

THINK TANK

Process of deliberation on new political culture: Working Document No. 10

CONCEPTUALIZATION OF THE NEW POLITICAL CULTURE

(31 March 2021)

Introduction

On 17 February 2021, following a debate on the working methodology, it was agreed to conduct a process of reflection until May on the input from the group members. The first of these sessions was held on 17 March and was facilitated by members working on the conceptualization of these sessions.

With regard to the dynamic, the group proposed going back to the reflection on the new political culture that was presented in the first working document, in order to build the conceptualization from the bases of the process. For this purpose, four themes were addressed:

- a) Characteristics of the new political culture
- b) Collaborative governance and other types of cooperation
- c) Why collaborative governance?
- d) Relationships between the working groups involved in the deliberative process

The contributions of the groups on these issues are set out in the sections below.

Characteristics of the new political culture

Before listing the characteristics, a member of the group explained that there are two dimensions to the new political culture. On the one hand, there is a political culture that is changing and taking root in our SOCIETY, which has different characteristics to the previous political culture. It is primarily based on the logic of individualism and consumption. On the other hand, there is an ASPIRATIONAL political culture which, faced with what it sees as a changing world and society, proposes an adapted means of doing politics to respond to this "new" society.

According to the group, the characteristics of the new political culture are:

- a) New political content.
- b) New ways of relating.
- c) New power relations.
- d) **Conditions for developing new knowledge.** We must extend our understanding of the challenges and changes in order to interpret the public agenda appropriately. The current context has given us new contents. A people/nation needs knowledge. We need a society that shares the level of knowledge and we need the repository of basic knowledge to lie in the community.
- e) **Possibility of assimilating changes and adjusting values.** It is necessary to build a common system of cohesion; we need a society that will acquire new values and adapt to complexity.

- f) **Social listening needs – possibility of authentic listening.**
- g) **New links between citizens and politics.**
- h) **New channels and tools to facilitate citizen participation.**
- i) **New ways of acting, creating effective systems of relationship** (institution/citizens, inter-institutional, etc.). Opportunities must be created to strengthen the relationship between policy makers and citizens and to incorporate changes within public institutions.
- j) **It must be based on networks**, going from hierarchical structures to concepts such as "cycles".
- k) **It must be an instrument at the service of the Basque Country** - Our society is especially important in collaborative governance. We need collaborative governance for popular survival, so that our identity, the Basque language, our own identity, is maintained through community building.
- l) **It must be effective** - Uniting the strengths we have.
- m) **It must be collaborative** - Placing social and institutional forces at the service of common objectives.
- n) **Democracy** - It must provide new ways of extending democracy. A process of democratic deliberation is needed to bring different actors into the process and overcome confrontation.
- o) **Systemic approach.** Because the new political culture must be developed within the wider framework of the responses required to the great challenges we face today.
- p) What is thought **about the legitimization** of politics at any time.
- q) **Less dependence on scientific-technical knowledge.**
- r) Contributing **innovation and cohesion** in terms of citizen and political involvement.
- s) To be developed within the framework of **economic, political, social challenges.**
- t) The culture that emerges within **new human groups**, which are those that generate new political cultures.
- u) More open than the previous ones.
- v) No "maximalism".
- w) No friend/foe dichotomy.
- x) It must steer clear of ineffective idealism.
- y) Critical citizenry.
- z) Link to the **new political agenda**, and new emerging challenges
- aa) Willingness to **satisfy citizens' needs** using resources responsibly and enabling results-oriented management.
- bb) **Good management** of citizenry, empathising with the problems of society and getting involved in the answers.

Collaborative governance and other types of cooperation

Asked about the differences between collaborative governance and other types of cooperation, the group answered as follows:

- a) Differences between collaborative and other forms of governance:
 - a. **Collaborative governance** requires an open and active dynamic of permanent learning (which enables knowledge generation); development of horizontal, non-hierarchical relationships between agents; the public-political agenda

belongs to society and the priorities of the agenda are established through collaboration between the government and the network of stakeholders; shared governance. Deliberation should be equitable for all stakeholders (parity that ensures that people really believe in it).

- b. **Other forms of collaboration** may exist with an agreed hierarchy, or collaboration can be facilitated while the agenda remains exclusive to the government and it is the government that sets the priorities. Or there may be another type of collaboration whose objectives do not necessarily include generating knowledge.
- b) Cooperative governance gives private and civil actors responsibility for political decisions, integrating them into public policy processes. It is not merely an improvement in democratic representation, like other forms of collaboration.
- c) The two words within the concept of "collaborative governance" may be something of a "trap". Although governance exists *de facto* in any cooperative process, it does not necessarily have to be collaborative governance. And so, when different actors come together, I would say that the concept of "collaborative governance" is often used instead of "collaboration" or "cooperation".
- d) In "collaborative governance", as well as collaboration, other elements are shared. In the first place, we are referring to the ways of doing things in a process logic, in which objectives, responsibilities, decisions, financing, etc. are shared through the bond of trust that is developed. However, collaborative governance can in no case be based on not sharing all these elements (which are need to build together), but only some of them.
- e) Collaborative governance is not only about working together, but also about jointly defining problems and projects, sharing them, adapting decisions to each reality and speeding them up. It requires sharing strategy, not coordination. It is not collaboration, it is co-creation.

Why collaborative governance?

Asked why, if a new political culture is to be developed, collaborative governance is relevant, the group answered as follows:

- a) Because other solutions fall short of the goals we have set.
- b) Because this new way of relating will allow us to internalize new knowledge, values and attitudes, and assume new forms of behaviour.
- c) Because it should be a way of rebuilding the relationship (regaining that lost trust).
- d) In the short term, because it is a solid way of addressing the complexity of different societies and achieving shared political results. It is not perfect and there are doubts surrounding its evolution in the medium term, but it can serve to build adequate foundations to strengthen the cohesion of today's societies.
- e) Because, at the same time, it can ensure that the link between the new aspirational political culture and the new political culture prevailing in society is made by strengthening the democratic foundations effectively and legitimately. That is to say, because the approach itself (if it is sincere) has solid democratic bases and it is also the best way of responding to a complex reality in the process and to reinforce the political/public nature of society.
- f) Because the characteristics we have defined are found collaborative governance and no other option.

- g) Because diversity brings new knowledge and promotes adherence to the projects by encouraging participation.
- h) New vs. old political culture, because we are clear about where the walls and confrontation stand historically and we want to overcome them.

Risk in relation to former models, concern, contradiction: it is necessary to dedicate the necessary time to this collaboration; this time is prized in the model to which we are currently accustomed, even if the final result (more democratic guarantees) is worth it.

Relationships between the working groups involved in the deliberative process

Finally, each working group was asked in **what area, how and why** they were going to **contribute** to the project of a new political culture. In their answers, each working group made reference to their input and what they expect from the theory group.

Conceptualization group

- Contribution to the other teams: to establish a conceptual theoretical framework with which to lay the foundations to provide coherence and solidity to the work of the team as a whole.
- They ask the other teams to set out the different ways of working theoretically, of understanding the concept and of using it, and, acting in dialogue with them, to form a project which will be "ours" (and thus that of the whole team).

Group working on the involvement of citizenry and organised civic society

- Contribution to other groups:
 - Two different experiments or projects:
 - i. Directly related to citizen involvement.
 - ii. New models of social actor and inter-agency governance: for the creation of the Badalab laboratory.
 - We are going to specify the experiential knowledge and develop the framework that follows it; in a way it is about discovering the logics within which things can be done. The projects we are going to discuss here should be learning experiences.

Contribution through:

We want to promote a process of deliberative democracy to bring citizens into the public agenda, to design and implement new approaches to participatory processes that encourage and increase citizen involvement and participation in the public agenda. And this will be achieved using new tools and new paths/approaches. On the other hand, we want to explore and experiment with new models of governance between public institutions and social agents, promoting participation and consensus. We also promote spaces for listening, reflection and experimentation and we want to connect with new knowledge, incorporating new tools and approaches to community development. Finally, we will connect with the real needs of society, with specific actions and with the projects of our society (so that this does not remain confined to a report or theoretical frameworks).

- What does this group expect from the conceptualization group?
 - General framework in which the important concept is collaborative governance.

- To compile the studies we put into practice and which we draw from experimentation.
- To localise the discourse on governance to our specific circumstances - because there are experiences in our public-social partnership.
- A comprehensive definition of collaborative governance - if we are to reach out to citizens and promote active citizenship.
- To address complexity. We start from the idea of complex challenges, in their meanings and implications, and how this highlights the need to rethink models of governance. We will therefore need some conceptualizations or theoretical bases of complexity. This basis will also help us to consider the elements and questions to be taken into account in the process.
- We want to be brave (up to the limit) in order to put governance into practice in a shared way - and to this end, theoretical support is important.

Methodology development group

- Contribution to other groups:
 - It will work on the methodological dimension when working on the new political culture, including, *inter alia*, ways in which this deliberative group can develop as a community of practise. This can affect the stability and effectiveness of the group when it comes to working on transformation.
 - Methodological contribution. Attention to the relationship between knowledge creation and power. This raises the idea that this new way of exercising power, collaborative governance, involves generating knowledge and sharing it as a social process.
 - We can provide a grammar for this purpose. How do we do this? It would be helpful to analyse cases in which the theory is reflected, elsewhere in Spain and, especially, elsewhere in Europe.
 - The structure is quite well consolidated: both groups are action-oriented and from the theory they will give us key words; we MUST SET IT IN MOTION.
 - Bringing historical international success stories, creating a database and garnering learning opportunities from them.
- What does this group expect from the conceptualization group?
 - For it to help us interrogate the concepts and frameworks that we have provided in the theory and conceptualization, in order to go beyond the current approaches and advance further as a team.
 - The group should use the theory and the conceptualization should be effective; in other words, it should generate knowledge in the transformation process itself, without previously linear thinking followed by an attempt to implement it.
 - Generate shared knowledge from experience. This allows for collaborative learning. Under what conditions is this possible?
 - To help consolidate the concepts we frequently use and, as they do so, to clarify what the project we share is. If we are a community, to understand the common enterprise that unites us and help establish the goals towards which our reflection is geared.

Group working on transformation of the administration

- Contribution to other groups:
 - Instead of imposing a tool, we will make it known, adapt and implement it gradually, which will help us to further explore new ways of working. In a crosscutting way, we will learn to work better.
 - Insofar as we contribute to changing the in-house culture, ways of doing things, values, we will help to articulate and strengthen collaborative governance on a day-to-day basis.
 - We will try to escape the inertia and take another look at a space where there is mistrust. How do we do this? Beyond the pride of hierarchy, we are turning this into an active dialogue. Why? In order to make these processes more efficient, we want to make them attractive so that the Provincial Government's clients come to us.
- What does this group expect from the conceptualization group?
 - To reflect and argue about the need for transformation. They realize that this is necessary so that we can move on to practice.
 - To collaborate in applying the theory. Without the theory we would also not be aware of the need for transformation.
 - The key to collaborative governance is the role of legitimation. To help understand how to apply this in the process.