

## Article

# Western US Basque-American e-Diaspora: Action Research in California, Idaho, and Nevada

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**Abstract:** Basque settlement increased in the western states of the US decades ago, particularly in California, Idaho, and Nevada. Alongside this migration phenomenon, Basque Studies programs have been emerging at the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR), Boise State University (BSU), and California State University, Bakersfield (CSUB), particularly in the humanities, including history, anthropology, linguistics, and literature. The impact of the pandemic in Basque e-Diasporic communities in California, Idaho, and Nevada, and, consequently, the deep digitalization process being undertaken at the abovementioned universities, has resulted in an increasing demand for an articulated strategy in community engagement through action research. To respond to this timely challenge, the article suggests a need for a transition towards a Social Science transdisciplinary roadmap to support Basque e-diasporic communities. Basque Studies programs have the potential to act as a transformational policy driver through their virtual connections with the Basque Country and key homeland institutions. This article explores this necessary transition through action research by acknowledging the potential for the three abovementioned US states and the Basque Country to set up a transformational e-Diaspora.

**Keywords:** digital citizenship; western US Basque-Americans; e-Diaspora; e-Society; transdisciplinarity; community engagement; social sciences; action research; social change; Basque studies



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## 1. Introduction: Understanding the Land of the Western US Basque-American Diaspora

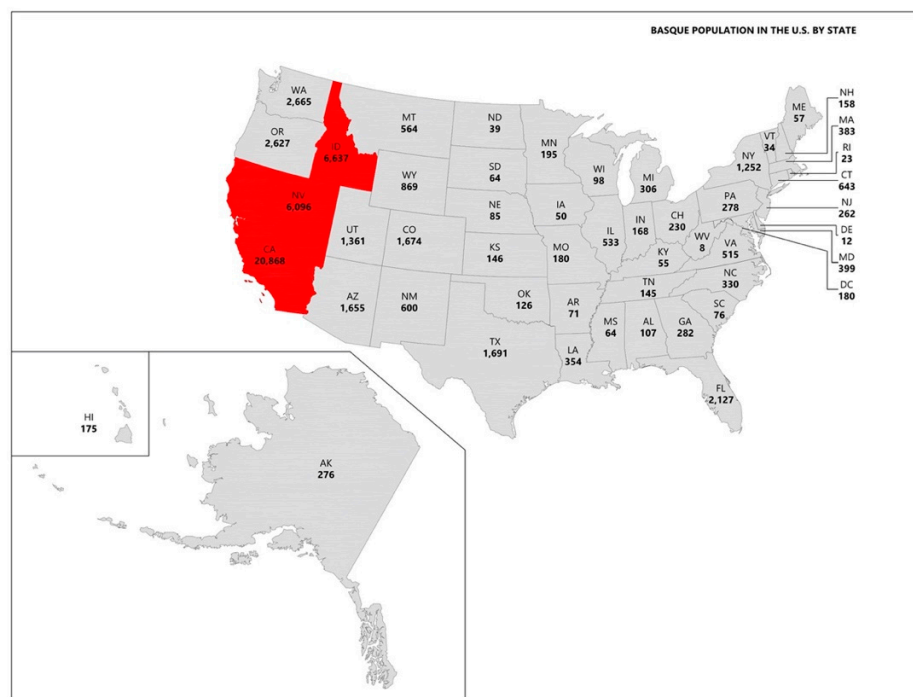
According to the 2000 US census, there were 57,793 persons of full or partial Basque descent in the US, but the actual number of Basque Americans could easily reach 100,000 (Figure 1) [1]. Of this number, 41,811 people claimed to be simply Basque American, 9296 claimed Spanish Basque ancestry, and 6686 claimed French Basque ancestry. Both Spanish and French sides are considered in this article as the *continental* Basque Country, assuming that the western US Basque-American diaspora is part of the broader *diasporic* Basque Country.

According to the North American Basque Organization (NABO), in 2000, the states most populated by Basque-Americans were California (20,868; 0.1% of the population), Idaho (6637; 0.5% of the population), and Nevada (6096; 0.3% of the population) [1]. These proportions are explained in the fourth section of this article through an analytical table.

This article applies action research by employing secondary data (as the one illustrated in Figure 1 derived from the US Census 2000), as well as policy documents by the Basque Government (particularly addressing the Basque e-Diaspora platform [www.hanhemen.eus](http://www.hanhemen.eus) accessed on 1 October 2022) and the three universities' Basque programs that are examined in this article: (i) the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR), (ii) Boise State University (BSU),

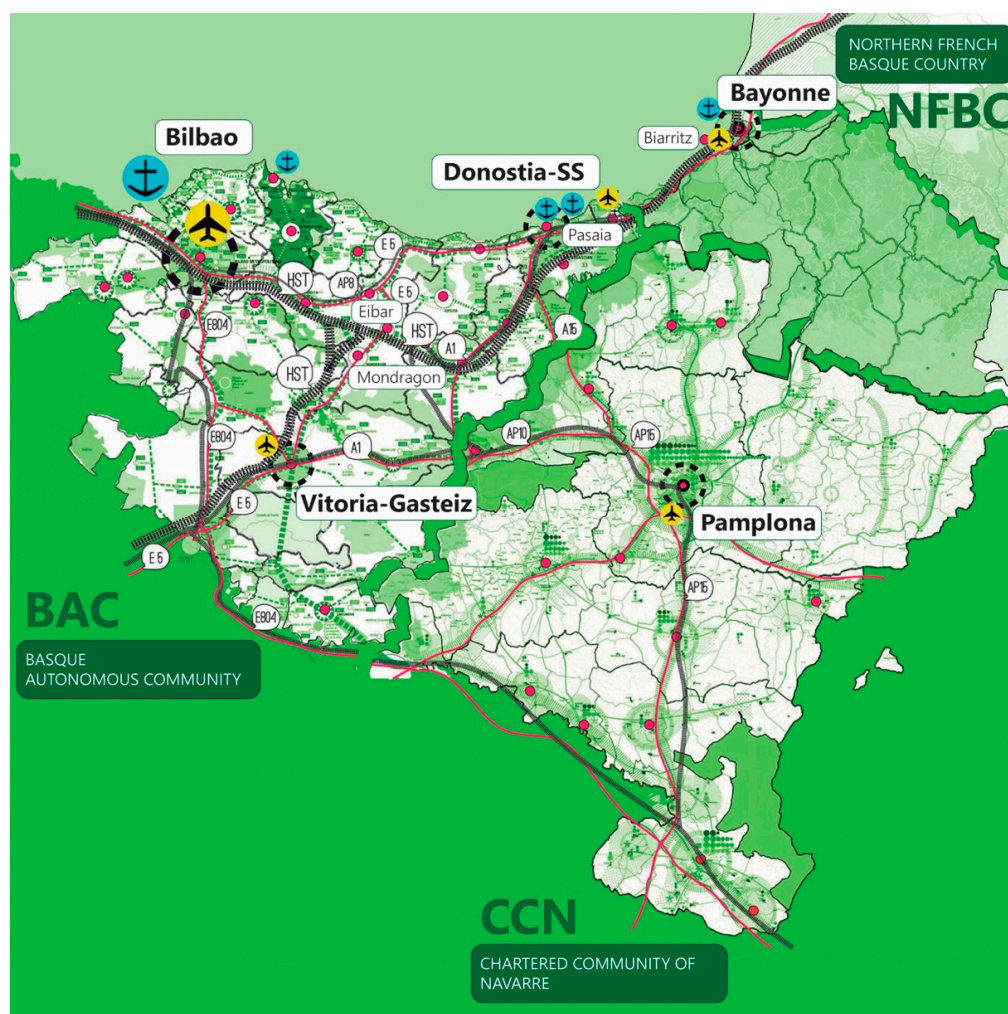


and (iii) California State University, Bakersfield (CSUB). This action research fieldwork process is currently being funded and undertaken at CSUB under the Fulbright Scholar-In-Residence (S-I-R) framework program by the leading (and corresponding) author of this article and deployed in coordination with the US–UK Fulbright Commission (<https://www.csub.edu/basquestudies/fulbright-scholar-residence> accessed on 31 October 2022). This research article is a direct outcome of this prestigious academic exchange program.





artificially established by binding the “Land of the Basques”, as Wells argued fifty years ago. These three entities are included in the examination of the fifth section of this article.



**Figure 2.** Continental Basque Country: Basque Autonomous Community (BAC) and Chartered Community of Navarre (CCN) in the Spanish Basque Country and Pays Basque commonwealth (*mancomunidad*) in the Northern French Basque Country (NFBC). (Source: Algorithmic Nations, Towards the Techno-Political Conceptual Assemblage [3]).

Wells’ arguments resonate today, especially considering that this distinction between the north (*Iparralde*) and south (*Hegoalde*) has become blurred in the western US diasporic community settlements. It must be noted that a new imminent separation border occurs pervasively between home and abroad—the “there and here effect”—as recent research by the leading author of this article has already demonstrated [4]. This imaginary *border* precipitates multiple interpretations of the space, identities, and practices around the diaspora. Not surprisingly, the name of the Basque Government’s work-in-progress e-Diaspora platform is *HanHemen* ([www.hanhemen.eus](http://www.hanhemen.eus) accessed on 1 October 2022), translated from *Euskera* as *ThereHere*. This distinction matters, given that real-time e-identity practices are produced in the homeland (*Hemen*/here) and the diaspora (*Han*/there). The e-diasporic space is, therefore, a merge of e-identities, overcoming established borders in the traditional Basque mindsets between the north (*Iparralde*) and the south (*Hegoalde*). Borders in the Western US Basque-American diaspora do not exist. Thus, their reproduction does not occur as it might be expected in the homeland, a fact that is highly overlooked and underestimated in the continental Basque Country.



Consequently, this “*there and here effect*” delves into the partial interpretation that continental Basques often make about reproducing their practices in the Basque diaspora. This interpretation assumes one *official* version of the Basque identity being replicated elsewhere, without considering that internationalization of the Basque identity enables multiple e-identities of *Basqueness* and is based on the idea of commuting or travelling through a physical space [5]. Yet, this article embraces the concept of e-diaspora(s) as the key to understanding these e-societies’ transitions in a postpandemic world. e-Diasporas are defined in this article as a set or sets of migrant communities that gather collectively in virtual platforms such as blogs, social media, or other spaces on the Internet without falling into the uncritical use of commercial Big Tech social media platforms. These social media tools extract digital and e-diasporic citizens’ data without showing democratic accountability. Thus, the term e-diaspora in this article counteracts the term “Hyperconnected Diasporas”, which has been examined in recent research by the leading author of this article [4].

Acknowledging this gap in interpretation in the Basque e-diaspora among those belonging to the homeland (*hemendarrak*) and those belonging abroad (*handarrak*) [6], the Basque Government, through its most recent strategic formulation and policy document “Internationalisation Framework Strategy—Euskadi Basque Country: 2025 External Action Plan”, has launched a cutting-edge initiative that aims to overcome the imaginary and practical border between diasporic and digital citizens living *there* (diaspora) and *here* (homeland). This initiative centers on the decentralized and blockchain-driven platform [www.hanhemen.eus](http://www.hanhemen.eus) (accessed on 1 October 2022) [7]. This platform attempts to be a gamechanger in the e-diasporic relationship between homeland and diasporic Basque citizens.

The active entrepreneurial role played so far by the diasporic settlements in California, Idaho, and Nevada and self-organized around Basque clubs (Euskal Etxeak, [www.euskaletxeak.eus](http://www.euskaletxeak.eus) accessed on 1 October 2022) seems to offer remarkable support to the *HanHemen* e-diasporic platform. Nonetheless, the dynamic around *HanHemen* requires bold and collaborative entrepreneurial approaches not only by Basque clubs but also by the three universities examined in this article.

Hence, this article aims to open an entrepreneurial research and policy pathway among these diasporic communities in western US Basque-American locations and those in the Basque homeland through the e-diasporic platform *HanHemen*. Thus, Basque Studies programs established over the past decades at the three universities examined in this article (UNR, BSU, and CSUB) can serve as academic enterprises to activate entrepreneurial networks among Basque communities by connecting with each other. In doing so, this article formulates the main hypothesis as follows: although Basque Studies programs were established to support diasporic communities, the core of their academic programs stemmed from the humanities without a structured entrepreneurial spirit, limiting their capacity to engage with Basque diasporic communities and thus missing the opportunity to undertake transdisciplinary Social Science action research.

Therefore, the exploratory research question could be articulated as follows: How can the new Institute for Basque Studies (IBS) at CSUB make the best of (i) the networking opportunities with UNR and BSU and (ii) better connect with the Basque homeland and strategic institutions and companies? This article suggests establishing a transformational, entrepreneurial, and cutting-edge transdisciplinary Social Sciences academic program in these institutions to better support diasporic communities and form a geostrategic hub for Basque Studies worldwide. This article sheds light on this research question insofar as it is exploratory—it is up to the IBS to demonstrate through a consistent framework around action research whether this is a feasible outcome concerning the territorial context in Bakersfield and Kern County. This article illustrates a potential roadmap to shed light on this exploratory research question.

The article provides: (i) an understanding of the “land” of the Basque-American diasporic communities in the US and (ii) a historical and social context for digging into the



“land” of the western US Basque-American diaspora. (iii) A literature review is conducted to complete the pathway about Humanities that has been mainstream so far in the western US Basque-American academic programs. Through this literature review, this article demonstrates the need for a transition toward a transdisciplinary Social Sciences roadmap. (iv) Next, benchmarking is conducted among the CSUB, UNR, and BSU academic programs, delving into city-regional and academic program analysis to shed light on the article’s exploratory research question. (v) Consequently, the article discusses the completion of a transdisciplinary Social Sciences roadmap at IBS through four specific developmental transitions. (vi) The article concludes by indicating some limitations and suggesting future research avenues around the Basque e-diaspora, e-citizenship, and e-society.

## 2. Historical and Social Context in a New City-Regional Frame: Digging into the *Land of the Western US Basque-American Diaspora in California, Nevada, and Idaho*

The Basque diaspora settled in the western US decades ago, particularly in the states of California, Idaho, and Nevada [8]. Alongside this migration phenomenon, academic programs on Basque Studies have been flourishing since then at the UNR, BSU, and CSUB, particularly in the domain of Humanities, including history, anthropology, linguistics, and literature. Given the strong impact of the pandemic on Basque diasporic communities in California, Idaho, and Nevada, and, consequently, the deep digitalization process being undertaken at the abovementioned universities, outreach and community engagement activities have been increasingly demanded by both universities and diasporic communities in the western US. In the fifth section of this article, four developmental transitions stemming from the current advancements in the Basque Country are described, including the three administrative entities of Figure 2 [5]: (i) socioeconomics, (ii) sociopolitics, (iii) diaspora/migration studies, and (iv) digitalization. The article sheds light on this necessary transition by acknowledging the potential for the three US states and their respective academic programs, as well as for the Basque Country itself, to bridge the gap between *There and Here*.

Although the most recognizable commonalities between the western US and the *continental* Basque Country are typically related to sheepherding, boarding houses, and long lonely journeys in an infinite landscape reminiscent of classic Westerns, a more fundamental connection had already been made as early as 1786 by John Adams. The second president of the US, in 1786, argued that the Basque historical form of government, known as the Code of Laws in Biscay (*Foruak* or Charters of Biscay), represents a defense of the Constitution of the United States.

Starting in 1910, nearly fifty Basque clubs (Euskal Etxeak; [www.euskaletxeak.eus](http://www.euskaletxeak.eus) accessed on 1 October 2022) emerged in different parts of the US. Other European migrations into the US in the middle of the 20th century followed similar patterns, but these communities tended to gather and relate to each other differently. For instance, in many parts of Central Valley in California, Portuguese and Basque communities had mutual understandings around the business they were conducting. This evidence is particularly relevant in Kern County, California, and San José Valley, as the ongoing fieldwork action research by the leading author of this article reveals. The Portuguese diaspora had an important presence in the cattle business, and many Basques started dairy businesses. The fights between sheepherders and cowboys belong to the legends of the Basque migrant. However, not all stories converge in this manner. Basque clubs allowed deep socialization processes among Basque-American people and established regular connections with the Basque homeland. Notably, the Basque Government has maintained links with Basque-American people over the decades by supporting cultural, linguistic, and social activities and events. Basques, like many others, found different and new symmetries to re-imagine their community.

One of the first questions that Basques in the western US ask each other is the *where are you from* question [9]. However, this question is far from generic; it is the beginning of a longer conversation that usually ends with an effort to identify a person, a place,



or a moment that could connect both parties. The *where are you from* question always refers to the town, the province, and the co-relation with the community—shared contacts, names, or people that fall in the same set of friends—that the Basques involved in the conversation might have; it intends to create a cartography of familiar figures. Therefore, the localization that the Basque community demands becomes very important, as illustrated in the following three case studies.

Nevada shows a diaspora mainly originating from the Biscay province around the metropolitan and flagship city of Bilbao in the BAC (Figure 2). The population of Basques in Nevada is concentrated mainly in cities and towns, including (i) Winnemucca—a town with a very detailed history related to the Paulite Indian tribe, but also to Sarah Winnemucca [10], a peculiar hybrid figure in the recent history of Native Americans; (ii) Elko, where one of the most notorious Basque hotels, The Star Hotel, remains open to this day; and (iii) Reno, where the Center for Basque Studies was established in the 1970s.

Boise, Idaho, represents the intersection between politics and the local community, which has tended to favor the local Basque community for the last few decades, although not without a restless effort coming from the community itself. Boise followed the path of the Center for Basque Studies in Reno, with one particularity: Boise was able to build a Basque block with public visibility around museums, restaurants, and Basque shops. The Basque festival remains the ultimate Basque experience in America. It is widely acknowledged as the current incarnation of the Basque diaspora in the western US. It depicts the homeland's image of what the Basque-American should be. However, we cannot take for granted that Boise fully represents the variety of the Basque community abroad, particularly in the western US. In Boise, we find Basques that migrated mainly from CCN (Figure 2).

California shows a slightly different configuration for the Basque community due to the size of the state (1.9 times bigger than Idaho and 1.4 times bigger than Nevada) and the unique ecosystem of cities and economic driving forces. The Basque community in the state's north is concentrated in San Francisco and the Bay area, and Bakersfield in the south. Among others, San Diego, the Los Angeles area, and Central Valley are populated with significant Basque communities. A good percentage of Californian Basques come from Iparralde (NFBC; Figure 2) and Navarre (CCN; Figure 2), and, to a lesser degree, some from the Eastern province of Gipuzkoa in the BAC, along with some from Biscay (the western province of Bizkaia in the BAC; Figure 2), completing a peculiar mosaic of origins and territorial roots.

Against this historical and social backdrop, this article is framed by two main developmental transitions suggested by Calzada in 2011 [5]. These transitions may have been exacerbated over the last two decades (2002–2022) in the Basque diaspora in the western US, particularly focused on the aforementioned states that this article compares.

- (i) The first developmental transition refers to the pervasive and ongoing shift from the geographically rooted notion of a cohesive ethnic and community-driven diaspora towards a scattered and detached 'liquid' digital citizenship, as is already shaping the e-diaspora experience in the western US. As such, the ethnic population of western US Basque-Americans has been changing over the last decades towards new forms of digital engagement, irrespective of location. This is particularly relevant to the three main case studies that this article examines from the e-diaspora perspective.
- (ii) This first developmental transition results in a second developmental transition that shapes new practices, meanings, and exchanges from the folkloric and traditional revival approach towards a real-time remixed Basque cultural hybrid identity. This second developmental transition may have been overlooked from the inner *here* perspective—from the homeland—as the simple reproduction of dance and folklore in the US might have been permanently perceived as reinforcement of the Basque presence in the diaspora. A unidirectional model threatens to misunderstand the real-time cultural production and reproduction of new practices and experiences in the



diaspora. This phenomenon is vital for the permanency of active and multidirectional Basque cultural interactions abroad.

### 3. Literature Review: Completing Humanities with a Transition towards a Transdisciplinary Social Science Roadmap in the Western US Basque-American Academic Programs

Basque Studies have traditionally pivoted around research lines that mingled with the origins, history, and survival of traditions that Basque peoples brought to the western US at the beginning of the previous century. Established in 1967, the Center for Basque Studies (CBS) at the UNR has been the flagship of Basque Studies in American academia and has historically examined the concept of Basque identity from an analogic perspective rather than a digital one. Nonetheless, the contemporary e-diasporic context highlighted in this article offers an alternative way to explain the uniqueness of ‘western US Basque-American’ communities in California, Nevada, and Idaho, as part of a broader range of Basque identities. The existence of such a complex space of Basque identities proves the necessity of this transition towards e-diaspora that this article offers. e-Diaspora neither erases nor removes historical and contextual social attributes of specific Basque communities. Instead, it embraces a real-time orchestration of a diverse set of Basque e-identities that can co-exist and learn from each other [5].

William Douglass provides the first anthropological perspective to the research and analysis of the how and where of Basque migration. His seminal work, *Death in Murelaga* (1969), focuses on understanding what has been a recurrent theme in Basque Studies and is historically considered the first sign of human ritual—the ones related to death [11]. Jorge Oteiza’s understanding of the new Basque art also emanates from funerary rituals. The beginning of the Basque program in Reno is explained in *A Candle in the Night: Basque Studies at the University of Nevada 1967–2007* [12], an exhaustive account of the development of Basque Studies in Nevada. Out of the figures that appear in *A Candle in the Night*, there is an interesting mix that confirms an “inertia”, a *habitus* à la Bourdieu, in Basque Studies in American academia, which also provides the context of the creation and development of the CBS at UNR. In addition to some librarians, the other significant figures come from Humanities departments in the US, including some of the first Ph.D. graduates of the program itself. These departments include Anthropology at Princeton University, Modern Languages and Literatures at Nebraska University, and Spanish and Portuguese at Iowa University. The exception to this list is the founder, William Douglass, who obtained his MA and Ph.D. at Universidad Complutense in Madrid. In this context, Basque Studies start their journey in American academia.

Along with Reno’s Center, BSU began to offer Basque courses within a similar frame. BSU’s link with Basque Studies follows a different path. Starting in 1974–1975 as a study abroad initiative, Boise linked their efforts to the University of the Basque Country’s (UPV-EHU) Oñati campus [13]. In association with Jon Bilbao from the UNR-CBS, Pat Bieter decided to begin a journey connecting one of the most significant Basque communities abroad with an academic program in the western US. In this context, the seminal book by Jon Bilbao and William Douglass *Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World* was published [14]. In the review published by Duke University Press one year after the publication of *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, the reviewer promptly notes the disciplines of both authors—anthropology and history—which frame the entire work [15]. The same review refers to the work’s attention to the Basque way of life in the West, which is detailed and extensively referenced for future researchers. The reviewer notes the book’s fixation with the Basques mainly in the West, and less attention is paid to the Basques in Latin America, for instance. The book also frames what will be the second oldest program in American academia in Basque Studies.

More works and authors follow the first steps made in the 1970s. With regard to the western diaspora, the works of Bilbao and Douglass have a continuation in authors such as Alvarez Gila [16,17], Totoricagüena [18–21], Ott [22], Webster et al. [23], Irujo [24–27], Bieter [28], and Gabilondo [29–31]. In more recent years, authors such as Zulaika [32–34],



Gonzalez-Allende [35], Irujo [36], Olaziregi [37–39], and others create some distance from previous anthropological and historical perspectives without completely detaching themselves from the seminal works. The creation of its own press by the Center for Basque Studies in Reno in 1999 (as the continuation of the Basque Studies 1970s book series by the University of Nevada Press) opened the possibility of publishing many types of works—translations included—for an American academic and non-academic audience.

Several other contributions could be suggested to explore further transdisciplinary outcomes. Setting up a transdisciplinary Social Science academic program would need to be closely connected with the diasporic communities that are affected and articulated by action research. These references include Zulaika's Basque political violence [40,41], Aretxaga's work on nationalism, violence, and gender [42], Ott's work on history and anthropology on the French border [43,44], and Del Valle's work in political anthropology [45]. The study of the political violence in the Basque Country has been the subject of numerous doctoral dissertations, MA theses, and undergraduate theses, as well as courses both in the Humanities and Social Sciences.

More recent attempts are already experimenting with interdisciplinary rather than transdisciplinary perspectives [46–50]. The journal *Territories: A Transcultural Journal of Regional Studies*, edited at the e-scholarship branch of the University of California, is a prime example of this. Moreover, the postpandemic transition seems to open the way for an emerging debate in Basque Studies through forums and events that include the diaspora in their discussions. Yet, this preliminary transdisciplinary Social Science pathway has been introduced previously. The concept of *Euskal Hiria* ("Basque City-Region") blends disciplines, including political geography, regional studies, social innovation studies, critical data studies, and technopolitics [4,5,48–50]. Similarly, one of the most pertinent publications was the keynote paper entitled 'Algorithmic Nations' published in the journal *Territories*, which opened new pathways by merging topics such as digitalization, datafication, and nationalism [48]. That article was the precedent of this present article and may have already opened new perspectives in several disciplines around Basque Studies [49,50]. The workshop *Basque Studies from a Transdisciplinary Approach* was conducted between December 2021 and March 2022 and aimed to produce a special issue in an academic journal that gathers the thoughts produced during the sessions. The workshop had the support of CONICET and REVA (*Red de Estudios Vascos en Argentina*).

Moreover, the 31st AEMI conference, "Relations between Diasporas and their home countries: new migrations, return movements and historical contexts," held in San Sebastian during September and October of 2021, aimed to share the different diasporic experiences of a diverse group of cultures. A transdisciplinary view in line with this article was presented at this event by coining the new term "Hyperconnected Diasporas" [4].

Under the direction of Iñaki Goirizelaia, the UPV-EHU offered a Summer Course, "Challenges of Basque Identity in the 21st Century", in July 2022, featuring speakers—including members of the Basque community from abroad—that could share their insights on how to answer the basic questions related to Basque identity.

Finally, during the Winter of 2021 and Spring of 2022, under the direction of Oscar Álvarez-Gila, the UPV-EHU offered a graduate course for the first time that was focused entirely on the challenges of the Basque diaspora. Under the title "Diáspora Vasca" (Basque Diaspora), this course included more than ten different faculties from universities around the world—including MPs, postdoctoral students, and the authors of this article—that covered specific questions related to the Basque diaspora. This article intends to incorporate the foundation of the IBS at CSUB within this chain of events. The postpandemic years may offer new pathways to articulate digital citizenship around the diaspora. This article calls this set of events occurring between digital and diasporic citizens from *here* and *there* the e-diaspora [4,51].

Yet, some things remain unaltered, and Basque Studies seem to be stuck within traditional vectors regarding its classification in American academia. Some of this could be explained by its conventional association with Hispanic Studies, with some efforts



made in recent years to relocate it. One of the most significant efforts was made during the 2018–2019 academic year at UC Santa Barbara. The Basque Studies program at UC Santa Barbara was initiated by Juan Bautista Añave-Arce, a prominent Cervantist, in 1993. For different reasons, it has fluctuated in its presence and curricular offer over the years. After an agreement with *Etxepare Euskal Institutoa* in 2010, it regained a constant and coherent presence of at least one lecture in Basque Studies. Starting in 2014, the program started offering less conventional courses—in Food Studies and Cooperatives, among others—and incorporated an online course in 2018. This became available for the 500,000 students enrolled in the UC system. The meetings that took place during the academic year of 2018–2019 aimed to discuss the relocation of the program to different possible faculties, including the Department of Global Studies at UCSB. It had the direct involvement of various faculties, among them Global Studies, History, Film and Media Studies, Linguistics, and German and Slavic Studies, and both Deans of Humanities and Social Sciences (Dean Majewski and Dean Hale). The proposal stalled for several reasons and faced particular resistance from the Spanish and Portuguese Department, who held understandable concerns about the long-term consequences of such a move. Although it was not wholly successful, this attempt marked something of a starting point that the IBS at CSUB could complete by working with UNR and BSU through action research-oriented programs. The stage was set to engage western US Basque-American diasporic and digital communities by setting up a fertile e-diaspora via platforms such as *HanHemen*, as mentioned above.

More recently, there is promising evidence for key action research-oriented policy projects such as *HanHemen* ([www.hanhemen.eus](http://www.hanhemen.eus) accessed on 1 October 2022). It clearly illustrates the potential pathway around e-diasporas that this article suggests, focusing on the western US Basque-American contemporary context. The *HanHemen* project, begun in April 2021 and facilitated by the Basque Government, aims to reconfigure the modes of social and technological interactions of the Basque e-diaspora. Furthermore, these interactions have been weakly mediated among Basques that live inside (*hemen*) and outside (*han*) of the Basque Country. The fact that the *HanHemen* framework project supersedes the previous failed project *Basque Global Network* ([www.basqueglobalnetwork.eus](http://www.basqueglobalnetwork.eus) accessed on 1 October 2022) indicates the challenges that facilitating e-diasporas through digital citizenship platforms may entail [51].

The outcome and the questions that bind all these initiatives remain open, though: why are there no scholars affiliated with Basque Studies with expertise in Social Sciences or transdisciplinary fields? Why are Political Science, Sociology, Public Policy, Economics, Political Economy, Urban Studies, Political Philosophy, Business Administration, Ethics, Social Anthropology, Political Geography, or Digital and Media Studies academic spots not yet occupied abroad by these very scholars? A forward-looking trend around the ongoing connection between the homeland, in the Basque Country, and the diaspora in the western US is articulated in this article as a clear gap to be addressed in the coming decade. This potential prospective approach demands a double articulation. Both a historical view on the diaspora and migration studies and a contemporary and prospective view to support the future collaboration between diasporic communities in the western US and stakeholders in the homeland are required. Strategies around internationalization have been abundant over the last years and have increased after the pandemic [6]. Nonetheless, a framework around these internationalization efforts is needed. This article offers this strategic position to the current universities in the western US to complete their foundational commitment to supporting Basque diasporic communities and implementing a livable transdisciplinary Social Science action research roadmap. The following section benchmarks the Basque Studies academic programs in the western US.

#### 4. Methodology: Benchmarking BSU, UNR, and CSUB Basque Studies Programs

This section expands on the exploratory research question presented in the introduction of this article. This benchmarking is the first methodological step of a broader set



of techniques driven by action research. Action research was defined by Lewin [52] as “comparative research on the conditions and effects of various forms of social action and research leading to social action that uses a spiral of steps, each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action, and fact-finding about the result of the action” (p. 35). Action research seeks transformative change through the simultaneous process of taking action and engaging in research, linked together by critical reflection [53].

To proceed methodologically, benchmarking is presented for the three states selected, California, Idaho, and Nevada, as the three case studies. The benchmarking is shown in Table 1, which consists of two parts: (i) city-regional analysis by comparing secondary data such as demographics and geostrategic factors, and (ii) academic program analysis through comparing subjects and academic orientation around Basque Studies. This article infers several comparative elements that contribute to the exploratory research question in the final section.

Although most people associate the Basque diaspora with Latin America, since the 19th century, Idaho and Nevada have been home to a flourishing Basque presence that has left a significant cultural imprint. In the 19th and 20th centuries, many Basques left their homeland in search of better fortunes on the other side of the Atlantic. Like other Spanish immigrants, most settled in Latin America, which consequently has a large Basque diaspora, most notably in Argentina and Uruguay. The largest number of Basque-Americans live in California [1] (Figure 1), but a high concentration can also be found in Idaho and Nevada (Table 1).

The city with the largest population of Basques outside of Spain and France is Boise, Idaho. The sheep industry was the main factor influencing the migration of Basques to the US from 1910. The Basque Block, a 600-block of Grove Street in Boise’s Historical District, could represent the meeting point for the Basque diaspora in the US. Constructed in 1864, the Basque Museum and Cultural Center is a key feature of the Block and the oldest surviving brick building in Boise.

The city of Reno is rich in Basque culture, exemplified by its restaurants, festivals, and monuments. A monument dedicated to the Basque Sheepherder is situated at the intersection of McCarran Boulevard and North Virginia Street. The map illustrates the Basque settlement in the US. The Basque library at UNR is considered the leading library on Basque topics outside the Basque Country.

The city of Bakersfield and Kern County has a long history with Basque immigrants. Their history has been recreated by authors and researchers Steve Bass and George Ansolabehere in their book *The Basque of Kern County* [54].

By analyzing Table 1, we can observe that the largest city and state population lies in Bakersfield and California. The most concentrated Basque population is shown, respectively, in Boise (13%) and Reno (8%). Regarding the Basque-American community census in each state, again the order is Boise, Reno, and Bakersfield. Boise has 3573 Basque-American inhabitants, Reno has 2216, and Bakersfield has 1078. Nonetheless, the potential of California is greater than the other two states: California hosts 20,868 Basque-American people, 5.1% of them being concentrated in Bakersfield. A geostrategic aspect that should be considered is the location of Bakersfield. While Reno and Boise are somewhat detached from the important corridors, Bakersfield is relatively close to Los Angeles and San Francisco. When approaching the entrepreneurial role of the Basque community in Bakersfield, this city-region aspect should be addressed. As such, Bakersfield hosts several key events and strategic institutions: Kern Venture/Seedcore Foundation (JP Lake), Bakersfield City Council, Bitwise Industries, KEDC, KITE, B3K, NASA, Chevron, Blue Diamond co-operative, and Greater Bakersfield Chamber. Moreover, it should be noted that the reliable data on the Basque population in the western US comes from the 2000 US census [1], which raises the question of the appropriateness of conducting any future research to adjust these figures with actual data on the western US Basque-American population and potential e-diaspora.



**Table 1.** Benchmarking Boise/Idaho, Reno/Nevada, and Bakersfield/California: City-regional and academic program analysis.

City-Regional Analysis		Boise/Idaho	Reno/Nevada	Bakersfield/California
Population City/State Proportion (US Census 2020)		228,057/ 1,754,000 (13%)	264,165/ 3,104,614 (8%)	403,455/ 39,185,605 (1%)
Basque-American community census in each state (%)		6637 (0.5%)	6096 (0.3%)	20,868 (0.1%)
Basque-American population density in each city per state (%) [1]		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gooding (4.1)</li> <li>• Shoshone (3.4)</li> <li>• Cascade (3.2)</li> <li>• Rupert (1.6)</li> <li>• <b>Boise (3573 = 1.5)</b></li> <li>• New Plymouth (1.5)</li> <li>• Caldwell (1.3)</li> <li>• Eagle (1.2)</li> <li>• Homedale (1.2)</li> <li>• Meridian (1.2)</li> <li>• Fuitland (1.1)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Winnemucca (4.2)</li> <li>• Battle Mountain (4.1)</li> <li>• Elko (3.7)</li> <li>• Minden (2.2)</li> <li>• Gardnerville (1.7)</li> <li>• Fallon (1.3)</li> <li>• <b>Reno (2216 = 0.8)</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Susanville (2.1)</li> <li>• Oak Park (1.2)</li> <li>• Moss Beach (1.1)</li> <li>• Bonsall (1.1)</li> <li>• Bodfish (1.0)</li> <li>• Mojave (1.0)</li> <li>• <b>Bakersfield (1078 = 0.2)</b></li> </ul>
Basque-American population city/state (%)		3573/6637 (53%)	2216/6096 (36%)	1078/20,868 (5.1%)
Key Events and Venues		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Jaialdi</i> Basque Festival (since 1987)</li> <li>• Bar Gernika (since 1990)</li> <li>• Leku Ona Restaurant (since 2005)</li> <li>• The Basque Museum and Cultural Center (since 1985)</li> <li>• Yearly Basque Festival</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yearly Basque Conference at UNR</li> <li>• Yearly Basque Picnic</li> <li>• Louis' Basque Corner (since 1967)</li> <li>• Santa Fe Basque Restaurant (1949–2020)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yearly Basque Symposium at CSUB</li> <li>• Yearly Basque Picnic at KCBC</li> <li>• Benji's Basque Restaurant (since 1992)</li> <li>• Woolgrowers (since 1954) Pyrenees Cafe (since 1887)</li> <li>• KEDC Annual Dinner</li> </ul>



Table 1. Cont.

City-Regional Analysis	Boise/Idaho	Reno/Nevada	Bakersfield/California
Academic Program Analysis	BSU	UNR	CSUB
Responsible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prof. Mark Bieter</li> <li>• Prof. Nere Lete</li> <li>• Dr. Ziortza Gandarias</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prof. William Douglass</li> <li>• Prof. Joseba Zulaika and Prof. Sandy Ott</li> <li>• Prof. Xabier Irujo</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prof. Steve Gamboa (2005–2016)</li> <li>• Prof. Steve Gamboa and Dr. Iker Arranz serving the IBS (2019-current)</li> </ul>
Value proposition	Museum and the traditional revival Agricultural ecosystems	CBS Press	Center for Entrepreneurship at CSUB, Basque community, local Basque owned companies (agriculture, law firms, etc.) Energy sector and aerospace industry
International networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic agreements with UPV-EHU</li> <li>• Etxepare Institute for “Eloise Garmendia Bieter Chair” in Basque Studies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Province Council of Bizkaia for a yearly fellow in Fiscal System (2014-)</li> <li>• UPV-EHU for Center for Basque Studies Press</li> <li>• Etxepare Institutoa for “Jon Bilbao Chair” in Basque Studies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fulbright Scholar-In-Residence (S-I-R), US-UK Fulbright Commission (2022–2023): Dr Igor Calzada</li> <li>• Etxepare Institutoa for “Frank Bidart Chair” in Basque Studies (2022-)</li> <li>• Bizkaiko Diputazioa for “Yearly Art and Music Grant” (2022-)</li> </ul>



Regarding the analysis of the academic programs, it is noteworthy that each program has evolved differently. BSU was driven by the traditional revival of the academic curriculum and courses. UNR pivoted around the CBS, gaining a presence with the Ph.D. in Basque Studies program and making a solitary effort to gain an actual degree program in Basque Studies outside the Basque Country. Meanwhile, a significant number of publications in the field opened the scope to readers in English. The case of CSUB is a work in progress, but it is worth considering its response to e-diaspora challenges while being connected with the Basque community in Kern County. In this direction, the Fulbright Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Cardiff University, CSUB, and key institutions in the Basque Country can leverage a roadmap to be developed within the following five years by designing a research agenda that explores undeveloped areas in Basque Studies. This article signals the point of departure of such partnerships.

Thus, we return to the exploratory research question: how can the IBS recently established at CSUB make the best of (i) the networking opportunities with UNR-CBS and BSU and other emerging programs in major universities and (ii) connect more effectively with the Basque homeland and strategic institutions and companies?

This article explores several findings from this benchmarking after conducting a city-regional and academic program analysis:

The first finding is the opportunity around a critical and emancipatory pathway around digitalization and datafication: the e-diaspora will play a vital role in the upcoming years. Digital citizenship is inevitable, and evidence must be curated through hybrid events. The opportunities offered through the Fulbright S-I-R with the *HanHemen* platform, among other initiatives, including Basque–Wales connections led by the corresponding author of this article, funded by the ESRC at Cardiff University and accordingly presented at a Fulbright S-I-R reception event on 10 October 2022 (<https://www.csub.edu/basquestudies/fulbright-scholar-residence> accessed on 31 October 2022). This could set the scene for further applied research, as the data source remains relatively untapped in this location, as it does at some of the other hotspots of Basque Studies. Furthermore, the connection of the western US Basque–American e-diaspora roadmap with the European continent could be valuable in terms of connecting with cutting-edge research conducted in the UK and involving key institutions in the Basque Country with action research and policy endeavors.

The second finding is the historical lack of clear and defined leadership capacity in CSUB-IBS, unlike in UNR and BSU.

There seems to be an important boost in the structural advancement of Basque venues in Boise that coincides with the institutionalization of the Basque diaspora as a local phenomenon in Idaho. We can observe how the Basque Museum and Cultural Center and Bar Gernika were established around the same time, along with the first edition of *Jaialdia*, in the late 1980s. Idaho has maintained a prominent Basque presence in local institutions for more than four decades, first with Pete Cenarrusa, the Idaho State Representative from 1967 to 2003, and later with Dave Bieter, the Mayor of Boise from 2004 to 2020. The establishment of the *Leku Ona* restaurant in 2005 seems to coincide with the election of Bieter, completing “The Basque Block” in Boise. It is no secret that collectives congregate around food, an almost religious pilgrimage for the Basques. Therefore, there is a documented overlap in the Basque presence in institutions with significant development of public spaces dedicated to Basque traditions, culture, and festivities.

This phenomenon began even earlier in Nevada. Starting with Senator Pat McCarran in 1950, Nevada welcomed many Basque workers thanks to the Senator’s flexibility in facilitating Basque migration. More than 5000 applicants, some returning from World War II, processed their petitions at the American Consulate in Bilbao [55]. This consulate coincidentally stopped operating after a few decades once this migration flux slowed. Around this time, the two Basque restaurants in Reno started operating, one in 1949 and another in 1967. Lastly, Central Valley, and particularly Kern County, did not have a prominent figure of Basque heritage in any of its core institutions, yet Pyrenees is one of the oldest Basque culinary venues in the country. Kern County still holds one of the most significant



Basque presences in the US without any embedded institutional support, compared to the abovementioned two cases. This scenario provides yet another reason why CSUB should spark an entrepreneurial engine by connecting with the opportunities offered through the e-diaspora channeled by platforms such as *HanHemen* or other ongoing initiatives around Mondragon University and Food Studies. It could bring together socio-economic stakeholders—especially Bitwise Industries, among others—that aim to implement a socio-economically progressive policy roadmap, including the Digital Foundational Economy. Digital Foundational Economy is a policy-oriented research framework developed by the Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research and Data (WISERD) around data privacy, data co-operatives, digital citizenship, and digital rights [53,56] in the new facilities of the Social Science Research Park (SPARK).

The third finding concerns the need to modernize the understanding of the e-diaspora beyond “Hyperconnected Diasporas” [4]. At Kern County Basque Club (KCBC; [www.kcbasqueclub.com](http://www.kcbasqueclub.com) accessed on 1 October 2022) diaspora gatherings, there is a predominance of face-to-face interactions supported by social media, despite the possibility of engaging with the multiple digital resources available, from courses to guided visits, which the Basque Program at CSUB currently offers. Digitalization is in almost all human interactions and the pandemic has exacerbated its predominance. The role that CSUB-IBS could play in activating e-diaspora activities is remarkable. Moreover, this strategic reorientation could be especially appealing to the younger generations, the so-called “digital natives” or “millennials”. However, data privacy issues should be given priority regarding the California Consumer Protection Act and ongoing Californian regulation of Digital Foundation Economic principles [56,57]. A workshop jointly organized by the IBS and KCBC around the intergenerational gap among the Basque community through digital literacy is expected to be held on 10 December 2022.

Consequently, this article draws on several developmental transitions that could expand workshop activities as defined above and allow the IBS at CSUB to network effectively with UNR and BSU. Establishing a transformational, entrepreneurial, and cutting-edge transdisciplinary Social Sciences academic program would allow for more robust connections with the Basque homeland and strategic institutions and companies. This would support diasporic communities and see the IBS at CSUB become a geostrategic hub for Basque studies worldwide. This aim can only be fulfilled if linked with reputable international research institutions such as the new Social Science Research Park (SPARK/SBARC) and the WISERD funded by the prestigious Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) funding institution. Stemming from WISERD, research on the Digital Foundational Economy was presented at the Fulbright Reception on 10 October 2022 at CSUB, by emphasizing the ongoing Basque–Wales Cooperation policy agreement that could be linked through the Fulbright Program to the western US Basque-American context.

Establishing a transdisciplinary Social Sciences academic program requires institutions to conduct ongoing and structured fieldwork action research and work closely with avant-garde research institutions investigating real global societal challenges while being regionally connected. This is the case for the approach that CSUB-IBS could develop in the coming five years. The five-year roadmap e-diaspora program suggested by this research is presented in the following section through four developmental transitions.

## 5. Discussion: Completing Basque Studies Programs with a Transdisciplinary Social Sciences Roadmap in CSUB-IBS through Four Developmental Transitions

This article acknowledges the gradual transition that diaspora studies are witnessing in postpandemic times, given the influence of digitalization over diasporic citizens. It may be worth considering the ongoing trends around emerging digital citizenship regimes [50]. As such, this section has been formulated with a close consideration of the key strategic policy documents recently released by the Basque Government [6]. This transdisciplinary Social Sciences roadmap in CSUB-IBS should inevitably fit into the diaspora strategy of the Basque Government to suggest a realistic and framed set of programs and associated actions.



Four developmental transitions considering the three Basque administrative entities (Figure 2) could be envisaged to suggest a transdisciplinary Social Sciences roadmap in CSUB through the IBS to activate an entrepreneurial network among diasporic western US Basque-American communities and the homeland, the *continental* Basque Country.

### 5.1. Socioeconomics: Local and Regional Development

There is a widespread assumption that the Basque case presents a remarkable case of socio-economic resilience [58]. According to Ibarretxe [59], several factors show the uniqueness of the Basque case and could be considered key policy evidence: (i) the urban renewal of the city of Bilbao, (ii) alongside the Mondragon cooperatives [60], as well as (iii) the city-regional social economy ecosystem. In addition to these, (iv) an intensive cluster policy, (v) the local industry 4.0 and advanced manufacturing and technology alliances, (vi) a 20-year-old basic income policy, (vii) the recovery of the Basque language (*Euskera*), and (viii) the highest concentration of Michelin Guide-awarded restaurants per square meter, among many other interconnected initiatives, depict a rather paradigmatic socioeconomic case study from the progressivist approach.

With its history, status, and future perspectives, the Basque fiscal system needs to be acknowledged as the main socioeconomic innovation at the city-regional level, allowing further developments. As such, it is only possible to understand former factors with the foundational origin of fiscal decentralization or devolution [27,58,61]. Yet, simply translating these ecosystems into Western environments would generate more problems than solutions. Establishing a solid, long-term fieldwork strategy in the western US is necessary to identify “sister” ecosystems where the Basque solutions can be adapted, tested, or transformed. The experiences in the Basque Country should be inspirational rather than resolute to provide foundations for long-term, transdisciplinary action research fieldwork. Those advocating for decontextualized replication of the Basque Country model might encounter difficulties applying what they argue [62]. This roadmap is designed as a multidirectional learning loop driven by action research rather than a simple recipe to be reproduced. When implementing action research from scratch, this methodological caveat is worth considering [52].

For this article, the socioeconomic developmental transition that could be taken as a source of inspiration in several western US diasporic locations inevitably requires adaptable policy instruments, given the importance that social capital and community development practices represent for good practices in the Basque homeland. CSUB-IBS attempts, therefore, to learn from and build relationships with key institutions and universities to leverage the potential of the Basque socioeconomic model for the local and regional development of Kern County [63]. In this direction, CSUB-IBS could articulate networks between Kern County stakeholders [64] and key institutions in the Basque Country for mutual benefit and commercial exchange. The Basque Country case could be connected to Kern County to establish cluster policies and an ecosystem of new economic activities driven by digitalization and data devolution [65–67]. As such, not only BAC but also CCN and NFBC administrative entities could be well-placed for such policy exchange, given that the multilevel governance of the EU framework through Interreg and Horizon Europe programs equally benefits the three administrative entities, despite their different institutional arrangements [3]. The Euroregion cross-border cooperation framework opens interesting pathways for the ongoing sister city agreement between St. Jean de Luz/Donibane Lohitzune in the NFBC and Bakersfield in Kern County [5].

### 5.2. Sociopolitics: Fiscal Decentralization and e-Democracy

Building on the previous developmental transition, this roadmap shifts from socioeconomics to sociopolitics. CSUB could influence policymakers, bring together a wide range of stakeholders, and promote a multistakeholder penta-helix approach that includes the private sector, public sector, academia, civil society, and social entrepreneurs [68]. The socioeconomics of data devolution requires tools for direct deliberation and democracy



that current digitalization and social changes are creating. Thus, social and technological interactions in e-societies cannot be detached from the progressivist socioeconomic and sociopolitical tools used to engage the e-diasporic Basque community in Bakersfield and Kern County.

Amidst political violence and its aftermath, economic agreement (*concierto económico*) as a unique fiscal decentralization model in Europe and the need to better articulate direct democracy for self-government in the future are of the utmost importance. This article suggests an opportunity for a transdisciplinary Social Sciences roadmap, given the widespread usage of direct e-democracy tools [69].

California is prolific in its use of direct consultations with citizens. Under different names and initiatives, including the CALExit initiative which aimed to retake their efforts in 2024, it has been inspired at times by Scotland's process for independence. A future dynamic of exchange could be established between the good practices of fiscal decentralization at the county level between Biscay (the largest province of the BAC), the CCN, and Kern County in California. Economic agreements both in the BAC (*concierto económico*) and in the CCN (*convenio económico*) could serve for this purpose. Moreover, through their separate administrative entities [3], the Basque Country could articulate referenda and direct democracy to trigger practices around deliberative democracy. This leads us to the third developmental transition of this roadmap, which is related to the importance of empowering e-diasporic communities. This involves not only engaging the 1078 Basque-American people currently residing in Bakersfield, but broadly—and this is the leap this article suggests—by connecting with those 20,868 Californian, 6096 Nevadan, and 6637 Idahoan Basques. However, the question remains how to digitally empower these communities amid the influence of Google, Amazon, Facebook, Apple, and Microsoft (GAFAM) [70], given their uncritical view on data privacy, even despite the California Consumer Protection Act (CCPA) [57]?

### 5.3. Diaspora/Migration Studies: Western US Basque-American e-Diaspora as an Emerging Digital Citizenship Regime

Current postpandemic challenges have led us to reconsider social and technological interactions in e-societies. Nevertheless, how is the diaspora affecting these interactions? Data are the raw material of artificial intelligence, and data flows subconsciously manage people's lives. E-Diaspora interactions cannot be understood without clear critical consideration around datafication processes. So far, diaspora studies consider GAFAM social media as allies and artifacts that could expand the effect of social networking. Privacy issues will emerge sooner rather than later by demanding the protection of citizens' digital rights. This is the case for several cities in the western US, namely Long Beach, Los Angeles, Portland, and San José, as part of the Cities' Coalition for Digital Rights (CCDR) [53].

Hence, diaspora and migration studies, when applied to the Basque [71], have shown an uncritical view of "Hyperconnected Diasporas" [4]. "Hyperconnected Diasporas" could be defined as (i) the single techno-deterministic and hegemonic interpretation around datafication global processes led by data-monopolistic practices, which (ii) consequently causes data privacy risks for diasporic citizens who are (iii) unwittingly exposed to surveillance capitalism through permanent tracking by Big Tech social media platforms [72–74].

This third developmental transition suggests moving from the "Hyperconnected Diasporas" conception towards a western US Basque-American e-diaspora as an emerging digital citizenship regime [50]. This move may require improvements in data literacy and digital empowerment for e-diasporic people in these three states. Bakersfield shows an emerging ecosystem led by the Bitwise Industry, which should inevitably be partnered with IBS and KCBC. Alongside this partnership, could the [www.hanhemmen.eus](http://www.hanhemmen.eus) (accessed on 1 October 2022) platform serve as a testbed for such a transition while being assisted by western US cities leading the digital rights agenda [53] through the Cities' Coalition for Digital Rights and the National League of Cities? As presented earlier, IBS and KCBC attempt to plant seeds to overcome the intergenerational gap by counting on the expertise



of Bitewise Industries and the City Council of Bakersfield leadership. Therefore, it certainly can shed some light by conveying languages, methods, and realities—such as virtual and metaverse environments—that are synchronized with “digital natives” in smart cities in Bakersfield and Kern County [64]. The past smart city projects under the Horizon-2020 framework, such as Replicate in St. Sebastian (BAC) and Stardust (CCN), could serve as an inspiration for Bakersfield and Kern County in this endeavor.

#### 5.4. Digitalisation/Datafication: e-Citizens as “Digital Natives” in the Metaverse

A cybernetic view of the Basque is not new. There is widespread literature about the influence of social media in the Basque diaspora. Nonetheless, perspectives remain limited about how e-diasporas could incorporate the intense digital transformation of Basque diasporic and digital citizens. Echeverria could thus be considered a visionary for his description of a cyber city or a smart city for the Basque e-diaspora [70], which he named “Telepolis.” Moreover, he envisaged the critical role that US Big Tech, particularly GAFAM, could play in setting the scene for a new world order around digital geopolitics. In this direction, it is fair to say that his contribution around the *Lords of the Air* (*Los Señores del Aire*) is especially relevant to current debates on digitalization and datafication and how these disruptions are directly affecting Basque digital and diasporic citizens in particular. He presented a new scenario where transhumanism should be the norm and not the exception.

Many scholars have theorized about the impact of digital transformation on the notion and institutions of citizenship. The early literature conceptualized “digital citizenship” as merely the ability to participate in society online by using the internet effectively. It focused on how technology facilitates or hinders citizen participation in digital literacy and the “digital divide”. Today, it is more useful to consider the “data divide”, framing access to the Internet and data rights and ownership as pivotal digital rights [53]. Mossberger et al. [75] used a participatory notion of citizenship to define digital citizenship as an informed and knowledge-driven set of citizen practices involving the access to and use of digital assets to enhance political participation. This concept of citizenship, based on its mere translation into the digital environment, reflected the spread of digital optimism that characterized the first decade of this century. The increasing societal and political relevance of digital technologies—along with significant scandals such as the Snowden or Cambridge Analytica cases—progressively fostered growing concerns about digital surveillance and the advent of a homogenized society based on “dataism” [76].

Consequently, the fourth developmental transition suggests considering social and technological interactions as the source of critical social change around digitalization and datafication processes in the Basque e-diaspora. Digitalization and datafication processes must be reconsidered if we want to envisage sustainable e-citizenship communities. Metaverse seems to be the next revolution around social and technological interactions in e-societies [77]. In the meantime, *Twitter* has been recently bought by Elon Musk, with uncertain consequences for users’ digital rights. Against this backdrop, the innovative policy-oriented research program *Digitranscope* conducted at the Joint Research Centre in Ispra [78] indicated that the challenge around e-diasporic communities in e-societies does not lie in the advanced use of tools. Instead, a critical understanding of digitalization and new technologies [79] will be as important as using data literacy to retain our associated digital rights [53,80]. E-diasporic communities will rely increasingly on the social capital they can gain online [81–83]. Consequently, the more digital consumption takes place, the more cautious e-digital citizens need to be with their privacy and data ownership [49,57,68].

Nonetheless, CSUB would be better off embracing an emancipatory approach of datafication to ensure sustainable and healthy digital community engagement around the interaction of the west-American Basque from California, Nevada, and Idaho. If they are already part of the Basque e-diaspora, the Metaverse cannot simply reproduce similar misalignments that concepts such as the “smart city” have produced over the last decade [82]. This is particularly relevant given the deep digitalization and datafication processes that will affect “digital natives” or “millennials”. Unwittingly or not, the western US Basque-



American e-diasporic communities are emerging in opaque—at least for the citizen, user, person, or even sometimes consumer—digital contexts. The three administrative entities from the Basque Country should use the western US Basque-American strategic locations to test emerging technologies near the places that are being adopted.

## 6. Conclusions

This article has suggested a need for a transition towards a Social Sciences transdisciplinary roadmap to better support Basque e-diasporic communities, while making the Basque Studies program a transformational policy driver through a connection with key homeland institutions. To better support communities from the Social Science perspective means to articulate social change and positive transformations in coproduction with citizens. Thus, the Social Science perspective could clearly enrich the knowledge and policy cycle that the Humanities kicked off in past decades by implementing action research as this article shows. The article stands for a transdisciplinary perspective blending Humanities and Social Sciences by serving e-diasporic communities overall and addressing global societal challenges such as migration, datafication, inequalities, and identities, among others. Consequently, the article sheds light on this necessary transition through action research by acknowledging the potential for the three abovementioned US states and for the Basque Country to set up a transformational e-diaspora. Thus, the article serves as a point of departure for a roadmap and strategic discussion around the Basque e-diaspora.

The article revealed three main findings for CSUB: (i) the opportunity around digitalization, (ii) the active search for leadership jointly with KCBC, unlike at UNR and BSU, and (iii) the possibility to deepen understandings of the e-diaspora while taking on the entrepreneurial challenges of this transition by overcoming the side effects of the “Hyperconnected Diasporas.”

In doing so, the article pointed out four developmental transitions that CSUB (through IBS, among other departments and strategic stakeholders that the leading author has interviewed during August–October 2022) should consider facilitating an active and entrepreneurial e-diaspora. It remains to be seen whether the actions taken by CSUB will result in the emergence of the western US Basque-American e-diaspora. Given the existing critical mass, particularly in the western US, CSUB is in a privileged position to lead this activation, while constantly connecting with UNR and BSU, without discarding collaborations with midwestern and eastern US programs and initiatives.

This article acknowledges several limitations, such as that the most recent US census data on the Basque-American population is dated to 2000 [1]. After consulting key institutions and experts in the field, including UNR librarians, this study found that this dataset remained the most reliable source of information to estimate a set of actions to implement the suggested four developmental transitions.

The article envisages two directions for future research. Firstly, the way platforms are managed and used by providers and users requires further investigation, especially given the latest advancements in this field. Secondly, the Basque e-diaspora needs to go beyond the main trends in social and technological interactions, rather than being a follower of outdated trends and developments. Given the privileged geostrategic position of CSUB between the cutting-edge research on digitalization in California and the most recent EU regulations on datafication, it should attempt to lead this emerging e-diasporic wave from the beginning. As e-societies tend to move quickly, the clock is ticking for CSUB to move toward an entrepreneurial and transdisciplinary roadmap around e-societies in the 21st century [83].

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