

Democracy and agonism in the face of the climate crisis: in search of irruptive collaborative governance

Igor Ahedo Gurrutxaga, Andere Ormazabal Gastón, Izaro Gorostidi Bidaurreazaga

Abstract: The challenges of the new millennium make it essential to establish synergies between the instituting and institutional spaces that are trying to further democracy. From this standpoint, it is necessary to analyse the improvement of democracy made by the irruptive contributions of social movements. This article presents and exemplifies a new model of governance, that of irruptive governance, which aspires to enable protestors and institutional spaces to feed into each other in fuller democracy. Based on a specific example, it shows that environmental movements in the French Basque Country are managing to determine, oversee and improve municipal strategies aimed at mitigating the climate crisis. It concludes by suggesting that the collaboration of universities promoting participatory action research strategies can bring about synergies between irruptive and institutional actors, supporting the search for a choreography that allows agonism and democracy to work in harmony.

Key words: Instituting and institutional spaces, democracy, irruptive governance, social movements

Democracia y agonismo frente a la crisis climática: en busca de la gobernanza colaborativa irruptiva

Resumen: Los retos del nuevo milenio obligan establecer sinergias entre los espacios instituyentes y los institucionales que buscan profundizar en la democracia. Desde esta perspectiva, es necesario analizar la mejora de la democracia desde los aportes de la irrupción de los movimientos sociales. En este artículo se presenta y ejemplifica un nuevo modelo de gobernanza, el de la gobernanza irruptiva que aspira a que los espacios de la protesta y el institucional se retroalimenten respectivamente en una lógica de profundización democrática. Apoyados en un ejemplo concreto, se muestra como en el País Vasco de Francia, los movimientos sociales ecologistas están logrando condicionar, fiscalizar y mejorar las estrategias municipales ante la emergencia climática. Se concluye señalando que la colaboración de las universidades impulsando estrategias de investigación acción participativa pueden facilitar las sinergias entre los actores irruptivos y los institucionales, apoyando la búsqueda de una coreografía que permita poner en sintonía agonismo y democracia.

Palabras clave: Espacios instituyentes e institucionales, democracia, gobernanza irruptiva, movimientos sociales

1. Introduction

At a time marked by crisis surveillance capitalism (Fricke et al., 2022), the climate crisis is leading us to a crossroads in civilisation. The neoliberal project of positioning the economy as the main principle of life (Ahedo and Telleria, 2020) has taken humanity and the planet to a possible point of no return.

This project, which reduces life to commercial transactions, is taking root in minds, political cultures and institutional systems (Laval and Dardot, 2013), and its monistic, short-term, transactional postulates (Mirowski, 2009), based on the principles of freedom and individual interest, impede any consideration of what we have in common (Laval and Dardot, 2015), selling us a de-evolutionary system as if it were natural (Ahedo, 2021; Mirowski, 1989).

The neoliberal perspective on this is post-political, if we see politics as an attempt to find collective responses to problems with structural roots (Ahedo, 2022). Faced with the challenge climate change poses to civilisation, a short-term commitment to a minimum state in public policies is accompanied by a militarily fortified state. With this authoritarian turn (Goikoetxea, 2018), the aim is to guarantee that a minority becomes the owner of power like a board of directors in a public company. As a result, an authoritarian mutation of neoliberalism (Brown, 2019; Callison and Manfredi, 2019) has become shamelessly apparent.

On the citizens' side, this disruptive scenario boils down to a double radicalization of the demos.

- On one hand, this comes in the form of discriminatory, reactive resistance identities, as defined by Castells (2000), which feed the drift of authoritarian neoliberalism and tilt institutions towards increasingly less democratic positions. This explains dystopian experiments like that led by Milei in Argentina.
- On the other hand, it can be seen in challenges to the status quo, such as outbreaks, revolts, civil disobedience, or other agonistic expressions by social movements and NGOs that are trying to deepen democracy (rather than roll it back, like the previously listed actions) through repertoires that are increasingly confrontational (Letamendia, Ibarra and Ahedo, 2020). They are project identities, as defined by Castells (1997).

Leaving aside the relationship between regressive agents, we are seeing an evident contradiction in the interaction between institutions that are committed to deepening democracy, and movements that seek to radicalize it.

- On the one hand, these institutions (and their legitimizing actors), not yet co-opted by authoritarian liberalism, are open to the improvement of democracy, although without problematizing the causes of its weakness (Martínez-Palacios, 2020). This generates the paradox that the time of greatest objective weakness of democratic sentiment is the moment when institutions and their legitimizing actors promote democratic innovations, often using commercial methods (Martínez-Palacios, Ormazabal and Ahedo, 2022).
- On the other hand, in a game of smoke and mirrors between the instituted and the instituting, the opening up of institutions (and their actors) to democracy driven by governance (from here onwards DDG) as seen in the deployment of democratic innovations by invitation is now accompanied, in the words of Bua and Bussu (2023), by governance driven by democracy (from here onwards GDD), which can be seen in the

pressure and demand of social movements for more equality, democracy and high-mindedness regarding the climate emergency.

Thus, at the centre of politics, a kind of path can be seen (increasingly surrounded by the illiberal space of authoritarian neoliberalism) where actors who still support democracy can interact. It is a shared playing field where two out-of-sync choreographies compete with each other: that of participation by institutional invitation (DDG) and that of participation by disruptor movements (GDD). These are two choreographies, we must be clear, that are marked by a limit in their relationship: when the centrality of the institutions was endangered, it broke off negotiations and assumed the Schmittian role of the ‘frenemy’, which in essence (symbolic but also physical) leads to the extermination of the other. Unlike social movements, which according to Cohen and Arato (2000) have been characterized by a self-limiting radicalism in their relationship with the institution (a dynamic of containment that avoids violence), since the 1980 s the attitude of the institutions towards social movements has been based on an increase in repressive strategies and emergency legislation (de la Porta, 2013; Goikoetxea, 2018). This process has turned the social space into scorched earth, where community networks have been devastated. It is a barren land, we have no doubt, in which the weeds of illiberal reactions grow. The question is, how long can this out-of-sync choreography be kept up between the democratically instituting and the instituted?

The reasoning on which this position article is based is that Action Research for Territorial Development (ARTD), which is discussed here in this special issue, has been developed by working exclusively or preferably with public policy makers, who can potentially represent “institutions (and their legitimizing actors)”. These are institutional actors that are not yet co-opted by authoritarian liberalism and that, consequently, “are open to the improvement of democracy; although without problematizing the causes of its weakness (Martinez-Palacios, 2020)”. However, in this sense, it is noted that ARTD has not yet generated spaces and dialogues with those who work for “governance driven by democracy (GDD) seen in the pressure and demand of social movements for more equality, democracy and high-mindedness in the face of the climate emergency”. It is considered that in this broadening of the view which as we will show has been possible in Gipuzkoa, Participatory Action Research, traditionally associated with the work of empowerment and agency of associations, i. e., of the instituting sectors, can be an essential complement for achieving synergies. It is even more possible in a territory like the Basque Country, where two research teams can work in parallel with institutions and associations, in a democratizing way.

Indeed, currently, in the Basque Country, two research teams belonging to two universities that share the aspiration to deepen democracy are collaborating. Moreover, both groups, Parte Hartuz and Orkestra, are using the same common methodological ground, that of Action Research.

However, the niche areas of these groups are different. Based on the methods of ARTD, Orkestra has collaborated for several decades with institutional leaders in Gipuzkoa on collaborative governance dynamics that aim to define a strategy for the territory (Larrea, 2024). In the meantime, the Parte Hartuz research group from the University of the Basque Country has been collaborating for decades with the social fabric and social movements using the methodology of Participatory Action Research (Ahedo, 2022). This provides double the amount of research results, which could result in the improvement of the territory. On the one hand, complementary to ARTD, is the method of PAR, which can expand the potential of the

institutional perspective with an approach to the social and instituting. On the other hand, we see research and reflection regarding forms of interaction in which the methods of the instituting and the instituted allow us to overcome the negative sum game and arrive at a win-win situation (Gorostidi, Ormazabal & Ahedo, 2023).

This article responds to the call by the editors of this special issue to rethink how to push forward territorial development, facilitation and pedagogical action to confront climate change. We see this call as an opportunity to rethink answers and even reframe questions. For this reason, this article aims to problematize the view of democracy with a proposal for working together aimed at those who, in institutions, social movements or the interstitial spaces between the two, are committed to strengthening democracy.

2. Democracy as a constituent relationship

With this objective in mind, we affirm that a concept of democracy equal to the challenges posed by the climate crisis must transcend a mere liberal perspective based on pluralism in discourse (that all ideas are acceptable) and Schmittian sectarianism (that protest should be crushed) in practice. Since the principles of pluralism are accepted by anti-government movements, their growing commitment to disruption and civil disobedience in their practices (Letamendia, Ibarra and Ahedo, 2020) means that institutions should accept and normatively integrate an agonistic perspective that turns conflict into a tool for improving and furthering democracy.

The commitment to improving democracy must be radically deepened. Over the last two decades, established democracy has moved from its liberal standpoint and has opened up to DDG methods (participation by invitation) accepting deliberative criticism (with a commitment to citizen assemblies), participatory criticism (with the deployment of strategies such as participatory budgets) and representative criticism (with openness to direct democracy). At the same time, the growing presence of intractable problems has enabled the deployment of collaborative governance formulas, which can integrate these commitments into their procedural systems.

However, the question that emerges is the following. If, despite this openness, delegitimization has increased and disruption has become radicalized, what else should democracy incorporate? From this vantage point, the answer is the need to go beyond a top-down view, looking from a different point of view (as necessary as the previous one) from a bottom-up perspective: one in which irruption and instituting factors are seen as constituents of democracy.

This forces a conceptual shift, placing the agonistic theory of democracy at the centre of the debate. In this theory (Mouffe, 1999), democracy needs to overcome the concept of the Schmittian frenemy as an opponent. Thus, through confrontation, social movements emerge and seek to reconquer the meaning of politics in democratic terms through the articulation of counter-hegemonies. In contrast to the liberal model that exalts consensus (hiding power relations as much as possible) but that uses antagonism to set limits on the irruption (when tension surfaces), agonism puts conflict centre-stage and reveals the unequal character of social structures. Consequently, it is committed to confrontation as a way to transform reality,

but it does so by considering the other as an adversary, but not as an enemy. Compared with the Schmittian theory, agonism sets out as the recognition of the other as a legitimate other. The instituting identity, thus, is based on the building of bridges; between contentious actors first, and in our proposal, with democratic institutions too.

We believe in the possible integration between a) the liberal/deliberative/participatory concept of institutions and democracy driven by governance on one hand, and b) the agonistic/deliberative/participatory concept of the instituting and governance driven by democracy. This is possible if we posit an open and relational conception of democracy. This is why Pedro Ibarra (2010) considers that democracy is not only limited to the sphere of electoral representation, but that, in line with DDG, it is complemented by its openness from above and below with the spheres of participation and governance. However, taking a step further and integrating the logic of irruption and GDD, Ibarra points out that democracy, inextricably, needs mobilization. It can be seen, therefore, that the instituting pressure of social movements and conflict is the cornerstone; the fuel of a democracy that does not end with the vote or in the opening up of government to participation.

Thus, considering the irreducibly democratic character of irruption in the relationship between the instituted and the instituting, the recognition of the other as a legitimate other can be the tempo that makes it possible to harmonize the rhythms of the hitherto out-of-sync choreography of participation by invitation of one party and participation by irruption of the other. This becomes democracy driven by governance on the one hand and governance driven by democracy on the other.

In this context, considering that the response to the climate emergency requires multiple formulas for responding to intractable problems, and since collaborative governance is emerging to face these challenges, we consider it necessary to move towards strategies – firstly informal and flexible, then structured and permanent – of managing the irruptive on one hand, and agonising the instituting on the other. Only this hybridisation can help the democratic management of the climate emergency. And to do this, the opening up of collaborative governance to the social and the irruptive is essential.

This is possible. This is happening. Elsewhere we have analysed how this link between the instituting and the instituted is possible. There is a long history of negative-sum dynamics in the relationship between the instituting and the instituted, which is clearly exemplified in evictions and demolitions of occupied social centres. However, in the Basque Country progress is being made in governance mechanisms for irruption which, as we have analysed in Gorostidi, Ormazabal and Ahedo (2023), show that this interaction between the instituting and the instituted is possible. However, as the focus of this monograph is the approach to the climate crisis, we believe it is pertinent to present the experience of the Basque territories administratively dependent on France, which we see as a paradigmatic example of what we might call irruptive governance in the management of climate change (Ahedo & Lekue, 2024).

3. Irruptive governance in practice: towards climate democracy in the Northern Basque Country

This section presents an example of irruptive governance. Although it is not an example of action research, we believe that it helps to understand the type of processes that ARTD could use, to bring together the two perspectives described in the introduction to this article within its frameworks; i. e., to problematize the methodological and epistemological view based on what is emerging from the institutions.

Iparralde – the Northern Basque Country or the French Basque Country – includes the three historical provinces of Lapurdi, Lower Navarre and Zuberoa, which are administratively dependent on the French State. Iparralde had no institutional recognition from the French revolution until 2010, when the Basque territories were organized into their own community with their own president. Although their powers are limited given French centralism, current recognition allows for embryonic institutionalization of the territory and the emergence of an institutional dialogue (Ibarra and Ahedo, 2004). This institutionalization, in turn, is indebted to a previous process of collaborative governance in which, for two decades, elected officials have cooperated with social movements and representatives of the associative, cultural and economic world. The current community is part of the Pyrénées-Atlantiques department where, in addition to the Basque municipalities, there are also other coexisting towns with Béarnaise culture (in this regard, see Ahedo 2005 and 2008). It is, consequently, a two-headed department, with two territories differentiated by culture, language, history and productive model.

From the beginning, the farming union model in Iparralde has been indebted to a low-intensity, environmentally friendly farming system, compared to the intensive model of Béarn. The Basque nationalist union Euskal Laborarien Batasuna (Unity of Basque Farmers) was set up in the 1980 s, and at the turn of the century it became the main union in Iparralde, using alter-globalist principles of food sovereignty and the confrontational strategy of Via Campesina, whose leader José Bové is internationally recognized for his participation in acts of civil disobedience.

Contravening French legislation that prevents the existence of two chambers for agriculture in one department, in January 2005 this union created the Euskal Herriko Laborantza Ganbara (Chamber of Agriculture of the Basque Country). This act was a challenge to the French authorities, who had rejected the creation of this body. Within the framework of the demand for institutional recognition of the Basque territory, the union took action to form an anti-government structure. This was noticed immediately by the sub-prefect of Bayonne, who requested the judicial closure of the Iparralde Chamber of Agriculture for “usurping a public name”. In this context of agonistic confrontation, however, the union began to collaborate with local and regional authorities by carrying out plans linked to organic farming and food sovereignty.

During this period of legal challenge, the union managed to establish a variety of different types of pressure on the state and alliances with local authorities, combining civil disobedience with the implementation of practical proposals for sustainable agricultural development. Not even the sub-prefect’s threat to prosecute local councillors who collaborated with this body had any effect. The authorities of Aquitaine and the municipalities of Iparralde continued their institutional collaboration with the social movement right through the court

case. Finally, the courts legalized this body in 2010, admitting an exception in the French administrative framework. This anti-government body, which had arisen out of an act of disobedience to the legislation, was legally and institutionally recognized. In 2023, the EHLG had 23 employees working with institutions with an alter-globalist agenda of degrowth and with an anti-developmental perspective in the farming sector, and is a model in France for ecological transition proposals.

As a result of this initiative, the Bizi collective was set up in 2009. Using a prefiguring strategy that is typical of social movements, which aim to show possibilities for transforming the status quo with their actions, Bizi put forward evidence that territorial development to challenge the climate emergency was possible. In 2010 therefore, Alternatiba, the Alternative Fair, was convened, turning the capital of Iparralde into a meeting point for eco-social projects, alternative economy, eco-feminism and care. Hundreds of cooperatives, small businesses, and sustainable projects presented real alternatives that raised awareness of the possibilities of transition of the eco-social and economic model. The resounding success of the fair, in which thousands of people participated, meant that the experience spread to the whole of the Basque Country and France, with the birth of the association of the same name.

Beyond the prefigurative aspect, the movement began a strategy of disruptive pressure that took the shape of carrying out various acts of civil disobedience in Iparralde, such as the occupation of shopping centres demanding responsible consumption or cutting off electricity to shop windows to show the consequences of wasting energy. This tactic of disobedient confrontation was transferred to various scenarios and strained relations with the authorities, who felt directly challenged. However, swinging from radical to pragmatic ideas, the movement slid towards the articulation of alternatives and responses. One example of this was the creation of Txirrind'Ola, a collaborative space for the recycling, repair and sale of bicycles, which in 2016 was the largest workshop of its kind in terms of surface area and with the most members (1,200) in all of France.

With a dizzying development of the current mobilization of 800 activists organized in 12 work commissions, the movement managed to deploy a capillarising strategy that wove a network of pressures and agreements that prefigured a model of irruptive governance based on the agonistic alliance between identities of legitimation and those of proactive resistance. The most obvious example is the relationship of the movement with the mayors' offices.

Specifically, the Bizi collective prepared a document (<https://bizimugi.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Pacte2020-Signature-2.pdf>) aimed at local public authorities, to push the ecological transition forward, giving clear commitments to proposals such as promoting non-polluting transport and reducing emissions, support for agriculture and local economy, the Eusko (a local currency) and waste reduction. In 2023, this commitment was signed by 46 municipalities that represent 66% of the population of Iparralde. To guarantee compliance with the commitments, the Hitza Hitz (Keep your Word) committee was formed, which in addition to training, advising and ensuring compliance with the commitments in the participating municipalities, monitors the rest of the municipalities with more than 2,000 inhabitants, together representing 87% of Iparralde's population. Prior to the municipal elections, Bizi presented the results of the fulfilment of the commitments, identifying the municipalities with the least ambitious goals.

4. Irruption, disruption and democratization

The example of Iparralde shows the irruptive radicalization that we had stated in the introduction. As we see, social movements use disobedience and anti-government strategies that show a growing deployment of disruptive strategies (Letamendia, Ibarra and Ahedo, 2020), which add a component of breaking with the established order in their vision. As in this case, we find this concept in the disobedient confrontation of NGOs that work on migrants facing inhuman legislation, on disobedient actions about the climate crisis by movements such as Extinction Rebellion, or on the controversial irruption of activists into museums. In all these cases, the repertoire of social movements transcends the expressive performativity of the conflict and moves towards agonistic confrontation. This represents a direct challenge to the institutions¹. Whether facing evictions, preventing shipwrecks, helping migrants cross borders, squatting in abandoned public buildings, chaining themselves to private planes or throwing paint at works of art, agonism breaks out strongly, in a disruptive way, showing the power of bottom-up strategies and participation by irruption (Blas and Ibarra, 2006).

As we have pointed out previously, this irruptive dimension can be confronted by institutions in a Schmittian way² or it can be resituated and integrated into the centre of the debate on democracy³. This text clearly supports the latter, in line with Bua and Bussu (2023), who, when questioning the democratizing role of irruption and social movements, point out that it is necessary to consider that they also “commit to deliberative institutional participatory design, as part of their strategy to reclaim the State” (Bua & Bussu, 2023: 4). That is to say, an interstitial space is possible between the irruption and the invitation, between the instituting and the instituted. The instituting can improve the design and practice of what is instituted, as we have seen in the case of Iparralde.

Be that as it may, it is worth asking how to go beyond informal interaction, or a game of pressure and integration, to advance more stable formulas of constituent integration. In this sense, we can find ways out of this bind through collaborative governance (Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015), which aspires to put institutions and civil society together to talk, through structures of deliberation, proposition and action, to confront intractable problems (Arrona and Larrea, 2022; Larrea and Arrona, 2019) including climate change. In its more open formulation, collaborative governance uses three concepts: directed, normally driven by an institution; self-invited, normally activated by civil society; and as a guest, normally initiated by an actor accepted by all parties. One of the key elements in all these scenarios is the recognition of shared interests. Another is conflict management. The last, mutual trust. The activating element in all is the awareness of interdependence.

At this point, it is important to stop and understand how, faced with the reality of the climate crisis, both the institutions that support democracy and the democratizing social movements are interdependent. In other words, they need each other. Bua and Bussu point out

- 1 This is clearly evident in the disruptive strategy in museums. The idea is not the destruction of the work of art (which would be a Schmittian frenemy strategy), but rather a call to the government, which is defined as an adversary (to the extent that its safety is questioned) while safeguarding the integrity of the object of the ‘attack’.
- 2 Perhaps the most brutal Basque example was the demolition of the squatter-occupied Okupado Kukutza III Social Centre at the order of Bilbao City Council in an unprecedented police intervention, despite calls for negotiation from hundreds of public figures from across the Spanish State (see Ahedo and Telleria, 2018).
- 3 At the same time as the demolition of Kukutza, the Basque City Council of Gemika reached an agreement with a social movement to convert another squatter-occupied Social Centre into an institutionally supported creation factory (see Gorostidi, Ormazabal & Ahedo, 2023).

that incorporating irruption into democracy allows “collective action to be interpreted not only as the formulation of political demands through protests”, but also as the direct production of collective good, for example, through “forms of mutual aid, provision of services and experimentation with community lifestyles” (2023: 1). Thus, from the point of view of GDD, it is interesting to analyse how social movements, thanks to their prefigurative, irruptive and disruptive policies, “manage to generate an upward institutional commitment” (2023: 6) that aspires to democratize not only politics, but also the economy and society in general. In our opinion, this bottom-up institutional commitment is based on a variable, often informal, configuration of pressures and agreements between social movements and institutions, which could crystallize into diffuse, but real, forms of irruptive governance (Ahedo & Lekue, 2024).

Thus, the example analysed shows how in a bottom-up dynamic, a social movement can seduce, support, control and praise or discredit institutional action against climate change. It does so through a pragmatic, seductive action, but also strongly marked by an alternative, critical way of thinking in which disruption is present. At the same time, we see institutions of legitimation open to pressure from below. These institutions do not respond to the emergence and agonistic action of social movements with a Schmittian antagonistic logic oriented towards their disappearance, but rather open themselves to a dialogue of pressures and decisions. We see, consequently, that it is possible to speak of a meeting point between what is instituted based on the identity of legitimation and what is instituting based on the identity of proactive resistance.

Therefore, innovations such as the collaborative governance networks on which the Action Research strategies for territorial development promoted by the editors of this volume are based, if opened up to social movements, can serve as a testing ground for the instituting and the instituted to dance a shared choreography. In this choreography, the music would be based on a constellation of agreements, pressures and tensions between movements and institutions, based on a rhythm defined by an agreement based on first principles, supported by the assumption of the reciprocal need to cope, in this case, with the climate crisis. As the case of Iparralde shows, this choreography only works if in the course of the dance a mutual trust emerges that allows progress towards the only existing solution: the reformulation of the current model.

Consequently, an agreement based on principles, an assumption of interdependence and an articulation of relationships of trust, linked to a strategy that combines pragmatism with radicalization by social movements and openness to social strategies by the institutions, make up the central elements of this constellation of assemblages that we propose to call irruptive governance.

We understand, in accordance with what has been stated, that this irruptive governance constitutes the *sine qua non* condition for democratic roots. As evidenced by the Iparralde experience, it is possible to “generate an upward institutional commitment” (Bussu and Bua, 2023: 6) that aspires to democratize not only politics, but also the economy, allowing territorial development committed to the climate crisis.

An alternative is possible. And necessary. In fact, there is no democratic solution other than this alternative.

5. A constituent choreography

As a result, we can conclude by pointing out that the climate crisis highlights the limits of the model not only with respect to its material sustainability but, above all, with respect to its structural sustainability. In the current context of the authoritarian neoliberal offensive, we are witnessing a depoliticization of the political in which the greatest risk is not entailed by the individualistic drift that we are witnessing, but rather by the renunciation of the essence of politics: the collective management of problems previously analysed as private that require structural solutions generating mandatory rules. In the context of the climate crisis, there is no way out for the future that does not take the need for a collective solution as a starting point. There is no individual way out of the climate emergency. Consequently, a political answer must be put centre-stage. This centrality of politics must deal directly with a double dialectic between the defence of the status quo and the challenge to it.

- A destituent political approach, in which the institution is shrunk by reactive movements that irrupt, breaking the consensus of democracy and that are institutionally co-opted by an authoritarian neoliberal elite represented by Trump, Bolsonaro or Milieu
- An approach that we call constituent in which there is a constructive tension between what is instituted based on the principles of liberalism and the defence of the status quo (economic, but also democratic) and what is instituted based on the principles of agonism (politically and economically) and democratic irruption

Needless to say, if in the dance of democracy there is no commitment to a choreography that allows people to dance, even if they are separated, but at least with the same harmony of the identities of legitimation and those of proactive resistance, of participation by invitation and participation by irruption, of democracy driven by governance and governance driven by democracy, of instituted and instituting approaches, of the principles of liberalism and those of agonism... If this choreography does not come together urgently, it will be the reactive resistance identities and their destituent logic that will put an end to democracy and the possibility of facing the climate crisis collectively.

This requires commitments. The problematization of democracy incorporating liberal ideas and the agonistic antithesis in the combination of irruptive governance pushes the authorities to accept the autonomy of society, respecting the deliberative approach of the world present in social movements; it forces social movements to accept the legitimacy of what is instituted and the rules of the game; but above all, it forces us to opt for forms of relational democracy between the instituting and the instituted based on the shared assumption of an irreducible, constituent relationship between the liberal principles of pluralism and the agonistic principles of the democratizing nature of the conflict. In short, it forces the instituting and the instituted to coordinate their choreographies in a constituent relationship based on the governance of the irruptive to prevent the dance floor from being occupied by illiberal destituent ideas.

6. Action research as the tempo of the choreography

Action research can contribute to this dance. It can set the tempo of the choreography. Action research, in all its forms, puts reflection at the heart of the action. This, evidently, allows the actors to take a conscious and critical look at their role. As evidenced by the work of Larrea (2024), ARTD allows for progress in a shared vision, in empowerment and in the assumption of the need to open institutional networks to the social, movement-based fabric. However, if reality is analysed in a conflictive way and the focus is expanded to the instituting, Action Research for Territorial Development is partial as it is too focused on facilitating processes with governments that represent the established order.

For its part, Participatory Action Research, led by Parte Hartuz, has the potential to feed the agency of the instituting actors, give a strategic view of their actions and allow rational management of approaches that are often too emotional. Paradoxically, if ARTD shows that institutional actors must be moved in emotional terms, PAR shows that citizens' emotions must be channelled strategically. This confluence in the form of an inverse mirror world, however, is not the only one. Perhaps the most important is that insofar as ARTD allows the instituting to press an acceptance that it is impossible to advance without the social and the movement-based aspects, PAR shows, as in the aforementioned case, that if social movements want to have democratizing impacts, they must learn to work together shoulder-to-shoulder with the instituting. If in ARTD the limit is in the social aspect, in PAR it is in the capacity to affect the institutions.

In other words, this is why ARTD and PAR can become tools for parallel articulation of the instituted and the instituting: by taking responsibility for common ground, reflection caused by action and rootedness in the territory, they can be the beat that marks the rhythm of a new dance.

The coexistence of action research teams such as Orkestra and Parte Hartuz, working in the same territory with frameworks and participants that represent the two positions described throughout this article, the instituting and the instituted, is a unique opportunity and can achieve shared synergies, through Action Research. This feasibility is based on the premise that in Gipuzkoa a large number of the ARTD frameworks have been created by the institutions, in parallel with the deployment of a wealth of PAR experiences. In both cases, AR has been at the centre of institutionally directed collaborative governance ideas, based on invitation dynamics on the one hand, and socially self-invited ideas, supported by irruption, on the other. Action research, in its two modalities, shows that the logic of the autonomy of the institutional and the instituting is accompanied by points of contact in which mutual need is evident. This reciprocal need refers to the possibility of achieving a dance that, through the system of governance, brings progress in democracy based on collaboration between the instituting and the instituted. In this text, we wanted to show that facilitating teams, armed with the methods of Action Research, can help this pair to dance, by tapping out a shared rhythm.

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Igor Ahedo Gurrutxaga has Full Professor accreditation at the University of the Basque Country. He is Principal Researcher of the research group on participatory democracy Parte Hartuz and former head of the Doctoral Programme in Social, Political and Cultural Studie. The University of the Basque Country has recognized his teaching practice for its excellence in implementing innovative methodologies. He is a teacher-trainer in gender perspective in Higher Education. His publication include Why Does Gender Really Matter in Political Science Learning Processes? *Journal of Political Science Education*, 1–23; “Collaborative governance and irruption in Northern Basque Country: an irruptive governance model?”, *Oñati Socio-Legal Series*, 14(4) and Beyond the margins of neoliberalism: Biological and Neurological Foundations of Action Research, *IJAR – International Journal of Action Research*, 2–2021
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6341-3342>

Andere Ormazabal Gaston is a lecturer at the University of the Basque Country, member of the research group on participatory democracy Parte Hartuz and the director of the Master’s in Participation and Community Development. She is a teacher-trainer in Participatory Action Research in Higher Education. Her publications include Central nodes in the reform of the Spanish Universities Law. *Profesional De La información*, 31(3), or The Neoliberal Commercialisation of Citizen Participation in Spain. In: Zabalo, J., Filibi, I., Escajedo San-Epifanio, L. (eds) *Made-to-Measure Future(s) for Democracy?. Contributions to Political Science*. Springer
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6886-5137>

Izaro Gorostidi Bidaurreazaga is a lecturer at the University of the Basque Country, member of the research group on participatory democracy Parte Hartuz and the director of Higher Diploma in Participatory Perspectives and Methodologies for the Deepening of Democracy (Latin American Social Sciences Council – CLACSO). Her publications include University and democratization: A training project in action research with social movements. *Action Research*, 22(3) and Rethinking Relationships Between Public Institutions and Community Initiatives: The Cases of Astra (Gernika) and Karmela (Santutxu, Bilbao). In: Zabalo, J., Filibi, I., Escajedo San-Epifanio, L. (eds) Made-to-Measure Future(s) for Democracy?. Contributions to Political Science. Springer.
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6970-9817>