

Collaborative Governance to Foster Public Good: The Case of the Etorkizuna Eraikiz Initiative

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Abstract : The deep crisis (economic, social and cultural) in which Europe and Gipuzkoa, in the Basque Country (Spain), have been immersed in since 2008 forces governments to face a necessary transformation. These challenges demand different solutions and answers to meet the needs of the citizens. Adapting to continuous and sometimes abrupt changes in the social and political landscape requires an undeniable will to reinvent the way in which governments practice politics. This reinvention of government should help us build different organizations that, first, develop challenging public services, second, respond effectively to the needs of the citizens, and third, manage scarce resources, ultimately offering a contemporary concept of public value. In this context, the Etorkizuna Eraikiz initiative was designed to face the future challenges of the territory in a collaborative way. The aim of the initiative is to promote an alternative form of governance to generate common good and greater public value. In Etorkizuna Eraikiz democratic values, such as collaboration, participation, and accountability are prominent. This government approach is based on several features such as the creation of relational spaces to design and deliberate about the public politics or the promotion of a team-working approach, breaking down the silos between and within organizations, as an exercise in defining a shared vision regarding the Future of the Territory. A future in which the citizens are becoming actors in the problem-solving process and in the construction of a culture of participation and collective learning. In this paper, the Etorkizuna Eraikiz initiative will be presented (vision and methodology) as a model of a local approach to public policy innovation resulting in a way of governance that is more open and collaborative. Based on this case study, this paper explores the way in which collaborative governance leads to better decisions, better leadership, and better citizenry. Finally, the paper also describes some preliminary findings of this local approach, such as the level of knowledge of the citizenry about the projects promoted within Etorkizuna Eraikiz as well as the link between the challenges of the territory, as identified by the citizenry, and the political agenda promoted by the provincial government. Regarding the former, the Survey on the socio-political situation of Gipuzkoa showed that 27.9% of the respondents confirmed that they knew about the projects promoted within the initiative and gave it a mark of 5.71. In connection with the latter, over the last three years, 65 millions of euros have been allocated for a total of 73 projects that have covered socio-economic and political challenges such as aging, climate change, mobility, participation in democratic life, and so on. This governance approach of Etorkizuna Eraikiz has allowed the local government to match the needs of citizens to the political agenda fostering in this way a shared vision about the public value.

Keywords : collaborative governance, citizen participation, public good, social listening, public innovation

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