Chapter 3
The institutionalisation of Etorkizuna Eraikiz: From conceptualisation to practice

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1. Introduction

The preceding chapter, which describes the conceptual model of Etorkizuna Eraikiz (referred to hereinafter as EE), states that institutionalising collaborative governance means creating a new logic that will transform the existing one and take on a life of its own. It achieves this goal to the extent to which the model is collectively grasped and put into practice. The purpose of this chapter is to describe the form taken by that joint practice during the first six years of EE (2016–2022), in order to explain the logic it has gradually acquired on its path to transformation, knowledge generation and permanence.

More specifically, this chapter:

– provides background on EE, identifying key aspects without which the momentum and subsequent development of the initiative cannot be understood;
– describes its practical development, i.e. the way in which the spaces, cross-cutting processes and management mechanisms around which it is structured are arranged;
– explains the responses that have been provided to any needs that have emerged when the model was applied, with reflections from the actors involved; and
– discusses the lessons learned from the experience.

Three of the authors of the chapter are members of the EE promotion team, and the fourth has worked as a researcher. The first author is currently advisor to the Deputy General, was Chief of Staff to the Deputy General in two
government terms (2007–2011 and 2015–2019), and is at present the main person responsible of the initiative; the second author is Strategy Director of the Cabinet of the PGC; the third author is Managing Director of Strategic Projects; and the fourth author is a researcher at Orkestra and part of the research team collaborating in the EE’s Governance Laboratory and the Think Tank.

The text includes the individual reflections of each of the authors, together with lessons shared by all of them. However, in order to facilitate reading of the text, it has been written in a common voice.

2. **Preliminary considerations: background and approach to collaborative governance in Etorkizuna Eraikiz**

Although EE was launched in 2016, its momentum and subsequent development cannot be understood without some reference to the background that made it possible to sow the first seeds that would later blossom into today’s initiative. In addition to the theoretical bases described in the previous chapter, we think it is important to explain the concept of collaborative governance adopted at EE. With this objective in mind, we set out below some key elements to contextualise this initiative for the institutionalisation of collaborative governance by the Provincial Government of Gipuzkoa in a broader time frame and in its specific theoretical conception.

2.1. **Early experiments with shared leadership, public–private partnerships and citizen participation**

The origins of EE can be traced back to 2007, the first year of the government in which some of the current policy-makers in the programme promoted three principles through political discourse and action that would later form the basis of the idea of collaborative governance in EE: shared leadership, public–private partnership and citizen participation.

During the 2007–2011 term of government, the first initiatives were developed that were to take shape in the first attempt to experiment with new forms of governance – the *Gipuzkoa Aurrera* and *Gipuzkoa Sarean* projects and a provincial decree on citizen participation. Gipuzkoa Aurrera was a public–private platform that sought to promote major strategic challenges in Gipuzkoa. It was a first approach to experimenting with shared leadership and public–private collaboration by the government team that would later develop EE.
This initiative included Gipuzkoa Sarean, a project that sought to strengthen the social capital of the territory in order to improve competitiveness and wellbeing (Barandiarán & Korta, 2011). A working group was created between different institutions and universities. This group identified a number of actions for developing social capital in different areas of society, thus highlighting the importance of values in the economic, social and political development of Gipuzkoa.

Following the 2011 elections, the project continued under a new government and its action was redirected towards the construction of a new governance for territorial development. The project – currently known as the Territorial Development Laboratory (see section 4.2) – has contributed to the construction of a collective capacity for collaboration by generating spaces and dynamics between a certain group of agents, mainly local development agencies, the Provincial Government and researchers (Diputación Foral de Gipuzkoa, 2015; 2020), through the methodological development of action research for territorial development (Karlsen & Larrea, 2014). This methodology enabled conceptual ideas on collaboration to be given shape in a real construction of governance, and was later of key importance in the practical structuring of EE (see more details on the project and methodology in Chapter 5).

2.2. Collaborative governance as a response to new challenges

In 2015, part of the political team that in 2007 had promoted the early initiatives experimenting with new forms of governance returned to office at the Provincial Government. This team proposed a collaborative governance strategy. It understood that globalisation and its conditions of development had brought a new political agenda to the table, including challenges such as climate change, diversity management, the fight against inequality and the new individual and collective living conditions resulting from digitalisation. Society and its institutions were faced with a new political agenda that was developing against a backdrop of uncertainty, disruption and lack of stability.

Moreover, the political leadership of the Provincial Government considered that the liberal democracy that has characterised Western societies was undergoing a transformative crisis, as a result of new geopolitical, economic and social realities, with major consequences, such as the generation of more individualistic and consumer-oriented societies, the weakening of social capital, a growth in social inequality, difficulties for political structures to influence multiple spheres, and political disaffection. It was thus felt that the current configuration of state governance presents enormous difficulties in
developing effective public policies in a context of enormous deregulation and profound disengagement of society from the political community.

In this situation, the Provincial Government decided to adopt the principle of collaborative governance as a strategy that would lead the institutions towards a new form of political direction and means of managing public policies, based on collaboration and shared leadership. This entailed a new form of communication between policy-makers, organised society and civil society. The concept more coherently included the initial ideas of shared leadership, public–private collaboration and citizen participation advanced in the first term of government. Moreover, it matched the collaborative logic that has characterised the development of Gipuzkoa in many areas.

2.3. Collaborative governance in Etorkizuna Eraikiz

Although there are many good reasons for choosing collaborative governance as a principle for governance and problem-solving strategy (Ansell, 2019), at EE it is seen as a way of establishing the structural and cultural conditions that will guarantee democratic quality for deliberation and for the shared action of public, private and social actors interacting in a specific public policy context.

While there are many ways of approaching collaborative governance (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Batory & Svensson, 2019; Bingham, 2011; Emerson, Nabatchi & Balogh, 2012), the team responsible for EE sees it as the process of deliberation and shared action that links public institutions, organised society and civil society, with the aim of strengthening the public policy ecosystem in the context of a shared public space, through the generation of social capital and a new political culture.

We can particularly draw attention to three fundamental implications of this definition, which have been key to the development of EE:

- Redefining the deliberative space and the distribution of power. Incorporating diverse actors in public deliberation has made it necessary to analyse how this new space is configured in democratic terms. Who do the participants in the deliberation process represent? It was felt that in this new space, the government’s leadership role does not disappear, since it is the government that holds the democratic representation of public institutions and guarantees the preservation of the public nature of the process while respecting fundamental democratic values and principles. However the incorporation of organised society and civil society into a new space for deliberation and shared action means building a new public space, which adds new spaces to that represented by the public
institutional system. These spaces are also public in nature but do not derive directly from the institutional system.

- **Generation of social capital** to activate a new political culture that provides a response to an institutional structuring in terms of collaborative governance. It was seen that social capital is a resource that is developed in human relationships (institutionalised and formalised to a greater or lesser extent) and which translates into norms that generate reciprocity and trust-based social behaviours. Consequently, it enables collaboration between public, private and social actors.

- **Governance and social innovation**, since collaborative governance incorporates wider society into the development of new spaces for creation, deliberation and active experimentation, to respond to the multiple needs that arise in the field of public policies in a context of complexity and uncertainty.

The EE model was built on this vision of collaborative governance, viewed as a strategy to extend democracy – which redefines the public space and power and seeks to strengthen social capital in order to create the necessary conditions for active experimentation and social innovation – and the vision of the role of social capital and the bases described in Chapter 2.

### 2.4. Key elements that enabled the promotion of *Etorkizuna Eraikiz*

Academic works that have systematised experiences in collaborative governance (see, for example, Ansell & Gash, 2018; Emerson et al., 2012) identify a series of factors that help explain the onset of this type of experience, such as political dynamics, levels of trust, incentives and leadership. It is not the purpose of this chapter to analyse the role of these factors in the origins of EE. However, we do consider it important to share some characteristics of the initial leadership that we believe to have been of key importance in the implementation of the first actions in 2007 and the subsequent launch of EE in 2016:

- **A dream/vision among top policy-makers.** During the 2007 term of office (and subsequently in the 2015 and 2019 terms), the Deputy General and his chief of staff were individuals who had been formed politically in academia and in the political party to which they belonged. However, they had little experience of public management. Paradoxically, this circumstance provided an opportunity to propose strategies such as collaborative governance and shared leadership which sounded far removed
from everyday politics and administration and were seen as pertaining more to theoretical paradigms.

- **New political agenda and a new way of doing politics.** From the beginning of the 2015 government, it was considered necessary to work as a team to achieve the targets that had been set for the legislature. A sociological study carried out in the Provincial Government at the beginning of the term of office revealed the need to develop a new political agenda and a new way of doing politics in the territory. A new political agenda entails addressing major transformations to respond to territorial challenges (such as climate change, digitalisation, population aging, social inequality, etc.); and a new way of doing politics has to do with the development of a collaborative culture that overcomes political divisions, partisan interests and the political disaffection of the citizenry with the political community. Thus, in the early days of EE, the political team began to discuss shared leadership, public–private partnership and citizen participation, and to develop actions based on these principles; subsequently, these would be articulated in the concept of collaborative governance.

- **Incorporation of reflexivity and long-term vision.** The need to transform the political agenda and the way of doing politics (and ultimately, the political culture) meant that from the beginning of the term of office it was necessary to incorporate greater reflexivity into public policy processes and also a long-term vision to achieve objectives in a context that was considered to be complex and uncertain. As we shall see in the rest of this chapter, the team managed to implement this reflexivity.

- **Understanding power as a means for action, with the consequent detachment from it.** The Deputy General saw power as an instrument for achieving results. These authors believe that it would not otherwise have been possible to promote the creation of spaces to share this power with other agents and wider society.

- **The importance of people.** All of the elements mentioned above show that, beyond strategies, functions and plans, the characteristics and values of the people in charge can be decisive when it comes to guiding an initiative such as EE.

- **Power and capacity for action.** In addition to all of the above, those who wanted to put into action a concrete vision of politics and democracy were at the top of the hierarchical pyramid in the Provincial Government and had the capacity to implement the actions that would build that vision. The results of the 2015 election (the electoral support for the new political leadership was overwhelming) created better conditions for launching an initiative such as EE.
The launch of EE, whose principal features are described below, cannot be understood without the previous factors and background described above.

3. Principles and objectives of Etorkizuna Eraikiz

EE’s objectives are: 1) to identify the challenges of the future, in dialogue with society; 2) to collectively build the public agenda of the province, in spaces of stable collaboration; 3) to cooperate in the design of and experimentation with public policies, in order to define joint solutions to the territorial challenges, learning to work collaboratively; and 4) to drive the transformation of the Provincial Government, accompanying the transition to a culture of collaborative governance.

In order to achieve its objectives, EE is based on four principles:

– Institutional leadership. The programme is promoted and led by the Provincial Government, the agent that proposes and finances it, as well as actively participating in its development.

– Based on the specific characteristics of the territory in which it operates. It is founded on characteristics such as the dynamism of its comarcas (a comarca is a sub-provincial, supra-municipal administrative division), a dense fabric of associations, and a tradition of collaboration and involvement in the public sector.

– Creation of open spaces for learning, exchange and experimentation, where people and organisations interact, collaborate and work together to generate proposals and address challenges.

– Generation of democracy, trust and public value, through new spaces for deliberation and experimentation that strengthen participatory democracy, seek to increase the generation of trust and a collective capacity to improve policies and services, and better respond to the challenges faced.

4. Collaborative spaces for deliberation and experimentation

EE has built a model in which several spaces are developed that provide a framework for different forms of collaboration, with different purposes and the participation of different types of actors. EE can be viewed as a collaboration system, structured into three collaboration platforms that generate and develop a range of collaborative arenas and projects. In this conceptualisation we acknowledge the contribution of Tina Nabatchi, who
suggested at the workshops that EE should be conceived as a collaboration system with collaborative platforms that are articulated in projects. We have further added the concept of ‘arena’ to capture the diversity of initiatives included in the platforms.

We see collaboration platforms as “programmes with dedicated competences and resources for facilitating the creation, adaptation and success of multiple or ongoing collaborative projects or networks” (Ansell & Gash, 2018) and collaboration arenas as “temporary, purpose-built institutionalizations of interaction that comprise a mixture of resources, rules, norms, and procedures that both shape and are shaped by actual processes of collaboration” (Ansell & Torfing, 2021). Although the categories could be applied differently (for example, EE or even one of its arenas, the Think Tank, could be conceived as a collaboration platform), and despite the fact that there are some slight differences in practice (the three platforms of EE are not organisational bodies but conceptual spaces for articulation), we believe this to be a suitable conceptual approach, which we use to describe the model in order to facilitate the reader’s comprehension.

Specifically, the EE model has three major platforms (see Appendices 3, 4 and 5 for further information):

– **Space for listening:** Gipuzkoa Taldean is the main space for deliberation and proposal. It includes several listening, dialogue and deliberation initiatives.

– **Experimental space:** Gipuzkoa Lab is the main space for experimentation and learning. It is the laboratory for advanced experiments for the future.

– **Specialisation area:** reference centres and strategies are specialised public, private or social centres (foundations, consortiums, etc.) whose purpose is to strengthen sectors that are strategic for the province of Gipuzkoa (in the field of mobility, aging, cybersecurity, the Basque language, etc.).

The platforms are described below.

### 4.1. Space for listening: Gipuzkoa Taldean

This is the space for active listening to society, to enable its participation in the deliberation and co-creation of public policies. It consists of several collaborative arenas and projects:

– **Think Tank.** The mission of this arena is to co-generate transferable and applicable knowledge that will have an impact on a new agenda and a new political culture in the Provincial Government. It takes the form of four reflection/action groups, in which stakeholders from organised civil
society participate alongside staff from the Provincial Government: The Work of the Future, Green Recovery, The Futures of the Welfare State and New Political Culture. The methodology used is action research (see Chapter 5 for more details).

- Citizenship Projects. An initiative for citizens to propose and lead their own experimentation processes. This is achieved through an annual call for funding for social innovation projects, usually proposed and developed by local entities (associations, universities, companies, NGOs), generally grouped into consortiums.

- Territorial Development Laboratory. A space that promotes multi-level collaborative governance for territorial development, which is developed within the framework of a collaboration agreement with municipalities and their regional development agencies.

- Participatory budgeting. A tool through which citizens are offered the possibility of making proposals. Based on the ideas received, a series of projects are shaped and submitted to public scrutiny to determine which initiatives will be financed.

- Ekinez Ikasi (‘Learning by Doing’). With the support of the methodology of action learning, active listening and learning processes are developed for internal groups of the Provincial Government of Gipuzkoa (see Chapter 7).

- Udal Etorkizuna Eraikiz. A programme that seeks to promote collaborative governance at the municipal level and create a learning community together with the municipalities, centring on new ways of governing.

- Panel of Political Parties. A space in which all parties represented in the provincial parliament participate to deliberate on the political agenda of the future and adopt decisions on a shared basis.

4.2. Experimentation space: Gipuzkoa Lab

A platform where active experimentation projects are developed, bringing together key actors from civil society, universities, public administration and those with the capacity to generate knowledge at an international level. The aim is to incorporate a new political agenda into the Provincial Government’s public policies. The reference frameworks for the establishment of this new agenda and the projects proposed are the 2030 Agenda, the missions of the European Union and the RIS3 strategy of the Basque Government.

An experimental project is an initiative that is aligned with one or more strategic areas of EE; that seeks to respond to one or more challenges; that is developed by an interdisciplinary partnership made up of different agents from
the territory and agents from outside the territory (university, international agent or network, one or more organisations from the network of agents in the territory, and the Provincial Government); and is oriented towards practical experimentation as a mechanism for transformation. The practical experimentation takes a triangular approach, relying on research, internationalisation and dissemination, and aims to generate applicable policy proposals.

5. Reference centres and strategies

The reference centres and strategies are collaborative work spaces that cooperatively address social and economic projects of a strategic nature for Gipuzkoa, and are characterised by: 1) strategic specialisation, since they promote the development of strategic areas for the future of the territory; 2) being aimed at positioning Gipuzkoa in their respective fields; and for this purpose 3) leading and facilitating the implementation of the strategies; 4) seeking to increase the capacity to respond to complex challenges, based on transversality and plurality; and 5) generating their own ecosystems, creating networks and dynamising agents from the sector.

Table 3-1 shows the different reference centres and the way they are organised.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name and theme</th>
<th>Aim</th>
<th>Organisation and participating agents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MUBIL</td>
<td>Centre for the development of activity, science and knowledge in intelligent and sustainable mobility.</td>
<td>Public foundation (Provincial Government, Donostia-San Sebastián City Council, Ente Vasco de Energía) Collaboration with private agents and research and training centres in the development of activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADINBERRI</td>
<td>Strategy to enhance the innovative potential of the territory at the service of active and healthy aging, from a social and economic perspective.</td>
<td>Public foundation (Provincial Government) Collaboration with institutions, agents from the social and healthcare system, academia, industry and society in the definition of strategies and performance of activities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Name and theme</td>
<td>Aim</td>
<td>Organisation and participating agents</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZIUR Industrial cybersecurity</td>
<td>Centre for reinforcing and developing the cybersecurity capabilities of industrial companies in Gipuzkoa and strengthening their competitiveness.</td>
<td>Public foundation (Provincial Government, Donostia-San Sebastián City Council) Collaboration with institutions, industrial companies and research centres for organising actions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NATURKLIMA Climate change</td>
<td>Multidisciplinary centre that seeks to generate institutional, technical and social capacities to address the impact of climate change and generate innovation for socio-ecological transition.</td>
<td>Provincial Government foundation Collaboration with public institutions, social entities and private organisations working in the fight against climate change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2DEO Audiovisual production in Basque</td>
<td>Strategy that seeks to increase the production and consumption of audiovisual products in the Basque Country, promoting new creative contexts, experimenting with new production models and formats, and increasing the number of channels for dissemination.</td>
<td>Laboratory integrated in a cultural centre (Tabakalera), managed by the centre’s team Collaboration with industry players in organising actions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LABe Digital gastronomy</td>
<td>A space for experimentation and testing based on research, catering and the components industry to apply new knowledge in the gastronomy sector.</td>
<td>Strategy coordinated from the structures of the Provincial Government Developed in conjunction with a reference agent (Basque Culinary Centre), a cluster of kitchen appliance components and an association of hoteliers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARANTZAZULAB Social innovation and governance</td>
<td>A space for reflection and experimentation on the challenges of Basque society, which promotes research, experimentation and socialisation aimed at social transformation.</td>
<td>Foundation made up of the Provincial Government, a local town council (Oñati), a religious order (Franciscan Province of Arantzazu), a business corporation (Mondragon Corporation) and a local bank (Fundación Kutxa) Collaboration in organising actions with public institutions, universities, knowledge agents, international agents and organised society.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Name and theme</td>
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<td>Organisation and participating agents</td>
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<tr>
<td>ELKAR-EKIN LANEAN Inclusive employability and activation</td>
<td>Integrated multi-departmental strategy for employability and inclusive activation through economic reactivation and competitiveness, quality employment and social policies.</td>
<td>Strategy developed from the structures of the Provincial Government Strategy management and governance bodies that include representatives of public institutions and economic and social agents. Collaboration in organising actions with public institutions and third-sector and economic agents, universities and training centres.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GIPUZKOA QUANTUM Technologies</td>
<td>Strategy to form a hub around quantum technologies in Gipuzkoa, aligning existing agents in this field.</td>
<td>Strategy led by the Provincial Government, in collaboration with BERC Donostia International Physics Centre (research centre) and Multiverse Computing (private company) Collaboration with other institutions in defining the strategy.</td>
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<tr>
<td>GIPUZKOA GANTT Gipuzkoa Advanced New Therapies Territory</td>
<td>Collaborative project to turn Gipuzkoa into an international benchmark in advanced therapies (cell, gene and RNA), with an industrial vocation, generating a specialised ecosystem in this sector.</td>
<td>Strategy developed from structures of the Provincial Government, in collaboration with a research centre, two companies and a public entrepreneurship agent (Viralgen, VIVEbiotech, BioDonostia and BIC Gipuzkoa)</td>
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Source: authors' own elaboration.
The reference centres and strategies constitute a key area of EE, and more information is provided on them in different chapters of this volume – as part of the conceptualisation of the *Etorkizuna Eraikiz* model (Chapter 2), and as a contribution to the 2030 Agenda (Chapter 8). This chapter analyses how these centres develop collaborative governance, an issue that is dealt with in greater detail in the paragraphs below.

Each centre and reference strategy has its own form of organisation and decision-making, adapted to its objectives and sectors. Thus, some have generated *ad hoc* teams and centres under different legal forms (foundations, consortiums), and others have teams from the structures of the Provincial Government or another collaborating agent. For example, *Badalab*, the centre specialising in minority languages, takes the legal form of a consortium, with exclusively public funding, but decisions are made collegially among the public institutions and social organisations making up the centre. The centre for social innovation, *Arantzazulab*, is part of a foundation in which the Provincial Government, a town council, a local bank, a business corporation and the religious order to which the venue in which it is located belong all participate, and its financing and decision-making processes are shared. The cybersecurity centre, *Ziur*, is a public foundation, owned by the Provincial Government and the City Council of Donostia-San Sebastián.

In addition to their contribution to addressing specific challenges, the centres contribute to the construction of collaborative governance in Gipuzkoa through the inclusion of a collaborative logic in the main strategies of the territory. Specifically:

- They extend the practice of territorial governance, through the incorporation of a collaborative logic. This occurs on two levels. On the one hand, there is a collaborative rationale in the organisation and the decision-making and management bodies, as in the case of *Badalab*, where, as already mentioned, decisions are shared. On the other hand, although to varying degrees, there is a collaborative logic in the development of the actions carried out within the framework of the centres. One example is the initiative to address loneliness (*Hariak*), promoted by the centre for active aging, *Adinberri*, which has been developed in collaboration with public and social institutions and experts, with a steering group of 51 people, in a process in which more than 400 people have participated. The centres also encourage a collaborative logic among the agents of the sectors they stimulate. For example, *Badalab*, the centre for minority languages, seeks experimental structuring and relationships between different agents and speakers through its programmes and experimental spaces.
They succeed in uniting, aligning and coordinating visions and capabilities. They bring together the key players in their fields, in some cases mobilising resources, knowledge and capabilities to build solutions. For example, gastronomy agents have diverse priorities in the area of digitalisation and so the centre for digital gastronomy, LABe, has worked on defining common fields of interest for all stakeholders. The strategy of employability and inclusive activation, Elkar-Ekin Lanean, was defined in a process of dialogue between a diverse group of agents. It promotes alignment and agreement on visions, knowledge and resources among the agents, through, for example, regional networks of inclusion in which third-sector entities, economic agents and local public entities collaborate. The Ziur cybersecurity strategy also collaborates with proximity agents – development agencies, business associations, clusters, etc. – to work with small businesses. Another example is the design and implementation of an integrated care model developed by the centre Adinberri, connecting health, social, community and private services.

These promote relationships between different departments and different tiers of government. For example, the Elkar-Ekin Lanean strategy has been built on the idea that inclusion is a multidimensional challenge that requires a comprehensive, multi-sectoral and multi-level approach. It must include the economic-business and social vision and needs to activate different levers, such as issues of taxation and procurement, which depend, in institutional terms, on different departments of the Provincial Government, the municipalities and the Basque Government. The strategy has therefore been defined and developed in collaboration with these institutions and their representatives participate in its management structures.

They lead knowledge and experimentation in strategic areas. For example, the Naturklima strategy has a climate observatory and produces annual reports on the circular economy. The Ziur centre has observatories to identify cybersecurity threats and best practices in its field –which are also shared with companies, in collaboration with local agents – and tests out cybersecurity technologies and products. Mubil does the same in the field of intelligent and sustainable mobility. The social innovation centre, Aranzatzulab (see more details in Chapter 4), has created a meeting place for Basque universities to carry out research on collaborative governance, has a residency programme for international researchers, and carries out various tasks for generating knowledge in practice, as an initiative to connect spaces of co-creation in the region and generate new knowledge.
In short, the strategies and reference centres achieve objectives and results that would not be possible without joint action and contribute to the design and implementation of public policies. Although led by the Provincial Government, these are co-developed together with the main agents of the system and with society.

6. **Etorkizuna Eraikiz governance and cross-cutting processes**

To promote and facilitate their development, management and facilitation bodies have been created for the main EE initiatives, as well as bodies and strategies to manage the model with a comprehensive overall vision.

Specifically, EE has governance structures that include: a) bodies from the Provincial Government for strategic orientation, design, monitoring and implementation; and b) the 'Project Office', comprising representatives from the EE ecosystem (six people from the Provincial Government, two representatives from universities, four representatives from other public institutions, companies, associations and the social sphere), who play an advisory role, especially for experimental projects. In addition, the Governance Laboratory, created in 2022, seeks to deepen the relational logic, collaborative governance and a systemic vision of EE (see Chapter 4).

Together, these bodies seek to foster institutional designs and leadership that facilitate collaboration and experimentation, connectivity between processes, and management, socialisation and communication activities.

In addition, as noted in Chapter 2, EE has three cross-cutting processes (dissemination, internationalisation and research) that must be integrated in all areas of the initiative to enrich the production of information, knowledge and learning in the construction of shared solutions. To support these processes, the Provincial Government has signed collaboration agreements with international institutions (such as the OECD), has created an international network on collaborative governance, has designed an International Plan to position EE at a global level, and has consolidated stable relations with the French Basque Country. It has also signed annually renewed collaboration agreements with all the universities in the territory, and the universities participate in almost all of EE’s projects.

Before getting into the description of the practice, Figure 3-1 is a graphic representation of the model.
7. **From theory to practice: evolution and learning**

Since the initial conception of the model, EE has evolved, taking a form which, based on the same principles, with the same objectives, and within the same general framework, has sought to respond to the needs and problems that have arisen, making additions and adjustments to the concept initially proposed. The most significant changes are outlined below, with the lessons learned from its practical construction.

7.1. **Collaborative governance involves generating stable collaborative ecosystems for developing territorial strategies**

The reference strategies and centres, described in a previous section, were not included in the model initially designed on the theoretical basis described in Chapter 2. However, the team in charge considered that the areas in which the Provincial Government was planning to develop strategic commitments should be addressed with a logic of collaborative governance, i.e. the main strategies of the territory should be co-led by organised society and the Provincial Government.
For its development, the members of the team identified the key players in each (previously defined) strategic area of Gipuzkoa, to approach them with the proposal for developing this endeavour jointly. In this way, the different reference centres and strategies took shape, each with its own specific form, according to the specific features of the different sectors.

As mentioned in section 5, the reference centres and strategies help to develop collaborative governance in two ways: firstly, the organisation, structure and operation of each centre entails the collaboration of agents from different sectors, giving rise to a new institutionalisation; and secondly, each of the projects carried out is essentially a collaboration.

7.2. Development of the process involves reformulating the initial spaces: from a classic Think Tank model to a space for action research

Initially, the Think Tank was conceived as an instrument to provide the Provincial Government with a greater capacity for reflection. Having been conceptually defined, the challenge was to build the space in practice and the team in charge began in the way it knew best, in a classical way: it proposed a strategic reflection with four groups of agents on four major themes, on which a series of reflections were made and, subsequently, some projects were launched.

After that first experience, the team decided to rethink the suitability of the model. The reflection had had an instrumental function oriented towards selecting the projects for experimentation and we concluded that we had to look for another way of institutionalising reflection. Based on the idea that it was necessary to establish a new arrangement for the relationship between knowledge and public policies (see next section), and on the experience acquired in the Territorial Development Laboratory (see Chapter 4), in 2020 it was decided to use action research as a working methodology.

Two years on, the Think Tank is now not only a space for reflection, but also a space for transformation, since reflection is oriented towards action and policy transformation (see Chapter 5). For example, a new model of care has been jointly defined (as set out in a White Paper), which the department of social policies is incorporating into its public policies. In addition, the Think Tank has taken on a central role that was not initially envisaged, becoming a key element for experimenting with collaborative governance and generating reflections and lessons that can be useful for other EE spaces.
7.3. A new relationship with the university is both a condition and a result of a new collaborative governance

The arrangement that is usually proposed in public organisations (and which was also initially proposed in the Provincial Government) with regard to the relationship between knowledge generation and public policies is a classic linear scheme: ideas are put forward and it is up to the policy-maker to take ownership of them and work with them. This is what has traditionally been called the knowledge-driven model (Weiss, 1979).

Within the framework of EE, we performed a reflection exercise that led us to reconsider the role of academia and the relationship between the Provincial Government and the universities. It was felt that the logic had to be changed, in such a way that the Provincial Government would set out the needs arising from the policies, to which the university could respond. However, it is difficult for a public institution to overcome existing inertia, and it was therefore decided to leave the previous dynamics in place, in the belief that they would be gradually diminished, and to generate a new working arrangement within the framework of EE. In addition to the arrangement described above (in which the Provincial Government sets out the needs to the University), other spaces have also been established in which research needs are co-defined in the process itself, in a continuous dialogue between policy and research (see Chapter 5).

This new arrangement has been extremely important, not only because it has allowed the development of several collaborative projects between the Provincial Government and the university, but also because it conceptually establishes a change in the relationship between the two, as well as in the logic of incorporating knowledge into policies.

7.4. The importance of change in the Provincial Government

One dimension that has gained strength in the institutionalisation of EE is the importance of working to transform the Provincial Government to ensure that it takes on board the approaches and values of collaborative governance.

Change in the Provincial Government had been a goal from the outset, but it did not constitute a field of action, since EE’s focus had been on the spaces of articulation with society. During the implementation process, it became increasingly clear that it was vitally important to transform the culture of the organisation. EE’s spaces for deliberation and experimentation contribute to this transformation, since the development of projects requires working collaboratively. However, it was considered necessary to make an additional effort
in order to avoid what some people called a ‘twin Provincial Government’, which relates with external agents in one way – collaboratively – within the framework of EE, and in another way based more on a traditional hierarchy.

The first step was to incorporate programmes from the Governance Department into the EE initiative, so that they could be developed on the basis of a collaborative logic. An Interdepartmental Committee was also created, which is enabling steps to be taken towards mainstreaming. In addition, studies have been intensified to enable the Provincial Government to strengthen its capacity for reflection. The Ekinez Ikasi (action learning) programme, mentioned above and described in Chapter 7, has made it possible to increase reflexivity about practice and enrich interactions with a dynamic of mutual listening and assistance, and has had an impact on the way problems and collaborative work are approached. Finally, a pilot project is being carried out to foster a culture of collaboration and speed up transformation of the Provincial Government towards collaborative governance.

7.5. The evolution towards a ‘polycentric architecture’: of management as a support to meta-governance

The initial model designed for EE included two spaces (listening and experimentation), and a body – the Project Office – connecting the two. The relational logic was conceived as follows: the listening spaces would generate ideas, from which the Project Office would select several to be experimented with in the experimentation space, in order to generate lessons that could be incorporated into policies. The Project Office was made up of representatives from the stakeholders’ ecosystem (universities, public institutions, companies, associations, Provincial Government), and was to be the body in charge of monitoring the EE, as well as analysing and selecting proposals. The Provincial Government’s Strategy Directorate was to have a supporting role.

However, reality showed that the Project Office as initially conceived was not feasible. The participating organisations felt they did not have sufficient knowledge, capacity or time to perform the assigned decision-making function; they felt that their role should be consultative and advisory, and this is the function currently performed by the office. What had appeared to be a good formula for structuring the model in an ideal theory-based design proved not to be so in practice.

Moreover, the institutionalisation of collaborative governance in EE was more complex than the initial model envisaged. It has generated what Sonia Ospina, Professor of Public Management and Policy at New York University, called a ‘polycentric architecture’, in her address to a conference organised
by *Etorkizuna Eraikiz* in December 2021. The model includes a diversity of collaborative spaces, which generate their own collaborative ecosystems, and which interact in a logic of diverse relationships, influencing policies through diverse mechanisms.

In this complex situation, the team conducted a reflection in 2021 and stressed the importance of managing the entire initiative systematically and going further in the governance of governance, i.e. *meta-governance* (Sørensen & Torfing, 2009). The collective processes of reflection and evaluation performed in the annual plenary of EE in 2021 reinforced this idea, and issues emerged such as the need to work with a systemic vision and the importance of articulating the relationships between the different areas. Following a process of reflection between a team of policy-makers and researchers (including the authors), in 2022 it was decided to create the group called the Governance Lab, whose mission is to strengthen the systemic and holistic vision of EE and to further extend the ways of working on collaborative governance across the initiative (described in more detail in Chapter 4).

### 7.6. Structures inside or outside the Provincial Government?

**A hybrid model that could increase the potential for innovation and policy change**

One of the debates when designing the model was whether EE should be managed and integrated into the structures of the Provincial Government or whether a specific agency should be created for its governance. After considering the advantages and disadvantages, the former option was chosen. Thus, even though resources are allocated and special bodies and dynamics are generated for its development, it was decided to place EE within the structures of the Provincial Government, under the direction of the Strategy Directorate.

In practice, however, a hybrid model has been constructed that can draw on the benefits of both options. EE is managed from the structures of the Provincial Government. This involves a series of difficulties, such as the reduced capacity to facilitate collaboration and innovation processes, confusion in the type of tasks for public managers, and other types of resistance typical of hierarchical and compartmentalised structures. However, this approach facilitates the link between the work of the deliberative spaces and the work of the departments and decision-making bodies, thus increasing the possibility of transformation.

At the same time, the EE reference centres have structures that develop their strategies in a semi-autonomous manner. Some centres, such as *Adinberri*, *Arantzazulab* and *Badalab*, are particularly well advanced in the development
of experimentation dynamics, which allows innovation spaces to be generated that are one step removed from the institutional inertia of public bureaucracies.

If it is necessary to find institutional designs in each place that seek their own balance between different criteria (Ansell & Torfing, 2021), in the case of EE a formula has been constructed that allows innovation capacity to be balanced with capacity for influence in policy-making with a model that hybridises internal and external structures.

7.7. **The ambition to establish collaborative governance as a principle of governance beyond the Provincial Government: Udal Etorkizuna Eraikiz**

The multi-level perspective is integrated especially into certain EE deliberation and experimentation spaces, such as the *Territorial Development Laboratory* and the *Elkar-Ekin Lanean* strategy, in which collaboration dynamics are established between public bodies of different territorial scales, adopting a multi-level governance perspective. Indeed, some territories, like Gipuzkoa, are characterised by a strong framework of local institutionality, whereby several public bodies play an important role in building collective responses to territorial challenges.

From this perspective, and with EE’s aim being to foster a new political culture in Gipuzkoa, it was considered relevant to develop a line of work that would promote collaborative governance beyond the Provincial Government, i.e. at a local level between different municipalities. The *Udal Etorkizuna Eraikiz* programme was launched for this purpose. It aims to extend the culture and forms of collaborative governance to a local level, and to generate a community of change and learning with local councils.

Although the programme is still in its infancy, it may have great potential for establishing collaborative governance as a principle of public governance in Gipuzkoa, as well as for strengthening inter-institutional collaboration between the Provincial Government and the municipalities, further extending the multi-level perspective of EE.

8. **Final reflections**

Since EE was launched in 2016, institutionalising it has entailed a confluence between the initial design and the decisions that have been made in practice, as part of the learning process that has characterised the implementation and development of a model to foster collaborative governance in Gipuzkoa.
Beyond the specific challenges that emerge from practice, such as the strengthening of shared leadership, EE must continue to face the challenge of experimenting in order to further extend the democratisation of politics.

Power sharing has become a strong area in the institutionalisation of society in advanced democracies, but it has not yet permeated the system of public institutions. Democracies are usually considered to be consecrated through the election of representatives from the citizenry and their integration in public institutions, which then develop dynamics that do not further impinge on the democratic system.

Collaborative governance means questioning the current public system, and the development of an initiative such as EE therefore runs into some resistance. It constitutes a process of deconstructing traditional power, which entails moving away from the bureaucratic system and designing new spaces, and thus represents a new way of doing politics.

It is therefore reasonable to presume that the further the implementation of the model goes, the more problematic and entangled the path will become. Collaborative governance is a challenge to classic power, and it will bring with it conflict, anger, reflection and complexity. However, if a society aspires to re-empower the democratic system in order to address the crisis of liberal democracy, it is essential to create new deliberative spaces and further embed democracy through them. In this future construction, a model such as EE must encourage reflexivity, and question and challenge itself with questions such as: who is participating and who should participate? In this way, this process of questioning becomes a driver for a constant furthering of collaborative governance.

9. Lessons for practitioners

- Flexibility is of key importance in co-constructing a model of collaborative governance practice. It needs to be redesigned on the hoof to respond to emerging challenges and incorporate lessons learned during implementation. At EE, this flexibility has enabled, among other changes, a collaboration platform to be incorporated for developing territorial strategies (reference centres); a key deliberation arena (the Think Tank) to be transformed from a space for listening and generating ideas into a forum for action research, and a decision body (the projects office) to be reformulated as an advisory body.
- The logic of collaboration needs to be introduced in the public sector and addressed throughout the organisation. Particular effort is required to change the organisational culture and to involve political and technical staff from all areas so that they work together collaboratively.

- Fostering a collaborative system in which different platforms, arenas and projects are promoted requires the creation of a good system of ‘governance of governance’ (*meta-governance*), to endow the system with the capacity to reflect and work on institutional designs and leadership, not only of each of the platforms and spaces, but of the system as a whole.

- Although collaborative governance arrangements need to be context-based, a hybrid formula such as that constructed in EE, in which platforms are articulated from the structure of public organisations, while at the same time promoting autonomous platforms and arenas that eschew the traditional logic of administration, can be a helpful formula for generating innovation and having a real impact on policies.

- It is essential to change the form of relationship between the public administration and academia, and to involve universities in collaborative governance, so that specialised knowledge can be included in identifying territorial challenges and in the construction of responses to address them.

- If the ambition is to change the political culture of a territory, moving it towards collaborative governance, it is essential to adopt a multi-level territorial perspective. This means involving other governments and public institutions from the territory in collaborative platforms and projects. However, it also entails considering the promotion of collaborative governance at different territorial scales – in the case of EE, at a local level and in the municipalities.