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FRAMEWORKS FOR BUILDING COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE

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Executive Summary

More and more governments are trying to experiment with forms of collaborative governance in the process of developing their policies and strategies. However, as many studies have previously highlighted, the construction of new forms of horizontal governance is difficult, as it implies breaking with inertias and working logics deeply rooted in the institutional, political and territorial spheres.

For more than a decade, Orkestra has collaborated with local and regional governments in the development of their collaborative governance. To a large extent this experience has been developed in processes of action research for territorial development (ARTD), in which methodological knowledge has been intertwined with disciplinary knowledge in processes of reflection, decision and action. In the language that has been generated in the projects, these two types of knowledge have been called: knowledge about *what* (disciplinary knowledge) and knowledge about *how* (methodological knowledge).

A review of the methodological knowledge generated during this period has defined eight central axes of ARTD that characterise it as a methodology for facilitating the development of new forms of governance (Larrea, 2019): (1) social capital as a starting point; (2) praxis as a balance between reflection and action; (3) cogeneration as a backbone process, (4) facilitation as a driver of cogeneration; (5) conflict management; (6) the emergent nature of strategy; (7) the balance between the relational and the critical, or soft resistance; and (8) the territorial role of research.

Together with this methodological knowledge, the dialogue with the actors has introduced analytical and theoretical frameworks that contribute to nurture the reflexivity of governance processes, i.e., to generate an awareness of what is being built and what is to be built. This dialogue and accompaniment have made it possible to identify key dimensions of governance that are considered relevant to work on and on which it is important to generate a common vision among the actors.

This report presents these key dimensions, and includes a selection of theoretical and analytical frameworks, as well as some questions that can help in cycles of reflection and action in decision-making, in order to advance with greater solidity in governance construction processes. The six dimensions identified are as follows.

Define what we are referring to when we talk about collaborative governance

Collaborative governance is a term that can contain multiple realities and visions, both in theory and in practice. It is important to be aware of this at the beginning of any process, since the people involved may have different visions of what governance is and should be. Therefore, among others, it is important to define: i) whether the governance you want to build is a collaborative process for a strategy or policy, or is a more holistic governance that includes organisational transformation and public sector change; and ii) what the desired governance looks like in terms of who participates, what for, and how.

Generate a common vision on the main reasons for building governance

There are several reasons why a given government may decide to initiate a collaborative governance process. These reasons mainly boil down to greater democratisation or policy efficiency, although there are more rationales. In any case, it is important to understand the different motivations that might exist within a government and the rest of the actors, as it has implications for subsequent decisions on governance or on the fulfillment of objectives and expectations of the processes, as well as for the construction of the common vision among the participating actors.

Organisational change for collaborative governance

Collaborative governance processes are often accompanied, in the long run, by the need to transform structures, organisational aspects and ways of working of the governments that promote them. Thus, the construction of governance can be accompanied by a process of transformation and innovation in the public sector. In this transformation process, it is key to reflect on the principles and logics on which governments or administrations are organised and work, including, among others, defining the objective, the way problems are addressed and the forms of knowledge inclusion, and the roles they play in the processes of policy development and service provision.

Analyse and act on relevant factors in collaborative governance processes

A number of works have identified what factors are relevant to collaborative governance, which can be helpful in processes to generate a common framework, and especially in assessing how a particular process is developing. The frameworks suggest that there are several areas related to governance that are important to focus on: i) elements of the context (e.g. what the initial power relations and trust relationships are like); ii) the collaborative dynamics, in aspects such as, among others, commitment, mutual trust, and shared vision; iii) the structures in place for collaborative processes; iv) what the leadership(s) looks like; and v) what the expected and actual governance outcomes and impact are.

The importance of meta-governance or the governance of governance

In most cases, governance processes often include several collaborative spaces, thus building a kind of collaborative governance system or multi-space process. In these systems, meta-governance, or the governance of governance, takes on special relevance; that is, the tools that are used to generate the conditions and to facilitate the spaces and the system in general. At the level of institutional design, decisions need to be made on the following aspects of collaborative spaces: i) how inclusive and open or closed the processes will be; ii) how they will relate to regular institutional activities; iii) whether they will be challenge-specific or multi-purpose spaces; iv) the degree of formality; v) and how they will be accountable. In addition to these, in relation to the system in general and the relationship between the spaces, it is also key to define: i) the mechanisms for coordination, search for synergies and learning between

the spaces; ii) the management mechanisms; and iii) the mechanisms for the generation of a shared vision.

Governance facilitation: new roles, tasks and competencies

Collaborative governance does not happen spontaneously, it requires people to facilitate it. Thus, new ways of working based on collaboration bring with them a redefinition of the roles of politicians and technical positions in public organisations, who must be involved in and lead collaborative processes. Governance requires them, in essence, to play a facilitating role. Facilitation implies exercising a series of roles such as the generation of a shared vision, conflict management, or the building of trusting relationships. And it is not only public officials and politicians who can play this role and perform these tasks, but facilitators can also exist in other spheres, such as universities. Facilitation requires specific capacities, meaning that a strategy of building collaborative governance would be strengthened if it is accompanied by a strategy of capacity building for facilitation. In summary, it is important to define and identify the roles, tasks and capacities needed for governance facilitation and to develop a capacity building strategy for facilitation.

In conclusion, analysing, elaborating and acting on the six dimensions described above can help to facilitate collaborative governance building processes in strategy and policy development and contribute to a transition towards a new collaborative governance paradigm.

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