Building Collaborative Governance in Times of Uncertainty

Published by Leuven University Press

Building Collaborative Governance in Times of Uncertainty: Pracademic Lessons from the Basque Gipuzkoa Province.

For additional information about this book
https://muse.jhu.edu/book/109941

For content related to this chapter
https://muse.jhu.edu/related_content?type=book&id=3384899
PART III

LOOKING AT RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS
Workshop 3
Synthesis of interactions between scholars and practitioners

What follows is a synthesis of the discussions, including major ideas, comments, further questions and challenges that emerged from the interaction between the local/international scholars and the practitioners (politicians, civil servants, stakeholders) embedded in Etorkizuna Eraikiz.

1. What indicators are there about Etorkizuna Eraikiz?

Initial response and reactions

The DFG presents quantitative and qualitative data (included in Chapter 1): satisfaction of the participants, political commitment, changes in relationships (with the media, universities, business organisations and societal organisations), changes in politicians-technicians interactions, changes in stakeholders’ assessments about the DFG’s role (from money-giver to partner), changes in the scope of relationships with municipalities, and new actors contacted (particularly people in risk of social exclusion). On the whole, 150 projects, 50,000 people.

Thematic debates

The following comments and suggestions emerge from the discussion:

– In measuring innovation, an attempt is usually made to assess direct effects. But what about indirect effects? It could happen that there are beneficiaries with no awareness of either the DFG or EE. Indirect effects are therefore to be also taken into account.

– Government programmes usually include traditional structures and projects. EE shows that the reform is being expanded and institutionalised; it has a higher volume than usual reforms. The system is changing and being rebalanced. To measure this, beyond looking at figures (i.e. percentage of people participating) it is also necessary to look at the why: Why is the system changing?
Trust is something that happens at the end, but also at the beginning. Trust should also be taken as a precondition of CG interventions.

Trust implies lowering oneself to vulnerability. Measuring trust then includes looking at the extent to which honest talks are being undertaken.

Further questions, critical issues and challenges

- CG could lead to a vacuum in politics. Intermediary organisations become central, to the detriment of parliaments. Complexities emerge about the role parties play in parliamentary representation: Are parties blocking parliamentary deliberation?
- Politicians versus technicians: Is CG just about managing better? What is the role of politicians? Is it just to manage or to represent better?

2. **How do we jump from results to trust? How is the collaborative governance of *Etorkizuna Eraikiz* building and keeping trust?**

Initial response and reactions

The following data and evidence are referred to:

1) Some quantitative data (survey among Gipuzkoan general population) are presented showing: that those who show awareness of EE assess the DFG’s performance as being better than those who do not; that they are more politically active; and that they show higher social trust.

2) Some qualitative data (interviews with EE’s stakeholders) are presented showing: a predominantly relational trust source over rules and structures; and a strongly shared (among politicians, technicians and societal organisations) normative framework about the benefit of collaboration and participation.

Thematic debates

The following comments and suggestions emerge from the discussion:

- From a learning perspective, it is suggested to look at the role of difference: How are perceived differences valued? How are differences managed? The DFG makes it explicit that they take differences as something good, but they recognise that they do not know how to manage them.

- The predominance of relationships (EE is seen as a relational model) indicates that assessing EE is very much about assessing relationships.
Further questions, critical issues and challenges

- Differences are shown between trust in politics and politicians and trust in public institutions. Political trust seems to be not well correlated with institutional trust.
- The relation between communication and trust. Does communication lead to trust or the opposite? Internal debates within the DFG are shared about the use of marketing and advertising for the promotion of EE. On the one hand, there is awareness of the need for the brand to have visibility; on the other, there is also the assumption that high visibility may hamper the purpose of EE. The goal of EE’s communication is not that people remember the name Etorkizuna Eraikiz, but that EE’s activities lead people to think differently about politics and the public.

3. How to further analyse outputs and impact of collaborative governance?

Initial response and reactions

The DFG has collected evaluation data from different projects, but now it feels the need to properly conduct an overall evaluation of EE, which is being tendered. According to the major characteristics of EE, the following elements are to be included in the evaluation framework: Listening, Deliberation, Experimentation and Analysis, as well as actual consequences in public policies. Changes in the following will be looked at: in collaboration (ways of doing), in the processes, in the traction capacity. An impact map is pursued, including mapping the problem, resources, changes and, ultimately, trust.

Thematic debates

The following comments and suggestions emerge from the discussion:
- Who will be the end users of the evaluation? Who are those who want to learn? a) Those who are at the top of EE, in order to have an overall view of what has been done; b) external actors and society in general, in order to account for the deployed resources.
- Different forms of evaluation are needed. There is evaluation for acknowledging what has happened, and there is strategic evaluation for redefining the future.
– Evaluation should be able to grasp learning. This suggests that a way of evaluating is by asking what has been learned.

– Evaluating helps self-understanding. Things have developed intuitively, without much reflexivity. What is pursued in assessing is not only to acknowledge impact, but also to understand what has been done. Evaluating thus helps asking the right questions, and even reflecting about the new questions that should be asked.

– New ways of evaluating are needed. EE has used traditional indicators, but if the reality is being transformed, new indicators are needed.

– Trust evaluation requires looking at behaviours. Evaluating trust entails looking at passive trust (attitudes) and active trust (behaviours). How have behaviours changed in relation to participation as a result of EE initiatives?

– Workshop participants jointly list questions for evaluation, among which the following are mentioned: Will you come back? What did we do right and what wrong? Was your problem solved? How did your willingness to collaborate change? Who is missing? Would you have achieved the same by yourself? Did you learn something new? Has your motivation to be involved improved? Do you have a better understanding about why things do not work?

Each one of these questions could serve to start a conversation for learning. Would you come back? No. Why not? What is missing? These questions are instrumental for the purposes of collaborative governance.

**Further questions, critical issues and challenges**

– To combine the emotional with the rational dimension, subjective indicators with objective ones. Subjectivity shapes evaluation. Evaluation should register tangible changes in public policies, but also trust, and trust is subjective.

– To account for intangible outcomes. There is the need to make tangible the intangible. Legitimacy has a value which is difficult to visualise.

– How to measure intangible outcomes with objective indicators? Evaluating intangible outcomes requires registering gaps between real achievements and perceived achievements. For intangible resources to exist, both real achievements and activating acknowledgement of the latter are needed. What is needed is to register how intangible resources transform reality. Validating narratives without factual support is risky.