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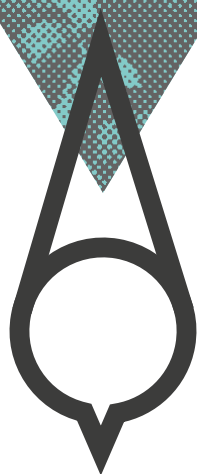
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CITIZENS AND THE BASQUE LANGUAGE: KEY FACTORS IN THE PROCESSES FOR ACTIVATION

**Language activation
at a local level
(2016-2019)**

RESEARCH REPORT

Andoain, February 2020



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INTRODUCTION

The focus of this research project has been on the processes of local activation in promoting the use of the Basque language.

In fact, it has served as a response to the request made by the Department for Linguistic Equality of the Gipuzkoa Provincial Council to the Soziolinguistika Klusterra at the end of 2015.

The object of this research is relevant, given that, over the last decades, Basque-language advocates and the public administration have undertaken various programmes to promote the use of the Basque language across local municipalities, both separately and jointly, but, in many cases, without obtaining the desired results. It has therefore been decided to learn from last experiences, and to construct new methods of working in order to mobilise Basque-language support amongst the local citizens.

This research, entitled “Language Activation at a local level”, has obtained two main results: on the one hand it identifies the key factors in activating the use of the Basque language amongst the citizens, and it also suggests a process for setting up this activation.

First and foremost, we analysed several local experiences that had been successful in activating citizenship. Next, we developed pilot interventions in two specific local contexts, working with different agents on the key factors identified in the successful experiences. Therefore, the results of this research have been obtained by collecting local data, and from information gathered via various experiences related to the implantation of the *Euskaraldia* initiative in various municipalities.

A leaflet has been put together in order to publicise these results, in addition to this summary report. The report explains the basic ideas set out in the leaflet. However, anyone interested in delving into the subject can access the latest technical report of the research on the Soziolinguistika Klusterra’s web page (www.soziolinguistika.eus/aktibazioa).

We would like to thank everybody who has taken part in the investigation (members of the development group and all the local agents); this project would not have worked without their help.



2 LANGUAGE ACTIVATION

The concept of activation is related to **starting off a process**. In general terms, a group shares their thoughts and readings on a subject and organise themselves for action, which is to say, they activate their project. **The project in hand is to promote and facilitate the mobilisation of the citizens**. In addition, activation often involves drumming up support for certain values and practices in order to **overcome contemporary inertias and to spread these practices throughout the community**. It could be said, then, that activation is akin to social reversion.

Social reversion and the **process of activation** are long-term proceedings, given the generally deep-rooted nature of prevailing disparities and the difference of opportunities, and nor are they linear in their development, faced as they are with resistance, contradictions and fluctuations. With this in mind, the process of activation can be likened to **a voyage on a rough sea** (with its associated peaks and troughs). Patience is therefore a must, and it is important not only to monitor frequently, but also to acquire a long-term view of the process (in some circumstances, the challenge is to build up resilience and the ability to keep the baton of reversion into force).

Language activation is thus the **organisational process which is started off with the intention of having a bearing on the linguistic reality and looking for open, flexible collaboration in order to undertake a series of actions**.

When we talk about activation, we tend to think of mass public acts, of celebration or demonstration; acts which oblige us to veer away from our daily routines. However, this is just the tip of the iceberg – the visible element. In order for this to occur, work has to be done to pave the way, and in this research project we have attempted to compile the key aspects of this preparatory work and the process it should be followed.

The contents of this report are therefore focused on the activation of Basque speakers in each local geographical area, but may also be extrapolated to other subjects, territories or situations.

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RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND AIMS

The main aims of this research project are as follows: to identify the key factors in activating citizens on the Basque language in municipalities and provinces, and to propose a process of activation. The ultimate goal is to increase the use of the Basque language.

The investigative task has responded to these two research questions:



I. What are the key factors in the process of activation with a view to promoting the use of the Basque language?

Which are the most adequate collaborative experiences between citizens, social agents and public entities that seek to transform the local linguistic reality in the province of Gipuzkoa? Which characteristics do they have?

II. What process could be undertaken in Gipuzkoa in order to organise effective collaboration between public entities, social movement, other social agents and citizens, with the aim of re-converting the local sociolinguistic reality?

How can the key factors identified during the activation process be worked on? What path should be taken for activation? What steps will have to be taken during the process? What will the tasks be? What aspects should be taken into consideration?

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METHODOLOGY EMPLOYED DURING THE RESEARCH

In order to answer each of the research questions, the project has been three-phase:

• Phase one: CASE ANALYSIS (2016 and 2018)

Aim: to analyse experiences where citizens have been effectively activated in different areas, in order to identify the key factors in play.

Research topic: collaborative work carried out between public entities, social movement in favour of the Basque language and other social agents and citizens in the local sphere, focusing on coordination, the balance of power, participation, etc.

Work done: Six experiences were analysed, some related to the Basque language and others gender equality, grassroots or local governability and culture:

- “Astra” social culture factory (Gernika) (2016)
- “Ttakun” association for the Basque language (Lasarte-Oria) (2016)
- “Herri-ola” grassroots project (Otxandio) (2016)
- “Euskaraz bizi nahi dugulako” initiative (Living in Basque) for the Egia neighbourhood (Donostia-San Sebastián) (2016)
- Emakumeen Mundu Martxa (World March of Women) (2016)
- AKEBAI project (Eibar) (2018)

We interviewed several social agents who took part in these experiences (14 in total), and have analysed the documentation relating to each. As a result, we have been able to collate the key factors.

• Phase two: INTERVENTIONS (2017-2018)

Aim: to contrast these key factors in day-to-day work, in order to visualise the process of language activation at a local level.

Research topic: the situation and needs of the local social movement in favour of Basque language, in order to design interventions suited to each context.

Work done: interventions were carried out in two towns in Gipuzkoa, Arrasate and Tolosa, and the key factors in activation were worked on over several sessions:

- The round table of social movements in favour of Basque language in Arrasate had already acted as a meeting point for some time, for the various bodies involved, including

the local council. Before the end of the project, the sessions have covered the bases of the meeting point known as Geike, where all agents take part.

- Every session was deemed useful within the context of expansion into the region of Tolosaldea, as promoted by the association for the Basque language, Galtzaundi. Over the last year of the project, we have collaborated in the creation of the Tolosaldea Basque Language Board.

Apart from this, we have also held contrastive sessions with agents of Basque language activism from Arrasate, Tolosaldea and Eibar, and with several individuals belonging to Basque language activism groups on a country-wide level, in order to work in unison.

• Phase three: KEY FACTORS IN MOBILISING EUSKARALDIA (2019)

Aim: to analyse the organisational methods required to set up the Euskaraldia Project, having seen how successful this was in activating citizens in favour of the Basque language.

Research topic: what has the Euskaraldia project taught us about activation? Regarding activating citizens, what advances and limitations did the Euskaraldia Project suppose? What factors came into play here?

Work done: five experiences in Gipuzkoa were analysed, with a special focus on the organisational side.

- Arrasate
- Ikaztegieta
- Donostia-San Sebastián
- Rentería
- Hondarribia

In order to gather information on the different geographical areas, we have used the data available on participation levels in Euskaraldia, including its research, interviews (with individuals well-versed in the process) and workshops (with the people in charge).



Once the three phases were concluded, and with the data to hand, we could address the research questions. That is to say, we have designed and proposed a possible process for activating citizens, and we have listed the key factors to bear in mind (see Part 6. of this report entitled: “Results of the research”).

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ORGANIZATION

We set up a development group for the project, which has been responsible for taking decisions concerning the project itself, and analysing the results.

The development group is made up of representatives from the Gipuzkoa Provincial Council and University of the Basque Country (EHU/UPV), as well as members and technicians of Soziolinguistika Klusterra. The following people took part:

- Zesar Martinez (Parte Hartuz research group from the EHU/UPV): academic director of the project.
- Helene Armentia (Elhuyar)
- Amaia Balda and Ainhoa Lasa (Emun)
- Edurne Otamendi (Donostia-San Sebastián City Hall)
- Mikel Ozaita (Euskaltzaleen Topagunea)
- Izaro Ugalde and Joxean Amundarain (Gipuzkoa Provincial Council)
- Imanol Larrea and Maialen Iñarra (technical department of Soziolinguistika Klusterra)

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RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

This research project has had two results:

- **A process proposal:** a proposal for how to organise the process of activating citizens at a local level, in favour of the Basque language; a possible road to go through.
- **Key factors in activation:** the key factors to bear in mind when activating citizens in favour of the Basque language, which is to say, the factors to work on in order to facilitate the process of activation.

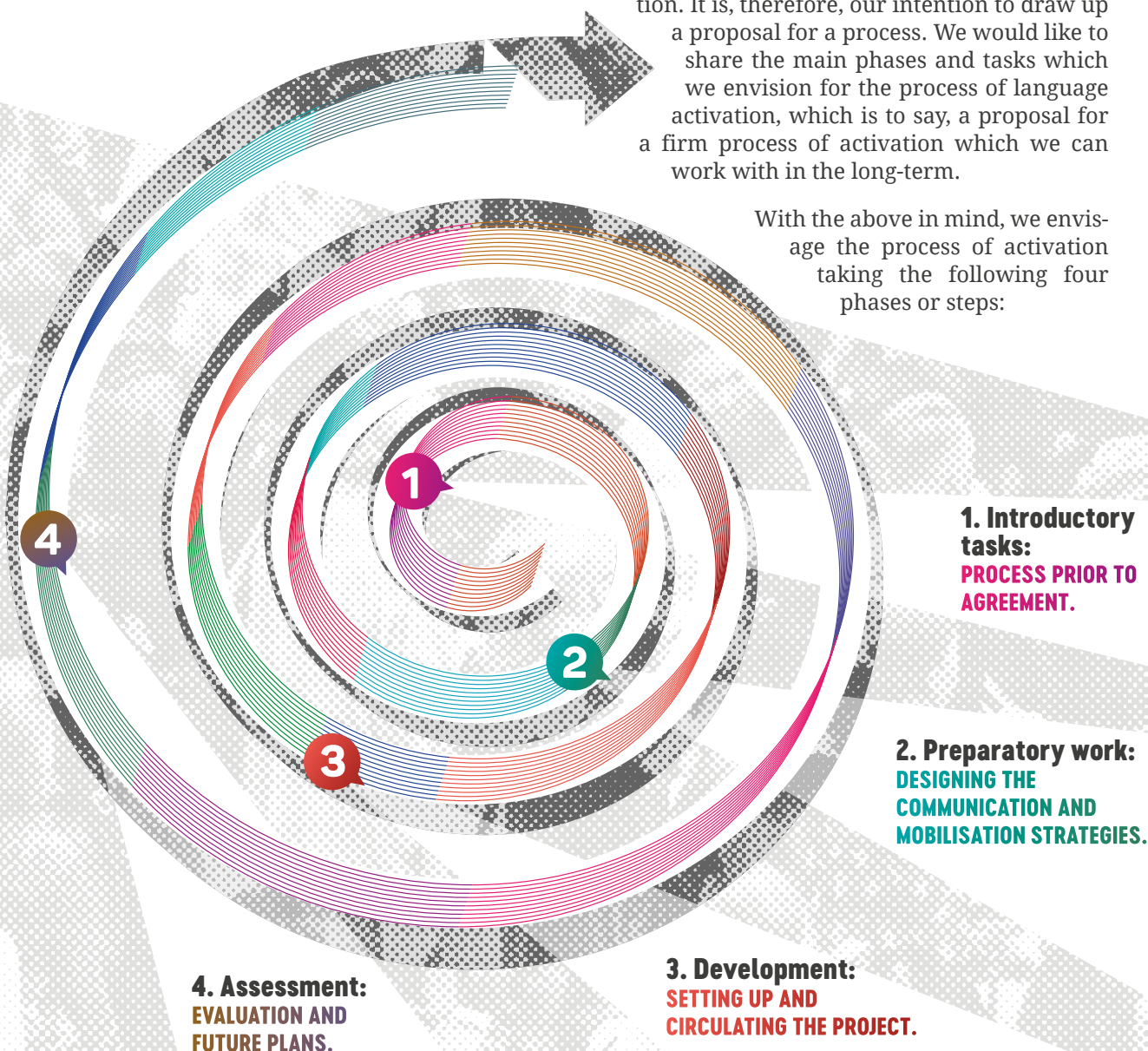
The results are presented below.

PROCESS PROPOSAL FOR ACTIVATING CITIZENS

Activating citizens is not a direct and sure consequence of following the correct methodology. The behaviour of the citizens is not ruled by a mathematical formula; it is not something which can be planned, predicted or automated. It is something far more complex.

This research project has identified the steps and prerequisites necessary for facilitating the activation of citizens, but, in addition, there may well be further conditions or elements which cannot be planned for and which are vital for achieving the desired results. It is for this reason we feel it is more correct to talk about the process of activation, as opposed to discussing the methodology of activation. It is, therefore, our intention to draw up a proposal for a process. We would like to share the main phases and tasks which we envision for the process of language activation, which is to say, a proposal for a firm process of activation which we can work with in the long-term.

With the above in mind, we envisage the process of activation taking the following four phases or steps:



1. Introductory tasks: PROCESS PRIOR TO AGREEMENT

The starting point for a process of activation is usually a discussion, brainstorming and buy-in stage among a small group of people, or else the impetus that comes from within a group of agents or an association. These agents or motivated individuals speak to each other about what they could do to bring about language activation, who for and what for. **The first step is usually to put the main idea down in black and white, and make a draft of the project¹.**

Whatever the case, we want the project to be agreed on from the start as far as possible. In order to do this, we need to flesh out the initial idea, adding suggestions from other **individuals, agents and strategic bodies²**. In this case, the important task will be the **chats, coffees and meetings with these people** and this implies that, in order to present the draft, we should meet several times in order to transmit our intention and conviction in an open, flexible manner, integrating their ideas and suggestions. It is, therefore, vital that we draw up the proposals and listen to the other parties in a constructive, integral way. And our draft must of course be flexible and open to modifications. In this way, more individuals and agents can buy into the project and feel that they are able to participate with their own opinions.

This first round of contacts and chats will be useful for testing the situation, empathy and willingness of other individuals and agents. In this case we should analyse the resources available (time, energy, monies, etc.), what shared base we are working with and what reading around the subject is involved, in order to build up a wide and varied group of agents.

It is also important to ponder the strengths and weaknesses facing us when the time comes to activating the project. We might feel that we are weak in some areas, but quite strong in others, and it is therefore important that we are conscious of this in order to dedicate time and effort to the right points. Of course, after a realistic calculation of the resources and strengths, we may have to redesign our project to fit accordingly.

As this initial process gets underway, we will be able to identify which individuals or agents would usefully make up a Leading Group. After adding the contributions made by each agent to the initial notes, we can call various meetings to present the

¹ If the initiative is wider than at simply a local level, like the national initiative for Euskaraldia, it is important to align the general outline of the initiative with the reality in each geographical area. As a result, this could also act as a starting point, to be followed up in the same way. Or perhaps in our neighbourhood, town or collective, we should better organise something akin to a warm-up exercise for a project similar to Euskaraldia.

² We mention individuals and strategic bodies because they are members of different social circles and can act as ambassadors.



rough draft and set up the leading group. If we want to make a real impression on our society, the ideal thing would be to create a structure which welcomes different levels of compromise (different levels of involvement and responsibility): a broadly-based leading group which is heterogeneous and new (i.e. has not worked together before); a network of collaborators (these people should not be part of the leading group, but can be called on to help); and collaborating bodies (which can act as a connecting link and aid circulation).

This first phase, therefore, has a two-fold objective: **to reach a consensus on the project** and **to set up a Leading Group and a strong network of collaborators**.

These first relationships and leading group meetings will be vital in the creation of a harmonious, cohesive working atmosphere. In fact, within the heterogeneous nature of the group itself, we should promote mutual understanding, building a collective protagonism, free from patrimonial appropriation, where leadership is shared and there is a balance of voices. The leading group should develop a **conscious internal process**, in order to construct these components.

These meetings must be prepared with the utmost care, not giving any leeway for inertia or improvisation. It is important to table and propose motions openly, so they can be analysed by everyone present. Turn-taking should be balanced and all participants should be replied to by the same measure so that everybody feels they are indispensable and their participation is valued. These basic behaviour patterns will make for mutual trust and complicity.

In fact, aside from agreeing on the project and establishing the leading group, we will here begin to visualise how the **work can be shared out and organised**, that is to say, who is going to take responsibility for each task (infrastructure, communications, liaison, resources, etc.). Whatever the case, we suppose that the majority of the responsibilities will be defined in the following phase, when the main characteristics of the project will take shape, thanks to the internal work of the leading group.



2. Preparatory work: DESIGNING THE COMMUNICATION AND MOBILISATION STRATEGY

Language activation is closely related to the collaboration and mobilization that wants to influence linguistic behaviour. When activating citizens, we should employ concrete messages, proposals and activities. The discourse used must spark social debate and create a true sense of enquiry – an innovative invitation which motivates citizens and provokes change.

All of these elements require work on their creation in order to attain the desired effect. If we were to improvise or not dedicate sufficient time at this stage, we run the risk of getting stuck with our proposals and messages and little else. We thus propose an in-depth study of the communication and mobilisation strategy, and in order to do this, we suggest that the people in the leading group hold at least three **topic-based workshops**:

- **Knowledge of new encounters.** Our intention is to boost the leading group's creativity through various training sessions: visits, lectures, meetings... What prompted mobilisation in other areas? Which are the key factors to bear in mind today? What aspects are different in our own situation? Which proposal and activity shall we structure our language activation around?
- **Mapping our local networks** (neighbourhood, municipality, province, etc.). Drawing up a map of the available network of both formal and informal agents (sectors and target groups) and identifying the natural meeting points within each network (which areas should we move in, in order to find our target groups?). We propose setting up several specific, well-planned sessions on this theme.
- **Sessions focusing on communication and creativity.** If we want to define our message, image and main activities as attractive as possible, we must tick certain boxes: What is the message behind our project? Do we need different messages for each target group? Do we have a script or rationale to follow when we air our new debate? Should we make a formal statement? What kind of image, logo or slogan should we circulate? What use will we make of social networks? - We need to plan all of the above, leaving nothing to chance or improvisation, and this requires a sophisticated, channelled process.

In this light, the project, and all its components, defines itself in a creative, innovative way: What will work here? What will pique the curiosity, encourage the motivation and ensure the attention of people here? Which proposals will move people and conjure unforgettable experiences, and help us to take the steps we need to change our linguistic practices?



Apart from the initial, topic-focused work in these three areas, and before taking any action, it would be interesting to establish a period for contrasting and testing ideas, on a small scale, to see whether the messages, images and proposals for activities are as well received as we expected; and it goes without saying that we need to demonstrate sufficient flexibility to adapt according to the feedback.

To this end, the topic-focused session should serve to reinforce and strengthen the leading group, and it is therefore vital that all of the above is carried out in an informal but balanced manner. The leading group could use these sessions to develop a process of conscious cohesion and create an atmosphere of self-knowledge and mutual trust.

When the collaboration, organisation and actions of different individuals and agents are led by a cohesive leading group, attractive propositions blossom. If we want to cultivate collaborative values and effective buy-ins towards a set of linguistic practices, we should be the ones who shape these grassroots practices ourselves, leading by example in a positive atmosphere of happiness and personal development.

3. Development: **SETTING UP AND CIRCULATING THE PROJECT**

This is the phase dedicated to the planning and development of the communication and mobilisation strategies. The aim is to circulate our slogans, images and messages via different relationships and communication networks, and to **create a social debate** covering the questions and proposals we want to focus on about the Basque language.

The best-case scenario would be the creation of an activation initiative which enthuses citizens, an initiative related to local references and culture, which can be **taken up as a collective challenge and spread by word of mouth**. In the same way, we are looking for a proposal which Basque-language advocates will take on board and so become active members of the movement – something we can plan for but which must inevitably remain open and flexible. We are offering, therefore, an option to individuals who want to play a part, and to Basque-language advocates who can broadcast and back the initiative among their circles and their social media networks.

It must be remembered that social intervention is much more than desk-work, although it does require a lot of meetings and work behind the scenes. Overall, though, **it is field work** – being with people, listening to people, integrating points of interest, creating attractive and exciting proposals and **meeting a multitude of social sectors on their playing fields**.



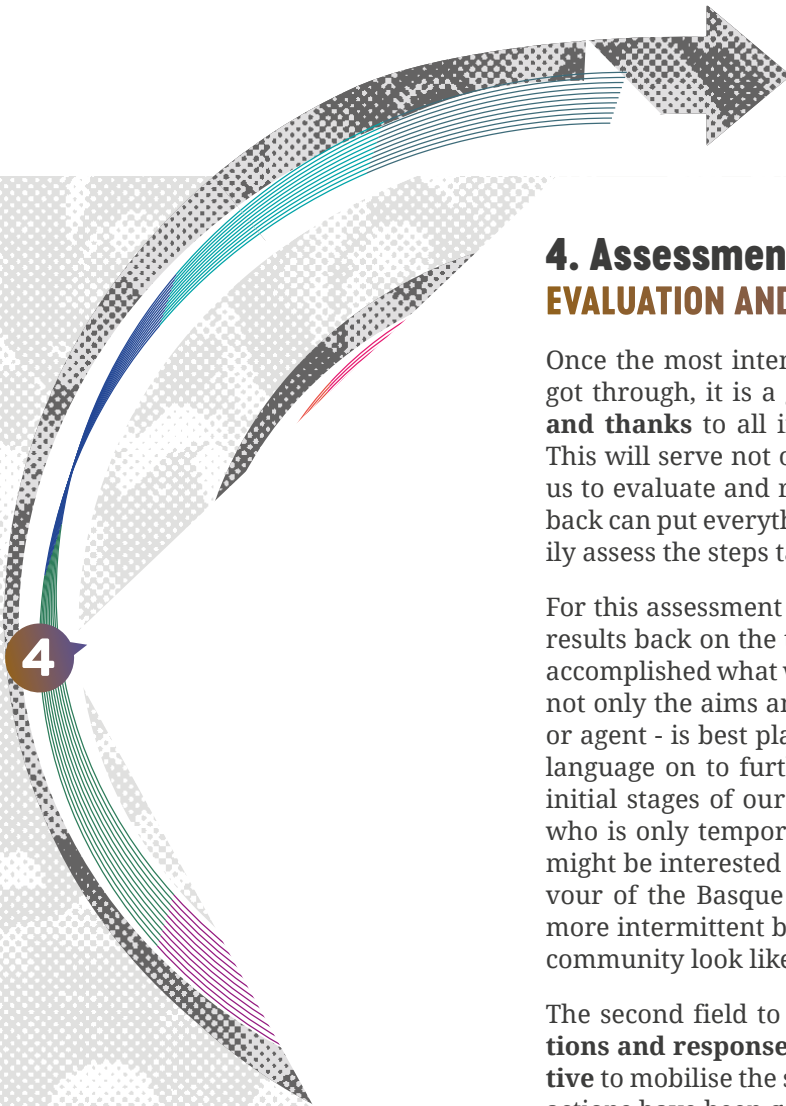
It is for this reason that we want to stress the importance of setting up a positive, friendly atmosphere. Managing social impact is a task which requires leadership capable of attracting and bonding, among other skills (some of which are in our hands, or can be influenced by us, but others may depend on third parties over whom we have no control).

In conclusion, we want to start up a movement which will attract the largest number of people possible. We want to start a movement where the individuals who communicate with each other on a daily basis in Basque feel revendedicated and empowered. We want others close to these Basque-speakers to feel motivated to do the same. We want to address people further from these social circles to join us, and to break down the negative postures of people who are against this project.

We know that our initiative may well provoke **resistance and contrary debate** (prejudices, fears, worries, labelling, etc.) and, if faced with this, **we must take note of all the points raised, and address them in our messages**. This exercise will lead us to create a diverse message which will stand us in good stead throughout the stages of the project and reinforce the bonds between the leading group by furnishing them with arguments and uniting them in their responses. The desire to change the dominant factors in any society brings with it a component of conflict, resistance and obstacles. It will be of fundamental importance that the leading group keeps their head during the difficult, problematic times, as it will be throughout the development of the initiative, and especially in sociolinguistic contexts where there may be strong conflicting currents in play.

Finally, this phase in the activation process not only calls for the development of motivational proposals alongside outreach initiatives to the different sectors of society we want to contact, but we should also be actively working with the experiences, reactions and responses our process provokes. **We envisage receiving basic qualitative and quantitative information** which we will then use to assess our initiative (its impact and results), and to obtain information on and contacts for individual participants. All of this is fundamental for establishing and reinforcing the language community.

This is normally the most active and stressful phase in the activation process, and as such we should be even more vigilant than usual that the tasks and responsibilities are shared out equally, and keep a close eye on the communication and the atmosphere between participating individuals. The process of how the work is done is just as important as the outcome of the work itself; if the attempted mobilisation leaves a good impression, we will be stronger in subsequent phases. If the people involved in the organisation are burnt out and stressed, we will be wasting valuable resources which could be working for the language community. It is therefore vital that all those involved **enjoy the work they are doing, create a positive atmosphere and celebrate each goal reached**.



4. Assessment: EVALUATION AND FUTURE PLANS

Once the most intense moments in the activation process are got through, it is a good idea to send round **congratulations and thanks** to all involved. After that, a **respite** is in order. This will serve not only to recoup strength, but will also allow us to evaluate and reflect on our journey so far. Taking a step back can put everything into perspective, and we can more easily assess the steps taken up to this point in the process.

For this assessment phase, we need to put the aims and initial results back on the table, in order to analyse how far we have accomplished what we set out to do. It is a sound idea to analyse not only the aims and results, but also who - which individual or agent - is best placed to carry this promotion of the Basque language on to further stages. Who have we activated in the initial stages of our initiative? Of these individuals or agents, who is only temporarily active but not permanently so? Who might be interested in joining a long-term working party in favour of the Basque language? Who might be interested on a more intermittent basis? What does our new Basque-language community look like (make-up, structure, etc.)?

The second field to analyse would be **the experiences, reactions and responses which have been created by the initiative** to mobilise the social surroundings. What experiences and actions have been generated by this initiative with regards linguistic awareness, reviewing or changing linguistic practices, or the empowerment of Basque-speakers? How have the slogans, images and messages been received? What has worked the way we expected it to, and what has not? Have we managed to provoke the social debate we were aiming for? Have our interpretations and proposals been understood the way we intended? Have we reached the social sectors we wanted to? Have we managed to influence experiences, emotions and subjectivity? Now is the moment to analyse the qualitative and quantitative information we have received so far, and to try to make up for whatever shortcomings this information may have.

Finally, we must evaluate a third important area: the leading group and the other people who have taken part in the organisational tasks, should carry out a **frank internal assessment** in order to **highlight lessons learned**: What went well at each step of the organisational process? What do we need to improve? What are we missing?

During these exercises in evaluation, as in the whole process, we should take great care when preparing the work sessions and meetings, with an eye on the methodology and dynamics. In fact, if we are aiming for a sincere assessment of each as-



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pect, we must be critical and self-critical, and ensure correct working conditions (space, time, attention, etc.), in order to give constructive criticism which will not offend anybody. By the same token, we should link the positively valued actions, and attempt to identify the key factors which have led to these results (individuals, resources, ways of behaving and acting, etc.) in order to replicate them in the future. In this way, our work-group will be strengthened by this phase.

It is a good idea to note down and share (socially) a **brief report** containing the reflections and evaluations made during this phase. We can thus record our learning curve which will be of great use in future initiatives: where are we now on our journey towards language activation? What are the next steps? This report will become vital for the steps we now have to take towards activation.

In conclusion, every experience and shared moment (both the funny, happy moments and the stressful, tense ones) occurring while we work together can be a springboard for **celebrating results**, and this way we can continue to feed the good vibes and look after each other as we work on new initiatives.

KEY FACTORS IN ACTIVATING CITIZENS

Six key factors have been identified for activation.

1. Response to a social need

The activation process should respond to a social need. If we start off from a situation which produces criticism, worry and responsibility, our aim should be to improve and to reach our positive goal. Every effort should fill a gap and re-route a tendency, and in order to do this, it should create a dynamic which responds to these needs and changes the paradigm.

If the understanding or legitimacy of this need is not broadcast widely enough, it must be fed and stimulated, given the importance of **acting in accordance with the citizens' concerns**, and **giving voice to their wishes and interests**. The citizens will act when faced with a worrying situation, or with the possibility of getting something they want, or when they feel that they can help in some way. In short, citizens will act when they feel a need to improve the status quo and when that need is voiced.

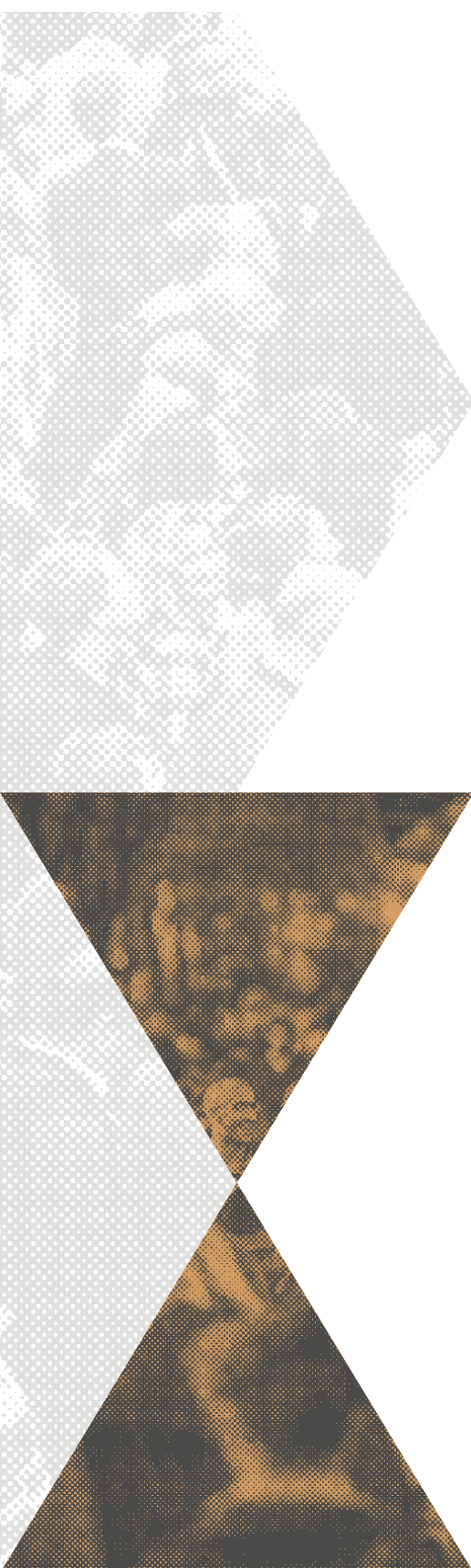
When consciences and subjectivities are stirred, mindful Basque-language advocates will call on like-minded people and **the need of the many will become accepted by all**. This is to say that the process can indeed attract the support of the citizens, both credibly and legitimately.

But, how can we affect this social sector? Creating an innovative message and offering the tools for change which will affect and empower the public as a whole is a major challenge. It is useful to employ overtly inclusive messages in order to enthuse and excite and promote positive change. When setting out on this journey, it would be useful to take a serious look, for example, at the findings of sociolinguistic research.

2. Agreeing on theories and basic arguments

During the course of our research we have seen the importance of working on the theory or ideological points of view (sociolinguistic aspects, further aspects which come into play in linguistic behaviours, etc.), and even occasionally addressing questions of a nature unconnected to the linguistic sphere (group dynamics, participative processes, psycho-social relationships and questions, articulating and consolidating a sense of community, emotions and power struggles, etc.).

This all implies that it is of the utmost importance to **work on the theories and proposals with relation to the linguistic sphere and the grassroots movement**, as this will endow the activation process with a strong starting point.



The route itself is also a learning process. During the process, a movement of individuals, ideas, knowledge and actions will blossom, and a process of these characteristics demands that we broaden our horizons and initiate a journey alongside people who have different ways of viewing the world. This experience will give us the opportunity to taste and try the problems, limits and contradictions suffered by others. In terms of personal (and collective) growth, this is a superb opportunity to enrich and empower ourselves. Bearing this in mind, it is important to **meet with new groups and to alternate the training sessions**, and in that way, the process itself becomes a learning experience; the process becomes a result in itself.

Whatever the case, in every mobilisation of this kind there is a context and a backstory. It is this intuition or vision, based on what has gone before, which makes the group gel and begin to work together in a more or less organised manner, at times without a fixed route-map, but with an open mind towards new ideas and drives. It is for this reason that, prior to undertaking any initiative, we should always take into consideration the many backstories and the **social climate**.

On balance, it is never a good idea to limit an initiative solely to “activism”, and this is something we must never lose sight of. When faced with this situation, we should think back to the sociolinguistic diagnoses, and debate the proposals put forward by other grassroots movements, in order to create structures for an exchange of knowledge and training. Curiosity should never be lost.

3. Collaboration between government bodies and grassroots movements

When organising citizens' activation, **the collaboration between social agents, and between agents and institutions is extremely positive** as far as the symbolic value of the activity goes, and regarding the mobilisation of resources. However, how can we promote an active, living associative network without recourse to financing from public bodies? If we respect the autonomy of each area (and it is not imperative that the process runs simultaneously with the collaboration of all agents), it is important to look for different options in order to work together.

Similarly, we must **admit and manage** any **tension or conflict** that arises in a democratic way, should members of the group voice criticisms or revindications. Apart from methodological conflicts, protagonism and bureaucracy also take their toll, and not only between the social agents and the public administration, but there may also be tension and conflict between individuals and agents. In this case, we must ensure that these **differences of opinion are channelled via negotiated agree-**

ments. This way we can encourage a constructive attitude towards working as a team, and maintain a balance, wherein every individual feels comfortable throughout the process. In order to reach this state, the functions of the public and social bodies and the general public should be clearly identified, and the decision-making powers should be laid down in black and white.

In order, then, to work together, it is vital to build a **relationship and dialogue based on trust**. Optimally, we should **analyse and settle the balance of power** between the participants in the process, sharing words, deeds and protagonism.

In many cases it will be necessary and feasible to reach a consensus and to formulate the ideal future scenario. The activation process should promote initiatives which help us to reach this ideal scenario where initiatives and projects are shared: those which can be shielded by politico-electoral turnouts; those which should not be used to weaken the adversary or obtain electoral benefit; and those which have the backing of politicians and wider institutions.

4. Horizontal organisation

In order for the process to continue, it is important to respect the level of organisation. **We must set up open, horizontal structures in order to boost the participation of individuals and agents.** That is to say, we must broaden the call for participation to every person affected by the process. Many different people will take part in this process (different ages, genders, origins, ideologies, social classes, levels of education, etc.) and we must be prepared to face this personal and collective challenge – **we must make a conscious effort to manage diversity and differences transparently.**

In addition, we should **build bridges**, from as wide a base as possible, **above and beyond Basque-language activists**, and these bridges should be a part of a pooling of contributions, decisions, fears, and the like, so that the citizens become more than simple recipients.

Nowadays, identities are evermore liquid, and there are more and more heterogeneous, diverse groups, also in the sphere of linguistic commitment. This flexibility can bring with it a weakening of engagement, but it can also have positive aspects: the disappearance of dichotomies, the opening of frontiers, the ability to reach out to sectors of society we thought were too far from our own, etc. In conclusion, the possibilities of offering access to a wider range of individuals, without them having to forego their personal goals, are much wider now. We will be working with volunteers and thus we must ask each and every one of them what they are willing to do or bring to the project, and we must bear in mind **the importance of every level of**

commitment. There will, of course, be differences in the level of participation, but decision-making will not depend on the level of engagement, because these organs will be open.

Within the horizontal, open participatory organisation there may well be several decision points, in order that everybody's voice may be heard in the process. This will result in individuals identifying with and forming an emotional bond with the initiative, and it is important to be able to respond to everybody in the same way.

Linked to this, and in order to construct a relaxed working environment and create a cohesive group, it is vital that there be, among other elements, mutual recognition, **collective protagonism, shared leadership** and a balance between voices and participation. Participation must be decisive, not decorative. We must make everyone feel important in the process and channel all collaboration towards this end.

5. Establishing the leading group

It is important to form a cohesive **leading group**. Theirs is the job to assume responsibilities, propose projects, create relationships and expand the network. They will be working externally and internally, always keeping the activation process in their sights, and always with conviction and strength.

The individuals making up the leading group are people with very different personal profiles, all of whom are excited about setting up a new dynamic and bringing to it their freshness and open mindedness. There will be a mix of people who have experience ("the oldies") and those who do not ("the newbies").

It is a good idea to have a mix of people who will work carefully on the internal process, and people who are happy to participate in training and give their time generously, in order that a tendency to look for solutions based on consensus, humility and honesty reigns. It is also important to be able to count on people who are capable of communicating with different sensitivities, revindications and realities.

As a result, **we must work hard on building the profile of that group;** the character of each individual can have a strong impact on the functioning of a group and, as a result, on the project itself. Additionally, this can affect the way the group communicates with citizens and, as such, the people who make up the group should be able to demonstrate a set of concrete characteristics: creativity, strength, bravery, empathy, a sense of humour, conviction, the ability to cope, excitement and enthusiasm, efficiency, a disposition to build new relationships, human and professional qualities, etc.

It is almost impossible that one individual will demonstrate all these qualities, so instead, we must look for a group of people

who complement each other, and make sure that all the members of the group share the listed characteristics or, at the very least, they can transmit them. The group should, then, be made up of people with **different profiles** and the more plural the group, the greater its reach. In any case, it is important to pay special attention to the number of components: large groups can be less efficient, and often a group of between 3 and 8 people is sufficient.

These people should work together with the aim of becoming a group. They should take measures to function correctly and in a cohesive manner: taking care of the relationships and atmosphere, combining work with informal downtime, looking after one another, taking care to prepare their meetings well and take the correct decisions, giving consideration to and working with contrary opinions, and using a system of rotation to share our responsibilities and tasks.

6. Controlling the development of the process

When there are multiple tasks needing doing, we must leave to one side the temptation to cover everything at once – the activation process should have **clearly defined goals**, which are ambitious but realistic, in order to be on the safe side. By defining these goals we can help enormously with the smooth working of the network.

In order to work in the way described above, it will be important to follow a **concrete methodology, and foster well-planned initiatives** so that, once the activities are underway, people will be more willing to join up. **The simplicity of the activities** may guarantee continuity, and may also facilitate the participation of citizens by making everyone feel a part of the project. In fact, if these actions are linked to peoples interests and hobbies, participation will come naturally.

So said, it is worth getting the participants working on the activation process to agree on the aims, challenges, deadlines, the sharing out of roles, the geographical area chose for the project, the specifics for each place and other characteristics. It is also worthwhile getting them to monitor the planning process carefully so that there is a positive record for future actions (taking care of each other to avoid burn-out). Whatever the case, we must act **flexibly**, whilst following the methodology and the agreed pace. In fact, the initiative should fit the local structures, customs and social culture, and we should therefore be ready to add new lines and actions to the proposal.

We must also show our readiness to **overcome difficulties** which come up, and the associated moments of weakness which may overwhelm us as well. The role of the leading group and of the social network the group is building, may not remain firm and long-lasting. At times it might be a very active



role, whilst at others it is more passive. The question is whether the active moments are used to the greatest benefit and leave a positive wake and a good vibe. If this is the case, it will be easier to reactivate once again, if a member of the network should so desire, even though this time it might be for the purpose of a different revindication.

The communication tool is therefore extremely useful in order to spread our message, influence participation rates and visualise situations. **It is vital to take great care over both internal and external communication.** The internal channels should be pampered and there is always a place for a note of humour, irony or a flamboyant gesture. The communication which circulates via social media is similarly important, and we must be alert to any responses received through that channel. In order to create well-formed messages directed at the general public, a communication plan is essential.

Likewise, it is a good idea to work on the emotional aspect of the slogans and messages, and always from a constructive point of view. Working on the collective imagination through the use of symbols helps to develop our memories and build connections within the community – the trail left in our minds by a well-used symbol can be useful as an aide-memoire, for encouraging bonding and for our emotional engagement.

Social interventions demand a lot of work, meetings and office time, but it is not only office work. The grassroots initiative's eco-system is the street, networks of informal relationships and digital links. This kind of process should make us aware of spontaneity and the need to have people nearby in order to remain in touch with society; a grassroots initiative should have a fresh character and should never lose its essence.

There is a risk that, over time, an initiative might lose its novelty value and become routine-like. If this happens, we should try to keep the interest alive and the initiative strong.



7 CONCLUSION

We believe that this process of intervention and research, carried out over the last four years, has given us a series of ideas about how to encourage activation among citizens on the subject of the Basque language, and has thrown up various interesting questions which call for reflection.

We are conscious of the fact that it is hard to replicate the ideal conditions for starting up the proposed activation in real-life social contexts. However, we also know that we are capable of recreating some of these conditions, if we go about it in the correct way.

In addition, we have to bear in mind that, most probably, **there will be cases where it will be impossible to apply all of the key factors outlined in our proposal**, and that we will have to push the activation process forward without them. **We also know that there may be cases where all the key factors are present, yet the results may well be reached thanks to other initially unexpected factors.**

Taking all of the above into consideration, our plans cannot be taken as a set in stone, nor are they the winning formula which will bring about activation – behaviour and activation are, luckily, processes which cannot be planned for one hundred per cent. Consequently, we must adapt the process of activation to the conditions and resources present in each area.

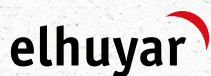
To conclude, we believe it is necessary to continue our research into how to activate citizens in favour of the Basque language, and to reflect on new ways of organising more effective communication.



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