

THINK TANK

Process of deliberation on new political culture: Working Document No. 13

Deliberation Group on New Political Culture: A YEAR'S JOURNEY AND CRITERIA FOR THE FUTURE

(16 June 2021)

Introduction

June 2021 was a milestone for the deliberation group on the new political culture. Following the assessment of the year covered so far, the group laid the foundations for the new period, 2021-2023.

This document contains three contributions that have served as the basis for this work:

- a) Inputs from group members after reading the assessment report
- b) Bases of the new phase shared by Xabier Barandiaran
- c) Interventions from participants from the June session, taking into account the previous two inputs.

Post-assessment learning

With regard to the specific themes, some members of the group have contributed to the concepts worked on so far. They have questioned some of these concepts and stressed the need to work further on others:

“I felt some words were very repetitive and actually meant very little [complexity, systemic, experimentation, etc.]. Moreover, they are repeated almost automatically. I agree with some of these words, but it would be helpful to work on them analytically, compare them with other ideas and forms of practise or ways of doing things and to define the differences and talk about their cultural implications”

“New Political Culture and Collaborative Governance - Conceptualization: the need to define a shared understanding and a consensual definition of these two key "starting" concepts (in order to focus action and guide future thinking)”

Regarding the methodology of the Think Tank, some of the participants expressed concern at an excessive tendency towards action:

“Certain ideas about the need for action, experimentation, etc. are repeated often. As far as I know there are already increasing numbers of spaces for this and I would be concerned if the Think Tank were to tend in that direction”

“I understand that some people felt more comfortable in the second part of the process. However, that is one question, and another is whether or not that is the function of the Think Tank. One way or another, we should resolve our doubts about the nature, meaning and purpose of this Think Tank”

“From the assessments it is clear that we are sure what the objective of the Think Tank's deliberation is:

reflection, cogeneration and tendency to action. However, given that this is the case for all four groups, I wonder whether this New Political Culture group should perhaps focus more on reflection than on action. The four groups are different in character. I think this group's ambition requires it to stand back further from the day-to-day in these early stages"

Others considered that integrating action into the knowledge generation process was one of the values of the Think Tank:

"We need to continue to co-generate knowledge through deliberation, but as someone in the group wrote, I think we need to make the leap to practice"

"If this rewarding and innovative link between projects and reflection is maintained, significant steps can be expected in the creation of a new political culture"

"I did not get as much from the experts' participation as I had expected. I think it is much more interesting to go back over the experience accumulated in the organization and validate it technically in order to organize the action around the axes of collaborative governance and, in general, to bring visibility to the progress and the shortfalls. We need to work on the practical and solid conceptualisation of collaborative governance, rooted in the practice of the Provincial Government"

At the same time, several working groups have been set up to foster collaboration in translating reflection into action. These groups have been operating for almost a year. These are the opinions on those groups: On the one hand, one problem related to these groups was identified:

"The subgroups have led to fragmentation (reported in previous documents)"

On the other hand, the contribution of these subgroups has also been recognized:

"We are very satisfied with the subgroups. It is true that it is necessary to work more on the links between the subgroups (I believe that this will also bring visibility to the links with the action)"

"In the deliberation process, some groups generate theoretical knowledge and others generate practice-oriented knowledge. That is where our added value lies. We are focusing on different sections that are part of a whole. This can tie in with our group structure (from the working documents) and be productive."

Basic criteria for phase 2021-2022

Xabier Barandiaran presented the main axes for the period 2021-2023. In addition to the information contained here, he also set out who will be responsible for working on each of the axes. These criteria are the same for all four Think Tank focus groups.

a) Governance of the Think Tank

Going forward, the Think Tank will have a single management team. The Coordination Group will disappear and the Coordination Group and Promotion Group will be combined into a single group.

b) The Think Tank's reflection, research and academic work

The development of the Think Tank is based on methodology of action research. The Think Tank is a broad space of experimentation at whose centre lies the creation and dissemination of new knowledge with different agents. It is therefore essential that the Think Tank becomes the driving force behind academic creation and that ETORKIZUNA ERAIKIZ should be the centre of the different research and strategic reflections.

c) Dissemination and sharing

The work carried out by Etorkizuna Eraikiz Think Tank must be publicised in wider society. The Think Tank, beyond the social agents participating in the different groups, must become a space for reflection on the new political agenda with the different social agents and the general public.

d) Think Tank working methodology

Given that the Think Tank's working methodology is that of action research, it is advisable to follow the same working process in all the groups, using the following steps: (1) Establish the objectives of the action; (2) Agree on the basic conceptualisation; (3) Design and develop the action and its assessment.

Reflection of the group on the future of the Think Tank

The following lines set out the group's reflections on the topics compiled in the previous sections. The aspect that generated most controversy was the working methodology, and these contributions have therefore been included in a specific section.

Think Tank working methodology

In addition to the considerations from the assessment, the following remarks were made:

- a) There is a clear diversity in the group and we have different approaches to theory and practice.
- b) Within each subgroup we also speak different languages; we are starting from different paradigms.
- c) We have been able to manage the complexity to work together.
- d) We have created knowledge, negotiated and offered a repertoire of knowledge.
- e) Our mission is to have a solid conceptualization, a common playing field.
- f) You can prioritise reflection in the short term and resort to action in the longer term.
- g) Things that now appear as dichotomies (reflection/action), we had initially overcome.
- h) Two projects are proposed for this group: on the one hand, drafting a map of collaborative governance and, on the other, selecting some concrete projects and using them to put into practise the ideas we worked on during the deliberation phase.
- i) We have already selected a number of projects and implemented the aspects addressed in the deliberation in them: Aurrerabide, Badalab, ArantzazuLab.
- j) The action does not necessarily have to be a "project".
- k) Etorkizuna Eraikiz itself can be the reference for this deliberation group.
- l) The Think Tank itself is a prototype that we can use for experimentation.
- m) Rather than influencing other projects, we can make the process itself tangible. We are making an impact, the question is: How can we measure that impact?

- n) We must overcome subjectivity and measure what we do within "recognizable" categories.
- o) It is very difficult to measure what we do within the "recognizable" categories". The objectification system cannot be a traditional assessment system, we need hybrid indicators. In addition to the previous sections, the following aspects were also mentioned in relation to the Think Tank.
 - a) There is an imbalance between the ambition we have at Think Tank and the resources available to us.
 - b) Non-conformism is necessary; it is not the same as dissatisfaction.
 - c) The book will conclude this phase; the next phase will be a more refined Think Tank.
 - d) The issue of collaborative governance is gaining momentum in Europe, we should keep ahead of the game in Gipuzkoa and show ourselves as a benchmark.
 - e) The digital format has influenced the formation of the group, we should resort to mixed processes.

Based on these ideas and in order to prepare the September proposal, the following ideas have been collected:

- a) The first step in answering the need the group identified for clear theories and concepts could be the chapter on theory in the book to be written by the group.
- b) This chapter can be used to draw up a glossary in the book.
- c) It is not necessary to keep the subgroups stable.