

# THINK TANK

Deliberation process on new political culture: Working Document No. 7

## COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE AS THE GOAL OF DELIBERATION IN THE THINK TANK

(23 December 2020)

As a complement to the reflection made on deliberation as a tool for generating people's commitment in the different processes linked to Etorkizuna Eraikiz (see Working Document No. 6), this document reflects the group's deliberation process around the concept of collective intelligence, as proposed by Josep Lluís Martí. The decision to focus the reflection on this concept arose from the participants' desire to integrate, in the reflection on deliberation, the dimensions of complexity and systemic vision that had previously been discussed.

The fundamental idea raised by Josep Lluís Martí is that democracy is not only more legitimate, but will also lead us to make better decisions, if we design processes of governance (i.e. public decision-making) to take advantage of distributed collective intelligence. Collective intelligence is defined as the set of cognitive and practical capacities that certain groups (collective agents in some form, albeit metaphorical) have, under certain conditions, to develop a "common mind". It involves:

- Identifying, sharing, understanding and accumulating/retaining information
- Forming or filtering collective beliefs, preferences or judgements on this information or on joint problems or challenges
- Learning collectively and in collaboration
- Developing problem-solving capacity
- Collective decision-making
- Working together to implement these decisions by conducting collective actions
- Adapting to changing circumstances

The key question with regard to collective intelligence is under what precise conditions groups can develop their collective intelligence and make better decisions or produce better results. In short, collective intelligence is the **capacity** to reason, learn, create, resolve problems and make decisions in a **group**.

One of the elements stressed in the presentation was diversity. It was noted that under certain circumstances, large groups solve problems more successfully than small groups of experts, or individuals (whether they are expert or not).

Within this framework, the deliberation in work groups focused on analysing how the deliberation group on the new political culture within Etorkizuna Eraikiz Think Tank can contribute to developing collective intelligence in the think tank itself and in Etorkizuna Eraikiz.

The group that addressed collective intelligence from the perspective of **knowledge management for transformation** developed a critical view of the think tank that can help to improve it. The elements raised were:

- Taking into account the relevance of the "conditions" for the construction of collective intelligence, we should start by analysing what those conditions are and how we can generate them. The following are some of the conditions we should consider:

- Respect for diversity
  - Willingness to discuss one's own beliefs
  - Willingness to accept other participants' points of view
  - Mutual compromise
  - Willingness to collaborate with people who think differently in order to find common solutions
  - Willingness to compromise
  - Willingness to review agreements already made
- If we take diversity as a value, it is important to accept that our group is not diverse (in terms of gender, ideology, socio-economic level, rural/urban residence, etc.). For example, we are all from a university setting, which means there is a risk of failing to get away from theoretical solutions. We should compare our ideas, prejudices and methodologies with people from outside the university when building collective intelligence.
  - In order to generate collective intelligence, the group must generate a climate of trust and mutual commitment (responsibility) among its members. In addition, the group should have relevant information on the issues being discussed.
  - The diversity of the group is important, but the size of the group is no less important. It is important that the group is not too large if a climate of trust is to be created within it.

In the specific area of the ***construction of a theoretical framework on the new political culture***, the contribution to the construction of collective intelligence was addressed in terms of the process to be followed between January and May 2021, in which:

- The group will promote mutual understanding to identify areas of knowledge and interest
- It will establish the existing conditions in terms of the options, time and resources available to each person to make a conceptual contribution
- It will begin to complete the conceptualization
- It will define the topics to be dealt with in the form of monographic contributions
- It will segment the group into those who can act as a driving force and those who can contribute in other ways
- Based on all of the above, the group will decide on the goal to be achieved in May, setting precise and operative targets.

In the specific field of the ***transformation of government***, in which the contribution will be made mainly from a position of practice, one of the main contributions will be to contribute to collective intelligence with theoretical and practical knowledge on facilitation. With this in mind, the group noted that:

- We can establish dynamics to share knowledge. The Aurrerabide process might be a good source of knowledge on the obstacles and difficulties in developing this new political culture. The cabinet has knowledge about facilitation that it can share.
- Even if we work in groups, each group will not have sufficient knowledge for the transformation it is undertaking, and it will be important to have mechanisms to

transfer knowledge from other participants in the deliberation group to the project

- We need to be aware of an element of dissatisfaction, asking ourselves whether we are able to incorporate the perspective of those outside the process.

In the specific area of the ***involvement of citizens and organized society***, it was mentioned that one important element this group can contribute is its closeness to practical applications. The reflection focused on the conditions and process for building collective intelligence and the contribution this group can make to the other groups.

- Conditions:
  - There are different actors in the experiments to be conducted (public authorities, citizens - different groups: young people, the elderly, children, political parties, social agents, agents working in the area of Basque language and culture, etc.)
  - In order to strengthen diversity, we propose incorporating new technologies and new channels for listening
  - We are going to conduct comparisons with advanced experiences (we are deliberately planning to conduct some of these experiments with international agents)
- The process (oriented from the beginning towards the construction of collective intelligence):
  - Detecting synergies between action-oriented experiments/prototypes (a list of 19 projects)
  - Choosing, from amongst the projects, the ones with the most direct link to collective intelligence (e.g. 5 prototypes). These will be real-time experiments
  - To extend community development and citizen participation, empowerment and involvement, bringing together different dimensions: town planning- Basque culture - social innovation- collaborative governance
- Contribution to the deliberative process and collective intelligence of the think tank
  - Sharing what we are doing with the rest of the group because we are close to the field of action
  - Identifying needs and connections with other groups
  - Orienting the lessons learned in the projects to improve processes and contents
  - Integrating our knowledge in the projects into the think tank and its dynamics and also in the axes to be addressed by the other groups (contributing to a systemic vision)

We will integrate all of the above elements into both the reflection and practice of the work groups, as part of their effort to contribute to the construction of collective intelligence within the framework of Etorbizuna Eraikiz.