

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CUADERNOS ORKESTRA

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METHODOLOGY AND METHOD FOR TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT

LESSONS LEARNT ON HOW TO
MAKE EFFICIENCY AND
DEMOCRATIZATION
COMPATIBLE THROUGH
ACTION RESEARCH

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Executive summary

Around the entire planet, countries and regions are currently addressing multiple transitions to face eco-social challenges. Scientific and technological knowledge is recognized as having an important role in addressing these challenges, but what is the role of the social sciences? This document presents one of the possible roles: facilitating, together with local and regional governments, collaborative governance construction processes that help social transformation.

The document is based, specifically, on a process in which a provincial government (the Provincial Council of Gipuzkoa, PCG) has opted for collaborative governance as a tool for the construction of a new political culture that makes it possible to address the challenges of the future through the collaboration. Collaborative governance is defined in the case we present as: “institutionalized collaboration between public institutions, social agents and citizens to empower and make the ecosystem of public policies more efficient; which must be done by strengthening the social capital between institutions, social agents and citizens through shared deliberation and action”.

One of the difficulties when developing collaborative governance is that there is an extensive literature that conceptualizes its nature and characteristics, but there are few works that help to understand how collaborative governance is built. In order to respond to this need, the PCG has chosen, together with the Orkestra-Basque Institute of Competitiveness, to use the methodology called Action Research for Territorial Development (ARTD).

ARTD has been developing since 2008 in collaboration networks of Orkestra with international partners, especially in Norway (University of Agder) and Argentina (Praxis-Institute of Social Studies). The document presents how after a year of collaborative work with the Provincial Council of Gipuzkoa, 6 elements of this methodology have been detected that have helped transform governance towards more collaborative forms:

- The configuration of *think tanks* as meeting and dialogue spaces
- The explicitation and management of *conflicts* that have arisen
- The *critical role* played by the research team, together with its relational role (soft resistance)
- The *facilitation* of the process both by the research team and by the political leaders
- The consideration of the process as *emergent*
- The integration of *emotions* as part of the process

One of the novelties of this document, compared to previous publications on action research cases, is that it shares not only the methodology (or the philosophical bases of what was done) but also the method (a detailed description of what was done). The method is collected in an extensive Appendix that allows readers to see how governance was transformed step by step.

In short, the notebook shares a real experience in which, through action research, the discourse of collaborative governance has been moved to action. In doing so, the notebook makes explicit a series of problems that are rarely published, but that may be relevant in practice:

- Methodological differences between policy makers and research teams

- Predominance of the culture of planning when generating strategies, which makes it difficult to accept emerging processes
- Practical difficulties of dedication of time of the people involved in processes of social transformation.
- Emotional exhaustion of the participating people



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