

THINK TANK

Deliberation process on new political culture: Working Document No. 6

ATTITUDINAL AND PROCEDURAL REQUIREMENTS OF DELIBERATION

(16 December 2020)

This working document is a further step in the integration of conceptual reflection and practice within the context of the deliberation process on a new political culture. Specifically, it combines the concepts and frameworks Manuel Villoria set out in the session of 18 November 2020 with the axes for action outlined in Working Document No. 5.

In his presentation, Manuel Villoria shared the theoretical origins of deliberation, together with its current theoretical and conceptual bases. After considering the difficulties of generating deliberative processes, he also addressed the Why and How of deliberation and the importance of teamwork for achieving it. With this framework in mind, the groups for this workshop are formed of people who will be working together —or at least in coordination— from one workshop to the next, with a view to applying the think tank's reflections to experimental processes in their working areas. The following are each group's reflections on the concepts and frameworks presented at the session of 18 November.

Critical construction of the Think Tank's theoretical bases

This group's work focused on defining its own role and game rules, something that Manuel Villoria had flagged as being important. It began by setting a goal for its deliberative process in terms of "providing a solid theoretical-conceptual basis for the deliberative process on a new political culture. This should not be addressed in isolation but integrated into the way the think tank is managed".

It should have an impact on the way that deliberation is integrated as an axis of collaborative governance in the context of Etorkizuna Eraikiz and in the public policies of the Provincial Government of Gipuzkoa. This work begins with the construction of collaborative governance by the participants in the deliberation process itself, within the framework of the Think Tank.

The group stressed that participants in this deliberative process cannot build a concept [new political culture/collaborative governance] and its practical meaning solely from experience. This is why this group's work is important. Finally, the group noted that its work raises the challenge of bringing the theoretical formulation closer to the people, structures and ways of working in public policy.

Involvement of citizens and organised civic society

This group also drew on the concepts discussed in the presentation to reflect on its own objectives and procedures, bearing in mind that their specific objective is to experiment with transformation processes in four specific projects (Arantzazu Lab, Badalab, Debagoiena 2030 and Herrigintzan Berrikuntza).

The reflection allowed them to see that this group's work will consist of learning from practice. Their position stands in contrast to that of the previous group, showing that within Etorkizuna Eraikiz Think Tank there are different approaches to the co-generation of knowledge.

One of the main insights the group took from the presentation is that the legitimacy of governance is increased as agreements are extended through dialogue. In this context, and in practical terms, the group felt that, when it comes to generating the conditions required by the new governance, the approach taken with the Basque language might be used as a cohesive element; there are numerous ideas and experiences in this area that could be used to help develop the collaborative governance required by the new political culture. They suggested that one possible way of working would be to seek 10-15 simple but interconnected projects that would together create a rich and meaningful fabric.

Transformation of public administration

This group, which comprises personnel from the Provincial Government of Gipuzkoa, also worked on defining a specific objective for their deliberation process. They expressed this goal as follows: “We are going to tackle the challenge of identifying facilitators and developing their facilitation skills with a view to launching the Aurrerabide program in different departments”.

The group drew inspiration from a number of ideas in the opening presentation:

- It is important to communicate to understand one another.
- The system (market/bureaucracy) has put paid to some sincerely-focused deliberative processes.
- The most important thing is attitudes.
- A group is not the same as a team.
- Deliberative processes do not arise spontaneously: they need to be worked on and managed.

Managing knowledge for transformation

This group is made up exclusively of representatives from different universities in Gipuzkoa who have joined Etorkizuna Eraikiz, and specifically the think tank, in different roles. In this case, too, their discussions focused on the group's objectives and the role of each participant. They highlighted the importance of integrating spaces into the think tank that are not exclusively related to politics; this group should demonstrate how a space for the university can be integrated.

The group recognises that each participant comes to the process with their own individual fears and power games. There is a need for discussion and negotiation on the ways in which each person will take these reflections to their own sphere of action. In regulatory terms, all participants clearly accept that they are not in the think tank to fuel quarrels but to work towards a shared goal. However, moving from being a group to being a team remains a challenge.

Continuing with the idea of setting out certain "game rules" for the group, they decided to use a methodology that would prevent the process from turning into a "war for wisdom":

- Each meeting will address one topic.
- Each participant will work on that topic from their own perspective.
- These perspectives will be shared, with no pressure for convergence.
- For the December session it was decided to reflect on the distance/break between theory and practice and on the concept of praxis