themselves from their right-wing competitors in a multitude of ways, there were three aspects in particular which had resonated very strongly with Seaska’s members thus leading many of them to both perceive and engage with Mitterrand’s election as a political opportunity.

First and foremost, during his campaign Mitterrand had presented himself as a proponent of cultural pluralism who was deeply concerned about the vitality of regional minority languages in France. Mitterrand even went so far as to make a pledge to normalize the status of regional languages such as Basque within the national education system. In December of 1980, for example, the PS presented ‘Proposition #2269’ to the public; a legal initiative intended to “permanently integrate the place of regional languages and cultures within the education system once and for all” (Garat 2005:134). While such compassionate statements had previously been made by politicians on both the left and the right, such advocacy on the campaign trail was a profound departure from previous elections in that it constituted the first time that a presidential candidate had made the minority language question a formal part of his platform. Mitterrand’s voice of support thus not only marked him as an ally to minority language activists in the Basque Country but also brought new levels of visibility and legitimacy to Seaska’s mobilization agenda. When Mitterrand talked about “the need to provide historical reparations” to speakers of regional languages and “to institutionalize a culture of support” for minority languages in the education system (Document B-75, *Enbata*, March 8 1980), he brought the issue into the national political arena in a manner that grassroots activists had not yet achieved. Prior to the Socialist campaign of 1980-81 the minority language issue had been sequestered in the darkest and most remote

corners of French politics where it remained an obscure issue that most mainstream politicians avoided for fear of being labeled as provincial. Through their campaign Mitterrand and the PS helped to remove some of the stigma surrounding minority language politics in France making ethnolinguistic revitalization a viable topic of political debate and public policy-making.

A second point of strategic interest for Seaska was that Mitterrand and the Socialists presented themselves as staunch advocates of governmental decentralization. On the campaign trail Mitterrand had persistently criticized “the rigid centralism of the Gaullist state”, describing such centralism “as an impediment to republican principles of democracy” and “a disturbing hindrance to the people’s proper participation in government” (Document B-75, *Enbata* March 8 1980). As part of his platform of promoting political decentralization, Mitterrand identified the education system as a particular point of concern and promised to increase local levels of authority in educational policy-making so as to bolster the democratic foundations of public education. Such a claim had clear appeal for Seaska considering that ikastola proponents perceived their agenda as being stifled by the rigid ‘Jacobin’ centralism of French governance. In this light, activists positively perceived Mitterrand’s election as ushering in a new, more accommodating and potentially more productive political climate whereby Seaska’s members might be acknowledged and their agenda taken more seriously. Moreover, Mitterrand’s proposal of educational decentralization in the name of democratic education also resonated very strongly with Seaska given that the organization had long defined its agenda as an attempt to bring increased educational self-determination to the Basque public in France. As one of the most influential organizations concerned with the status of Basque in the French education system, Seaska saw itself as very well-positioned to lead the democratic struggle for ethnolinguistic recognition should Mitterrand win the election. In addition, Mitterrand’s advocacy of educational

decentralization was also especially appealing to Seaska given that activists felt that political authorities at the local levels of government- i.e. the municipality and commune- were far more supportive of the ikastola movement than were educational policy-makers in Bordeaux and Paris. In this light, the project of decentralization was positively interpreted as potentially increasing the influence of Seaska's local allies on the policy process.

A third point of immediate interest for Seaska in Mitterrand's presidential campaign was his proclamation that the French state should stimulate civic associationalism and provide increased assistance to existing civic associations. As part of a broader debate that emerged in France and Western Europe at the start of the 1980's, the PS claimed to be deeply concerned with the negative impact of individualism, materialism and consumerism on French political life. It was argued that in order to "combat political apathy and disengagement" and to "avoid the deterioration of our democratic traditions" the French state had "a duty to actively encourage the creative solidarity of citizens who form the foundations of associational life because the spirit of associationalism in civil society breathes fresh air into the tradition of French republican democracy" (Document B-75, *Enbata*, March 8 1980). As a civic association working within the cultural and educational sphere, such proclamations resonated strongly with Seaska's members, especially at a moment when ikastola proponents felt that their agenda was being criticized by some state-level authorities as an irrational and illiberal endeavor rather than acknowledged and encouraged as a realization of democratic politics.

In sum, by making public claims of support for cultural pluralism, political decentralization and civic associationalism, Mitterrand's campaign not only provided Seaska's constituency with an important sense of hope that political tides were changing but it also provided the ikastola movement with newfound levels of visibility and legitimacy. The publicity

generated by the Mitterrand campaign worked to re-articulate many of the same claims that had come to define Seaska's agenda, and as such activists perceived the candidate's ultimately successful run for the presidency in a highly strategic light; i.e. the campaign was interpreted as useful and beneficial to Seaska's quest for recognition.

The sentiment that Mitterrand's election was an opportunistic moment for Seaska is illustrated, for example, in an article published by the organization in the Basque newspaper *Enbata*. In this article, Seaska claimed that "the socialist victory of May 10<sup>th</sup> has opened a new and encouraging path toward the future recognition of the ikastolas and for the resurgence of the Basque language and culture" (Document B-79, *Enbata*, May 14 1981). As also recalled in retrospect by Anne-Marie, a former activists and ikastola teacher from St Jean de Luz who had joined Seaska in her early twenties during the late 1970's:

Certainly many of us in Seaska saw his [Mitterrand] election in a very positive manner...If the president of the Republic was there announcing to the public his support for Basque and other regional languages, then perhaps all our work, all of the investments and sacrifices which we had been making for our language would finally be validated...His political promises were encouraging but we had every reason to be doubtful, things don't change so quickly in France...Seaska could not sit and wait for the Socialists to come to the rescue (Interview B-15).

While Mitterrand's cooperative posturing was interpreted by many of Seaska's members with optimism, the arrival of the new administration would actually be greeted by activists with considerable skepticism and an intensification rather than moderation of contentious claims-making. In essence, Seaska construed the entry of an accommodating government as a decisive moment to escalate rather than reduce mobilization efforts. In fact, the 1980's would be witness to the most intense period of protest in Seaska's history as a social movement organization. Most importantly, with Mitterrand's election in the spring of 1981 Seaska would initiate its protracted

campaign for increased recognition and support from the Ministry of National Education [henceforth 'MNE']. While the aim of recognition had previously been established among activists during the late 1970's, the leftward shift in government in 1981 would be the catalytic moment when activists would begin formally making claims for integration into the public sector.

By the spring of 1981 most of Seaska's members had come to construe the location of the ikastolas in the private sector as both financially unfeasible and politically unjust. On the one hand, the private sector was construed by activists as financially unfeasible because it placed far too heavy a burden on Seaska's members to raise the kind of money needed to maintain let alone expand the ikastola network. By the start of the 1982-83 school year, for example, ikastola teachers had not received full salaries in over a year and many parents were dedicating their weekends to a ceaseless array of ikastola fund-raisers, such as music concerts, soccer matches and selling calendars. While such volunteerism was a fundamental part of Seaska's organizational culture, many parents and teachers were stretching their energies to the maximum simply in order to maintain a bare minimum of financial security for the ikastola system. Feeling that the burden for parents was becoming too heavy, in the weeks preceding the 1982-83 school-year Seaska issued a plea of support from the public in the Basque newspaper *Enbata*. Seaska implored readers of the newspaper to donate "five francs per household to ensure the survival of the ikastolas, the only refuge for our language and culture" (Document B-83, *Enbata*, August 10 1982). As this moment was recalled by Anne-Marie: "The tank was on empty, Seaska was heavily in debt and people were simply exhausted...It was a very difficult and frustrating period for all of us...We were hoping that the political situation would change" (Interview B-15).

On the other hand, Seaska's location within the private sector was deemed politically unjust by activists because the state was regarded as having a democratic responsibility to support the normalization of Basque in the national education system. While the ascendance of the Socialists to government was interpreted as a positive turning point, in the immediate wake of the election Seaska's leaders argued in a newsletter that "the Jacobin policies of the old Gaullist regime are still in place and must be reformed...we cannot afford to await for such a process to unfold on this own terms or we will be waiting on the Socialists for an eternity" (Document B-85, *Ikastolak*, Autumn 1982). In this message, it was stated that "not so long ago, the Socialists declared that in a system asserted to be democratic, every *ethnie* [sic] has the right to an education its language. If the socialists sincerely want to establish this democratic reality then it is indispensable that an accord is immediately reached between Seaska and [the MNE]" (ibid).

As a consequence of activists taking on a much more politicized and contentious stance toward the state, in the weeks following Mitterrand's election, Seaska declared that it was committed to "pursue officialization until the day that it becomes a reality" (Document B-78, *Enbata*, May 21 1981). At the start of the 1980's, Seaska would thus engage in its most rigorous, unyielding and ultimately influential efforts to generate legitimacy and gain leverage within the arena of educational politics. It would not be until 1986, however, that Seaska's proponents would finally find themselves engaged in a truly tangible dialogue with the MNE. This dialogue would lead to the signing of an initial contract between Seaska and the state in 1989, a contract which would eventually be expanded in 1994. Thus along with pressure politics, both patience and perseverance would come to define the ikastola movement throughout much of the Mitterrand era.

## 7.2 FRAMING PRACTICES AND AGENDA-SETTING

Mitterrand's campaign and eventual ascension to the presidency in the spring of 1981 provided newfound levels of encouragement and hope to activists as well as increased visibility and legitimacy to Seaska's mobilization agenda. Working within the relative freshness of the moment, Seaska began seizing upon this opportunity in the summer of 1981 by issuing a series of public statements through the regional press that were largely intended to communicate Seaska's objectives vis-à-vis the newly appointed and seemingly support Socialist administration. These public claims would come to define Seaska's stance toward the political arena in the years ahead, and should thus be construed as concerted attempts by ikastola proponents to engage in a process of 'framing'; i.e. strategic practices of communication geared not only toward deflecting criticism but toward building increased levels of consensus and commitment from both everyday actors and political power-brokers (Snow 2004). As calculated attempts among activists to create a public voice for Seaska on their own terms, these framing practices became particularly central to Seaska's quest for political recognition after 1981 because it appeared to activists as though governmental authorities might actually listen. In addition to having an outward or exogenous effect in the political arena, it is important to note that Seaska's framing practices would also have an important internal or endogenous dimension by providing ikastola proponents with a more or less common and coherent mission statement through which they could effectively orient and organize their actions. Thus framing practices became an essential part of collective identity-building among Seaska's members.

In the aftermath of Francois Mitterrand's electoral victory, Seaska issued a series of press releases in the early summer of 1981 that articulated 5 'non-negotiable' claims upon the new administration. The first of these claims was that the national state should formally recognize the ikastolas as a legitimate part of the public education system, rather than maintain their suppression and remain sequestered in the realm of private schooling. In this context it was argued that: "Through the ikastolas Seaska fulfills a service to the Basque public and must be legally validated as a public system" (Document B-78, *Enbata*, May 21 1981). This was a major and drastic shift in Seaska's stance toward the French state in that 'recognition' was no longer simply about seeking permission from the state to operate bascoophone schools, they were now seeking to incorporate the entire ikastola network into the institutional framework of the state-run national education system. The goal of 'recognition-as-integration' would gradually come to define Seaska's mobilization and claims-making practices in the political arena for years to come.

The second claim articulated by Seaska in the summer of 1981 was that a series of negotiations should be initiated immediately in order for the state to begin taking over financial responsibilities for the ikastolas. This point was rationalized by arguing: "In its negligence of providing adequate educational services to the Basque public, the state has an obligation to take over the financial responsibilities that have been provided by Seaska as a consequence of the neglect of public authorities" (Document B-78, *Enbata*, May 21 1981). This claim was a criticism of the near total exclusion of Basque in mainstream public schools. Positioning itself as the main 'supplier' of educational 'services' to the Basque citizenry of France, Seaska essentially demanded that its labors be compensated through state-level subsidies.

A third point articulated was that the ikastolas would not adopt the minimalist model of Basque language instruction being ‘lackadaisically’ implemented in the public schools; a model deemed by Seaska as ineffective in promoting literacy. On this point it was argued: “The objective of the ikastola system is to develop bilingual persons, not bilingual classrooms, and the method of immersion is the sole path to achieving this objective” (Document B-78, *Enbata*, May 21 1981). Thus in seeking state-level patronage of the ikastolas, Seaska was not only seeking funds but also striving to have its pedagogical specificity recognized and endorsed by the MNE.

A fourth point put forth by Seaska was that the ikastolas would maintain their reliance on alternative methods of teaching and instruction. Here it was argued that the ikastola system would be based upon pedagogical methods developed by Célestin Freinet. In this context, Seaska portrayed itself as being on the leading edge of a broader movement for ‘progressive’ education reform in France. The pedagogical specificity of the ikastolas was thus not only linguistic but academic. Seaska’s education programs was presented as an alternative to the ‘pedagogically antiquated’ and ‘bureaucratically rigid’ model of education being used in state-run public schools (Document B-78, *Enbata*, May 21 1981).

A fifth claim put forth by Seaska was that the ikastola system was defined by a community-based structure of authority whereby the primary locus of control resided in parents and teachers. This was a very bold claim as it essentially was asking the state to recognize the ikastolas as part of the public education system, but with the clause that Seaska’s members retained authority over the content and delivery of educational services. The boldness of this demand was rationalized on the basis that “the only manner to guarantee a democratic structure to a public education system worthy of the name is to ensure the genuine inclusion of the public in the apparatus of all decision-making” (Document B-78, *Enbata*, May 21 1981). Considering

the extraordinary high levels of administrative centralization that characterized the French education system at this time, this was a rather revolutionary claim. What prompted Seaska's members to articulate this claim, however, was that Mitterrand had run his campaign on the premise of promoting a devolution of the education system so as to bring greater levels of so-called 'site-based decision making' to public schools. Thus, it is evident that the shifting structure of political opportunity influenced the discursive claims and demands of activists.

In addition to publishing these five claims in regional newspapers in the summer of 1981 Seaska also began to send letters out to the regional and national offices of the MNE. By October of 1981 Seaska finally received a letter of response from a representative of the MNE. Not only did the response recognize none of Seaska's claims, but it came two months into the new school year signaling that nothing could possibly happen until at least the end of the calendar year when a new budget would be fixed by the Socialist government. In the response, re-published by ikastola proponents in the local Basque press, the MNE argued that if the government was to accept an integration of the ikastolas into the public system then "the state would effectively take control of all domains" (Document B-87, *Enbata*, October 8 1981). In other words, any potential recognition of the ikastolas would be in the form of incorporation into the national education system and thus all pedagogical and administrative practices would fall solely under the jurisdiction of the MNE, not Seaska's members. In this scenario, Basque would be "valorized" and "included" but "priority would be given to the teaching of French, the language of the Republic" (ibid).

About a month later Seaska's members came together in November of 1981 for a General Assembly in order to discuss the state's unambiguous rejection of their claims and to decide on their next move (Document B-89, *Enbata*, November 15 1981). After two days of intense

deliberation, a text was collectively crafted and agreed upon by over 100 members so as to formulate a common platform for Seaska's future actions. This democratically crafted text was intended to act as a sort of guide or handbook for Seaska's representatives and public advocates in their future interactions with the government. In this text, Seaska's members agreed to adhere to several fundamental points. In addition to re-stating the five original claims put forth by Seaska back in July, several new points were added.

One additional point was that Seaska's members agreed to view their actions as working toward the broader legalization of bascophone education within France across all levels and spheres of schooling, both public and private (Garat 2005:137). This meant that while Seaska was not opposed to the development of bilingual programs in public schools, its members were working above all else to have the ikastola system legitimated, recognized and endorsed by the state. "Our project took on a bigger, more comprehensive dimension during the 1980's", recalled one activist during an interview, "it was not just about Seaska and the ikastolas but about the status of Basque in the entire education system" (Interview B-9).

Another point put forth in the text created through the General Assembly was to seek out the immediate creation of a governmental commission to work with Seaska (Garat 2005:137). This was not only intended to establish a direct link of communication between Seaska and the state, but also to locate potential allies within the political arena; governmental actors willing and able to work with Seaska. As described in retrospect by Miren, a former ikastola parent and supporter of Seaska: "There were some responsive elites, people open to our ideas, and it was very important for us that they made their position clear to the public so that we could build a relationship with them... the formation of a committee with local elites was seen as the starting point to realizing this relationship; it would get them involved" (Interview B-19).

In addition, a further decision reached by the General Assembly was to fix December 31<sup>st</sup> 1981 as the deadline for the state's response (Document B-90, *Enbata*, November 12 1981). If the state would not respond by the end of the year, then Seaska would re-convene for an emergency Assembly in order to re-evaluate its tactics. This point was meant to engage the MNE as soon as possible even though they had periodically refused to negotiate directly with Seaska's representatives. By creating a deadline activists felt they were collectively establishing the benchmark that would define the limits of their tolerance to the state's perpetual neglect of their claims. As described by Manex: "We had agreed that if nothing developed by the end of the year then it would be our responsibility to break the culture of political inaction through other means" (Interview B-1).

Another strategic point of agreement reached among members through the General Assembly of November 1981 was to engage in a tactical publicity campaign. This campaign would include the diffusion of claims through the press but also through "constant engagement with other Basque cultural associations, both Basque and non-Basque political parties, regional teachers unions and all other local organizations and national entities with parallel interests" (Garat 2005:138). In this context, Seaska's members had come to the realization that a continuous and well-coordinated process of public communication was a pivotal part of their mobilization agenda. On the one hand, activists identified the local and regional press as a strategic medium through which they could formally articulate their claims to a broader audience. On the other hand, however, activists also recognized that a more informal process of networking and communication was needed between Seaska and other potentially sympathetic organizations in the region. As noted in retrospect by Miren, a Basque language activists and former ikastola parent who was heavily engaged with Seaska at this time: "Certainly, it [the

publicity campaign] was a way to educate people about the ikastolas, to create a consciousness about the project, but I would say that it was also a manner of fighting against the silence that had been imposed upon us by the state” (Interview B-19).

Finally, an additional course of action put forth by Seaska was to designate a rotating committee of persons who could take charge of the process, monitor events and disseminate information (Garat 2005: 138). This was a way of dividing labor and appointing specific people with particular responsibilities. These actors could then provide periodic updates on the situation, evaluate the responsiveness of the state, and ultimately submit a report on the situation of recognition at the end of the year. As recalled by Nicholas, a former president of Seaska and one of the members of this committee: “It was an enormous responsibility, a full-time job with the idea that many people were looking to you and depending on you...in a sense [the committee] had become the eyes, ears and mouth of Seaska and its main link to the state” (Interview B-5).

By the end of December 1981, Seaska had been received by the MNE twice, with virtually no progress made apart from one important suggestion that Seaska could be made eligible to receive an allotment of public finances in the near future. The details of what such an arrangement would actually look like, however, remained unclear. While welcomed by Seaska’s advocates as a sign of progress, the vagary behind the state’s ambiguous offer did not inspire great hope among activists. As far as Seaska’s representatives were concerned, the MNE remained steadfast in refusing Seaska’s claims for increased recognition. As reported by Seaska in the Basque newspaper *Enbata*, “Without end Seaska has been told by the [MNE] authorities that the issue of integration is simply not a priority for the government at the moment. Seaska will have to wait until decentralization policies are realized and put into place over the next year

or two...Our situation has not progressed and the new year forecasts a continuation of our struggle” (Document B-102, *Enbata*, January 4, 1982).

### 7.3 LAUNCHING THE CYCLE OF PROTEST

As a consequence of the Mitterrand administration’s reluctance to engage in negotiations with Seaska, by 1982 activists began to construe protest as a way of seizing upon the window of opportunity presented by the seemingly accomodating leftward tilt in French political culture. A General Assembly was called for by the assortment of persons acting as Seaska’s leadership in late January 1982. This time over 300 persons participated and, according to one participant’s recollection: “The atmosphere was super-charged with a mix of emotions; doubt, frustration and resentment, but also an enormous sense of fraternity and determination” (Interview B-18). While the vague promise of state-level action was viewed by members with immense suspicion, it also fueled a collective sentiment of possibility. Through the meeting Seaska’s proponents articulated a sense that they were gaining some important ground and that they needed to push forth with increased energy.

For example, since the General Assembly of November 1981, Seaska had worked to maintain a constant presence in the public sphere by orchestrating several press conferences as well as by meeting periodically with a variety of allied non-state-level organizations and actors. By and large the press conferences had engendered a favorable tide of publicity for Seaska and had been deemed ‘successful’ in the January meeting. A sympathetic narrative had emerged in a series of articles on the *ikastola* movement in the [francophone] regional newspaper *Sud Ouest*, for example, that told the story of a beleaguered group of highly committed Basque parents

doggedly struggling against an obdurate educational bureaucracy in order to promote the survival of their ancestral language and culture. Such positive coverage was interpreted by Seaska's members as evidence that despite political opposition to their agenda, the underlying objectives of the ikastola movement resonated well with the general public. As recalled by one activist: "Many of the local newspapers were on our side and this was important because it put a much more positive light on our mission and helped to show people that we were normal parents concerned about the future of our culture, not crazy bomb-throwing radicals" (Interview B-18).

In addition to the visibility and legitimacy generated through press releases and conferences, Seaska's efforts to reach out to empathetic political actors and organizations in the region had also been fairly successful. For instance, one result of Seaska's attempts to build alliances was the creation and publication of a petition signed by over 3,200 persons in support of Seaska, a list that included several dozen municipal authorities and union representatives. The petition was mailed to political representatives at various levels of French government, including a letter to President Mitterrand. Titled 'Legalization of Education in Basque', the brief letter restated words that had been uttered by Mitterrand during his 1981 campaign: "In the context of the new [education] policy that I propose, associations that meet the public demand will be able to integrate into a reformed national education system. These establishments will benefit from a special status guaranteeing the perpetuation of their unique pedagogical methods" (Document B-103, *Letter from Seaska to President Mitterrand*, January 1982). Subsequently, under this quote Seaska stated: "we demand an immediate application of this promise" (ibid).

Nevertheless, in spite of Seaska's relative successes in generating visibility in the press and garnering voices of support from the public, a decisive conclusion reached at the General Assembly of January 1982 was that even though the public seemed increasingly supportive of

the ikastolas, the state remained largely indifferent and unresponsive to Seaska's claims. Hence, if Seaska wanted to make any political gains, it was collectively agreed upon that ikastola supporters needed to up the ante. After much deliberation, members agreed by a majority that a different strategy was needed; a more contentious approach that would include more publicity as well as a variety of public protest actions similar to the influential street marches organized back in 1977. As noted in a published transcription of the meeting:

It is likely that they [MNE] will not broach the subject of education in a minority language if we do nothing to persuade them of the importance of the problem. The primary challenge of this assembly is this: today we must trace out a course of action so that the Ministry, which is to say the political authorities, respond clearly to our claims and respond positively...Our demands for institutionalization can only be met through a general mobilization of people in a manner similar to '77. Such initiative and constancy of determination must come from ourselves even if other groups are prepared to support us (quoted in Garat 2008:140).

In the early months of 1982, Seaska launched a wave of contentious mobilization intended to bring the state into a dialogue regarding the institutional recognition of the ikastola system. This tide of protest entailed an intensification of the publicity campaign initiated in November as well as a variety of other practices which were labeled as 'street actions/*actions de rue*'. The initial wave of actions would begin in late January 1982 and encompass street marches, demonstrations, road-blocks and the squatting of government offices. While these protest actions would briefly cease in April and May when state-level representatives from Paris arrived to evaluate the ikastola question, they would quickly resume during the summer months as a result of continued stalling and inaction by the MNE.

Seaska's protest wave was initiated on the morning of January 27<sup>th</sup> when multiple groups of ikastola supporters simultaneously visited the mayoral offices of all 21 towns where an

ikastola was in operation. Collectively, these protestors demanded that the mayor of each town publicly voice his/her support for the local ikastola to representatives of the MNE. The claims of protestors were largely heard and they dispersed of their own accord without police involvement. Ultimately, 20 of 21 mayors ended up endorsing Seaska's agenda by writing letters of support, demonstrating Seaska's relatively strong level of support at the municipal level of local politics.

Subsequently on the 5<sup>th</sup> of February 1982, several dozen Seaska supporters 'stormed' the local office of a representative of the MNE in Bayonne and demanded that he meet with them to discuss the status of the ikastolas. The representative left his office and police were called in to disperse the protestors. After a modicum of verbal resistance the activists left with no arrests. The next day, February 6<sup>th</sup>, a demonstration was held in front of the prefecture in Bayonne protesting the forced expulsion of Seaska's supporters as well as the on-going refusal of the MNE to meet with them. The course of events reinforced the sentiment among activists that education authorities were unyielding in their resistance to Seaska's claims for recognition. Both events garnered front-page coverage for Seaska in the primary regional newspaper, Sud Ouest.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> of February 1982, a small cohort of Seaska's representatives went to Paris to meet with the National Director of Schools. The meeting had been scheduled months earlier, and although Seaska was able to present its case, it ended after about 30 minutes with little response or insight from the Director. The envoy returned to Seaska's headquarters in Bayonne frustrated about the seeming pointlessness of their journey but not terribly surprised by its outcome.

United by a collective sentiment of marginalization and immobility in the political arena, a public rally for Seaska was staged in central Bayonne several days after the failed meeting in Paris. Somewhere around 150 persons participated in the event, most of them the parents and teachers who constituted the core membership of Seaska. For approximately 2 ½ hours these

actors took over the plaza in front of the mayoral office chanting bilingual slogans, brandishing bilingual picket signs and waving bilingual banners in support of Seaska and the ikastolas. The episode was once again covered by *Sud Ouest* and the following day a picture of protestors was placed on the second page of the newspaper along with a brief factual rendering that described the event as “a passive assembly of parents alarmed about the future of the Basque language and culture in France gathered yesterday to protest apathy in Paris” (Document B-107, *Sud Ouest*, February 21 1982).

A few days later on the 21<sup>st</sup> of February the wife of President Francois Mitterrand met with representatives of Seaska. Articulating her support for the ikastolas as well as “for the future survival of all regional languages in France”, Danielle Mitterrand expressed “hope” that a “sensible solution will soon be reached” (Document B-108, *Sud Ouest*, February 22 1982). While activists placed relatively little hope on the influence wielded by the President’s wife, her meeting with the organization triggered important visibility for Seaska in the regional press. Not only was it becoming clear to activists that the ikastola movement was becoming a regional newsmaker but the meeting with Danielle Mitterrand was also interpreted as evidence that the new government was at least willing to entertain Seaska’s claims rather than continue to simply ignore them.

Corresponding to Danielle Mitterrand’s visit to the Basque region on February 21st, the next day activists orchestrated a slow-down of highway traffic on the principle coastal thoroughfare between Biarritz and Hendaye. Around 500 vehicles piloted by ikastola supporters merged onto the highway during the afternoon rush, and driving at a snail’s pace easily managed to bring traffic to a crawl for nearly an hour. Hanging placards off their cars that stated slogans, such as “Legalization of Basque in Schools” and “Speaking Basque is not a Crime”, the highway

protesters managed once again to capture the immediate attention of journalists covering Madame Mitterrand's brief but high-profile visit. Eventually the protestors exited the highway with several dozen stopping on a country road leading to the mountainous interior so as to continue the protest in the form of a road-block. By early evening the national police were called in to clear the road and arrest the protestor. While tensions with the police were high, no violence had ensued; a very important point of concern for Seaska given that activists were determined to maintain a peaceful identity for the ikastola movement.

The following week on a cold and rainy February 27<sup>th</sup> a host of Basque associations and political groups assembled in the central plaza of Bayonne to protest the state's un-fulfilled promises of support for the ikastola system. With over 3,000 persons in attendance, it was the largest show of support for Seaska to date. Peacefully and silently marching from the central plaza around the ramparts of the city and back again, the demonstration made the front page of *Sud Ouest* the following day under the headline: "Under the rain a strong show of solidarity for Seaska and the ikastolas" (Document B-109, *Sud Ouest*, February 28 1982). The tumultuous events of February 1982 had brought Seaska considerable positive exposure in the press, and the ikastolas were fast becoming iconic of the Basque movement in France.

## 7.4 PROTEST POLITICS AND THE SHADOW OF BASQUE RADICALISM

As the cold and rainy winter of 1982 gradually turned to spring and summer, Seaska continued its protest and advocacy efforts in earnest. A slight but notable shift would begin to emerge during this time as the regional offices of the MNE-then led by Alain Savary- started to entertain talks with Seaska's representatives. While these periodic talks encouraged activists to trudge onward, the utter lack of political progress reached through the discussions was a continual source of contention and frustration. Moreover, adding to Seaska's problems was a growing wave of violence being deployed among the radical factions of the Basque nationalist movement in France, particularly a spate of bombings made by the group *Iparretarak*. This would prove problematic as political authorities associated the ikastola movement with the putatively irredentist agenda of Basque ethno-political militancy, bringing increased scrutiny of Seaska's members and heightened skepticism of Seaska's agenda. Nevertheless, the growing wave of Basque radicalism in France also had the positive effect of elevating Seaska's status among members of the Basque public. As the ikastolas increasingly became an emblem of the Basque struggle for self-determination, Seaska's constituency grew in both demographic size and political influence. The place of protest would thus continue to figure prominently in Seaska's mobilization repertoire as the ikastola movement was becoming increasingly politicized.

The cycle of protest launched by Seaska after the General Assembly of January 1982 briefly ceased in early March when Seaska met with a cohort of education officials to discuss possible ways of achieving state-level support, particularly in the shape of financial backing. The protests had, it would appear, succeeded in generating a critical level of visibility for Seaska and brought reluctant authorities into a dialogue. The Socialist Minister of Education, Lionel Jospin, could not afford to simply ignore the press Seaska had been generating, particularly since

Mitterrand had openly promised to support regional languages in the previous year's election. On March 5<sup>th</sup> representatives of the MNE met with Seaska at the Biarritz airport and after several hours of discussion informed activists of the government's intent to begin developing bilingual streams in regional public schools. Seaska was ultimately offered a partnership in this process and suggestions were made that ikastola teachers would be given primacy in attaining posts within the bilingual programs. At the end of the meeting, Seaska's leaders were told that while the MNE warmly welcomed their expertise in helping to design the experimental bilingual programs, these programs would nevertheless be created 'with or without' Seaska's formal collaboration (Garat 2007:141). The offer was quickly and flatly rejected by Seaska's leaders who saw it as a patronizing non-recognition of their stated agenda to work toward integration within the public sector. The meeting was deemed a failure.

Following a published statement in the Basque newspaper *Enbata* outlining the logic of Seaska's refusal to accept the MNE's offer as a "farcical proposal" (Document B-112, *Enbata*, March 6 1982), Seaska renewed its cycle of protest on the 13<sup>th</sup> of March with ikastola supporters blocking the airport runway in Biarritz for over 6 hours. In addition to maintaining Seaska's consistently high visibility in the regional press, the airport sit-in led to a string of arrests and was one of the first openly hostile and moderately violent confrontations with police. Despite Seaska's desire to officially distance itself from the violence and radicalism of Basque nationalist politics, a growing spate of bombings and attacks within France by the northern faction of ETA put authorities in a state of alert and increased their skepticism toward Seaska's reported peaceful stance.

As part of the French government's growing suspicion of Seaska's links with the radical wing of the Basque secessionist movement, on the morning of March 22<sup>nd</sup> police raided Seaska's

headquarters seizing a wide assortment of financial documents, membership lists and meeting notes as ‘evidence to be examined’ (Garat 2005:142). While no charges were ever filed against Seaska, the action was interpreted by ikastola proponents as an overtly hostile warning by the state to stem its cycle of public protests or else. As recalled by Nathalie, a former ikastola teacher who had just joined Seaska in early 1982:

It was terrifying and made many of us think of the situation in Spain, where Basque associations had constantly been attacked under Franco...We thought that our situation in France was different, especially with Mitterrand in office. But the raid was a very clear sign that we had very strong enemies willing to use force and intimidation (Interview B-10).

While the raid on Seaska’s headquarters in Bayonne shocked many ikastola proponents, it did not deter the majority of members from continuing the cycle of protest. On the morning of April 2<sup>nd</sup>, a band of activists unsuccessfully tried to storm the offices of education officials in Bordeaux. Unable to get past security precautions at the building, the activists managed to stage a small and peaceful protest whereby they delivered a letter to the regional authority of public schools. In part the letter stated:

We demand integration of the ikastola federation of schools and the association Seaska into the public sector by way of a special status in existing educational legislature in France....This process will be immediately initiated through direct negotiations with Seaska leading to: the signing of a special convention guaranteeing the preservation of Seaska’s experimental pedagogy and the subsequent takeover of all financial costs (Garat 2005:144).

A few days after the protest in Bordeaux, Seaska was contacted by representatives of the governing *Parti Socialiste* (PS) in the spring of 1982 and informed that the government was prepared to meet and work with Seaska in the near future. Despite its ambiguously encouraging

tone, the message was interpreted by Seaska's members as "another vague and placating effort on the part of Jacobin officials designed to position us in a constant condition of waiting like dogs waiting at the table" (Document B-112, *Sud Ouest*, April 6 1982). However, weeks later toward the end of April Seaska actually received the following 'official' invitation from the office of Alain Savary, the Minister of National Education:

Your request for a special convention has been denied on the basis that the existing law in France stipulates that all education must be dispensed in the French language...Bearing this decision we are nonetheless prepared to work with you toward an agreeable alternative proposal...However, the achievement of any mutually agreed upon special option must remain within the terms of French law and not assembled in a haphazard manner that contradicts current jurisprudence in the domain of education (Document B-115, *Sud Ouest*, April 20 1982).

Shortly after receiving this letter, Seaska suspended protest activities and awaited the arrival of a team of officials from the Ministry of the Interior who were designated to arrive in the Basque Country in early May so as to meet with the representatives of Basque cultural associations and political parties. Upon the arrival of this governmental envoy, however, Seaska was shockingly never granted a formal meeting with anyone. Afterwards, ikastola proponents were informed that "unforeseen time constraints and scheduling situations" had precluded officials from paying Seaska a visit (Document B-117, *Sud Ouest*, May 4 1982). Activists were told once again that the MNE was working to develop bilingual streams in public schools and that Seaska was "encouraged and welcome to participate and consult in this experimental project" with the possibility that ikastola teachers could then gain positions in public schools (ibid). Hence, it became clear that the alternative proposal envisioned by MNE was to staff the new bascophone programs in public schools with Seaska's teachers. Once again, Seaska responded to the MNE's proposal by stating that its members were seeking a total integration of

the ikastola system into the public sector, “no more and no less” (Garat 2005:144). And, as for the MNE’s offer to bring ikastola teachers into the bilingual streams in public schools, activists interpreted this “as a blatant effort by officials to dismantle the ikastola system by enticing our members with the false promise of new jobs” (Document B-118, *Enbata* May 10 1982).

## 7.5 AN ESCALATION AND BRIEF PAUSE IN PROTEST

Frustrated by the inaction and stalling of governmental officials and seriously troubled by the severe economic shortages facing the ikastolas, in June of 1982 Seaska re-launched its cycle of protest in the form of a highly publicized hunger strike. Four of Seaska’s leading members embarked on a 30-day hunger strike in Bayonne’s main Cathedral<sup>27</sup>. Photographed lying on mattresses under a bilingual banner reading ‘Legalization of Education in Basque’ the four activists swiftly caught the attention of the regional newspapers, helping to send Seaska back into the public limelight. With the visibility sparked by the hunger strike, a month long series of protest actions were also unleashed. Based upon my review of coverage of the ikastola movement by the newspaper *Sud Ouest* during the month of June, these events included: the occupation of various governmental offices in Bayonne on June 1<sup>st</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>, a blockage of railway traffic in Bayonne by over 500 persons on June 13<sup>th</sup>, and a ground-breaking ‘march of solidarity’ by over 5,000 ikastola supporters on June 26<sup>th</sup> that included the presence of several dozen municipal authorities and high-profile union leaders (Documents B-120, 121, 122, 123 and 124. ). With the publicity generated through the organization of this third mass

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<sup>27</sup> Although I have found no explicit mention as to why activists had chosen the Cathedral, the staging of the event in a Catholic Church was an interesting choice considering Seaska’s stated aim of maintaining a secular identity.

demonstration, Seaska was establishing itself as an enduring actor upon the regional political stage and authorities were increasingly obliged to at least entertain its claims.

By early July 1982, representatives of the MNE met Seaska for a high-profile and tense afternoon of negotiations in Bayonne. This brought the cycle of protest into another temporary period of abeyance. Garnering significant attention from the press, the meeting would ultimately yield the first concrete results from the state in the form of financial assistance for the following school year. For many of Seaska's leaders and members it was clear that the strategy of public protests was working. During the meeting the precise amount of public assistance was ultimately un-stated but was expected to be around one million francs; the estimated amount of debt incurred by Seaska during the 1981-1982 school year.<sup>28</sup> For its part, Seaska agreed to provide greater transparency in administrative affairs, including expenditures as well as curricular content and teacher training. Seaska was unwilling however to reduce the hours dedicated to Basque in the ikastola system, a term that the MNE was particularly determined to achieve. The agreement was deemed an 'experimental contract' that would last for an initial period of three years, after which the situation would be evaluated and re-assessed. Although the financial assistance and meeting in general was welcomed by Seaska as an encouraging step forward, the outcome was largely deemed inadequate as it had not brought the ikastolas much closer to achieving integration into the public sector, Seaska's primary aim. Upon exiting the meeting, Seaska's president told awaiting members of the press: "Everything remains to be done. We should not misinterpret these positive gestures as a final solution. There is still much work to be accomplished" (Document B-127, *Sud Ouest*, July 11 1982).

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<sup>28</sup> Seaska's total estimated debt at this time was around 6 million francs. The state, however, was only willing to cover debts incurred since the arrival of a new government in 1981 (Based on information obtained during Interview B-15).

By September of 1982 Seaska's feeling of skepticism and dissatisfaction with the July meeting was compounded as the new school year was underway and Seaska had yet to receive any funds from the government let alone word on creation of the proposed convention. After weeks of writing letters to the MNE both directly and through the media, by mid-November Seaska eventually received half of the one million francs it was promised, albeit three months into the school year. Members were outraged at the delay and the quantity of financial assistance. During another General Assembly of November 18<sup>th</sup> 1982, around 200 of Seaska's members thus decided to launch an aggressive publicity campaign aimed not only at "reminding the state of its recent promises" (Document B-129, *Enbata*, November 22 1982) but also at re-kindling another round of negotiations in order to "prepare the path for a state take-over of finances" (*ibid*). Following a vote, it was clear that the vast majority of ikastola proponents present at the assembly continued to envision Seaska's primary objective as that of achieving integration into the public sector.

Another important conclusion reached through the November Assembly was that "while the state remains very far from meeting our demands, the recent financial intervention marks a small but very important first step in the direction of recognition...If we wish to realize our objective; we must maintain this momentum and continue our course of action (Document B-129, *Enbata*, November 22 1982). In other words, Seaska's constituency remained motivated and committed to pursuing political recognition rather than build bascophone schools in the private sector.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> It is important to note that a small minority of Seaska's members voted to keep the ikastolas positioned wholly within the private realm. These opposing actors felt that involvement on the part of the state is would undermine the associative foundations of the ikastola movement.

## 7.6 RE-INVIGORATING THE PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN

In the aftermath of the General Assembly of November 1982, Seaska decided to re-invigorate the strategic role of publicity. The ensuing publicity campaign had two basic intentions. On the one hand, Seaska's goal was to raise public consciousness about and support for the ikastola movement. In this context, Seaska was essentially working to bolster the size and scope of the ikastola schooling system by recruiting new members. As described in retrospect by Nathalie, a former ikastola teacher:

Quite simply we felt that the more people involved with Seaska and the ikastolas, then the less likely it would be for the elites to ignore the reality of our presence...Publicity campaigns have been essential to teaching people about what Seaska really does because there has always been a lot of apprehension and misunderstanding about the ikastolas. I think that era [the 1980's] was important because informational campaigns became normalized as a way to speak to the public directly (Interview B-10).

On the other hand, the aim of Seaska's publicity campaign was also to criticize and radicalize the French state's unwillingness to support the ikastola movement. In this context, activists were responding to Seaska's political opponents and detractors by painting them as zealous agents of 'Jacobinism'. The strategic logic behind the publicity campaign of 1982-83 is nicely captured, for instance, by Manex, a long-time supporter of Seaska and one of its former presidents:

By that time [late 1982] the press had taken notice of our actions and a certain amount of attention, public attention, had fallen upon us. Not all of it [publicity] was positive of course, but it was not all negative either. In fact, I would say that the press at that time was often supportive of us and so it was important to try and control the type of image that was developing for the ikastolas...After Mitterrand, it was becoming more difficult for the politicians to dismiss us so easily and the publicity campaigns were necessary to

remind them that the Basque people are here and that we will not disappear without a serious fight (Interview, B-2).

The stalling and reluctance displayed by education authorities throughout 1982 was thus met by Seaska with an escalation in claims-making through the regional press. Although frustrated by the state's inaction, activists felt that they had achieved considerable momentum and could further influence policy-makers by increasing their visibility in the public sphere. A continual flow of press releases and communiqués coupled with the orchestration of non-protest events, such as music festivals were initiated by Seaska in December so as to maintain pressure on MNE officials to re-kindle negotiations. Activists believed that the state was deliberately stalling because authorities knew that Seaska was having severe financial problems and could then 'starve' the ikastolas into decline. The publicity campaign was construed as the best way to kick talks with the MNE back into gear and accrue the finances promised to Seaska earlier that year.

## **7.7 A NEW YEAR OF PROTEST AND THE POLITICAL WAITING GAME**

By early January 1983, Seaska made plans to launch another series of protest actions that coupled with the publicity campaign would hopefully draw political authorities into a more productive set of talks. One particular protest strategy adopted at this time was the squatting of governmental offices. Activists had agreed to occupy the office of the regional educational officials in Bordeaux, a strategy that had failed several months earlier. A few days prior to the carrying out of this event, however, Seaska was contacted by government representatives to initiate new talks immediately. The protest was thus postponed and the meeting took place on

January 19<sup>th</sup>. During the meeting, MNE officials proposed to allocate the remainder of the 1 million francs to Seaska plus ten percent to cover costs for the remaining school year. Seaska was asked to present more documentation to determine its finances. Activists agreed to provide officials with the paperwork but remained steadfast in their demands for legalization and integration. Citing reasons of “legal incompatibility” and “the need to further investigate the programmatic applications of any new legal convention with Seaska”, education officials told Seaska’s representatives that while integration was not tenable at the moment “a statute could be realizable next September” (Document B-133, *Enbata*, January 17 1983).

With little progress made through the January 19<sup>th</sup> meeting, activists felt a frustrating sense of déjà-vu that the state was simply stalling. Seaska’s acting leaders thus called for another General Assembly in February. With this gathering of nearly 200 members, it was collectively agreed that the cycle of protest should be renewed. Following the February meeting, a press release was also created. In addition to summing up the meeting and re-articulating Seaska’s main objectives, the press release stated:

The proposals of the Minister are ridiculous and inadequate. It is obvious that [the Minister] has no intention of creating good Basque schools nor of multiplying the number of ikastolas, nor of equalizing the relationship between French and Euskara...This refusal reaffirms the logic that the [national education] system remains an exclusive guardian of French cultural primacy...In this Jacobin climate the ikastolas remain central to the survival of the Basque language and culture and the survival of the ikastolas depends on financial intervention by the government which is only possible through a more profound political transformation of the variety promised by Monsieur Mitterrand and the Socialists during their campaign now two years behind us (Document B-134, *Enbata*, January 23 1983).

By early May of 1983 the cycle of protest was re-booted when a mass gathering on the lawn of the home of the president of the *Conseil Générale* in the city of Pau on May 5th. This latter event had a particularly unique and creative twist in comparison to Seaska's previous protests in that it targeted the private residence of an elected official and it took on the form of a mass picnic. In short, approximately 200 of Seaska's members along with several members of the press arrived at the spacious residence of Monsieur Dubocq carrying bilingual protest banners and placards along with their children and families in tow. They then proceeded to unpack food and drinks, initiate children's games and periodically address Monsieur Dubocq by megaphone from his lawn. Among the reported statements of that afternoon was the following: "As you can plainly see Monsieur le President we are normal people. All we ask from our government is to recognize our right to educate our children in the Basque language and culture. All we ask from you is to support us in our peaceful mission and we invite you to join us on this beautiful spring day" (Document B-136, *Sud Ouest*, May 6 1983). Monsieur Dubocq never emerged from his home and several police cars eventually arrived but no confrontation took place as the picnic peacefully unfolded for several more hours and protestors gradually vacated the residence.

Press coverage by *Sud Ouest* was tucked deep within the paper and largely framed in a 'neutral' rhetoric that focused on 'the facts' with little clear evidence of either support or criticism for the protest action. Several days after the protest in Biarritz, however, a letter to the editor from the president of the Basque Language Academy remarked rather wryly that "in continuing to ignore the reality of the Basque people and their language within France, the elites have invited such political actions to their homes and should be prepared to host these families again in the near future" (Document B-141, *Sud Ouest*, May 22 1983).

With the end of the school year looming on June 8<sup>th</sup> 1983, ikastola teachers organized a sit-in at five municipal offices surrounding the greater Bayonne-Anglet-Biarritz area. The teachers had collectively agreed to withhold their salaries for several months due to Seaska's severe economic problems, and they implored local officials to demonstrate their support for the ikastolas by endorsing a collective letter of protest to governmental authorities at the regional and national levels. Part of this letter stated:

After 2 years of struggle for the simple right to exist the authorities have shamelessly turned their backs on Seaska and the Basque people...The subventions recently transmitted constitute less than 20% of the operating costs for 1983, leaving 62 employees without salaries...We demand immediate support for the workers and immediate progress toward a real convention (Document B-144, *Enbata*, June 3 1983).

There was a general show of empathy and support for the teachers and the 'letter of solidarity with Seaska' was signed by 4 of the 5 authorities who had been approached. The only abstention came from the more conservative mayoral office in Biarritz, which remained antagonistic toward the ikastola project.

Following the sit-in Seaska tried to organize a brief blockage of the airport runway in Biarritz on the 18<sup>th</sup> of June. Because security measures had been significantly increased since their last airport protest, however, the several dozen activists involved were unable to actually block the runway and were quickly intercepted by the police. Several activists were arrested but most were released on the condition that they depart airport grounds. Asked by the press why the airport protest had been organized, one activist was quoted as saying "Until Mitterrand fulfills his promises to the Basque people, our combat will not cease" (Document B-145, *Sud Ouest*, June 19 1983).

The following week-end on June 25<sup>th</sup> a large demonstration in support of the ikastolas was orchestrated in Bayonne. This would be the largest to date with an estimated 2,500-3,000 people participating. Asked by the press why the protest was organized, Seaska's president made the following statement:

[Protest] is the only means we have to defend ourselves because in practice we are constantly refused the right to negotiate the future of the ikastolas...We ask the [education] Minister for a transitional convention for Seaska which guarantees two things. First, the legalization of Basque in the national educational system, and second a financial takeover of the ikastola system as it is the only legitimate bilingual education service in operation within the Northern Basque Country (Document B-146, *Enbata*, July 1 1983).

The peaceful protest in Bayonne garnered considerable press, most of it overwhelmingly supportive of ikastola proponents. The demonstration was deemed "A Cry of Alarm" by *Sud Ouest* and photographs of the event focused on the presence of children with their parents, creating the image of a peaceful and family-oriented movement, rather than of ethno-nationalist radicalism. More importantly, the state's continuing inaction and stalling tactics were questioned and criticized by journalists who evoked sympathy with the cause of the demonstrators, contrasting their non-violent tactics with the "dissolute culture of violence and militancy that certain nationalist groups in the Basque Country have come to rely on in recent years" (Document B-145, *Sud Ouest*, June 26 1983).

## **7.8 A NEW ROUND OF NEGOTIATION AND THE SLOW EMERGENCE OF RECOGNITION**

In the early days of July 1983 Seaska was contacted by the regional office of the MNE and a meeting was established to work toward a convention. This was the initial step toward Seaska's eventual realization of an experimental convention in 1986 and the ultimate acquisition of a stable contract in 1994. The Minister of National Education, Alain Savary, was largely sympathetic of the minority language issue but more inclined to work within the realm of the public education system. Savary had issued a report in the latter part of 1982 outlining how and why support for regional languages could be developed within the national education system. This report eventually prompted the creation of 'experimental' bilingual programs in several public schools within the Basque Country (Leralu and Lichau 2005). Nevertheless, Seaska's voice was difficult to ignore given the strategic levels of visibility generated by thousands of ikastola proponents. Apparently, the political presence generated through several months of protesting and publicity campaigns had paid off and negotiations were back on track.

The major points of disagreement remained in place however, as the MNE was unwilling to entertain the idea of total integration in the public sector. Moreover, the MNE as represented in southwestern France at the time by future Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, pushed for teachers to acquire state-level accreditation, criticized the Spanish citizenship of many ikastola teachers, and strongly advocated for a watering down of Seaska's immersive approach to bilingual education. An additional point of concern also emerged regarding the transition of ikastola students into public schools at the secondary level given that the ikastola system largely ended at primary

level.<sup>30</sup> The MNE wanted these students to pass examinations assuring their academic preparedness and competence. Seaska argued that students were more than capable and should not be singled out for testing.

Despite the persistence of significant differences, however, this time around things would be more productive and Seaska would walk away from a July 8<sup>th</sup> meeting with its most concrete arrangement yet: a financial allotment of 7 million francs under a one year contract with the possibility for annual renewal (Garat 2005). Although the precise terms of this contract would not get worked out until October, the state's agreement to negotiate and enter into a working contract with activists was an important moment of political validation for activists.

Notwithstanding the relative success of the October contract of 1983, however, over the course of the 1983-84 school year, Seaska would continue to bargain and negotiate for a much more comprehensive and permanent contract. As noted by Philippe, a former ikastolas teacher: "Seaska envisioned the contract as a starting point, not a final solution...It was like the first foothold one needs to climb a mountain; a starting point" (Interview B-16). The political foothold was vital because as the ikastolas were continuing to grow at a pace Seaska was unable to support the system was sinking into an ever deepening financial crisis. Indeed, the state-level funds dispersed through the contract of 1983 barely covered a quarter of operational costs for the 1983-1984 academic year. Nothing more would materialize for Seaska in the coming year, however, as the MNE would continue to find major problems with Seaska's objective of total integration and its use of the immersive method. But, by throwing some money at the

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<sup>30</sup> Although Seaska had opened its first secondary level school in 1982, this program was limited to the first year of secondary education and only served around 30 students; a fraction of the total number of students enrolled in primary-level ikastolas. Most students thus went to mainstream public schools after their time in the ikastolas. Seaska's secondary-level programs would grow successively, however, with each year after 1982, and by 1990 concrete plans were laid for building a *lycee*, thus making the ikastola network a fully comprehensive schooling system; ie K-12.

economically down-trodden ikastola system it appeared that the state could at least placate activists and prevent Seaska from organizing protests that only helped to stoke the energy of radical Basque nationalist political parties, such as *Herri Batasuna* and *Iparetararak* (Urteaga 2007:121).

With the arrival of 1984, Seaska spent much of its time negotiating and working with representatives of the MNE in order to illustrate how extant funds were being used as well as to point out how future funds could be put to use. The feeling among ikastola proponents was one of anticipation and waiting to see what longer-term developments would emerge from the initial contract. Throughout the winter and spring of 1984 activists would spend much of their time preparing for and traveling to meetings with the MNE in Bordeaux. Protest activities were placed on hold, and as the school year wound down, Seaska's members entered the summer months in great anticipation of what the following school-year would bring. For Seaska's leadership, it was clear that the bulk of members were exhausted and tired of dedicating their free-time to the endless stream of demonstrations, protests and fund-raisers that had become a part of life for ikastola parents. The relative quietude of summer 1984 was thus probably also a product of growing activist burn-out as well as mass anticipation for a working agreement with the state.

## **7.9 ECONOMIC CRISIS AND THE RENEWAL OF PROTEST**

With the start of the 1984-1985 academic year, came the worsening of Seaska's financial situation. The number of ikastolas and thus number of students had been growing steadily but over the past year Seaska had been forced to turn many people away due to shortages in teachers, textbooks and classrooms. As recalled by, Eliana, a former administrator and activist: "We had

lots of people interested in registering their children in the schools, but our financial situation could not even provide simple resources, such as books and desks...The demand was stronger than the supply!" (Interview B-18). These financial shortcomings would eventually re-ignite the cycle of protest by the end of 1984 as it was clear to activists that Seaska's now weekly fundraising efforts were not making ends meet. This particular episode in the protest cycle would prove to be one of the most intensive and decisive for Seaska in the sense that a slew of protests would yield some of the most fruitful negotiations with the MNE yet. The political foothold acquired in 1983, an outcome of the political opportunity of 1981, was transforming itself into a strategic accrual of political recognition.

With the 1983 contract Seaska had obtained some legitimacy within the political arena but after waiting nearly two years for the Mitterrand administration to deliver on its campaign promises, activists were aggravated at the extraordinarily slow and episodic pace of negotiations. During a General Assembly in December of 1984, ikastola proponents thus voted by an overwhelming majority to launch another round of protest actions. This moment is vividly recalled by Manex, a long-time ikastola supporter and former president of Seaska:

We felt that waiting for the authorities to take things forward was a serious mistake because they were playing a waiting game. They had all the time in the world whereas we had none. Quite simply, we were broke and the Ministerial offices knew this. We had given them all our financial records...because they requested them for transparency, and...they could clearly see the crisis we had. The longer the Minister and the rectorate delayed things, the more serious our debts became...We decided by majority that it was time again for us get the process moving because if we didn't, then we would be forced to close ikastolas, and this was a step in reverse...The street was our only solution, the only way to speak freely and to ensure that our voice would be heard by the officials in Bordeaux and Paris (Interview B-1).

Through collective debate and negotiation, Seaska's members had decided in early December 1984 to renew the cycle of protest once again in the new year. Prior to the holiday recess, however, a series of letters would first be sent out to a broad array of state-level actors positioned at various levels of government, from the municipality and department levels to the regional and national levels. All together, an estimated 1250 letters were sent out (Document B-151, *Enbata*, December 17 1984). Employing a very succinct and non-contentious rhetoric Seaska would once again outline its main objectives of achieving integration while preserving its pedagogical method and ask the officials to respond and express their support for the ikastola movement by the end of January 1985. A failure to respond to the letter was to be interpreted as a show of opposition to Seaska. After mailing out the letters prior to Christmas, members agreed to reconvene for a General Assembly in early February to assuage their situation and determine their next move.

By late January 1985, Seaska had received a strong show of solidarity from many local political elites positioned at the municipal and cantonal levels of government, especially in the 21 towns where an ikastola was in operation. The political recognition accrued locally was not being put to use in order to convert it into capital at the upper echelons of French governance; the MNE. The Gaullist mayor of Biarritz, however, remained un-supportive and proved to be a constant source of antagonism by making public declarations of opposition to Seaska's "aggressive attempts to corrode the Republic's schools with nationalistic and vindictive ideologies" (Document B-152, *Sud Ouest*, December 28, 1984) . Irrespective of whether or not Seaska's agenda was 'corrosive', all of the Basque nationalist political parties in France had unsurprisingly voiced their solidarity with Seaska; a voice of support that proved as always to be a double-edged sword for Seaska.

On the one hand, many ikastola parents were active supporters of nationalist political groups and thus formed a crucial part of Seaska's membership base. On the other, however, the ethno-political militancy and secessionist aspirations affiliated with some of Basque political parties threatened Seaska's image as a peaceful and 'apolitical' cultural association concerned with providing bilingual education services to as broad a public as possible.

Along with local elites, Basque nationalists and other language activists, the leaders of several small labor unions had also expressed their support for Seaska. This was especially important not only because Seaska wanted to eventually unionize its employees but because Seaska's primary opponent in the political arena remained the large and highly influential *Syndicat Nationale des Instituteurs* or 'SNI' (National Teachers Union). In fact, SNI's influential opposition to the ikastola movement was quite likely one of the primary factors thwarting Seaska's ability to achieve increased recognition at this time. As the biggest and most powerful public school teachers union in France, SNI was very closely linked with Mitterrand and the governing *Parti Socialiste* [PS].

The PS probably had no intention of going against SNI as the bulk of its members have traditionally been card-carrying Socialists (Auduc 2002). In brief, SNI remained diligently opposed to the idea of a private schooling association achieving integration into the national education system as this violated the institutional divide between private and public education. Such recognition, it was argued, would create a slippery slope down which an endless array of special interests groups including religious groups within civil society would endlessly want to reform France's secular education system in the name of a given cultural cause thus contributing to a fragmentation of France's unitary schooling system. The preferred solution to the Basque question for SNI's leaders had always been the introduction of experimental bilingual streams

into public schools; the exact process which had been very slowly initiated at the behest of Alain Savary in 1982.

While Seaska's members applauded any efforts to support Basque in schools, the introduction of bilingual streams was criticized from two angles. First, Seaska argued that only an immersive approach to bilingual education would promote minority language revitalization. The models being experimentally adopted in public schools in the early 1980's were not immersive. Second, many of Seaska's members saw the experimental bilingual programs as presenting as a potential threat to the ikastolas in the form of institutional co-optation. In other words, Seaska felt that the state was trying to siphon off its students by offering similar services in public schools<sup>31</sup>.

Despite relatively impressive shows of regional support, however, very little progress had been made with the MNE . Educational authorities continued to stall on further specifying any concrete terms for expanding let alone actually implementing the terms of convention with Seaska. Frustrated with slow progress, a General Assembly was called for on the 10<sup>th</sup> of February 1985 so as to deliberate on Seaska's next step. At the start of the Assembly, Seaska's new young and energetic president, a 29 year old youth counselor and ikastola parent from St Jean de Luz, addressed "a visibly exhausted, perturbed and anxious crowd" of over 400 members (Document B-158, *Enbata*, February 11 1985). Knowing that people were getting tired and growing impatient, she used the introductory moments of the Assembly to deliver a motivating speech. In part of this speech she stated:

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<sup>31</sup> While I did not collect any data that shows such an agenda to have existed among educational policy-makers, the handful of experimental programs created by the MNE between 1982-1986 in the Basque Country were all introduced in towns where an ikastola was already in operation.

The past year has witnessed a considerable decline of associational life for Seaska. There has been a growing de-mobilization with respect to certain actions meant to apply pressure for the signature of a new and more comprehensive convention...If Seaska exists it is thanks to the energy of everyone and Seaska cannot operate if there is not an authentic engagement from every single one of its members. The path chosen by Seaska is that of a direct democratic method, and to realize this method there are often real risks involved with engagement. At this moment the risks of engagement are far less perilous than the risks of non-engagement which would see our association lose its life due to a pattern de-mobilization...Do we have the right to let the ikastolas die? Will we let the identity of our people die? No! No, to the closing down of our ikastolas. This past year we surpassed 800 students and we will soon surpass 1,000. We are committed to success and we will not turn our backs on fifteen years of progress when we are closer than ever to our goal (Document B-160, *Seaska*, February 1985).

Her speech allegedly elicited a standing ovation and after more than 4 hours of reported deliberation, debate and voting, it was agreed upon by a majority of members that Seaska would revive the cycle of protest in the coming months so as to pull the MNE back into a concrete and productive set of negotiations. In addition, a slew of ideas were also put forth to try and find more donors and volunteers whose contributions could help to alleviate Seaska's massive financial shortcomings. Other issues discussed included speeding up the process of getting ikastola teachers certified and continuing Seaska's gradual expansion into the realm of secondary education.

The 1985 cycle of protest would be kicked off on February 27<sup>th</sup> with a demonstration of over 50 ikastola teachers in front of the office of the sub-prefecture in Bayonne protesting the state's failure to recognize their work (Document B-161, *Sud Ouest*, February 27 1985). Two weeks later on the 6<sup>th</sup> of March a demonstration of 'solidarity with Seaska' was attended outside the offices of the MNE in Bordeaux by roughly 100 persons (Document B-164, *Sud Ouest*,

March 7 1985). Subsequently, on the 8<sup>th</sup> of March, around 80-plus of Seaska's employees-both teachers and administrators-gathered at the Biarritz residence of the vice president of the *Conseil Generale* in a replay of the 1983 protest that snarled traffic for hours (Document B-165, *Sud Ouest*, March 9 1985). The following week on March 16<sup>th</sup> a larger rally was attended by some 400-500 people who marched from Bayonne to Biarritz carrying a variety of bilingual [French-Basque] banners in another show of solidarity with the ikastola movement (Document B-166, *Sud Ouest*, March 17 1985) The next protest would take place in the central plaza of Bayonne on April 20<sup>th</sup> with an estimated 500-600 people in attendance (Document B-167, *Sud Ouest*, April 21 1985). Afterward, during May Day celebrations Seaska collaborated with a host of other Basque organizations and musical groups in orchestrating a massive rally to raise funds for ikastola teachers (Document B-168, *Enbata*, May 5 1985). Several weeks later on May 29<sup>th</sup> another smaller protest occurred with around two dozen ikastola supporters entering the local offices of the MNE in Bayonne and staging a sit-in for upwards of 6 hours (Document B-169, *Sud Ouest*, May 30 1985). All of these protest actions consistently garnered the attention of the regional press, with some journalists, for example, crafting sympathetic narratives that framed Seaska's efforts as part of "the struggle of the Basque people to defend their language and culture in the face of unswerving state-level obstructionism" ( *ibid*).

As protests continued to play out over the spring of 1985, Seaska's leaders repeatedly worked to gain contact with representatives of the MNE. These attempts were largely unsuccessful because officials were increasingly condemning Seaska's protest tactics, arguing that these actions contradicted the organization's pacifist claims. For instance, the regional head of the MNE eventually issued a statement by telex to Seaska in late May which said that "As long as these irresponsible political actions persist, no more negotiations can possibly take place"

(Garat 2005:159). A few days later on May 29<sup>th</sup> the occupation of MNE offices in Bayonne took place, illustrating that Seaska was determined to use protest as a tool of negotiation. As recalled by, Amaia, a former member of Seaska who was active in the protests of this time:

[The MNE] wanted us to be complacent and to wait, but after years of waiting with no results we had decided to make things move. Waiting would get us nowhere and we knew that was their strategy... In that era, the elites were always scared that with the nationalists getting stronger things would eventually turn violent as they had in Spain, but this was fiction because our actions were always peaceful, very intense maybe but always peaceful (Interview B-18).

Seaska's cycle of protest would continue and intensify into the summer of 1985. With the press constantly informed of Seaska's moves, the ikastola story was becoming a steady staple of the local news scene. State-level officials could not afford to simply ignore the ikastola movement because the Mitterrand administration had publicly declared itself in support of reviving Basque just a few years prior. In addition to the generally positive coverage awarded to Seaska by the press, an increasing show of public support for Seaska by local political elites, union leaders and intellectuals made it increasingly difficult for state authorities to simply disregard the ikastola movement. At the very least, MNE officials would have to sit down and meet with activists under the auspices of achieving a compromise.

## **7.10 ANOTHER ROUND OF NEGOTIATION EMERGES**

After a summer of intensive mobilization, Seaska began the new school year in the fall of 1985 with a series of negotiations with the MNE. The summer of protest had procured results, and Basque activists were able to utilize their political recognition to get back to the negotiating

table. Throughout the month of October, Seaska's representatives would thus meet with education officials in Bordeaux to discuss and deliberate on some possible venues of recognition for Seaska. By the first week of November Seaska was finally offered a new and somewhat more comprehensive convention than the one that had been originally offered but rejected by activists back in 1983. The central feature of this new proposal was that the MNE would integrate ikastola teachers into the public sector for a trial period of three years. This offer was limited, however, to primary-level teachers with French citizenship who had acquired or were in the process of acquiring state-level teaching credentials. Moreover, the offer was also limited to teachers working in ikastolas that had been in operation for a period of at least two years; a timeframe that the MNE felt 'proved' the long-term viability of the individual school (Document B-170, *Enbata*, June 22 1985). As many teachers were originally from Spain and did not hold French credentials or worked in schools that had been only recently created, these conditions ended up excluding over one third of the teachers working for Seaska at the time. Another stipulation raised by the MNE was that Seaska would have to provide strong test-based evidence that all students were acquiring strong literacy skills in French.

Shortly after the offer was presented to Seaska, a General Assembly was called for on November 10<sup>th</sup> 1985 in order to lay out the terms of the convention to members and vote on whether or not they would accept the state's newest offer. Over 300 members showed up to the meeting to listen to the committee that had been formed to spearhead talks with the MNE. The committee outlined the terms of the proposal to members and then explained possible outcomes of accepting or rejecting the offer; i.e. how the structure of the ikastola system would change if the proposal was accepted and applied.

After outlining the proposal and discussing its implications, the committee then gave its perspective and recommendation on the convention. First and foremost, committee members stated that the proposal was “inadequate” and fell far short of the comprehensive form of recognition Seaska was striving for (Document B-178, *Enbata* November 15 1985). Moreover, the three year duration of the convention was perceived as “ridiculous” given that educational authorities could swiftly bring it to an end: “we could easily find ourselves right back where we are now in just a few years time” (ibid). It was also pointed out that the three year limit to the convention corresponded directly to the arrival of the sub-national election cycle in 1988, meaning that a rightward shift in the political climate could “easily dismantle” Seaska’s already “weak presence” within the political arena (ibid). In addition, the total non-recognition of Seaska’s newly created secondary schools was seen as “proof” that the MNE did not take the ikastola system “seriously” (ibid). Given that Seaska’s goal was to attain recognition for the entire system, the partial form of recognition provided through the convention was problematic and unsatisfactory.

However, during the General Assembly of November 1985 members of the committee also discussed with Seaska’s constituency some of the immediate benefits that would be gained by having the state take over the salaries of a majority of teachers. As recalled by Coralia, a former ikastola teacher and parent who attended the meeting: “The immediate benefit of entering into the situation [an experimental contract with the state] was quite clear given Seaska’s desperate financial situation at the time. The exact terms of the proposal were far from what people wanted in that era, but the future survival of the ikastolas and our language was in question; it was a very strategic decision” (Interview B-2). In short, the committee presented the argument that the current offer was an “imperfect but strategic starting point” that could lead to a

more comprehensive recognition in the future (Document B-174, *Seaska*, November 1985). After nearly two hours of reported deliberation and debate, members thus widely acknowledged the severity of their economic circumstances and voted 224 to 88 to initiate the process of integration on the condition that they would “continue to pursue a more comprehensive and dignified recognition of the ikastola system in the immediate future” (ibid). It is significant to note that the opposing votes were basically split between one group of members who favored an all or nothing approach to integration and a smaller cadre of members who had continually opposed any type of integration into the state-regulated domain of public education for fear of total institutional co-optation by the MNE.

After Seaska’s initial acceptance of the MNE’s proposal was made public, the largest regional newspaper *Sud Ouest* ran a series of stories in early December 1985 detailing and largely celebrating the event. One leading story for example, exalted ikastola parents for their “determination and tenacity to fight for the future of the Basque language and culture” while also applauding education authorities for “finally inaugurating a new progressive era of education policy in the French Basque Country” (Document B-177, *Sud Ouest*, December 10 1985). An important exception to this positive and supportive coverage in *Sud Ouest*, however, was the publication of a scathing statement of opposition from SNI. In short, SNI’s representatives argued, as they had been arguing since the 1970’s, that any integration of Seaska’s teachers into the public sector was a “violation of the secular and universal foundations of the republican education system” (Document B-178, *Sud Ouest*, December 13 1985). While SNI did not explicitly oppose the inclusion of Basque in public schools, it did vehemently oppose state-level recognition of ‘un-qualified’ teachers working in the context of ‘private’ schooling associations which did not clearly follow the pedagogical and curricular guidelines of the MNE (ibid).

As the largest public school teachers union in France, SNI had strong ties with and thus considerable leverage on the governing *Parti Socialiste* throughout the 1980's (Auduc 2002). Its biting statement of opposition to the ikastolas was a big blow for the budding public image of the ikastolas as a progressive rather than illiberal education initiative, especially at a moment when it was on the cusp of signing a convention with the state. Hence, the declaration of opposition by SNI created quite a furor among proponents of the ikastola movement, and in response Seaska's representatives rapidly published a counter-statement in the Basque newspaper *Enbata* and orchestrated a 'march of solidarity with Seaska' on December 17<sup>th</sup> 1985. In their counter-statement, Seaska argued that SNI's leadership was simply "out of step with the reality on the ground in the Basque Country" and that the union was "blocked by anachronistic ideologies of public education that reinforce the walls of Jacobin centralism to the detriment of democratic education" (Document B-180, *Enbata*, December 16 1985).

Subsequently, at a public demonstration in Bayonne an estimated 1500 people peacefully assembled in the central plaza of Bayonne bearing bilingual [French-Basque] signs with slogans such as 'Integration Now', 'Legalization of Basque' and 'Ikastola=Public School' (Document B-181, *Enbata*, December 18 1985). Both the rally and the editorial in *Enbata* were meant as a final push of generating publicity for Seaska as MNE officials were preparing to forward the proposed convention to Paris for approval by the Ministry of Interior. The voice of opposition by SNI, however, hung over Seaska like a dark foreboding shadow reminding activists of the continued presence of their political foes. As recalled by Isabelle, a former member of Seaska and ikastola parent at the time:

Waiting for this process to unfold was a very tense moment; we were exhausted and experiencing so much stress and anxiety. We had never come so close to integration in the past. Even if [the proposed convention] was not the best solution, it was an important

first step in the climb to recognition...In the end I think that they [SNI] were responsible, or at the least very, very influential in bringing everything to a stop in Paris...They saw us as a threat, as too unorthodox in our methods, and so quite simply they were determined to stop the process, which they did (Interview B-22).

When the proposal for Seaska's integration finally reached Paris in mid-December, a short debate emerged within the Office of the Ministry of Interior- Pierre Joxe- in early January 1986. Uncertain of the legality of the unique proposal, the Minister brought the debate over to the Constitutional Council; the upper-most judicial authority within French government whose role is strictly consultative but also highly influential (Loughlin 2007). The Constitutional Council quickly opposed the proposal on legal grounds, arguing that the State "could not rightly permit the disposal of public resources for the endorsement of private schools where French is not the primary language of instruction" (Document B-189, *Enbata*, January 8 1986). The Office of Ministry of the Interior followed the Council's lead without further debate and the convention was formally invalidated on January 7<sup>th</sup> 1986. After five years of escalated mobilization, proactive political networking, infra-organizational deliberation and state-level negotiation Seaska was right back at the starting block.

Word of the proposal's rejection by the state was poorly received by Seaska's members. Fearing "massive emotional exhaustion" (Interview B-15) and a "dramatic loss of energy" (Interview B-2) on the part of ikastola supporters, a General Assembly was called for by Seaska's emergent leadership on January 19<sup>th</sup> 1986. As recalled by Miren an ikastola teacher and one of Seaska's leading representatives at the time:

The mood during the meeting was quite bad...sour I would say. Many of us felt that the whole process had been a façade and that the MNE had known the convention would never be approved in Paris. We were deceived, really angry, and frustrated, but above all we were tired and totally broke and this had a negative impact on our solidarity. Perhaps

they [MNE] knew this would be the result and they could break our spirits over time. It wasn't possible to know what they were thinking exactly and this was part of our struggle; we constantly had to estimate and guess...The [January 19<sup>th</sup>] meeting was an important moment because we were fragile at that stage; we would either fall apart from exhaustion or stay together and move forward; it was a critical point...We knew that the center of our strength, the future of the ikastolas, was in our solidarity [Interview B-15].

A primary topic of debate at the meeting was how to cope with the worsening financial crisis that would now result from the absence of three years of state-level funding which would have been dispersed through the convention (Document B-191, *Enbata*, January 24 1986). Members of the committee in charge of negotiating with the state suggested that immediate efforts would have to be made to work with the municipal authorities to find alternative ways of getting public funds as this was where Seaska had political support. In addition, it was suggested that more systematic efforts be made to reach out to the newly established Ikastola Confederation in the Spanish Basque Country, as I discussed in detail in the previous chapter. As recalled by Manex, one of Seaska's leaders at the time: "I think most people agreed quite simply that as a result of the state's refusal it was not the time for Seaska to become completely contemplative and passive. An approach such as this, with our heads down, would certainly have signaled surrender to those who wished our demise... It was a moment of great exigency and we needed to transform our dissatisfactions into productive expression of political energy" (Interview B-1). Indeed, in spite of the political setback of the state's rejection of Seaska's agenda, in the early part of 1986 ikastola proponents would re-calibrate their energies and re-engage with the political process with vigor.

## 7.11 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this chapter has shown how the election of François Mitterrand created an empowering window of political opportunity for the ikastola movement after 1981. In focusing on the mobilization practices of activists from 1981-86, I demonstrated how opportunity did not merely descend into the lives of ikastola proponents ‘from above’ but how opportunity was methodically grasped by Seaska’s members ‘from below’ as they evaluated the political landscape around them in more or less strategic terms. Through a blend of discursive, organizational and performative strategizing, the window of opportunity opened by Mitterrand’s election was transformed into considerable political momentum for Seaska. As activists deployed these strategies in an effort to engage with political authorities as a result of perceived opportunity, however, a host of oppositional actors also worked to diminish Seaska’s political momentum. This opposition became ascendant after sub-national elections in 1986 shifted the political pendulum back toward the Gaullist right; ushering in a new cadre of policy-makers who were less apt to support Seaska’s agenda. Nevertheless, the period from 1981 to 1986 saw Seaska make enormous progress in terms of generating increasing levels of symbolic and material recognition from the French state. In short, Seaska had penetrated the political arena and gained relatively firm footing. While Seaska’s attainment of recognition could not have been possible without the strategic resourcefulness of activists on the ground, the agency of these actors was enabled considerably by a general opening up of the political arena by Mitterrand government. After 1986, however, the challenge for ikastola proponents would be to devise and deploy strategies more suited to working within the political arena rather than to penetrating it.

## **8.0 CONVERTING OPPORTUNITIES INTO OUTCOMES: SEASKA GAINS STATE-LEVEL SUPPORT FOR THE IKASTOLAS, 1986-1994**

Focusing on the years of 1986 to 1994 this chapter examines the mobilization practices that led to an exceedingly sluggish but highly productive series of re-kindled negotiations between Seaska and the Ministry of National Education [MNE]. In particular, I show how the strategizing of ikastola proponents after 1986 gradually led to the creation of an experimental three-year convention for Seaska in 1989 and subsequently to a more comprehensive and permanent contract with the MNE in 1994. I argue that while the arrival of an accommodating Socialist government in 1981 had constituted an empowering political opportunity that set off a wave of protest, by 1986 this wave had subsided and Seaska's strategizing became more focused on strengthening their organizational solidarity; i.e. developing and executing effective schemas of group-based decision-making. Thus, while performative strategies of public protest were still important, less contentious forms of organizational and discursive strategizing became more critical in allowing Seaska to navigate negotiations with state-level authorities and enter into a contract with the MNE in 1989 and 1994. This finding suggests that after having gained some initial recognition in the political arena the strategic relevance of protest decreased for Seaska because activists needed to better establish their professional credibility vis-à-vis policy makers. The sporadic but ongoing use of protest from 1986 to 1994, however, suggests that activists continued to ascribe instrumental value to the deployment of contentious performances in the

public sphere. In addition, I also illustrate how the arrival of an accommodating Education Minister in 1992- Francois Bayrou- opened another window of political opportunity that helped Seaska transform the experimental convention of 1989 into the more permanent contract of association with the state in 1994. This finding shows how part of Seaska's path to recognition was paved by outside factors of political opportunity as well as internal factors of strategic resourcefulness.

### **8.1 DISCURSIVE REFLECTION AND ORGANIZATIONAL RE-STRUCTURING**

In the early weeks of January 1986 Seaska's members engaged in a collective reflection of the state's refusal to endorse an experimental 3-year convention between Seaska and the MNE. While the deliberation and discussion that constituted this moment of reflexivity ultimately led activists to re-ignite protest, in the short-run it led Seaska to re-structure the ikastola system so as to procure a more streamlined but still inclusive system of leadership and decision-making. If the failed negotiations had taught activists anything it was that an effective and efficient system of leadership was needed to negotiate with state-level authorities.

The state's ultimate refusal to recognize Seaska's claims for integration in 1986 had sapped much energy from the mobilization campaign that had originally been kicked off back in the spring 1982. On the one hand, it seemed like Seaska had made relatively few gains despite the intensive display of solidarity, commitment and perseverance on the part of members and supporters. Moreover, the ikastolas were in a state of financial crisis and as a result teachers were being under-paid, materials were in short supply, programs were not expanding, and parents

were being asked to fill in many of the gaps. For these reasons, a growing host of ikastola parents were not only starting to get seriously disgruntled with Seaska's lack of progress in the political arena but some were also becoming increasingly disillusioned with the objective of integration. As recalled by Yvette: "Everyone was simply exhausted and who could blame them? We had committed so much and in the end received nothing. We felt truly deceived by the state. It was natural in this type of climate for some parents to want to drop out of the game entirely... Luckily most stayed" (Interview B-14).

At the January meeting a small minority of Seaska's members put forth the proposition to normalize the ikastolas as a private school system and abandon the quest for a fully public status (Document B-183, *Enbata*, January 21 1986). For these members, the project of integration was not only deemed unrealistic given the powerful opposition of the state, but also potentially problematic for Seaska in the long run. In this latter context, it was argued by a handful of actors at the January 19<sup>th</sup> assembly that increased integration into the public sector would inevitably "entail increased involvement and regulation by the state"; a process they felt would "erode if not totally eliminate" Seaska's associational dynamics and grassroots decision-making capacity (ibid). Although it was only a minority of parents who voiced this concern in 1986, it raised an important debate about whether or not Seaska should continue to pursue integration as well as why integration was desirable. When the majority of members reiterated their commitment to pursuing state-level recognition, this collective reaffirmation bolstered the sense of solidarity needed to fuel Seaska's agenda beyond this moment of aggravation, exhaustion and doubt. Hence, it is evident that infra-movement processes of communication were a fundamental aspect of Seaska's strategy to pursue state-level recognition

While the state's rejection of the proposed convention in 1986 raised considerable angst and deep reflection among Seaska's constituency, it was also clear among Seaska's budding leadership that the organization had achieved some very important gains on the political front. Although very little material recognition had been allocated to Seaska since the cycle of protest had been formally launched in 1982, activists pointed out that the organization had managed to generate increasing support from the broader francophone public, elucidate steady levels of positive coverage in the francophone press, acquire steady voices of support from municipal authorities and draw education authorities into periodic episodes of negotiation and dialogue. Moreover, an emergent group of leaders across the ikastola network felt that the newly adopted federative structure would allow Seaska to work more efficiently and more effectively within the political arena. For activists on the frontline, all of these factors were construed as positive outcomes of the mobilization campaign and proof that Seaska had gained significant momentum, albeit sluggishly. These sentiments are illustrated, for instance, in the following excerpt from a newsletter published by Seaska:

Our efforts have not been in vain. The vivacity of our supporters is at the heart of our movement. Our combat for normalization has been strenuous and exhausting for all of us, but it has not been without influence. We find ourselves in a difficult moment, certainly this is true. But we have traveled a great distance in these past several years, too far to throw our arms up in defeat and too far to compromise our most fundamental objective: recognition and officialization of the ikastolas...This is a moment to restore our actions, energies and commitments for the future of our language and culture...Our message has been ignored, but our voice has been heard. We must continue the struggle  
(Document B-188, *Seaska*, January 1986).

Even though the experimental convention had been rejected by the Ministry of the Interior, the committee of activists who had been spearheading the negotiations pointed out to members during the January meeting that Seaska had managed to have its case heard at the highest levels of French government. In this light, leading activists argued that giving up the quest for integration would be disastrous for the ikastolas as Seaska had finally achieved a fairly steady presence within the political arena. For leaders, backing down from the political struggle would mean wasting the labor that had been invested by members over the past several years. It was argued that perseverance and determination were needed, rather than conciliation and acquiescence. As surmised by Manex: “It was an all or nothing moment. Most people were very tired but those of us on the committee, we had been on the frontline of the political battle and we knew that we had to continue in some way or else we would lose the momentum that we had established” (Interview B-1).

Although several protest events would transpire during the first few months of 1986, there would be far more emphasis in the spring and summer of 1986 on generating new sources of financing, maximizing existing resources and re-designing Seaska’s structure of collective decision-making and leadership. Seaska’s members made a collective decision at this juncture to transform every ikastola into an individual and semi-autonomous association rather than an extension of Seaska. This meant that while Seaska would continue to be the center of decision-making on all matters concerning the ikastola system, each individual school was given greater latitude in managing internal affairs, such as student retention and more importantly fund-raising. This was a key moment of transformation in the form of organizational adaptation by Seaska as the organization’s emergent leaders realized that they could no longer effectively run the expansive ikastola network through a direct democratic method, and would have to rely on a

more representative form of democracy whereby each ikastola created its own council of leaders and appointed certain actors as representatives. These representatives would then meet periodically at Seaska's headquarters in Bayonne to discuss concerns related to individual schools as well as issues related to Seaska's political agenda.

## **8.2 PROTEST IS RE-BOOTED**

After a lengthy and emotionally charged debate several important decisions were reached by majority vote during the General Assembly of January 1986.

First, it was decided that Seaska would continue to engage in some protest actions as a way to maintain pressure on the state. In the coming months there would be several small public rallies and demonstrations in order to generate and exhibit public support for Seaska across all the different towns where an ikastola was located. These events were usually quite small, very localized and typically maintained an explicitly 'apolitical' and non-contentious character. Because municipal authorities in these towns had been supportive of the ikastolas, Seaska wanted to organize events that were intended to demonstrate how successful and popular the schools had become. As described in retrospect by Miren: "Generally, the smaller rallies were about being positive, focusing on the happiness that a community experienced with the arrival of an ikastola. The intention here was not to be too political and make criticisms of the state because the point was to be celebratory and festive" (Interview B-15). In addition to these smaller festive rallies, Seaska would also orchestrate two much larger protest events in the weeks following the General Assembly.

The first of these would be a slow-down of traffic on February 8<sup>th</sup> along the main highway paralleling the Basque coast and thus stalling the entry of all commercial trucking into Spain. The second protest would take place at the regional headquarters of Radio France on February 26<sup>th</sup> whereby a crowd of roughly two dozen activists would peacefully over take the broadcast for 30 minutes and transmit a bilingual statement protesting the Mitterrand administration's non-recognition of the Basque language and culture in France. Given the relative largesse of these events and that Seaska had not organized a protest since the previous summer, both actions garnered immediate coverage in the main press outlets. Articles in *Sud Ouest*, for instance, provided a largely factual but relatively sympathetic account of the protests. One journalist described the incident at Radio France as a "call for help" from the Basque public and a 'reminder to Mitterrand of his aging promises to the Basques of France' (Document B-191, *Sud Ouest*, February 27 1986). For activists, the press garnered through the protests helped to demonstrate to members as well as political opponents that Seaska was still very much in the game.

In addition, it was also decided during the January meeting that the frequency of protests would have to be lessened considerably in the coming months in order to focus the collective energy of members on fund-raising efforts. A fund-raising activity of one sort or another was assigned to literally every week-end for the next several months in order to try and raise Seaska out of the massive debt it had occurred in anticipation of integration into the public sector. From sporting events to music festivals and from recycling campaigns to selling calendars, the volunteerism of parents, teachers and supporters would thus be maximized to its fullest from late January to the end of the school year in early June. As recalled by Marie-Jeannette, a former ikastola parent:

I spent practically all of my Saturdays and Sundays during that period trying to raise money for my daughter's ikastola... Soccer matches, rock concerts, making *talos* (a corn-based tortilla-like food eaten in the Basque Country), we did everything even beg [laughs]... Seaska was completely broke, the teachers were practically working for free... It was exhausting yes, of course but it was incredible because at that time there was such a strong feeling of solidarity among all of us, a feeling that we were building a new society with our own hands and fighting for our children's right to experience their own culture (Interview B-16).

A third decision reached in the January assembly was that media campaigns would be used more frequently in order to keep generating a constant flow of positive visibility for Seaska and to try and maximize public support for the ikastola movement. By this time, the role of the media had become a permanent feature of Seaska's mobilization campaign. Not only were protests used to garner exposure in the press, but communiqués, statements and editorials were being constantly produced in order to maintain a voice for Seaska and to counter the prevailing criticisms made of the ikastola movement by influential opponents, such as SNI. As part of this media campaign, Seaska was periodically asking local-level political elites to make public statements of support and to sign petitions backing integration of the ikastola system. Frequently published in newspapers these petitions or statements of support by municipal and communal authorities were crucial in legitimating Seaska's claims for recognition. On the 25<sup>th</sup> of March 1986, for instance, Enbata published a full-page statement made by Seaska with the names of nearly 2,000 supporters listed underneath. In part the statement read:

In all of its history Seaska has never known such a dire situation... And if today we are in this tragic situation it is thanks to the policies made against Seaska by the Ministry [of National Education]. In spite of this, and more than ever, Seaska is determined to ensure the enlargement of the ikastolas and their successful opening next autumn under superior and stable conditions... We urge the Ministry to follow the path of the people rather than

to block it, and to demonstrate their support for the ikastolas (Document B-194, *Enbata* March 25 1986).

Fourth, and perhaps most importantly, it was decided that Seaska would utilize the coming months to re-structure itself. In this final context, it was decided that because active membership had exceeded 500 persons and the ikastola system had grown to nearly 1,000 students, the format of the General Assemblies was too cumbersome and could no longer be used as the primary platform of decision-making on all matters. While everyone agreed that the format of open meetings should be preserved to make big decisions concerning officialization in a strictly democratic manner, an influential argument emerged from the committee that Seaska also needed to begin streamlining its decision-making capabilities in order to manage everyday issues linked to finances and infrastructure (Garat 2005) . From this emerged the idea to create school-based bodies of leadership or ‘ikastola councils’. In this way, each individual ikastola would be represented without all members having to vote on nearly every issue of concern giving the organization a federated organizational structure whereby members could manage concerns more rapidly and efficiently.

### **8.3 THE POLITICAL PENDULUM SWINGS RIGHTWARD**

In the aftermath of the state’s refusal to approve any integration of the ikastola system into the public sector and in the midst of Seaska under-taking a large-scale process of organizational re-structuring, an additional blow was dealt to ikastola proponents in the spring of 1986 when the structure of political opportunity narrowed drastically. This narrowing of opportunity came in the form of the *Parti Socialiste* [PS] experiencing massive losses in sub-

national elections; i.e. communal, departmental and regional. In brief, the elections of 1986 broke off many of the political contacts that Seaska had built up since Mitterrand's 1981 victory. The 1986 elections gave rise to a historical period of cohabitation in the French government whereby the Socialist President François Mitterrand would have to 'share' political power with a resurgent Gaullist majority in parliament (Loughlin 2007). This meant that the regional representatives of the MNE who Seaska had been working with since 1981 had departed and ceded their place to a new cohort of policy-makers aligned with the Gaullist politics of the Right. The result of this ministerial re-shuffling was that Seaska would have to re-initiate negotiations and then re-define the terms of integration. In short, any process of negotiation would have to be started again from scratch.

Upon entry to the MNE, for example, the new group of officials not only requested that Seaska re-submit all of its requests for state-level support, but also that Seaska provide the MNE with a battery of documentation regarding items such as financial records, pedagogical philosophy, teacher credentials, curricular programs, and student safety. "Essentially we were told to start the whole process, everything over again" recalled Miren in an interview, "it was devastating and it came at a very low point in the morale of Seaska" (Interview B-15). For activists, the request was absurd and interpreted as an unabashed attempt by the new officials to simply inundate Seaska with busy work and thus forestall progress toward any negotiation while also implicitly providing a false sense that progress could be achieved. Moreover, the demand to re-submit documentation was especially devastating because it came directly on the heels of the French Constitutional Council's rejection of the legality of Seaska's proposed integration into the public education system. Despite feelings of resentment and despondency, however, Seaska spent the next several months working with new MNE officials, compiling the necessary data

and eventually re-submitted its demands for state-level support in spring 1986. Seaska's leading and most public representatives continued orchestrating press releases, holding press conferences and seeking out the support of local-level politicians with the hope of further galvanizing public support during difficult times.

In May of 1986 representatives of the MNE contacted Seaska several weeks after it had officially renewed its request to achieve integration into the public sector. A meeting was set up by the MNE for the 7<sup>th</sup> of May to discuss "a possible solution for the Basque schools" with Michele Alliot-Marie, the new Minister of Education and a native of St. Jean de Luz (Document B-194, Sud Ouest, May 9 1986). Seaska was initially informed by Madame Alliot-Marie that a complete integration of the ikastola system would never be granted as such a process "directly conflicts with French law on private education" and "is not compatible with any legal framework in existence within the Fifth Republic" (ibid). Subsequently, as a concession Seaska was offered recognition in the form of what is known as a 'simple contract' for private schools; a status under which many Catholic and Jewish schools in France had been operating for years. Through this contract the ikastolas would be recognized as private tuition-based schools but a certain number of teachers would be eligible to be paid as public sector employees based upon Seaska's compliance with four non-negotiable conditions: [i] that these teachers were French citizens, [ii] that these teachers held proper accreditation from a French university, [iii] that these teachers worked in a primary-level ikastola that had been in operation for at least two years, and [iv] that Seaska increase the daily number of hours allocated to French in the ikastola system by 25%. The contract also stipulated a provisional trial period of three years, after which the MNE would re-evaluate its success and consider a renewal that might include secondary schools as well.

After the meeting with the MNE a General Assembly was called by Seaska for May 24<sup>th</sup> in order to deliberate and vote on the proposed contract. For Seaska's leadership, it was apparent that if accepted the terms of the MNE's proposal would only lead to the recognition of less than 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the ikastola teaching force and would thus constitute an important but still impartial source of financial relief for the schooling network (Document B-197, *Seaska*, June 1986). On the one hand, the provisional nature of the proposal was regarded as a potentially productive first step for Seaska to gain increased recognition after the first three years. However, on the other hand, its temporary nature was also construed as deeply troubling because it could simply be ended and send Seaska right back into the financial quagmire.

In general, activists had profound misgivings about the MNE's proposal and after nearly two hours of discussion and debate, members voted by a vast majority to decline the contract in order to pursue a more stable and comprehensive form of recognition. Moreover, despite their rejection of the government's proposition Seaska's leadership felt encouraged that the meeting had taken place and that the offer was made. For activists, the interaction was proof that Seaska had become a relatively viable and influential player in the political arena. As recalled by Manex, who was directly involved with the process at the time: "It was like having to do business with people you mistrust because they let you down in the past. The atmosphere was very tense and people were apprehensive. We did not accept their offer, but we would not stop pushing until we entered into a new phase of negotiation...Their offer was a joke; a complete denial of our demands. They wanted to make themselves look good while making us look ungrateful" (Interview B-1).

A final decision reached by majority at the assembly of May 1986 was thus to reject the proposal but stay the course in order to push for a more stable and comprehensive form of

recognition within the public sector. The logic of this decision was captured in a press release by Seaska the following day:

By a 2/3<sup>rd</sup> majority we have decided to reject the precarious proposal made by Madame Alliot-Marie. We will continue our struggle for a comprehensive process of integration that yields support and respect for our language and culture in the national education system. We demand that the ikastolas as administered by the members of Seaska, be recognized as public schools...The iron arm of the state has forced us into a severe crisis but we will continue our struggle until officialization is accomplished...We invite Madame the Minister to continue the dialogue and consider anew the logic of our demands (B-155, 1986).

#### **8.4 THE ELEVENTH HOUR**

At the start of the 1986-87 school year things looked pretty bleak for Seaska. On the one hand, political negotiations had not only stalled but seemingly broke down. The MNE was not re-considering the terms of its original proposal for a simple contract. Shortly after Seaska had neglected to accept the contract in May, an open letter to the public was published in *Sud Ouest* by the departmental sub-prefect berating activists for turning away from the offer. In the letter it was argued that “the financial situation Seaska now finds itself in is the product of negligence among its leadership and not of governmental malice as some militants have claimed...The Minister [Alliot-Marie] has been cooperative and shown admirable openness toward Seaska’s exceptional demands...The proposed contract was the best compromise that Seaska can possibly hope for and turning away from the agreement was a fatal mistake” (Document B-201, *Sud Ouest*, May 19 1986).

On the other hand, Seaska was ‘fatally’ stretched beyond its financial limits and operating in so much debt that dozens of teachers and administrators were working either without pay or with severely reduced salaries. About a month before classes began in September, for instance, Seaska published a statement in *Enbata* asking readers to make donations of at least 100 francs to help finance the secondary school in Cambo (Document B-202, *Enbata*, August 4 1986). In addition, despite Seaska’s original policy of maintaining very low tuition and fees for students, it now found itself periodically forced to ask parents for whatever monetary ‘donations’ they could afford to give. Seaska was also consistently reaching across the border to Spain to ask the newly created Ikastola Federation (est. 1986) for whatever resources that it could afford to give, monetary or otherwise. Municipal authorities were also being regularly tapped for their generosity, particularly in relation to costs related to the maintenance of school buildings, such as rent and utilities, or the use of public athletic facilities, such as gymnasiums and soccer fields<sup>32</sup>.

In short, the academic year 1986-87 was ushered in on the crest of the worst financial crisis in Seaska’s history and with little potential relief from the government in sight. Most of Seaska’s attention for the first few months of the new year would thus be poignantly focused on the economic concerns of raising and redistributing resources. As such, very little headway was made in the political arena and less than ten protests were undertaken. Among these was an

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<sup>32</sup> In spite of Seaska’s financial meltdown in 1986, it is important to point out that by this point Mitterrand’s reforms concerning the promotion of civic associations had been slowly put into place. For Seaska, this meant that some small annual subventions were becoming available to help cover costs. During the 1986-87 school year, for example, when the first distribution of this subvention was made it ended up totaling to less than 1% of Seaska’s annual budget. Two years later in 1988 it was estimated that the subvention approximated just under 3% of the annual operating budget, a figure which crept up to 3.5% by 1992 (Garat 2005).

assembly of approximately one dozen of Seaska's female constituents at a regional women's meeting of the Socialist Party in Biarritz. At the start of the meeting, the women stood up and silently unfurled a bilingual banner that read: "End the Silence: Legalization of Basque Schools Now!" (Document B-203, *Sud Ouest*, September 19 1986). Press coverage of this event was miniscule and it is unclear how the event developed. Most of the other events orchestrated that autumn entailed smaller week-end gatherings of ikastola supporters in front of various mayoral offices in the towns of Bayonne, Biarritz, Hendaye and Hasparren.

It was not until January of 1987 that Seaska would slowly re-ignite the struggle for recognition. The first step in this process would be to unleash a continuous flow of statements in the regional press that were intended to re-articulate Seaska's objectives, re-familiarize the public with the ikastola system, criticize state-level authorities for their continuing lack of support and perhaps above all to illustrate that Seaska was prepared to maintain the struggle. The second step would emerge a bit later in March as Seaska began organizing protest events once again, primarily in the form of rallies and marches.

A third and relatively novel step in Seaska's mobilization campaign which was introduced at this juncture was to explore alternative legal avenues for obtaining state-level support. In this context, a team of lawyers had been acquired *pro bono* to help Seaska make sense of the legal landscape, and to see if there were any possible ways of initiating broader-level legal challenges that could lift the seemingly immobile institutional barriers to integration. With the struggle becoming increasingly mired in legal and constitutional issues, Seaska's members needed to consult experts to figure out various courses of action and possible options for obtaining a more comprehensive contract than the one offered in the spring of 1986. Indeed, from this point onward, Seaska would continually maintain a legal team at or near its disposal.

The important role of lawyers for Seaska since the 1980's was summed by Jean-Claude, a former lawyer himself: "Because of the nature of Seaska's demands, the bureaucracy eventually became overwhelming for everyone involved. The Ministry was able to drown Seaska in mountains of paperwork that no one could possibly understand...Lawyers became a necessary part of the movement...Luckily they have always been Basque lawyers who work for free" (Interview B-9).

During the spring of 1987 Seaska began re-amplifying its efforts to work toward some form of integration into the public sector. Although the MNE remained steadfast in offering Seaska a simple contract with highly limited terms of recognition, activists believed that they could find some room to maneuver. The fact that Seaska had obtained a presence in the political arena, was evidence to activists that they could continue to push the issue and, hopefully, up the ante. At a mid-May meeting of the newly created Executive Council of Ikastolas, the emergent community of leaders behind the ikastola movement gathered to consider their options and course of action for the coming summer months. It was eventually surmised that while continuing the struggle for state-level recognition was a top priority for Seaska, the dire financial predicament of the 86-87 school year had led a growing number of parents to seriously contemplate the MNE's offer.

While a growing number of members started to see the contract as a reasonable and immediate means to alleviate the crisis, they also began to see it in a more strategic light as a temporary situation that could be expanded in the near future. In this light, an argument emerged among Seaska's ranks that the federation could begrudgingly accept the contract for now and then re-boot the struggle for integration later on. In this context, it was suggested that perhaps Seaska could re-negotiate some of the more technical aspects of the initial contract proposed by the MNE. There were two items in particular that Seaska felt could be negotiable: the number of

hours dedicated to French and the inclusion of pre-school and secondary school teachers. With this compromise on the table, Seaska's Executive Council called for a General Assembly at the end of the school year in June. At this historic Assembly of some 500 people it was agreed upon by an 88% majority that Seaska approach the MNE to deliberate on the boundaries of the proposed contract (Document B-204, *Enbata*, June 15 1987). The compromisory logic behind this collective decision was recalled by Yvette: "No one was happy with this idea, it was quite simply a strategy of survival. But, of course we had to start somewhere" ( Interview, B-14).

Prior to Seaska's formal efforts to reach out to the MNE, a large rally was orchestrated in July 1987 on behalf of Seaska by an alliance of Basque organizations in order "to honor Seaska and illustrate the strength and presence of the citizens who have supported and continue to support the ikastolas in these difficult times" (Document B-205, *Sud Ouest*, July 13 1987). An estimated 1,700 persons gathered in central Bayonne armed with the bilingual slogans, banners and signs that had become fairly familiar to the public by this point, such as 'Ikastolas=Public Schools' and 'Legalization of Basque'. It was the first demonstration of such a size to occur since 1985, and for Seaska it was a crucial public show of force by its supporters. During the event Seaska's president declared to the press that he hoped the event would "remind the Minister of the democratic character and foundations of our movement as well as the determination of the Basque people to continue the fight for respect of their language and culture in the education system" (ibid).

After a series of phone calls and letters had been exchanged between Seaska and the offices of the MNE during the summer of 1987, a meeting was finally established for September. In a now familiar series of events for Seaska, the talks unfolded in a very sluggish and sporadic manner. By December little headway had been accomplished as education authorities continued

to question the ‘legality’ of Seaska’s proposals to maintain organizational control of all pedagogical issues, and Seaska continued to reject the exact terms of the original contract due to the demand to reduce the number of hours devoted to Basque. At a press conference in January 1988, Seaska’s president claimed that authorities were “playing a political game of musical chairs” and that the ultimate intent of this ‘game’ was “to keep stalling the process until the ikastolas are completely starved of resources” (Document B-210, *Enbata*, January 18 1988). He then stated that the state’s stalling tactics were “ignorant of the perseverance and determination of the Basque people” as well as “a denial of the fundamental spirit of democracy” (ibid).

As talks limped on into the spring of 1988, Seaska’s supporters orchestrated a series of week-end rallies and demonstrations in order to maintain visibility in the public sphere and keep pressure on the political process. “Even though we were all tired and nearly bankrupt, it was absolutely necessary at that stage” recalled one participant, “that we sustained our street actions because the state was simply hoping we would surrender and quietly accept the contract like sheep with our heads down” (Interview B-19). Thus despite Seaska’s members having collectively agreed to enter into a limited and experimental contract with the state, they were now facing the extremely difficult task of trying to expand the terms of this contract. By the summer of 1988, however, no compromise had been reached and Seaska would have to wait until September to resume its dialogue with the seemingly resolute and unswerving officials from the MNE.

During the summer of 1988, a handful of rallies were organized on behalf of Seaska. While several small contentious protests emerged in Biarritz and Bayonne, most of these were festive events geared toward generating and distributing the funds that Seaska so desperately needed to maintain the ikastola system. For example, many ikastola teachers were slated to start

the next school year working at half-salaries and asked to donate as much time as they could both volunteering and coordinating fund-raising projects. The desperation of this moment was poignantly communicated to ikastola supporters by Seaska through a press statement released in May of 1988:

We have entered into a profound crisis of material scarcity and as a consequence the next school year will see a 15% decrease in the number of teaching positions and many teachers will experience a 40 to 50% reduction in salary. The ikastolas in Sare and St. P ere have been consolidated leaving us now with 20 ikastolas and 52 classes for 850 students. This is a strain for our teachers who have already sacrificed greatly for the progress of our ikastolas. Without a doubt this situation will have serious pedagogical consequences and our equilibrium will be difficult to continue. Our debts continue to rise but our commitments must not decline. We must strengthen our solidarity with the ikastolas in the south and it is with great exigency that we must continue the work needed to advance negotiations with the [Ministry of ] National Education in autumn (Document B-215, Enbata, May 91988).

The following week a massive fund-raising festival was organized on behalf of Seaska by an assortment of cultural and political organizations based in both the Spanish and French Basque Country. Known as '*Herri Urrats*' [lit. 'the people's path'] at least 5,000 people participated in two days of music, dancing, sports, arts, marches and public speeches. On the eve of this event a joint statement was released in the press by festival organizers and under-signed by host of municipal authorities. In this full-page statement it was argued:

Seaska's progressive ideas have created a political and cultural renaissance in *Iparalde* [the French Basque Country]. Seaska has forced the French state to face its democratic responsibilities and

shown to the people of Europe the limits of the state's tolerance toward the right to difference. The state has a duty to recognize the pedagogical integrity of the ikastola and to uphold the right of parents to chose the ikastola for their children...The French state has a cultural, democratic and moral obligation to take over financial responsibilities and to safeguard the place of the Basque language and culture within the public education system (Document B-216, *Enbata*, May 16 1988).

As the new school year began to unfold in September 1988, Seaska re-launched its efforts to draw the MNE into a dialogue regarding recognition of the ikastola system. By November a series of short talks were once again initiated in Bordeaux with the Office of the Minister of National Education, Nicole Alliot Marie. "It was incredibly frustrating because each time we would meet it was as if for the first time", recalled one participant in an interview, "we were turning in circles with no progress with the same problems always sitting there on the table in front of everyone" (Interview B-9). By December 1988 the MNE responded to Seaska by offering a limited and experimental contract of association that was nearly identical to the one Seaska had refused several years earlier in 1986. It was evident for Seaska's leading representatives by this point that while the MNE was periodically willing to meet with and listen to Seaska's representatives; it was not willing to entertain their demands. A meeting of the Ikastola Executive Council was thus called for after the winter holidays in January 1989 in order to deliberate on Seaska's next move. Despite an increased flow of assistance and contributions from the Ikastola Confederation based in the Spanish Basque Country, the ikastola system in France was operating very far into the red; an estimated 1.2 million francs was owed to several different banks according to one press release (Document B-209, *Seaska*, Autumn 1988).

With the upcoming 1989-1990 school year in jeopardy, Seaska's leading members felt that they could not afford to turn their backs on the proposed contract. Neither, however, were

they prepared to unconditionally accept the contract without another attempt to re-define some of its terms. Of particular concern was the state's demand that Seaska increase the hours of francophone instruction to at least 25% of the school day.

By and large Seaska was unwilling to sacrifice any hours of bascophone instruction to French. Seaska's immersive method of bilingual education was designed so that Basque was the predominant language of instruction. The dominance of Basque was especially strong in the early years of primary education in order to secure acquisition of the minority language among young children growing up in a francophone environment. While some school days may have entailed up to 25% francophone instruction, most did not. Seaska's main grievance here was not that the state mandated the presence of French, but that authorities were mandating precisely how much French must be used on a daily basis. The MNE's request to establish a linguistic quota was thus construed by activists as an attack on two of the most fundamental aspects of the ikastola system: the immersive method of learning, and organizational autonomy. Nevertheless, some type of compromise would have to be reached if Seaska wanted to enter into a convention with the state.

## **8.5 ROUNDING THE CORNER TO RECOGNITION**

As talks were started back up in the spring of 1989 Seaska's leading activists worked with the legal team to try and find a solution within the parameters of French law. A particularly interesting point of discussion that emerged at this point concerned Seaska accepting the contract in word only. In this scenario, Seaska contemplated formally accepting the contract under its current terms, but in practice ignoring the linguistic quota and continuing to emphasize Basque

as the predominant language of instruction. The logic of this putative solution was explained in retrospect by Txomin:

It would have been a gamble to operate like this in the shadows, and if we violated the terms of the contract, it could have resulted in its immediate termination. But, this was a strategy of survival, a way to preserve the pedagogical integrity and cultural mission of the ikastolas... It was not deception, it was survival; the only solution...I think if we had gone down this kind of path it was also because we felt that it would simply have been a reversal of the state's political games against us; we say 'yes ok good', but we would continue to operate as before; just as they say 'ok we support you' but then nothing concrete emerges" (Interview B-12).

With their strategy of 'innocent deception' in hand, Seaska entered into another brief volley of deliberations with the MNE during March and April 1989. During these talks the specific terms of the contract were painstakingly debated. An outcome of these debates was that the MNE finally agreed to accept the informal use of French by students during recreational/athletic activities as part of the 25% quota it had requested. As such Seaska would not have to explicitly engage in any deceitful strategizing of saying one thing but doing another.

Astonishingly, however, it would not be until the start of the 1989-90 school year that Seaska's acting leaders would be able to meet again with representatives of the MNE to finally sign the accord. The reason given to Seaska for this delay was that the MNE in Bordeaux would had to have the final terms of the contract officially approved by higher-level authorities in Paris; a process that would not only take months to unfold but which could once again be killed by veto as had happened back in 1985. Thus Seaska would enter the summer of 1989 unsure of how things would turn out despite having spent the past year deliberating and negotiating the terms of a convention that could ultimately be squashed in the bureaucratic labyrinth of the French

political system. Seaska could be sure at this point that, if approved, the contract would not be applicable until January 1990 at the earliest. This meant that the start of the 1989-90 school year would yet again be kicked off in financial straits.

Despite anxieties about the contract's approval in Paris, however, many of Seaska's leading representatives felt that they had obtained some strategic footing within the political arena. As recalled by Manex: "When the original contract was sent off to Paris, it was beyond our reach and the uncertainty was certainly very difficult to endure. But, no matter the result we still looked at the situation as a success. The terms of the contract were really a minimum; it was very far from the type of normalization we were working toward...but it was progress; it was the beginning of our path, not the end" (Interview B-1). Thus, although the contract was poorly regarded by Seaska's members, it was construed as an important first step in gaining increased recognition in the future.

The signing of an 'experimental' 3-year convention between Seaska and the MNE finally took place in early November of 1989. It was a public event with much fanfare in the press. Despite an over-whelming feeling of having compromised, Seaska did its best to portray the event as a victorious moment rather than a conciliatory move. Seaska's president maintained a light-hearted demeanor and was photographed smiling and shaking hands with the representative from the MNE. When signing the contract, for example, Seaska's president drew laughter from the public when he asked to use the official's pen "just to make sure mine is not filled with invisible ink" (Document B-211, *Enbata*, November 13 1989). After the event, he stated to the press that "this contract would not have been realizable today without the contact push and enormous commitments, both of time and emotion, by those who continue to invest a great deal

of their lives into the ikastolas and future of our language and culture” (Document B-212, *Sud Ouest*, November 13, 1989). He then stated:

The signature of this convention is of capital importance, especially because relations between the two parties have not always been smooth. We hope that this moment signals the emergence of a new era of political will that shall be favorable to creating the necessary conditions for the creation of a public education system that recognizes the cultural, historical and linguistic specificity of the Basque Country (ibid).

Through this statement Seaska’s president conveyed the public message that Seaska’s signature of the convention was the product of ceaseless grassroots mobilization and that the signature was viewed as a first step toward a broader reformation of education system. Several days later an additional statement was made to the press. In part it read:

The current convention is far from our objective and is marked by considerable fragility. It has been difficult to find a mechanism of recognition that does not go beyond the limits of French law...Our hope has been to initiate a partnership with the state that brings financial security to the ikastolas and that permits maximal preservation of our unique pedagogical model...Our worry remains the significant limitations imposed by the contract and that the partnership can be terminated at any moment with little warning (Document B-214, *Sud Ouest*, November 17 1989).

On the other side of the process, representatives from the MNE clearly wanted to portray the state as a progressive entity in touch with the lives and desires of citizens in the Basque Country rather than as a detractor and opponent of the ikastola movement. During the press conference that followed the signing of the convention, for instance, the regional representative of the MNE in Bayonne declared that:

The Basque language and culture forms an important part of the heritage of the French Republic and it is with great pleasure that we have found a tenable solution for the ikastolas that remains within the jurisprudence of French law. It has been inspiring to work with Seaska, an association comprised of tremendous dynamism, competence and commitment. We believe in this contract, a product of open, rational and peaceful negotiations, and look forward to its rapid and successful implementation on January 1<sup>st</sup> 1990...This marks the beginning of a relationship of continuing cooperation aimed at ensuring pedagogical quality and proficiency in a bilingual setting...We will continue our work with Seaska to evaluate the project and revisit the situation again in two years so as to consider its status" (B-212, *Sud Ouest*, November 13 1989).

Under the terms of the final draft of the initial three-year contract with the MNE, 61 of 83 ikastola teachers ended up becoming eligible to be recognized as full-time public sector employees (Garat 2005). This was not only an important source of financial relief for Seaska, but also an immensely historic moment of political recognition; i.e. it was the first time that any aspect of the ikastola system became formally integrated into the public sector. Although not comprehensive in its support of the ikastolas, the signing of the convention was a keystone moment for Seaska in that it became interpreted by activists as a tangible outcome of their mobilization efforts; i.e. it provided activists with an empowering sense of political agency.

The convention was made up of five articles, each addressing a distinctive component of Seaska's new relationship with the MNE (Document B-214, *Seaska*, Winter 1989).

The first article, for example, declared that an official commission would be formed in order to oversee the process of integrating ikastola teachers. This commission would be dually formed by appointed representatives from the MNE on the one hand, and by a designated group

of Seaska's members on the other. This article was designed to ensure Seaska's active participation rather than mere observation of the process.

The second article laid out the duties and functions of the 'bipartisan' commission. One particular area concern here was "the conceptualization, elaboration and utilization of pedagogical materials and teacher training programs" (ibid). Another topic of concern in this article was to find a way for eligible but non-certified ikastola teachers to obtain proper accreditation in a manner that would not deprive Seaska of its teaching force.

The third article of the convention discussed the need "to develop methods and modalities for the evaluation of those teachers under contract with the state" (ibid). It is in a subsection of this article that the minimal linguistic quota for French was declared as being 11 hours per week, a little less than 30% of the school week. An additional point added here was that evidence of equal proficiency in both French and Basque would be a requirement for successful completion of the elementary cycle. In other words, all ikastola students wanting to 'graduate' to the level of secondary schooling would have their literacy in French evaluated through formal testing mechanisms determined by the MNE.

The fourth article stated specifics on which members of the MNE would staff the bipartisan commission. It also stated that the commission itself would ultimately have to be approved by the Rector [the regional head of the MNE] as well as re-approved after one year's time. This aspect of the convention clearly put final authority in the hands of the MNE.

The fifth and final article of the convention simply stated: "The present convention will last for a period of one year after which it will be renewed barring ineffective results or clear evidence of harm to the education of children" (ibid). Thus while the convention was formally construed by the MNE as an "experimental contract" that would last three years, this final article

embedded a clause that the Rector could completely nullify the contract after its first year if it was deemed unsuccessful in outcome or injurious to students. This article also put the fate of the convention squarely in the hands of the MNE. Thus, while the convention was designed as a contract between two parties, not so surprisingly, these parties were far from equal in their partnership.

## **8.6 THE PATH TO RENEWING AND EXPANDING THE CONTRACT**

For the first time in its history Seaska started the 1990-91 school year with more than half of its teaching force funded by the French state, at least for the next three years. Nevertheless, for many of Seaska's members the contract was viewed as insufficient, unstable and problematic. Much effort would be spent in the years ahead working to renew the contract under more desirable terms.

On the one hand, according to activists involved with Seaska at this time, the 1989 contract was severely limited in the scope of recognition it afforded ikastola teachers. Not only did it totally exclude secondary school teachers, but it also failed to provide any concrete solutions for the future training and accreditation of eligible primary school teachers. Active ikastolas teachers who did not hold the proper credentials needed to enter into a contract with the state would have to leave their posts to pursue 2-3 years of higher education at a regional university in either Pau or Bordeaux. This solution would reduce Seaska's teaching staff considerably and oblige the organization to locate new teachers. Given the small pool of people capable of teaching a range of subjects in Basque, this was not a viable option.

On the other hand, according to activists, the three year limit of the contract meant that there was no guarantee funding would continue beyond the 1992-93 school year. This highly tentative situation provided little stability and made any type of long-term planning nearly impossible for Seaska.

As a consequence of Seaska's generalized dissatisfaction with the contract, by the latter part of the 1990-1991 school year ikastola proponents began to work toward acquisition of a much more comprehensive and permanent form of state-level recognition. Seaska thus set its sights on obtaining increased levels of recognition well before the current contract would expire in the summer of 1993. In working toward this objective, the bulk of activist energies during the years of 1991 and 1992 became focused on two processes: [i] demonstrating the integrity and worth of Seaska's bilingual educational system on the one hand, and [ii] renewing the cycle of political advocacy and protest on the other.

Following entry into the state-level convention, according to activists, Seaska spent much of the 1990-91 and 1991-92 school years ensuring that evaluations of the ikastola system by the MNE would turn out positive and thus amenable to future re-negotiations. This meant that administrators and teachers along with parents and outside consultants were constantly going over every pedagogical and curricular aspect of the entire ikastola network with a fine-tooth comb to make sure that scholastics were at a constant peak. As noted in retrospect by Aitor, a parent who had just joined Seaska around the time of the contract: "If Seaska wanted to expand let alone renew a contract with the state, then evaluation of the ikastolas would have to go over extremely well. Everyone knew this and we worked like crazy to make sure everything went well" (Interview B-6). Thus while Seaska had always worked to uphold the highest possible

standards in the ikastola system, it was now time to demonstrate the quality and professionalism of its unique educational program.

On the one hand, the MNE was scrutinizing Seaska's claim that using Basque as the primary medium of instruction in math, science, geography and history would not somehow 'harm' the aptitude of students in these subjects when compared to their peers in mainstream francophone schools. As noted again by Aitor: "Seaska had to show that Basque was a completely suitable medium for the school; in all subjects even science and math. The politicians did not believe this and so it was the work of the committee to show them once and for all that the ikastola was a real school in the fullest sense" (Interview B-6).

On the other hand, the MNE was also scrutinizing Seaska's claim that ikastola students would exit the primary level with strong French literacy skills. Seaska's critics maintained that ikastola students would enter the secondary level with weaker mastery over French as a result of Basque being privileged throughout the curriculum. Seaska's task here was to show that emphasizing education in the minority language did not have a negative impact on proficiency in the majority language. These concerns were cogently recalled in an interview with Elodia, a pedagogical administrator who had been with Seaska since the early 1990's:

Some of the members of the original commission (1990-91) were quite agreeable with the idea that Basque could be used to teach so-called 'soft' subjects such as literature, but it was still hard for them to believe that Basque could be used to teach technical subjects like math or science. They also believed that by spending most of the day learning through Basque, students would end up illiterate and unable to speak good French. This was where their faith in our program of immersion stopped. Our mission was to end these doubts and prove that their presumptions were completely misguided...In the end our proof was that the majority of ikastola students regularly scored above the

national average in all subjects, including French! Imagine that! ...Not only did our students master all the materials, but they did so through two languages, as fully bilingual persons” (Interview B-8).

Indeed, a major part of Seaska’s labor from the fall of 1990 to the spring of 1993 entailed a massive process of self-reflection and assessment. Working through the bipartisan commission, Seaska unleashed a battery of research on students as well as teachers and parents. Students were routinely tested to show how they were progressing through the curriculum, and teachers were periodically surveyed and interviewed to examine their teaching methods and materials. In addition, parents were also often surveyed to garner information on their attitudes and perspectives regarding the pedagogical qualities and professionalism of local ikastolas. By the end of Seaska’s second year into the contract, all of this research had resulted in a fairly large set of statistical and qualitative findings that led the commission toward two general conclusions.

The first conclusion made by the committee was that the scholastic performance of ikastola students was at least equal to that of their peers in public school if not consistently higher in some classes. As noted, for example, in the report of one such study about mathematics at the third and fourth grade levels, or ‘*Cours Elémentaire 2 and Cours Moyen 1*’: “There is no evidence in this context that clearly illustrates that the use of Basque functions as a detriment to the learning of mathematical operations fundamental to this level, such as long division, columnar multiplication, round number estimation and division with remainder...Generally the students were consistently able to demonstrate sufficient capacity in numeric exercises using both languages” (Document B-224, *Seaska*, Summer 1991). A second very important conclusion reached by the commission in the spring of 1992 was that the majority of ikastola students at the final level of primary schooling demonstrated “adequate” levels of proficiency in the French

language and were thus “sufficiently prepared” to enter secondary-level education, i.e. ‘*collège*’ (Document B-225, *Seaska*, Summer 1992).

In short, after two years *Seaska* had effectively demonstrated the pedagogical integrity of its educational programs and was well-positioned to renew if not renegotiate the terms of another contract. Moreover, the evaluative research generated by the commission from 1990 to 1992 also gave *Seaska* good ammunition for counter-acting future criticisms about the academic worthiness and professionalism of the *ikastola* system. As such, in the fall of 1992 the MNE agreed to tag an extra year onto the original 1990 contract thus extending its terms through the end of the 1993-94 school year whereupon another form of contract could be developed.

## **8.7 WORKING TO ATTAIN A BETTER CONTRACT THROUGH PUBLICITY, PROTEST AND OUTREACH**

In addition to engaging in an intensive process of self-assessment and disclosure between 1990 and 1992, *Seaska* also gradually began to initiate a new cycle of advocacy and protest around January of 1992. This mobilization campaign was characterized by three influential and interlinking processes: [i] the orchestration of an enduring and large-scale publicity campaign, [ii] the periodic organization of public rallies and festivals, and [iii] the development of strategic alliances with political actors and agencies based both within and beyond the French Basque Country.

In late 1991 *Seaska* began to put the wheels in motion for one of its largest publicity campaigns ever orchestrated (Garat 2005:200). Entitled ‘*Negotziaketa Orai/Negotiate Now*’, the campaign was intended to harness the power of mass media so as to engage in a continuous

process of communication with the wider public. Although Seaska would largely come to rely on the regional press to execute this campaign- namely the newspapers Enbata and Sud Ouest-, it would also maximize its own indigenous sources of communication, such as newsletters, flyers, open houses, and public speeches. The guiding aims behind this publicity campaign were twofold. On the one hand, Seaska wanted to generate as much empathy, understanding and support from the public as possible. For example, Patrice a former ikastola parent, member of Seaska and longtime language activist, noted the important role of media in creating a ‘voice’ for the ikastola movement:

In 1992 as well as still today, the objective in publicity and the media has always been to create a voice for Seaska, an authentic voice that can overcome all of the misunderstandings, myths and general ignorance that circulate in much of French society regarding respect for languages such as Basque in the education system...it is about educating the public about who we are and what we do, and communicating this message on our own terms; in our own voice (Interview B-10).

On the other hand, Seaska’s publicity campaign was aimed at forcing educational policy-makers and governmental officials to take a clear public stand on the issue of integrating the ikastola system into the public sector. In this context, Seaska directly addressed political actors and agencies with the explicit hope of drawing them out into public debate. In a sort of ‘call and response’ tactic, Seaska would issue public statements through the media and then anticipate public responses by various political opponents as well as proponents. As noted again by Patrice:

By this point [1992] we were really obliged to put all our adversaries and all the skeptics under the light. This was simply a way of forcing elected officials to clearly show their cards, to make their position evident to everyone; not only to us [Seaska] but to all Basques...And, of course, we certainly also wanted those [officials/politicians] who showed their support quietly or timidly to be more

dynamic and to engage more aggressively and concretely with our movement”

(Interview B-10).

Working with this agenda of educating the public and forcing the hand of political authorities, Seaska issued weekly press releases and statements through the primary regional newspapers throughout the first half of 1992. Much emphasis in these press releases appears to have been placed on obtaining a much more comprehensive contract with the MNE that would include all ikastola teachers working across all levels of the ikastola system as well as the provision of funds for student transportation services, maintenance of school buildings, athletic programs and a tangible plan for the long-term development of future ikastolas in the region. In short, Seaska was not simply hoping to renew the three year contract, but to expand its terms considerably.

By the spring of 1992, a growing host of regional political elites had shown solidarity with Seaska and galvanized their support behind the campaign for a new contract. It was becoming more and more difficult to stake a local political career in patent opposition to the ikastola movement. The signatures of certain mayor's were often present in Seaska's press releases as was their presence during press conferences or public demonstrations. Nevertheless, two notable voices of opposition continued to surface in the press in response to Seaska's publicity campaign. The most influential of these opponents remained the Socialist-based *Syndicat National des Instituteurs* [SNI]; the largest public school teachers union in France.

SNI remained vigilant in its opposition of Seaska's integration plans and on several occasions issued press releases declaring its strong disapproval of governmental recognition. Indeed, SNI had viewed the terms of Seaska's experimental three year contract as being “too expansive” and presenting “an unlawful and immoral encroachment upon public resources” (Document B-228, *Enbata*, May 24 1993). In one statement re-published by Enbata in February

of 1992, for instance, SNI wrote: “This initiative takes much needed resources away from our struggling public schools and places them in the hands of a separatist initiative that promotes a segregation of the education system under the false premises of cultural survival” (ibid).

Another vocal opponent of Seaska at this stage was the mayor of Anglet; a large urban center located between Biarritz and Bayonne. The city of Anglet had long opposed the opening of an ikastola, and with Seaska’s voice resounding throughout the press, the mayor’s office issued a reply after a pro-ikastola rally took place in front of city hall in spring of 1992. The brief but lucid statement opposed Seaska’s political agenda on the grounds that the ikastola movement embodied a “spirit of nationalistic malevolence” that “affects harm upon children by instilling them with asocial tendencies” and which “should neither be praised nor endorsed by the state” (Document B-217, *Enbata*, March 16 1992). He went on to write: “We must not give in to a nationalist populism that proposes under democratic pretenses the elaboration of separate education systems for ‘us’ and ‘the others’...The teaching of Basque must take place under the roof of our common public schools” (ibid). Hence, at issue for both SNI and the mayor of Anglet was not necessarily the teaching of Basque per se, but state-level stewardship of bascophone schools that had been founded within the private sector.

Voices of opposition from certain teachers unions such as SNI, political elites such as the mayor of Anglet and members of the French public became sporadically articulated and re-articulated through the regional press and Seaska was continually working to present counterpoints and arguments intended to justify its aim of integration. A core group of Seaska’s leaders and council members spent a great deal of time evaluating the discourse and position of influential opponents, such as SNI. One of the most central of justifications put forth by Seaska for its claims on the State was warranted by the fact that the limited nature of bilingual programs

in public schools remained wholly inadequate for the broader revitalization of Basque. Here, Seaska's strategy of legitimation lay fundamentally in its claims to pedagogical efficacy and uniqueness rather than ethno-political self-determination.

An additional component of Seaska's efforts to obtain a more comprehensive contract with the MNE by 1994 was the use of public rallies and demonstrations. These orchestrated events differed somewhat from the disruptive protest tactics used during the 1980's in that they maintained a predominantly peaceful quality. Gone was the blocking of highways, railroads or airport runways as well as the squatting of governmental offices. Instead Seaska's members would gather along with ikastola students and public supporters for long street marches or assemble for localized demonstrations. The logic of these events was essentially to physically demonstrate the demographic presence of ikastola proponents. The demonstrative role of these marches was recalled by Elodia:

By capturing the streets of Bayonne for a few hours or dominating the central plaza in Sare for the afternoon, no one can deny the democratic foundations of our movement...Mostly, events were smaller, with maybe 20 or 30 people in Hasparren or Hendaye, but these were generally families from these towns; everyone knows each other and so their presence is quite powerful politically. But actually some can be quite large with more than 1,000 people walking together for the ikastolas...In that moment [1992-1994] I think the demonstrations showed that we were not a small group of radicals shouting 'down with France' and demanding independence or things like that. We were seen as normal parents with our kids making very reasonable demands for the simple right to have our language and culture fully respected within our school system...This was not radicalism or communitarianism it was a very classic example of the democratic process (Interview B-6).

Over a dozen such rallies were organized by Seaska during the winter and spring of 1993, and in every instance the events would be captured by the press, thus further bolstering the impact of publicity efforts by confirming the presence of the community of supporters who stood behind Seaska's claims for recognition.

On top of publicity and street rallies, Seaska's campaign to expand the 1990 contract also entailed a process of reaching out to political elites and policy-makers. While part of this entailed asking empathetic members of local and regional government to voice their support through the press or physically take part in public events, it also involved asking for material forms of support. On the one hand, Seaska looked to some of its most staunch political allies at the local level to try and exert some upward influence on the political process. In this context, for instance, Seaska proved successful in helping to organize a consortium of municipal authorities, educational researchers and governmental policy-makers at the *Conseil Générale* in Pau in February of 1993. With several dozen persons in attendance, these meetings were centered on the topic of "creating institutional mechanisms within a departmental framework which can guarantee the place of Basque at all levels of the educational system and elaborate a permanent partnership for Seaska in this process (Document B-220, *Seaska*, Winter 1993). In full view of the press, these political actors assembled to demonstrate as well as discuss their support for Seaska's campaign. On the other hand, Seaska also looked to cement alliance with actors at the municipal, departmental and regional levels of government so as to try and develop novel policy solutions for the ikastolas at the local level. One such meeting in April of 1993 for example, entailed Seaska working with a group of local authorities from the interior of the French Basque Country in order to figure out ways in which ikastolas in these rural mountainous communities could collaborate with municipal and communal government on issues such as student

transportation, the use of athletic facilities and the provision of public housing (Document B-221, *Seaska*, Summer 1993).

Coupled with positive results from the bipartisan committee's pedagogical assessment of the ikastola system in 1993, Seaska's three-pronged mobilization campaign of publicity, protest and political out-reach ultimately managed to draw the MNE back to the negotiation table by autumn. By this point, however, another post-election re-shuffling of personnel within French government meant that Seaska was no longer working with the MNE through the office of Nicole Alliot Marie, but rather with the staff of Socialist François Bayrou. This would prove to be an extremely opportunistic and thus advantageous even for Seaska as well as for all other regional minority language schooling initiatives in France.

## **8.8 FRIENDS IN HIGH PLACES YIELD OPPORTUNITIES ON THE GROUND**

Appointed to the MNE in March 1993, Monsieur Bayrou was a native of the region of Béarn—a territory adjacent to the Basque Country where the Gascon dialect of Occitan is historically spoken. For much of his previous career in the *Conseil Générale de la Département des Pyrénées Atlantiques*, Bayrou had been a fairly vocal proponent of the minority language issue. He had attended and helped to administrate the consortium of February 1992 for example. Having started his political career in Béarn, Bayrou also had personal connections with actors involved with the Occitan schooling movement and had developed a working familiarity with some of Seaska's leading representatives. As such, in the fall of 1993 Seaska's representatives found themselves finally working with someone who was not only willing to work with them,

but who was also seemingly eager to achieve concrete results rather quickly. This was a 180 degree turn from the much more hesitant and unflinching stance of the previous Minister of Education, Nicole Alliot Marie. Nevertheless, despite M. Bayrou's public enthusiasm, the process of renewing let alone expanding Seaska's contract with the state would have to await the results of the intensive evaluation process that had been started in 1990 and slated to end by the start of summer 1993. Thus, while Seaska may have found itself ready to work with a new and seemingly supportive Minister of Education, ikastola proponents would simply have to bide their time; a feeling they had grown painfully familiar with by this point.

After the positive results of the longitudinal assessment of the ikastola system finally came out in summer of 1993, representatives of the Ikastola Council began a new series of meetings with Monsieur Bayrou and the MNE in October. While it was evident that the newly staffed MNE favored a renewal of Seaska's contract, the extent to which Seaska could expand the terms and conditions of a future convention still needed to be hammered out. Periodic meetings were thus held through the autumn and early winter of 1993 whereby Seaska would articulate its agenda, and the MNE would reply several weeks later. While Bayrou was generally supportive of promoting the inclusion of Basque within education system, it gradually became evident for Seaska that as a card-carrying Socialist he was not prepared to ignore the vocal opposition of SNI; the large public school teacher's union that adamantly criticized the use of public resources to fund 'ethnic' schools based in the private sector. Hence, as talks with Bayrou went into the early months of 1994 it became apparent that Seaska's ultimate objective of achieving full-blown integration within the public sector would, yet again, not see the light of day. As surmised by Jakes, a member of the Ikastola Council who was present during the talks:

It was encouraging to work with Bayrou. He was much more respectful and sympathetic of our project than any of the previous Ministers. This was a nice

change for us, of course. But, I think he made it very clear from the beginning that he was always only going to work so hard because there were other forces around him that he claimed presented serious obstacles...The problems were legal, he claimed, and we simply could not obtain complete integration into the public system. But we knew this already. As Minister he was clearly in a position to make legal changes, but he was simply not going to go this far because of the unions and politicians who opposed the ikastola since the beginning. The only solution he could offer us was another contract...And so, our objective during this process became to render this contract as comprehensive and as close to integration as possible. This is where the conflict happened, in the details (Interview B-22).

Finally, by October of 1993 both Bayrou and Seaska exited a two-day series of meetings in Bordeaux and declared that an agreement between the two parties had been reached. The terms of the contract were not exactly what Seaska had hoped for, but it offered a far more comprehensive and stable situation than the previous convention. The new convention was once again based on five articles, each of which was basically an amplified version of the 1990 contract (Document B-249, *Seaska*, Autumn 1993).

The first article stipulated that state certified teachers working at all levels of the ikastola system would be eligible to enter into employment contracts with the MNE, and thus recognized as public sector employees. Each contract would last for a period of four years after which it would be reviewed for potential renewal. The amount of contracts would be variable rather than fixed and thus awarded every four years in accordance to the proportion of expansion in the ikastola system. Teachers currently teaching in the ikastola system but not yet certified would have up to four years to obtain proper accreditation if they wished to become public sector

workers. Ultimately, this aspect of the contract would cover about 60% of Seaska's teaching force in the first period 1994-95 but closer to 85% in the second phase of 1998-99.

The second article laid out the specific terms for the creation and supervision of a university-based teacher training and accreditation program in Bayonne. While the program would be largely based upon the development of a generalized teacher education degree, it would also entail a small stream specified for the teaching of Basque in either the ikastola system or bilingual programs in public schools. Courses would be explicitly offered in the evenings and weekends to allow current teachers to gain accreditation. This aspect of the contract also meant that Seaska would no longer be responsible for designing, implementing and funding its own teacher training programs; it was now an affair of the state.

The third article stipulated that only teachers working in ikastolas that had been in operation for a period of two years and which had a minimal enrollment of at least 25 children would be eligible for entering into a contract. This was an improvement from the previous contract which called for an ikastola to successfully endure a 4 year trial period before recognizing teachers. This point remained highly contentious and enigmatic to Seaska's members as no ikastola to date had ever closed its doors as a result of shrinking enrollments, the problem rather was with managing steady growth and expansion.

The fourth article laid out specifics about salaries for teachers working in pre-school, primary-level and secondary-level contexts. These terms roughly corresponded to those for teachers in public schools, with primary and secondary school teachers receiving notably higher salaries than pre-school teachers who required less accreditation.

The fifth article stipulated that while Seaska would remain the dominant locus of management and decision-making, it was obligated to work in partnership with the MNE. In this

context, terms were laid out that specified the staffing and duties of an annual bipartisan commission. This point allowed Seaska to continue using the Ikastola Council as the main apparatus of authority, but also meant that certain decisions would be reviewed and regulated by the state, namely with respect to student safety and hygiene on the one hand, and curriculum and testing on the other.

After signing this contract Seaska was prepared to start the 1994-95 school year under the most comprehensive levels of state-based sponsorship ever achieved. It was a historical moment with great fanfare in the press and much public celebration taking place among ikastola proponents throughout the French Basque Country. After 25 years of mobilization, Seaska's perseverance and dedication had been significantly vindicated in the political arena. The ikastola system had finally become officially recognized by the French state, albeit only partially. While the coming years would witness Seaska continue its struggle to obtain full-blown integration into the public sector, as of summer 2010 this outcome has yet to be achieved; thus illustrating why the 1994 contract merits consideration as a maximal point of state-level recognition or 'political zenith'.

## **8.9 CONCLUSION**

Focusing on the years of 1986 to 1994 this chapter has examined the mobilization practices that led to an exceedingly slow but highly productive series of negotiations between Seaska and the French Ministry of National Education [MNE]. In particular, I showed how a renewed cycle of advocacy and protest among ikastola proponents in 1986 was sparked by a rightward shift in French politics and a closing of the window of opportunity that had been

created by the Socialist victory of 1981. Nevertheless, the levels of political recognition already accrued by Seaska up until this closing of opportunity, I argue, allowed activists to draw reluctant educational policy-makers into dialogue. In short, by 1986 the ikastola movement had become a presence that could no longer be completely ignored by political elites. The commitment of Seaska's members and their capacity to endure hard times thus eventually allowed them to enter into a renewed series of talks with the MNE by 1988; a process that ultimately led to the creation of an experimental three-year convention for the ikastolas in 1989. Within this context, I demonstrated how Seaska's acceptance of a tentative contract with the MNE in 1989 was viewed by activists as a strategic compromise that would provide them with much-needed resources as well as increased possibility to negotiate a better contract in the near future; if and when political winds would shift back to the Left. Subsequently, I showed how these calculations paid off as Seaska eventually entered into a more stable and comprehensive contract of association in 1994, thanks in great part to the accommodating efforts of the Socialist Education Minister François Bayrou, and in part to Seaska's capacity to prove its pedagogical integrity to state-level authorities during an extensive process of evaluation.

## **9.0 DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION: THEORIZING THE POLITICAL AGENCY BEHIND THE IKASOTLA MOVEMENT IN FRANCE**

For decades minority language activists in the French Basque Country have labored to transform the French educational system from a state-controlled site of ethnolinguistic marginalization into a community-based vehicle of ethnolinguistic empowerment. Acting in response to a resilient legacy of assimilationist language politics in France, these actors have mobilized their solidarity in order to redefine the democratic logic and limits of public education from within the civic sphere. Since 1969 the community-based schooling association ‘Seaska’ has engaged in an enduring and particularly influential struggle to garner increased rights, resources and respect for Basque-speakers in the education system. In particular, Seaska’s members have labored to build an alternative network of privately-run bascophone schools, known as ‘ikastolas’. Developed as a response to the systematic exclusion of the Basque language and culture in mainstream public schools, the ikastola system emerged during the 1970’s as a grassroots schooling co-operative whereby parents and teachers would form the primary locus of authority and decision-making. Through the years, however, as the ikastola schooling network grew in size and scope, Seaska’s members began making increased claims upon the French state for patronage and support. Bringing case study data into dialogue with social movement theories (Edwards and McCarthy 2004; Kriesi 2004), I have explored Seaska’s concerted quest for political recognition from its beginnings in 1969 to a climactic moment of

political validation in 1994. In the following pages I thus conclude my discussion by theorizing on the struggles, strategies and successes that characterized this 25 year span of ethno-educational mobilization. In this context, I also discuss the contributions of my analysis to the sociological study of social movements and conclude by suggesting productive avenues for future research on minority language activism in educational settings both within France and beyond its borders.

## **9.1 THEORIZING STRUGGLE**

Mobilization strategies evolve in contexts of struggle. Any understanding of strategy thus necessitates a comprehension of the struggles from strategizing they emerge. How was Seaska's campaign for state-level recognition thwarted by relations of power and governance in the French political system? My analysis of Seaska's mobilization initiatives between the years of 1969 and 1994 has shown how ikastola proponents constantly experienced the French political system in terms of obstruction and antagonism. This wall of political opposition became particularly challenging for Seaska when activists began their efforts to expand the ikastolas into the state-regulated domain of primary schooling in 1974. In this context, I showed how Seaska's members struggled against two main forms of state-level opposition: ideological gate-keeping and institutional obstructionism.

On the one hand, ideological gate-keeping entailed criticism and condemnation of Seaska's mobilization agenda by an array of educational policy-makers and practitioners as well as individual politicians. These discursive attacks constituted a form gate-keeping that thwarted Seaska's ability to achieve legitimacy- i.e. symbolic recognition- within the political area by

labeling the ikastola movement as an irrational and illiberal initiative that threatened both the unanimity of the French Republic and the integrity of universal public education. Such opposition was evident, for example, when France's largest public school teacher's union *le Syndicat National des Instituteurs* [SNI] published numerous editorials in the mainstream press criticizing Seaska's claims for state-level support as antithetical and harmful to the integrity of the French public sector. This opposing discourse was particularly detrimental to the ikastola movements in that the Socialist-leanings of SNI complicated Seaska's ability to garner concrete support from politicians who feared losing a larger base of constituents as well as policy-makers who refused to go against the union's wishes.

On the other hand, institutional obstructionism consisted of state-level efforts to variously contain, constrain and co-opt the growth of the ikastola movement within Basque society. These largely bureaucratic and legalistic mechanisms worked not only to impede Seaska's ability to gain material support from the state but also to restrain Seaska's capacity to open new ikastolas and expand the scope of the entire ikastola schooling system. For example, after the election of Mitterrand in 1981 helped to introduce the minority language issue into the political arena, Seaska's opponents sought to develop 'experimental' bilingual streams within public schools rather than support the ikastola system. Because many of these bilingual programs opened in towns where an ikastola was already in operation, Seaska's members interpreted their development as an attempt by the state to eliminate the ikastolas through a process of co-optation.

Cumulatively these ideological and institutional forms of political opposition overlapped through the years and gravely complicated Seaska's efforts to obtain the endorsement and patronage of political power brokers. While state-based opposition had a clearly negative effect

on Seaska's campaign for recognition, however, I have also shown how such political repression had the positive consequence of galvanizing the solidarity and resolve of ikastola proponents, thus enabling them to devise and deploy an effective repertoire of mobilization strategies. From this I argue that any theory of social movement strategies must account for the broader context of struggle from which strategizing emerges among actors in the first place. By understanding the subjective dimensions of struggle as experienced by social movement actors, I argue, scholars can better theorize on why certain kinds of strategies are adopted and deemed effective by activists on the ground. Because such an approach focuses explicitly on the meanings actors ascribe to the broader political environment within which they are embedded, it accounts for macro-level issues of governance and power without pushing micro-level issues of agency and empowerment to the background. Indeed, I argue that micro-level analyses of political agency that account for subjective experiences of struggle shed important light on the objective limits within which actors operate.

## **9.2 THEORIZING STRATEGY**

Given the ideological and institutional obstacles facing Seaska's mobilization campaign, how did ikastola proponents labor to achieve increasing forms of symbolic and material recognition from the French state? Throughout my analysis I have shown how ikastola proponents engaged in an array of practices geared toward the accrual of state-level support. Taking a longitudinal perspective, I have argued that Seaska's incremental accrual of political recognition between 1969 and 1994 was highly contingent upon the capacity of activists to deploy a three-tiered repertoire of mobilization strategies. These strategies entailed: [i] discursive

practices geared toward infra/extra-movement processes of communication and meaning-making, [ii] organizational practices geared toward managing and maximizing movement-based infrastructure, and [iii] performative practices geared toward reproducing and displaying the identitarian solidarity of movement participants. In what follows I discuss these three sets of practices in greater detail so as to elaborate on how and why these strategies ‘worked’.

### **9.2.1 Discursive Strategies and the Articulation of Voice**

Discursive strategies of recognition deployed by ikastola proponents between 1969 and 1994 centered largely on producing a collective voice for Seaska within the French political arena. The articulation of voice was a critical part of Seaska’s pursuit of recognition because it entailed the pragmatics of how activists understood and situated their mobilization agenda within the broader political system as well as how they then worked to promote and legitimate this agenda to political powerbrokers. The discursive labor behind the crafting of a political voice for the ikastola movement was thus defined by endogenous processes of reflexive communication amongst Seaska’s members, as well as an exogenous or outward process of communication toward the French state; i.e. ‘framing’ (Snow 2004). In this context, I argue that framing was largely a product of reflexive communication.

Discursive labor took shape ‘endogenously’ as activists worked amongst themselves to evaluate, understand and ascribe meaning to the broader political environment around them; i.e. through reflexive group-based deliberation and discussion. Examples of such endogenous discursive labor pursued by Seaska included a periodic reliance on assemblies, meetings and the publication of newsletters for members. As an instrumental extension of endogenous communication, discursive practices also took shape ‘exogenously’ when ikastola proponents

produced narratives and articulated claims for a broader audience of political supporters, skeptics, opponents and by-standers; i.e. the production of collective action frames (Johnston and Noakes 2005). Examples of such exogenously oriented discursive labor included Seaska's systematic orchestration of publicity campaigns whereby activists would rely heavily on the regional press for the dissemination of claims and attainment of visibility. Another important example includes Seaska's periodic publication of promotional literature geared toward raising consciousness in the general public.

It is important to observe that exogenous practices of discursive production were largely an outcome of endogenous practices. In other words, publicly oriented framing processes were the continuous by-product of the meanings and knowledges cultivated by activists through group-based inter-subjective deliberation and reflection. Activists worked vociferously at developing an infra-organizational flow of communication so to make sense of their circumstances, discuss their objectives, and elaborate upon tactical options. As collective decisions were reached and plans of action were laid out in various phases of mobilization process, activists would then periodically work in earnest to (re)communicate or '(re)frame' their agenda to the political authorities and the public more generally.

Taken together as continuously evolving elements of Seaska's mobilization repertoire, both endogenous and exogenous practices of discursive production were geared toward generating an ideologically cohesive and rhetorically coherent voice for Seaska in the political arena. Stated otherwise, prior to publicly verbalizing claims for recognition upon the French state, Seaska's members first had to agree upon the political ends and means of seeking out recognition. However, because neither the political environment nor the ikastola movement were static entities, the transition from endogenous to exogenous processes of discursive production

was always in flux and evolving. As the political events and situations surrounding the ikastola movement changed through time, activists periodically developed fresh stances toward the political arena and thus re-adjusted their frames and claims.

For example, when the ikastola movement began extending into the realm of primary schooling in the 1970's, activists shifted their once 'apolitical' stance toward the French state from one of generalized disengagement and avoidance, to a more 'contentious' stance characterized by active engagement and confrontation. Prior to activists making contentious claims for recognition on the French state in public settings, however, activists spent months in deliberation and voting on their longer-term aims and agenda. Ultimately this endogenous process of reflection transitioned into an exogenous process of communication oriented toward state-level officials, but only after a certain level of consensus had emerged regarding Seaska's ambition of integrating the ikastolas into the public sector as opposed to remaining in the private sector. While my findings illustrate that exogenous processes of framing are indeed a very central component in the strategic repertoire of social movement organizations (Johnston and Noakes 2005; Snow 2004), my analysis also reveals that there is quite a lot of endogenous labor that goes into the articulation of collective action frames. The dynamics of such discursive labor, I argue, needs to be analytically parsed and accounted for rather than subsumed under the umbrella concept of 'framing'.

### **9.2.2 Organizational Strategies and the Pursuit of Permanence**

As an extension of discursive labors geared toward establishing political voice, ikastola proponents also engaged in a considerable amount of labor aimed at securing Seaska's permanence as an organization. This is to say that organizational strategies were largely forms of

planning directed toward building, managing and reinforcing Seaska's infrastructure. While much of Seaska's energy in this domain was spent managing 'everyday' issues related to operating the ikastola schooling system, for my purposes I have focused on political dimensions of organizational strategizing. In other words, how did organizational strategies contribute to Seaska's quest for state-level recognition? In this context, I argue that two forms of organizational strategizing were particularly instrumental to Seaska's accrual of political recognition. These included strategies oriented toward the structure of decision-making on the one hand, and strategies geared toward the management of material resources on the other.

Organizational strategies geared toward the process of collective decision-making centered fundamentally on Seaska's structure as a community-based civic association whereby members both constructed and steered their agenda as a group. Stated otherwise, it can be said that organizational strategies were about planning and entailed activists making more or less calculated decisions about how they would structure their interactions as well as how they would execute their long and short-term objectives. Activists engaged in an extraordinary amount of organizational labor so as to bring a highly co-operative and deliberative quality to decision-making. In this context, an inclusive style of authority was prized so as to provide members with putatively equal amounts of input. Conversely, a hierarchical model of leadership whereby a small set of individuals made decisions in the interest of the group was largely shunned. Even though Seaska was not always successful in its endeavor to be wholly inclusive and the co-operative model engendered divisions or slowed down the decision-making process, I argue that the concerted will of activists to realize such an organizational model was highly instrumental to Seaska's pursuit of political recognition. By working in earnest to apply a co-operative and deliberative model of group-based decision-making, Seaska cultivated an empowering

organizational culture whereby the solidarity and loyalty of members- i.e. parents and teachers- became strategic resources in the pursuit of state-level support.

For example, I have shown how Seaska made frequent use of so-called 'General Assemblies' during the 1970-80's in order to gather ikastola proponents together in a moment of collective deliberation and reflection. During these meetings ikastola proponents would discuss their agenda, evaluate their situation and make important choices about their relationship to the French state. It was during such meetings, for instance, that important decisions were made about using protest tactics, orchestrating publicity campaigns and accepting state-level contracts. While such moments entailed a great deal of discursive labor, there was a particular organizational structure or framework being applied to the context that worked to channel infra-movement communication in a fashion deemed by activists as democratic and fair.

In another example, I have shown how Seaska engaged in a process of organizational restructuring in the latter part of the 1980's. This re-structuring was a decision reached through majority vote in 1986 as a consequence of membership levels reaching over thousand persons and thus growing too big for methods of direct democracy. A more streamlined system was adopted whereby each individual ikastola would create a council of representatives who would then execute decisions on behalf of the constituency after a process of deliberation and voting.

Another organizational strategy geared toward decision-making that adopted by Seaska was the development of issue-based committees. These were groups of activists who would volunteer their time and energy to work on a given task or problem. This format became particularly crucial during moments of negotiation with the state, as committees would be responsible for dissemination of information and news of progress to the rest of Seaska's members.

In addition to organizational strategies centered on the creation of an inclusive and deliberative model of decision-making, Seaska's members also devoted an exorbitant amount of labor to managing material resources. Two of the most central areas of concern in this context were the overlapping domains of economic and human capital; i.e. finances and labor.

With regard to managing both economic and human capital one of the most fundamental forms of strategizing was fund-raising. Because Seaska did not depend on the extraction of tuition and fees from parents in order to run the ikastola system and because very little money was made available from the state until the 1990's, there was an enormous reliance on fund-raising. This meant that parents and teachers volunteered countless weekend, evening and daytime hours participating in a range of activities geared toward raising funds such as selling calendars, food, and t-shirts during festivals. Indeed, parents were expected sign a contract upon enrolling their child(ren) in an ikastola whereby they would make a promise to volunteer a certain amount of time to Seaska's fund-raising endeavors, often defined as a minimum of around 10-12 hours per month.

In sum, organizational strategies geared toward decision-making and the management of material resources were instrumental in Seaska's pursuit of political recognition because they generated an empowering culture of commitment among activists. High levels of solidarity and dedication among Seaska's members in turn helped to bring strong levels of institutional permanence and durability to the ikastola movement. This permanence helped Seaska both endure and transcend experiences of state-based struggle by providing activists with coping mechanisms; i.e. methods of evaluating challenges and dealing with problems. The meso-level structure adopted by activists as a way to orchestrate their actions in a relatively systematic and efficient fashion permitted them to cope with the ideological and institutional obstacles erected

by state-level opponents. In this light, I argue that high levels of ‘bureaucratic formalism’ were a benefit rather than a liability for Seaska’s mobilization efforts. Moreover, I contend that the ikastola movement had little issue with the so-called ‘free-rider’ problem because to be a member of Seaska was by definition to invest a modicum of time and energy that contributed directly to the ikastola movement.

### **9.2.3 Performative Strategies and the Production of Presence**

In addition to discursive and organizational strategizing, Seaska also engaged in an array of performative practices whereby ikastola proponents reinforced their identitarian solidarity through public displays of collective commitment and resolve. The political effect of such performances lay in creating a physical presence for the ikastola movement within the public sphere. Such presence was strategic in that it showed to authorities that the ikastola movement was neither a fleeting nor fragile initiative, but rather an enduring socio-political force that the state would have to deal with. Moreover, bringing constituents out into public view was crucial in legitimating Seaska’s claims that it was ultimately pursuing a worthy and progressive cause rather than an irrational and illiberal one. Looking at Seaska’s mobilization efforts from 1969 to 1994 it is clear that such performative strategies generally consisted of two basic kinds of events: contentious and festive.

On the one hand, contentious enactments of solidarity entailed a range of events such as meandering street marches, localized rallies, squatting government buildings, hunger strikes and the blocking of highway, airline and railway traffic. The labor invested in these events worked to show the disruptive potential of Seaska’s constituency when they were faced with struggles of political exclusion and opposition. A principle motivation in orchestrating such contentious

performances was to gain coverage by the media; i.e. 'visibility'. Through such visibility it was hoped that political authorities would have to issue some type of a response, thus possibly opening the door to a dialogue with policy-makers. While such contentious performances often helped Seaska achieve visibility in the press they also often opened the door for Seaska's challengers to issue negative criticisms of the ikastola movement. This was largely because Seaska's contentious performances created an association between the ikastola movement and the more radical elements of the Basque nationalist movement; a relationship Seaska had traditionally been at pains to minimize given that some ikastola parents were active supporters of secessionism.

When ikastola proponents periodically blocked railway, airline and highway traffic during the early 1980's, for instance, their efforts were often emphatically supported and joined by Basque nationalist political parties, such as *Herri Taldeak*. While the support of such parties brought Seaska important levels of material support to the ikastola movement in the form of constituents, their participation in public protest events made it difficult for Seaska to dissociate the schooling movement from the more controversial issues of political autonomy and secession. By periodically emphasizing themes of recognition, legalization and officialization in its protest banners and placards, however, it is clear that Seaska regularly sought out increased collaboration with and involvement by the state rather than separation and independence. In this light, achieving an enduring presence within the public sphere was a crucial component to Seaska being able to articulate its claims on its own terms as well as indirectly through the media coverage generated by protests. Thus, it is possible to see how performative strategies of presence were a crucial supplement to discursive strategies of voice.

On the other hand, Seaska's performative practices also entailed the orchestration of numerous festive events ranging from rock concerts and sporting competitions to endless open-houses for individual ikastolas around the French Basque Country. While the performative labor invested in these celebratory events was typically geared toward the objective of fund-raising they were also aimed at raising public awareness about the ikastola movement and cultivating notions of camaraderie among ikastola proponents. IN addition, festive performances also had the political effect of demonstrating the civic qualities of the ikastola movement to a broader audience of political supporters, skeptics, opponents and by-standers. In this context, the associative dimensions of the ikastola movement would become foreground through the orchestration of festive events oriented around Basque music, arts, sport and/or cuisine. Always open to the general public such events helped Seaska to construct the public image of being an inherently peaceful and community-oriented educational organization concerned with cultural and linguistic matters, rather than a subversive instrument of nationalist political parties.

The most exemplary of such festive performances was the annual event, *Herri Urrats* ['path of the people']. Launched in 1982 as a way to generate funds for the construction of a secondary-level school in the town of Cambo, by the end of the 1980's Herri Urrats had become the pinnacle celebration of the ikastola movement with tens of thousands of people from all across the French and Spain Basque Country coming to take part. Not only would this early summer event garner important resources for the ikastola movement but it would also generate significant press for Seaska. This visibility would often place the public focus on two important dynamics of the ikastola movement: the constant lack of material resources and the strong commitment of Seaska's members. These two dynamics helped contribute to Seaska's quest for state-level recognition by constructing a sympathetic narrative in the press about the

determination, worthiness and integrity fueling the ikastola movement as well as by raising critical questions about the French state's systematic refusals to recognize the ikastolas.

In sum, I argue that the discursive, organizational and performative strategies deployed by Seaska between 1969 and 1994 helped activists accrue increasing levels of state-based support. In particular, I contend that in addition to fueling the general development of the ikastola movement Seaska's mobilization strategies also worked in two very important ways. On the one hand, they allowed activists to cope with a tide of political opposition. This is to say that strategies were deployed in an explicitly defensive fashion so as to either counter-act the ideological and institutional machinations of state-based opposition or simply weather the effects of such opposition. One example of this defensive strategizing can be seen in Seaska's periodic attempts to voice its claims through the media via highly orchestrated publicity campaigns and protest events intended to counter-act the rhetorical criticisms of state-level challengers.

On the other hand, the discursive, organizational and performative strategies wielded by Seaska allowed activists to seize upon emergent moments of political opportunity. In this context, the two most significant windows of opportunity strategically seized upon by ikastola proponents were the rise of a semi-autonomous Basque government in Spain after 1979 and the ascension of a Socialist government in France after 1981. One example of such strategic opportunism was in the way that Seaska reached out to actors in the Spanish Basque Country so as to formulate cross-border alliances and exchanges that would ultimately yield an influx of highly useful material resources and technical assistance.

#### 9.2.4 Theorizing Success

If one of Seaska's main objectives was to gain recognition from the French state then in what ways did activists realize this objective? Moreover, if Seaska was 'successful' in accruing state-level recognition then in what ways did such recognition influence the ikastola movement? In my analysis of the ikastola movement I have drawn inspiration from resource mobilization and political process theories so as to analyze how Seaska's members labored for years to attain and cultivate one particularly empowering and multi-faceted resource: state-level recognition. Drawing on my analysis of Seaska's members, I have construed 'state-level recognition' or 'political recognition' in emic terms: i.e. as it is subjectively conceived and defined by ikastola proponents. This has yielded fairly broad definition of 'recognition' as Seaska's attainment of empowering forms of symbolic and material support from governmental agents or agencies which in turn contributed to the development of the ikastola schooling movement. While symbolic support basically entailed Seaska's accrual of rhetorical or discursive backing from state-level sources, material support entailed Seaska's acquisition of state-based financial or technical assistance.

Through my analysis I have found that while Seaska's acquisition of political recognition in its material form was always preceded by the accrual of symbolic recognition, it is clear that the presence of symbolic recognition did not always or even frequently lead to Seaska's accrual of material recognition. In other words, my findings show that while there was no occurrence of state-level authorities providing funding to the ikastola without previously having voiced some sort of rhetorical endorsement, it was par for the course that most of Seaska's rhetorical endorsements from political power-brokers did not lead to the dispersal of economic backing. Indeed, although the crux of Seaska's struggle early on was to generate symbolic recognition

from the state, as the years wore on and Seaska gained increasing rhetorical support from a variety of political authorities ikastola proponents fought with tooth and nail to convert their stock of symbolic recognition into tangible forms of material recognition.

My findings also show that for activists the attainment of political recognition was experienced as a nebulous and fungible resource characterized more by its degrees of intensity rather than by its mere absence or possession. In other words, state-level recognition has many forms. On the one hand, recognition can be minute and fleeting. For example, during the early part of the 1980's a growing host of municipal and departmental politicians in the Basque region had publicly stated their support for the ikastola movement in the regional press. However, as Seaska's members began shifting their mobilization objective toward an integration of the ikastolas into the public education system, many of these authorities either withdrew or qualified their support by arguing that the ikastolas should remain as private schools. On the other hand, the attainment of political recognition can be grandiose and enduring as when the French Ministry of National Education entered into a long-term contract with Seaska in 1994 that would cover nearly half the costs of running the ikastola system. In this context, the acquisition of political recognition was not simply advantageous to the ikastola movement but transformed its entire institutional status vis-à-vis the state.

In addition to state-level recognition being an instrumental asset that is accumulated by social movement actors in incremental terms, my analysis has shown that it is also a resource that once accrued can be periodically drawn upon by grassroots actors in creative and empowering ways. For example, during the late 1970's and early 1980's a growing host of municipal authorities in the Basque Country increasingly expressed their support for Seaska's mobilization agenda in public forums and found ways to help the ikastola movement by

providing both small-scale funds and housing for schools. Seaska's accrual of political recognition locally became a strategic asset for garnering symbolic and material forms of state-based support from higher levels of authority, such as at the departmental and regional levels of French government.

With respect to how the accrual of state-level support impacted the trajectory of the ikastola schooling movement my work points toward two answers. On the one hand, increasing support from the French state had a clearly empowering effect on the ikastolas. Most notably, state-level support contributed to the institutional stability, expansion and endurance of the ikastola schooling system. In addition, state-level support of the ikastolas also had the positive effect of promoting the broader-level project of Basque language revitalization; the ultimate aim of the ikastola movement. In this light, Seaska's accrual of political support brought with it a diminishing of the assimilationist logic of language politics in France, suggesting the emergence of a gradual re-definition of French republican governance. In other words, with every moment of state-level recognition there was a gradual chipping away of the legacy of linguistic nationalism that had given rise to the ikastola movement in the first place. On the other hand, however, mounting levels of patronage by the state also came at a price for Seaska in that it became increasingly responsive to governmental mandates, regulations and procedures, thus bringing about a relative loss of organizational autonomy and creativity for Seaska's members. Given that ikastola proponents worked in such earnest to achieve state support, however, it is clear that for many activists the ends (ethnolinguistic revitalization) justified the means (political recognition).

### 9.3 AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In closing I would like to suggest some directions for future research on minority language in educational settings. In this context, I propose three avenues. The first is a consideration of Seaska's mobilization agenda post-1994. The second is a contemplation of other minority language schooling movements in France. The third is a consideration of minority language activism in other European nations such as Spain as well as in other parts of the world, such as the United States.

Because my empirical analysis has focused on the mobilization struggles, strategies and successes of the ikastola movement in the French Basque Country from 1969 to 1994 my broader theoretical conclusions are largely limited to the dynamics of this particular movement during this particular time. As such, it would be instructive to investigate how Seaska's mobilization efforts have changed in the aftermath of entering into a contract of association with the French Ministry of National Education in 1994. One particularly interesting line of inquiry in this context, for instance, would be to explore how Seaska's mobilization campaign shifted after 1994 as a consequence of increased institutionalization and patronage from the French state. Exploratory research I conducted in this area suggest that since 1994 Seaska has experienced a decline in the degrees of volunteerism exerted by parents when compared with the era of expansion during the 1970-80's. In other words, with increasing levels of state-based recognition the ikastola movement seems to have experienced decreasing levels of grassroots activism. This finding may correspond quite well with social movement theories that emphasize the negative aspects of increased professionalism and bureaucratization among community-based organizations (Clemens and Minkoff 2004). Another interesting line of questioning would be to explore how Seaska has engaged with Europeanization as French politics became more and more

imbricated with processes of transnational integration over the course of the 1990's and first decade of the 2000's. Preliminary research I conducted on this topic suggest that Seaska's members have ascribed very low levels of strategic relevance to Pan-European politics given that both language and education policy in France remain firmly in the hands of domestic authorities. This finding would contribute to theories of political opportunity by further reinforcing the argument that opportunities are subjectively rather than objectively determined; i.e. an opportunity is only an opportunity if it is experienced and seized upon as such.

As my investigation focused only on Seaska's quest for state-level recognition in France, it would be instructive to compare the Basque case with other movements in France such as the Breton and Occitan schooling movements. Modeled largely after the ikastola project, these movements emerged in the latter part of the 1970's and have since also experienced notable levels of expansion. A look at other similar movements within the same political context would yield interesting results about how grassroots actors within similar social movement fields may engage with the same state in different ways as well as how they may collaborate and coordinate their efforts. Preliminary research I conducted on the Occitan case in Béarn, for instance, showed that there was consistent dialogue with Seaska's members but that the mobilization strategies of activists in Béarn have been more heavily directed toward recruiting participants as a consequence of weak public support for Occitan language schools. These findings suggest that while minority language activists in France may have forged a relatively unified social movement field so as to make claims upon the French state, highly localized factors influence the ways in which activists experience and engage with the state in more or less strategic terms. Moreover, it would be interesting to compare the mobilization struggles and strategies of regional minority language movements with those of post-colonial migrant activists mobilizing

on behalf of Arabic and Berber speakers. In recent years Arabic and Berber language activists have mobilized for educational recognition in urban centers such as Paris and Toulouse. My exploratory investigations of this domain, for instance, show that the development of bilingual education programs in Berber and Arabic have been on the rise in the city of Paris since the late 1990's. A comparison of these initiatives with those of regional language activists would bring rich insight on how issues of race and class influence interactions with state-level power-brokers as well as how migrant claims for linguistic rights strongly parallel those of autochthonous language groups. In other words, while they articulate many of the same claims these two groups of actors experiences and engage with the state in different ways as a consequence of the citizenship positions which they occupy within the French nation-state.

Finally, it would be instructive to compare the ikastola movement with minority language activism in other nation-states, both within Europe and beyond it. A particularly intriguing line of inquiry would be to consider how minority language activists operate in educational settings within countries where the structure of educational policy-making is less centralized and have been more open to minority rights claims, such as in Spain and the United States of America. By conducting cross-national research on ethnolinguistic mobilization and the politics of education reform beyond France, important comparative knowledge would be gained on how disparate social movement actors pursuing a common agenda in educational settings variously engage with the logic and limits of state-based power. Such cross-national research would also provide insight on the emergence of linguistic rights activism on global scale. This international comparative research agenda would yield a plethora of findings on a thoroughly under-examined and under-theorized form of mobilization within the field of social movement studies.

## APPENDIX A: Template of Interview Questions in English and French.

Question #1: The ikastola schooling system has grown considerably over the past few decades. There are currently about \_\_\_ students said to be enrolled. What do you think have been some of the biggest obstacles to this growth, and why?

Probing Questions:

- What kind of political obstacles have existed?
- What kind of local, social obstacles have existed?
- What kind of economic obstacles?
- What has stood in the path of more growth?

*Question #1: Ces dernières décades les écoles administrées par Seaska se sont agrandies considérablement. En ce moment il y a \_\_\_ étudiants encadrés. Que pensez-vous les plus grandes obstacles à cet agrandissement ont été et pourquoi?*

*Questions de sondage:*

*Quel genre d' obstacles politiques existent-t'il?*

*Quel genre d' obstacles localisés et sociaux existent-t'il?*

*Quel genres d' obstacles économiques existent-t'il?*

*Pourquoi n'y a t-il pas eu plus d'agrandissement?*

Question #2: Considering the kind of obstacles that you have just talked about, what do you think are some of the most effective strategies used by Seaska to deal with these challenges, and why?

Probing Questions:

- What kind of political strategies have existed?- What kind of community-level strategies have existed?

- What kind of economic strategies?
- What kind of media strategies?

*Question #2: Vous venez de parler des obstacles et dans ce contexte pourriez-vous réfléchir un peu sur les opportunités et les succès qui ont caractérisé les ikastolas et pourquoi?*

*Questions de sondage:*

*Quel genre des strategies politiques?*

*Quelle sorte strategies sociales et localisées?*

*Quel genre des strategies économiques?*

*Quelles genre des strategies culturelles?*

Question#3: If you could write an editorial article in a major national newspaper, such as *Le Monde* or *Le Figaro*, what message would you want to communicate to the French public?

Probing Questions:

-Have you published in any newspapers before?

*Question #4: Si vous pouviez écrire un article dans un journal national, comme Le Monde ou Le Figaro, quel message aimeriez vous communiquer au public français?*

*Questions de sondage:*

*Avez-vous déjà publié dans un journal?*

Question #5: How is it that you have found yourself in the position of being an advocate for Basque schooling programs? What experiences and motivations have led you to this particular activity?

Probing Questions:

-Was there an event or person that was influential in your life?

*Question #5: Comment se fait-il que vous vous trouvez dans cette position de promoteur ou défenseur pour les écoles Basques?*

*Questions de sondage:*

*Est-ce qu'une personne ou un événement vous ont influencé?*

Question #7: Why do you think people have enrolled their children into a Basque/Breton/Occitan language schooling system?

Probing Questions:

- Have you ever talked with people about it?
- What did you [or, would you like to] find out?

*Question #7: Pourquoi pensez-vous que les parents mettent leurs enfants dans un programme éducatif Basque?*

*Questions de sondage:*

- Avez-vous déjà parlé de cela avec les parents?*
- Qu'avez-vous découvert ou qu'aimeriez-vous apprendre?*

Question #8: Why do you think people have NOT enrolled their children into a Basque/Breton/Occitan language schooling program?

Probing Questions:

- Have you ever talked with people about this?
- What did you [or, would you like to] find out?

*Principale#8: Pourquoi pensez-vous que des parents n'ont pas mis leurs enfants dans ce genre de programme éducatif?*

*Questions de sondage:*

- Avez-vous déjà eu des discussions sur ce sujet?*
- Qu'aimeriez-vous apprendre/qu'avez vous appris?*

Question #9: Do you think changes in the national government have impacted the development and the goals of Basque revitalization efforts over the years?

Probing Questions:

- How so? Why or Why not?
- Has there been a difference between 'Left' and 'Right'?

- Do you think the upcoming election will influence things?

*Question #9: Pensez-vous que dans les années passées des changements dans le gouvernement national ont influencé le développement et les buts des efforts de revitalisation?*

*Questions de sondage:*

*Comment? Pourquoi ou pourquoi pas?*

*Est-ce qu'il y a eu des différences entre la gauche et la droite?*

*Pensez-vous que les prochaines élections changeront quelque chose?*

## **APPENDIX B: General Timeline for the Ikastola Movement, 1969-1994**

1969: Creation of association 'Seaska' and founding of first ikastola pre-school

1974: Creation of first primary-level ikastola

1977: State shuts down ikastola in St Palais and massive protest ensues

1979: Emergence of Autonomous Basque Community of Spain

1981: Election of President Francois Mitterand and Socialist Government

1982: Creation of first secondary-level ikastola

1983: First allocation of state funds to Seaska by the Ministry of Culture

1986: Seaska enters talks with Ministry of Education

1989: Seaska enters into experimental convention with the Ministry of Education

1990: Creation of first high school-level ikastola

1994: Seaska acquires permanent contract of association with the State

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