

THINK TANK

Process of deliberation on new political culture: 20. Working Document

MULTILEVEL VISION OF THE TERRITORY: WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS ON THE POLICY ECOSYSTEM AND THE DELIBERATIVE GROUP?

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Introduction

The deliberation group has three learning focuses in this phase (mapping of the territory, internal transformation of the Provincial Government of Gipuzkoa and the role and leadership of the group itself in the territory). This session analysed the first of these. The issue was addressed in two ways. First, some intermediate results of the mapping process were presented; Then, taking into account the possibilities of multilevel governance that had been seen in the mapping process, a new participant was invited to join the group: Itziar Salaberria. Given her experience in the regional development agencies of Gipuzkoa, her contribution will be of great value in developing the multilevel approach.

Studies incorporated into the group

The mapping process, in addition to other elements that will be discussed later, has brought a new reality to the table. When analysing collaborative governance in Gipuzkoa, the municipal councils and the regional development agencies are both important. Among other things, their proximity to the citizenry and businesses allows them to implement collaborative governance, which in recent years has taken the form of several different projects.

In the introduction to the session, information on this role was shared, based on the mapping work and the presentation of the regional development agencies made by Itziar Salaberria.

Based on these presentations, the work described in the following sections was carried out.

Multilevel collaborative governance: results of individual reflection

One of the speakers at the session pointed out that in order for governance to be multilevel, mutual recognition between the Provincial Government and municipal councils/agencies is required.

The think tank's definition of collaborative governance was taken as a starting point for a reflection on this relationship. According to this definition, 'Collaborative governance is approached from a specific core of politics (government) ...'. Etorkizuna Eraikiz was set up at the proposal of the Provincial Government of Gipuzkoa, but then the following question was posed to the participants:

Is the Provincial Government the only 'government' within Etorkizuna Eraikiz? Or are the municipal councils (and their agencies) also governments?

A majority believed that the municipal councils (and their agencies) should also be seen as governments within Etorkizuna Eraikiz, although this is not the case today:

- In principle, I believe that the leadership corresponds to the Provincial Government, although, to a certain extent, it should be shared. The problem is how to structure and build this shared leadership.
- There is no single model, although in practice this still appears to be the case. That may be related to the way each one views their participation in Etorkizuna Eraikiz, to what extent they feel part of it.
- On paper, more than one government. But in practice, only the Provincial Government.
- I believe that what is 'transmitted' to society is the existence of a single government. And to draw an analogy with the *comarcas*, the word or the concept of Gipuzkoa should be used more.

Within this general situation, two speakers referred to the exceptions (Udal Etorkizuna Eraikiz and Lurralde Garapenerako Laborategia):

- I believe that the only government with a vocation in Udal Etorkizuna Eraikiz is not the Provincial Government. In some areas, the work of different actors other than the Provincial Government is recognised. However, much remains to be done.
- Within Etorkizuna Eraikiz, for example, in the laboratory, there has been a recognition of the municipal councils and the development agencies in terms of shared leadership. In other areas, both in discourse and in practice, what we see is the leadership of the Provincial Government.

Nonetheless, some people said that this recognition of the municipal councils and agencies already exists, and that they are all governments.

- No. Other actors are recognised. There is a distribution of power.
- No. There are also the development agencies. Even if the leadership comes from the Provincial Government.
- They are all 'government'. Some ideas: consolidation of municipal councils, organisation of general assemblies by *comarcas*, functional units, services by *comarcas*. Units of coexistence, on as small a scale as may be desired.

Other approaches were also shared:

- From the government's point of view, the Provincial Government ratifies power-sharing and collaborative work. However, it is possible to be too simplistic.
- Shared leadership between structures which, in turn, operate jointly towards the strategic objectives assumed by the Provincial Government.

A second, related, question was asked:

Who 'launches' the processes?

Among the answers to this question, three referred mainly to the Provincial Government:

- The Provincial Government of Gipuzkoa in most cases.
- In practice, the Provincial Government of Gipuzkoa.

- Provincial Government.

Three other answers highlighted the efforts made by the Provincial Government in the area of collaboration:

- The leadership of collaborative governance is shared. For example, both the Provincial Government and the development agencies launch the processes. It is not easy and it involves a major cultural change for some participants. However, this is not a general trend.
- In practice (political and procedural) I find it difficult to answer this question. Nevertheless, the symbolic status is of great importance in the launching and legitimisation of processes. The Provincial Government has been developing this area for years.
- Anyone. A minimum can be established. The Provincial Government defines the themes and resources. There are many forms of governance.

Finally, some participants referred to the way in which the processes are launched, rather than *who* launches them.

- Processes can be launched at different levels. In other words, the initiative must be shared.
- Anyone can be the driver of a process.
- The Provincial Government itself can launch a process, but it always has to leave a channel open so that it work in the opposite direction.

The question on the distribution of power was as follows:

Is it possible to build a shared leadership? Is the distribution of power shared? (formal authority, control of critical resources, legitimacy of discourse...)

Most of those who answered in the affirmative noted some condition or difficulty:

- I think so. It can be built, as long as we are able to manage the collective voice.
- Shared leadership can be built. The rules need to set out in advance.
- Yes. But it is very difficult, and doing it 'for real' requires several years of transformational work.
- A space of dialogue is required in order to build this shared leadership. This space should be understood as a space for learning and acting.
- Yes. But it is difficult.
- Distribution of power, yes. Not only between public institutions. Public/social collaboration around distribution of power.
- I don't think it is something absolute, but progressive and gradual. To a large extent, yes. The question is to what extent, whether everyone views this measure in the same way, etc.

Some people highlighted the leadership of the Provincial Government:

- Institutional and public leadership always corresponds to the Provincial Government, but steps should be taken towards a shared leadership in processes, results and their transmission.

Others mentioned the problems posed by the concept:

- The concept of 'distribution of power' raises theoretical problems. What can be done is to identify and highlight areas in which there is a lack or deficit of power. I would say that in this case the mapping is a significant example.

Finally, participants answered the following question about roles:

What is each one's role? What is needed to jointly build territorial strategies?

Not many of the answers were directly related to roles:

- Strategic territorial vision. Management, evaluation, deliberation by the *comarcas*: provincial assemblies.
- In each process it may be different. Roles should be based on the strengths of each territory, to their benefit. In the case of development agencies, the emphasis is on proximity.

In addition, several people emphasised the difficulty of defining the roles and characteristics of the process.

Need for learning and information in some cases:

- They should share the more general objectives and further extend the learning process.
- I believe that what is being asked is to conduct a learning process, to learn to work and take actions as a team. I could not say what the role should be and I think it is something that needs to be agreed on by the different collaborators.
- Gipuzkoa is made up of different *comarcas* and municipalities and it is hard to understand why they do not coordinate and work in parallel. Since development agencies and municipalities are entities that are very close to the citizenry, there should be a top-down and bottom-up flow of information.

Shared vision and ability to envision the future together:

- The role should be based on what everyone can contribute, in order to build a shared vision, rather than corporate/political self-interest. This will lead to a temporary distribution of roles.
- Sharing strategy means going beyond one's own limits. Others can see what we do not, and that ability is something that should be borne in mind.

In general, the individual responses highlighted the following approaches:

- 1) In the Etorkizuna Eraikiz model, the Provincial Government of Gipuzkoa is not the only government, although in practice this is the case.
- 2) According to this model, the processes can be initiated by the Provincial Government or other agents, although there are different views on what

happens in practice: Some believe that in most cases it is the Provincial Government, while others said that the initiative is more distributed.

- 3) Shared leadership and distribution of power is possible, although many difficulties are seen.
- 4) There are many obstacles to defining the role of each agent in advance. Roles should be defined as a result of learning, information exchange and shared vision.

Multilevel collaborative governance: group reflection

The different groups discussed the topic on the basis of the previous contributions. The answers from the spokespersons followed the same pattern, first stating what happens in practise and then what should happen. Thus, this section first describes the real situation as the groups describe it and then their normative contribution in this regard, or their vision of how it should be.

Multilevel governance in practice: What does it look like?

Group 1. 'The Provincial Government [...], for example, with the development agencies: We believe that the Provincial Government always has the last word. However, it listens to other stakeholders. One participant commented that the Provincial Government listens carefully. Although the Provincial Government is the one that decides, it takes into account and listens to the other stakeholders from the province.'

Group 2. 'We believe that the leadership belongs to the Provincial Government. However, it is a shared leadership.'

Group 4. 'We believe that within Etorikizuna Eraikiz there are other governments, beyond the Provincial Government. For example, the municipal councils. However, seen from the outside, it seems that Etorikizuna Eraikiz is the Provincial Government of Gipuzkoa. Or, at least, that is what it looks like.'

Normative contributions on multilevel governance: What should it be like?

Group 1. 'The Provincial Government has democratic legitimacy throughout the territory. However, we believe that it should leave room for other players.'

Group 2. 'The Etorikizuna Eraikiz initiative itself entails an idea of collaborative governance. It generates a space for dialogue in which different actors and institutions act. In addition, one of the main objectives of the process is to build shared leadership. However, it is not easy, and requires time and effort. [...] We are aware that what we are saying is very normative and theoretical, but we believe that there has to be a common space to learn and act. Indeed, this is where collaborative governance takes form. Roles are defined and instituted in that space.'

Group 3. 'Etorikizuna Eraikiz was born out of the leadership of the Provincial Government, but we believe that there have to be multilevel governments. In our opinion, this is where a conflict arises. Sharing and listening, yes. But who makes the final decision? For example, there are legal responsibilities. Stakeholders are asked to participate in the deliberation. There, they give their opinion and debate amongst themselves. But how far does this participation go? What is the limit? Should they also participate in the decisions? We should reflect on a shared responsibility in this regard. Collaborative governance needs to be put into practice. It is therefore necessary to talk about distributing responsibilities.'

Group 4. 'The concept of Gipuzkoa should be used more, rather than the Provincial Government. This is related to what has happened with the development agencies and the *comarcas*. It is the Provincial Government that holds the legitimacy. That is the case; however, the Provincial Government needs to facilitate ways for bottom-up processes to take place. That is important. More steps should be taken towards shared leadership. In terms of roles, there needs to be a coordinated strategy. There needs to be coordination with the *comarcas*. Communication should be top-down and bottom-up.'

Steps to the future

In general, the group prioritised acting from a multilevel perspective, although different approaches emerged as to the degree to which this model has been developed in practice. Some said that the Provincial Government already listens to other agents, whether they are municipal councils or development agencies. Some even said that it listens attentively, and that this listening process influences the Provincial Government. In any case, different points of view emerged as to whether collaborative governance consists of this listening exercise or should go further, and some even used the term *conflict*. For the future, therefore, the concept of collaborative governance will have to be further developed in order to clarify how decision-making capacity, shared responsibility, shared leadership and distribution of power are and should given form in the multilevel governance of Etorbizuna Eraikiz.