Roskilde University

Collaboration Guide

Exploring Dilemmas Regarding Socially Engaged Best Practices

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Engaged Best Practices

Re:ERUA
European Reform University Alliance
Research and Innovation

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I.
Introduction

ROSKILDE UNIVERSITY
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In a world saturated with 'how-to' guides, each promising the path to success, it's essential to pause and reflect on the deeper implications of collaboration. As we embark on this journey (collaboratively of course together), with this handbook we are not merely offering a blueprint for success but rather an exploration of the complexities and responsibilities inherent in collaborative endeavours. Drawing upon critical perspectives, we strive to transcend simplistic 'best practices' and instead foster a deeper understanding of how to engage responsibly in collaborations aimed at social innovation, ethics, and sustainability. Our aim is not to dictate rigid formulas but to inspire thoughtful reflection and context-dependent meaningful action.

The handbook is aimed at interdisciplinary collaborative partners – including researchers (like the authors themselves), students, partners and stakeholders from various sectors (private enterprises, NGOs, socially entrepreneurial businesses, government institutions, etc.).

Since collaborative endeavours include often-hidden social dynamics, which may characterize the work environment of all affiliated parties and ultimately what partners are able to achieve together, they leave their mark on the success of any project. So why not strive to become an expert?

The primary aim and purpose of this book are to prompt you to delve deeper into contemplating collaborations and what they entail. It aims to boost your understanding and make you – together with your partners – reflect on the practices in your team.

This handbook comes together with an online tool available free of charge on our Moodle platform ruc.dk/collab dilemma. Equipped with this package, you and your collaborators are supported to develop an attentiveness towards common dilemmas that you may experience in your everyday work life and that are associated with most partnerships.

Via text, video and through reflective exercises offered to you and your team, the intention is to help you spot neglected, silenced or otherwise unaddressed potentials and obstacles that may be crucial to the collaborative processes that you engage in. It will help you detect social aspects of your collaborative endeavours from start to finish, and it provides you with the possibility to collectively explore mutual understandings and organization strategies that may fit your specific project and its constellation of collaboration.

The origins and purpose of this guide

The handbook and platform together make up this guide, which is based on research into what it means to collaborate. It is conducted by a research team at Roskilde University (RUC) in Denmark, focusing on the practical experiences shared by existing collaborative researchers and partners within the EU, incorporating stakeholders' perspectives.

For the development of exercises on the platform we have profited from a close cooperation with our alliance partner at University Paris 8. This research journey into the social aspects of collaborations was supported by the European Reform University Alliance (ERUA) and its follow-up project, Re:ERUA, both funded by Horizon 2020, grant agreement №101035808. The alliance members find common ground in the shared vision revolving around the engagement approach, sharpening our critical edge, and enabling us to assess processes, prioritize development areas, and contribute to society's advancement (https://erua-eui.eu/)

The focus on cross-sectoral, cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural collaborations is central to the aims of responsible research and innovation (RRI) having a key focus on stakeholder engagement, gender equality, ethics, open access, governance and science education (Dupret et al. 2022:13). However, interpersonal dynamics of collaboration and the emotion work at stake among collaborators is less attended to (cf. Dupret et al. forthcoming; Umantseva et al. forthcoming; Branch & Duché 2022; Hillersdal et al. 2022; Smolka et al. 2021). This guide (handbook and platform) is based on an extensive study of collaborating researchers' own practices (Dupret et al. 2022), a literature review focusing on research collaboration from a care perspective (Umantseva et al., forthcoming), and the empirical investigation of collaborative routes between researchers and stakeholders that took place within the

European Alliance in the fall 2022 till summer 2023 (Dupret et al. 2023:8-9).

It serves to equip you with tools to initiate, consolidate and finalize ethical and responsible collaboration processes, addressing dilemmas that may arise along the way.

We understand that such dilemmas can be complex, shaped by institutional, organizational and even structural factors beyond the will of project participants and leaders' intentional practices. While established procedures for ethical research exist on an institutional level, this guide offers a perspective embedded in local needs and practices, considering social relations, serving as a tool for continuous refinement. It beckons readers to reflect on conducting researcher-driven collaborations with the aim of enhancing societal engagement and social innovation, drawing inspiration from responsible research and innovation principles that are: inclusion, reflexivity, transparency, anticipation and responsiveness, as well as considerations of ethics of care.

This guide invites thoughtful reflections and offers novel ways to bridge the gap between bottom-up perspectives and social innovation, RRI and inter-relational thinking. We hope you find our guide not only insightful but also immensely useful in your quest to bridge the gaps between academia and society, opening new horizons of knowledge and innovation.

II.
Anticipating and Navigating this Collaboration Guide

The following chapter introduces you to a flexible approach for enhancing interpersonal skills in collaborative settings. It emphasizes a gradual but non-linear customizable learning pace and provides a structured exploration of 11 collaborative dilemmas. The chapter outlines typical phases within a collaborative process—initiation, consolidation and finalization—and encourages a nuanced collaboration understanding.

? Continuous Reflection as Collaborations Best Practices

As interdisciplinary collaborators working across sector and cultures, our quest for the golden rules of societally engaged research with impactful outcomes leads us to ponder the possibility of a 'one size fits all' toolbox. Hence, the conventional understanding of best practices suggests a set of procedures guiding individuals or teams toward optimal results. Yet our exploration of collaborative research reveals a critical gap – the underexplored realm of relational dynamics and on that basis, we reformulate the understanding of best practice as:

[...] the reflective process and procedure that requires time and space to address the social interpersonal dynamics of collaboration. This approach considers how central dimensions of care can be strengthened. (Dupret et al 2023:9).

The research on which this handbook and our platform (ruc.dk/collab_dilemma) rests underscores that successful collaboration hinges on relational matters, with improvements in these aspects largely uncharted (Dupret et al., forthcoming; Umantseva et al. forthcoming). Even the laudable concept of Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) bears a risk of overlooking vital perspectives despite adherence to institutional procedures (Dupret et al. 2022).

Our approach to best practices is thus reframed as an ongoing reflective process, offering learning takeaways for all involved partners. It advocates a relational and ethics-of-care lens to define optimal results in collaborative research. Notably, our approach to collaboration acknowledges that relational aspects are intertwined with institutional and political conditions. We recognize that not all collaborators prioritize engaged and responsible research, with some emphasizing personal gains over societal interests, and for some, a collaboration is solely a means to reach a more important end product. However, for us, this is not the case. We acknowledge that diverse global landscapes present challenges, including countries lacking collaborative research cultures or stakeholder groups hesitating to claim a 'legitimate' role in knowledge creation.

In essence, your journey guided by this book into best practices we hope becomes a nuanced exploration of the social dimensions within the organizational fabric, emphasizing the need for adaptable strategies in negotiating these relational waters.

? How to get started?

Developing your interpersonal skills and those of your team is a time-consuming endeavour. It represents the initial and most substantial aspect that must be embraced, understood, and accepted before progressing further. Prioritize your engagement. All we ask for is reflection, conversation, some more reflection in terms of afterthought and a follow-up on your practice – it takes time but is not insurmountable.

You can proceed your upskilling at your own pace, and this guide is designed to help you integrate your work into an already busy calendar.

We recommend customizing any advice to suit your preferences and capacities. As a starting point, it can be advantageous to identify for yourself and your collaborating team what kind of challenges in your collaboration you would like to address and learn more about. You can consult the list of content to get an overview of what this guide proposes as themes.

We suggest that you dedicate a minimum of two hours to onboard the introductory material in this guide (handbook and platform), and that you take the time to discuss and reflect upon it yourself
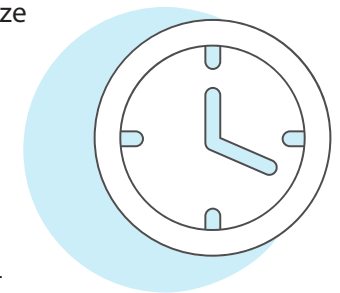
and with your team. Next, we suggest that you select one dilemma at a time, which includes the reflective exercises provided. Engaging with one dilemma requires approximately two hours spent on team discussions.

Additionally, anticipate allocating individual preparation time. By maintaining a schedule of joint activities for 2 hours, along with 1 hour of individual preparation, you can expect to complete all exercises within approximately a week. A scope of work that is well-suited for designing a seminar around the Collaboration Guide.

! *No wrong or right way* to navigate

The Moodle platform is organized around 11 dilemmas that commonly arise in collaborative situations. These dilemmas stem from interviews with collaborating researchers, stakeholders from private enterprises, NGOs, socially entrepreneurial businesses and government institutions.

The dilemmas cover diverse and equally significant themes having a key focus on stakeholder engagement, gender equality, ethics, open access, governance, and science education.

The series of dilemmas you encounter on our platform follows a thematic structure and thus lacks lin-earity. This means there is no cumulative build-up of your knowledge, but rather a gradual development of mutual understanding—both within your members (especially when you engage in the exercises) and in your research-based comprehension of the complexity of social mechanisms (particularly when reading this handbook, which also provides references to additional research literature).

Each dilemma is accompanied by reflective exercises, and you are free to choose from our selection of 11 dilemmas. There is no predetermined order in which to address them. You can choose dilemmas out of sheer curiosity and theoretical interest; you can leave it to chance and roll a dice; alternatively, you can follow our pre-designed phased approach. No option is better than another.

Learning Path:

	One week		
	Theoretical basis	**Collaborative dilemmas**	**Final assessment**
15 min	**40 min**	**3h / dilemma**	**5 min**
	Interactive content + Reflective writing exercises	Interactive content + Quizzes + "Reflexive questions" exercices + Case examples + Collaboration games (The Collaborator's Conundrum)	Your feedback
Getting started			
+	+	+	+
Welcome Introduction	• Collaborative Research seeks Societal Engagement (CRSE) • Collaborative Research rely on Emotion Work (CREW) • Collaborative Research Cares about Social Relations (CRCSR)	The presentation of each dilemma + references	Help us improve this guide!

Open learning community

Use this learning path as a guide to stay organized and derive the most benefit from the content. Feel free to customize your learning experience and progress at a pace that suits your individual needs.

→ **The phased approach**

Real collaboration processes are inherently complex, 'messy' and simultaneously filled with dilemmas. Dilemmas can arise in various forms at any time, but to make this tool as user-friendly as possible, the platform also offers a structured approach as you work through them. On the platform you are provided with a straightforward phase-divided guide scaffolded around three phases: ❶ initiation, ❷ consolidation and ❸ finalization. Each phase may be characterized by typical dilemmas worth exploring to handle them on an informed basis.

1.
Initiating

2.
Consolidating

3.
Finalizing

Initiation

In this phase, the collaboration process begins, and it is crucial to address the dilemmas that can arise when starting the collaboration. Regardless of your role, you need to understand how to identify and resolve these challenges.

If you are in this phase, although several dilemmas may be relevant to you, we recommend that you visit the following:
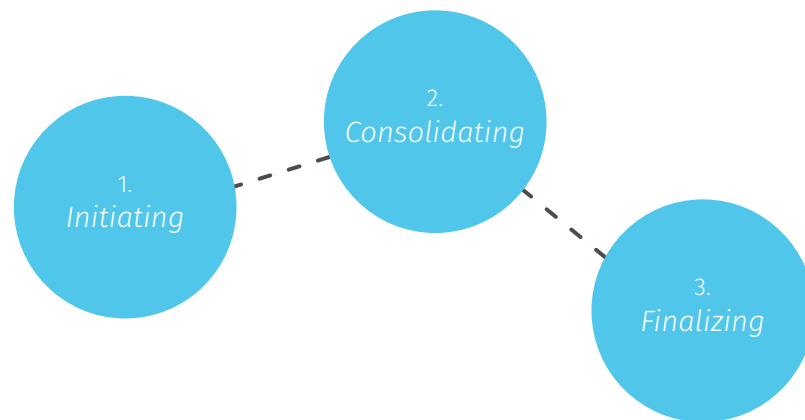
- *Dilemma 1:* Are you a planner or a player – in need of structure or flexibility?
- *Dilemma 2:* Multiple roles and alliances – challenges or advantages?
- *Dilemma 3:* Vulnerability – should one expose oneself or not?

Consolidation

Once the collaboration is underway, new dilemmas need to be addressed. This phase focuses on strengthening the collaboration and ensuring it continues smoothly. This is important for both project managers and participants in the collaboration.

If you are in this phase, although several dilemmas may be relevant to you, we recommend that you visit the following:

- *Dilemma 4:* Are collaborations truly legitimate? Illuminating the dynamics of legitimization and power
- *Dilemma 5:* Cross-disciplinarity vs mono-disciplinarity?
- *Dilemma 6:* Cross-cultural collaborations – navigating differences or finding common ground?
- *Dilemma 7:* Cross-sectoral collaboration: amplifying resources or generating misunderstandings?
- *Dilemma 8:* Personal differences – how do you prioritize?
- *Dilemma 9:* Are you an excellent researcher or an excellent collaborator?

Finalizing

The completion phase is about finishing the collaboration in an ethical and responsible manner. This involves addressing the final dilemmas that may arise as the project reaches its conclusion.

If you are in this phase, although several dilemmas may be relevant to you, we recommend that you visit the following:

- *Dilemma 10:* The art of setting boundaries – are you a yes-sayer or a no-sayer?

- *Dilemma 11:* Output or learning experience – what matters most?

Regardless of your role in the collaboration process, it is crucial to understand and manage these phases and the dilemmas that can arise along the way. By using this guide, you can optimize your collaborative projects and make the best decisions in the specific situations you encounter.

The phased approach
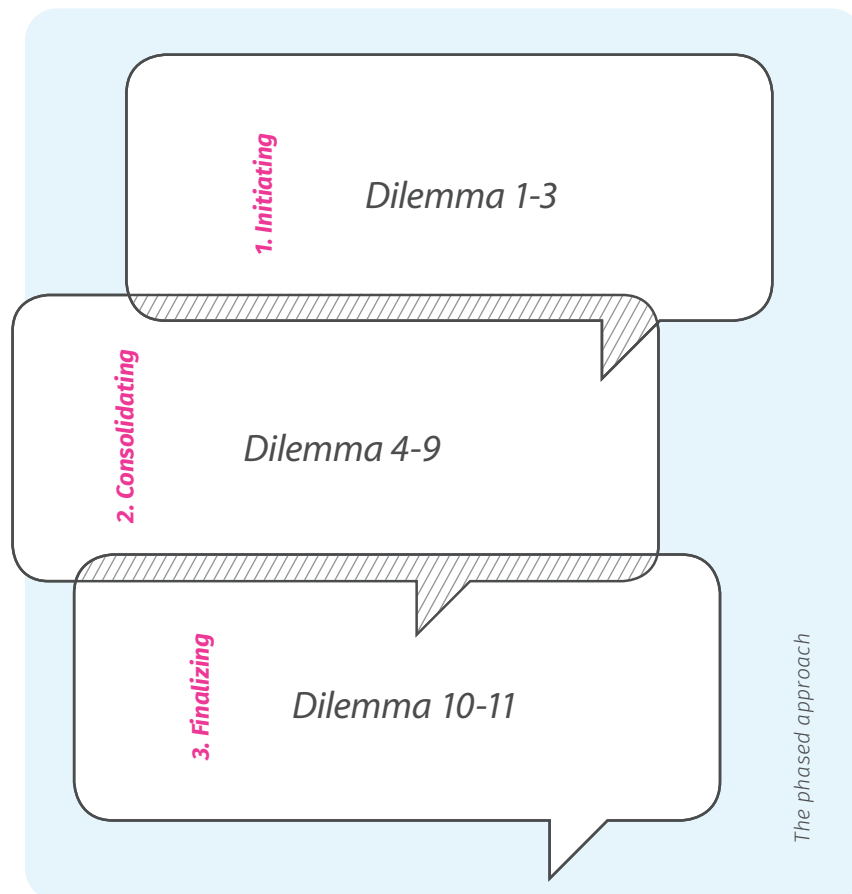
? **What to expect?**

When discussing dilemmas in a collaborative setting, there may be a tendency to seek quick solutions. However, the reflections and guidelines presented in this handbook and on the platform do not provide easy answers. Through video, text and various exercises, we encourage you to grapple with collaborative dilemmas intricately linked to dimensions of responsibility and ethics of care, inviting scrutiny, consideration, explication and mutual discussion.

Rather than offering a straightforward resolution to dilemmas, the intention is to help you and your partners recognize their presence. These dilemmas are likely to persist; we cannot eliminate them but can only handle them with care.

Our goal has been to explore and boost the reflexivity of collaboration practices from kick-offs to consolidation and finalizing phases, with a focus on social aspects. This helps offer insights and guidance to researchers, partners and stakeholders from private enterprises, NGOs, socially entrepreneurial businesses, government institutions, etc. who want to get involved with society.

III.
Theoretical Basis

The guidelines in this book rest on three foundational pillars: **A.** collaboration aimed at social innovation; **B.** the nuanced realms of relations and emotions at work and **C.** an overarching ethics of care. Before delving deeper, let's explore what collaboration means in research. You might find it inspiring to watch the authours in conversation about this here.

→ Collaborative research seeks social innovation

In research, collaboration involves researchers uniting with others—fellow researchers, organizations or community members—in a consortium. The extent of their collaboration varies, ranging from jointly developing research questions to the collective interpretation of results (Shirk et al., 2012; Bonney et al., 2016). Collaboration can include sharing resources, defining roles and engaging in participatory elements involving civil society groups, citizens affected by the research or public officials.

When we then add to the collaboration the importance of its societally engaged, responsible and innovative approach, it means that we draw from the social innovation research field's democratic tradition (Bauer et al., 2021; Dupret et al., 2022). This tradition seeks to address societal problems through citizen engagement and collective decision-making, aiming for equitable socio-economic and ecological outcomes – values that leave their mark on the collaborative best practices we can imagine (Moulaert & MacCallum, 2019). You can watch our video on social innovation here.

→ Collaborative research relies on emotion work

Emotion work is crucial in collaborations (Miller et al., 2008; Huynh et al., 2011; Dupret & Eschweiler, 2022). It involves 'invisible dimen-

sions' hard to measure and that go beyond most strategic planning. Hence, collaborative research becomes spaces of reflection with emotional and knowledgeable bodies that sense the collaboration literally (Davies and Horst, 2015). In this perspective, research collaborations transform from instrumental tools to reach a specific outcome to "possibilities of our being-in-common," forming collective bonds (Latimer and Gomez, 2019: 280).

Challenges arise with extensive emotional commitment in external collaborations, leading to exhaustion and a clash of personal values (Dupret and Pultz, 2021). Despite recognizing emotion work, there's a gap in understanding its diverse requirements in collaborative settings – this guide seeks to remedy that. You can watch our video on emotion work here.

→ Collaborative research cares about social relations

Ethics of care, rooted in feminist perspectives, defines care as everything done to sustain and repair our interconnected world, including our bodies and environment (Tronto 1993). Care, historically tied to the invisible labor of women and less powerful groups, is crucial in maintaining social ties and emotional lives (Federici 2012). Capitalist economies rely on caregiving practices while undervaluing and burdening certain groups (Fraser 2016).

In professional contexts care is often overlooked, and standardized procedures limit the imagination of what 'good' research work in collaborations might be (Bellacasa 2017). For instance, open data requirements and impact measurements become rigid frameworks, hindering our capacity for ethical research inquiry. Unlike broader approaches to ethics concerned with universal rights and moral rules, our approach to ethics of care subscribes to a relational approach. Concerned with empathy and interconnectedness, needs and relationships (Latour 2004, Hamington 2014). It calls for

cultivating 'response-ability' in collaboration, prompting research-ers to question not only whom they care for but also why and how (Bellacasa 2011).

Care, however, can be wielded negatively, as seen in imperialistic or paternalistic practices. Ethics of Care urges scrutiny when col-laborating, considering potential coercive consequences (Fraser 2016). Overall, it underscores the importance of empathy, respon-siveness, and relationship-building in decision-making, advocating for a more compassionate, just, and caring world (Bellacasa 2017). You can watch our video on etchics of cere [here](.).

The conceptual basis of collaborative research emphasize a soci-etally engaged outlook, a deep understanding of emotions and social relations, and an overarching ethics of care. These principles complement common understandings of responsible research and innovation (RRI) in the way that they link relations between the individual researcher and their organizational framework to reflec-tions on responsibility. This guide (handbook and platform) further addresses the impact of both individual researchers and the col-laborative process on responsibility, highlighting the importance of intentions and morally defined actions in maintaining and re-pairing 'our world'. This aligns with the broader perspective of RRI, going beyond technical outcomes to embrace the empowerment of citizenship in ethical and sustainable innovation (Dupret et al. 2022; Pellé 2019; Tronto 2013).

IV.
Collaborative Dilemmas

In this chapter, we present an introduction to 11 analytical collaborative dilemmas. Each dilemma is accompanied by reflective questions for you and your partners, and on the platform you will find more exercises.

If you visit this guide on your own, you can write down your reflections for yourself and perhaps share them with collaborators at some later point. If you would like to discuss the collaborative dilemmas with peers and collaborators together, you might, as a team, organize a roundtable discussion or consider reaching out on a virtual meeting channel concurrently to reflect and discuss. After each round, it might be helpful to jot down your thoughts in a document file.

The dilemmas in this section are analytical, empirically explored and addressed, providing insights into crucial dimensions of collaborative dynamics. It is important to note that the 11 dilemmas are not exhaustive, and as you engage with them, you may discover new dilemmas specific to your situation. You have the flexibility to work with, develop, and add to these dilemmas on our platform. In this guide, we have presented questions to kickstart your work, with the hope that the material will continue to evolve.

A dilemma, at its core, requires a choice between two options, neither leading to optimal outcomes. Our research uncovers dilemmas as points of professional and relational friction, occasionally subdued or manifesting as impasses necessitating substantial action. Contrary to a binary view, when working with empirical data, we often discover multiple pathways forward. While no singular preferred route exists, openly addressing dilemmas consistently yields results that serve as vital themes for reflective learning. Guided by the nature of social dynamics, the selected dilemmas in these guidelines aspire to be generic and applicable to diverse collaborations.

Derived from the complex nature of collaborative research, the presented dilemmas arise from engaging collaborators across universities, disciplines, sectors, and cultures. The approach, informed by Responsible Research and Innovation traditions (RRI), and ethics of care, acknowledges the intricacies and challenges inherent in addressing social sustainable ways to organise collaborations.

Embarking on the dilemmas of a best practice – attentive to concrete situations, people, social and structural dynamics – this guide (handbook and platform) delves into the complexities that emerge from engaging collaborators spanning institutions, sectors, and cultures. Informed by the principles of Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) and the ethics of care, our approach recognizes the multifaceted challenges that permeate collaborations.
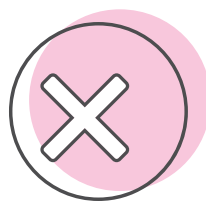
Within these collaborative landscapes, eleven distinct dilemmas come to the fore. These dilemmas extend beyond mere technical challenges; they cut across the realms of the individual, the inter-personal, institutional, and structural, reflecting the intricate nature of contemporary collaborations. From engaging with this guide – and delving into both the handbook and the platform –

comes an opportunity to understand the social forces at play; acknowledging that collaborative endeavours are often marked by tensions and complexities that resist easy resolution.

Join us as we navigate the terrain of collaborations, dissecting the dilemmas that researchers, students, private enterprises, NGOs, socially entrepreneurial businesses, and government institutions encounter in their pursuit of impactful and meaningful outcomes. These dilemmas, intricately woven into the fabric of collaborative activities, serve as points of reflection and insight, offering a deeper understanding of the challenges that shape the collaborative landscapes today.

Dilemma 1: Are you a planner or a player? Balancing meticulous planning and spontaneous creativity

This dilemma is especially pertinent during the initiating phase of collaboration but may also be relevant in other phases.

In the **initial stages** collaborations exude **excitement** with collaborators sharing motivations and interests enthusiastically. This fosters an **'organic'** and **flexible workflow** where novel ideas are embraced. However, projects with limited time frames necessitate **structured approaches** with **timelines, milestones** and **clear role delineation.**

The **'organic' workflow**, proposed by a player for ad-hoc management of re-sources and deadlines, can jeopardize collaboration. It may **hinder transpar-ency, inclusivity and reflexivity, potentially creating barriers to productivity.** If left unchecked, it risks evolving into a culture of unspoken agreements, stifling collaborators from voicing concerns and presenting them as less competent. The **'no-questions-asked'** mode can reinforce hierarchies, giving experienced col-laborators **unilateral leadership** (Smolka et al., 2012).

To counter the pitfalls of an 'organic' ad-hoc approach, collaborators may consid-er a **'by-the-book' strategy.** Yet this poses a dilemma, as **formalized procedures may stifle creativity and enthusiasm**, creating a disconnect from the emotional essence of collaboration.

Reflecting on the merits and drawbacks of **structured planning** versus **flexible approaches** is essential. This intr ospection should account for diverse institu-tional logics, workflows and the objectives of transdisciplinary stakeholders.

[?] Reflective questions exercise

The following questions aid in reflecting on the merits and drawbacks of, on one hand, employing structure and transparency in planning, and on the other hand, preserving and nurturing space for flexibility in defining and advancing collabo-ration. This reflection should also consider various institutional logics, workflows and objectives of transdisciplinary stakeholders.
Sum up and write down your main takeaways from your reflection on the dilemma.

1. What thoughts does the dilemma provoke? Can you relate to it, and if so, how?

Is there anything that surprises you or catches you off guard? For in-stance, what do you think of the fact that 'organic,' 'fluid,' and 'playful' collaboration processes can conceal who is making decisions?

If you team up, please take a round and listen to what each of you has to say and share about your experience of this dilemma.

Identify keywords that touch on the themes you find relevant for further discussion. You can draw these keywords from your shared experiences or from the dilemma 1 vignette, that you can listen to on our platform.

2. Does your project have the time, space, and capacity required to address issues such as different planning styles, resources available or project feedback methods?

Identify your current situation and compare it to your future desires and initiatives: What would be nice to have, and what would you need to have or work on to achieve it?

3. How do you think your collaborators would feel most comfortable building a trusting relationship with you? Do you see a value in building trust?

For inspiration visit our video on the platform.

4. What would it mean if you introduced ethical guidelines and proce- dures that team members could comply to? What could such prodedures forescribe? What would work and what would not work for you?

Take a round in order to generate ideas of relevance to you and your team.

5. Now, consider your collaboration having no or a minimum of proce- dures; what would that mean to you? Would you consider giving partners the mandate to decide on their own what to do next, and how then to define the common problem of concern in your mutual project?

Take a round in order to generate ideas of relevance to you and your team.

6. How do you deal with questioning the big and small premises of the project and its work processes along its way?

If you do things in a way that you see no purpose in and if your partners handle things in ways that are far from your own way of dealing with is- sues of concern, what then do you do?

And what does your partners do if they find your approach difficult to understand?

For example, have you experienced that (not) raising one of your own is- sues of concern in a collaboration has bounced back at a later stage in the collaboration? What happened? How did you solve the conflict?

Please take a few minutes to think through situations individually. Then turn to the group in order to discuss concrete, previous or fictious examples of how questions can and could be addressed in fruitful ways.

Please share with each other bad and good experiences respectively. Take a round and allow all partners to speak.

Dilemma 2: Navigating multiple roles and alliances – opportunities or challenge?

This dilemma is especially pertinent during the initial and consolidating phases of collaboration but may also be relevant when finalizing projects.

Balancing **diverse roles** within a collaboration is a critical consideration, particu- larly during the **consolidation phase** but extending to **various project stages** (Federici, 2012).

Collaborators often find themselves juggling **multiple roles**, which may evolve throughout the collaboration. How does this multifaceted involvement impact **collaboration dynamics**, and how are roles defined? For example, one partner may strategically leverage her identity as a woman and an expert, another as a practitioner and gatekeeper, etc. **Individuals** and **groups** contribute **diverse ex- pertise, personal skills**, and **institutional contexts** in combinations, enriching col- laborative **knowledge production** and **promoting innovation** and **reflexivity**.

While **transparent role exploration** unleashes collaboration potential, rigid role assignments can perpetuate societal hierarchies and exploit assumptions. **Un- examined role maintenance risks reproducing power imbalances within the team**. Acknowledging the complexity of social relations is essential for responsi- ble collaboration, emphasizing the need for **transparent roles** while recognizing the influence of external roles in collaborators' work and private lives.

? **Reflective questions exercise**

Reflecting on the dilemma prompts consideration of the advantages and drawbacks of strictly defining roles versus embracing collaborators' multifaceted roles. The following reflections aim to foster awareness of power dynamics and potential obstacles to participation in collaborative endeavors.
Sum up and write down your main takeaways from your reflection on the dilemma.

1. What thoughts does the dilemma provoke? Can you relate to it, and if so, how?

Consider individually before doing a round where all of partners share their considerations. To support your conversation you can also listen to the dilemma 2 vignette on our platform.

2. Try to map your own roles and relations and try to do it together with your collaborators, academic colleagues and external stakeholders.

3. How are roles connected to tasks (and perhaps hierarchy of tasks) in your project?

For instance, is one or are some of you often/seldom taking the minutes; doing the print jobs; taking care of room booking and are some assigned the writing tasks or big decisions more than others? Consider whether some tasks could be gendered, allocated due to seniority, etc. without your intention.

4. What roles may change throughout your collaboration? Which roles would you like to develop?

Dilemma 3: Vulnerability – should one expose oneself or not?

This dilemma is especially pertinent during the initial and consolidation phase of collaboration but may also be relevant in the finalizing phases.

Collaborators are people with **personal and professional lives**. For some, it is inevitable not to bring personal, emotional, embodied, messy, insoluble matters into their professional performance, and for others, it is a prerequisite to maintain emotional distance to organize their achievements (Latimer and Gómez 2019, 251; Davies & Horst 2015, 375). Responsible research and innovation show awareness of the different needs that partners may have **to share** or **not share** their **vulnerabilities**.

On the one hand, **if only calculable and controllable practices are recognised** as relevant to collaborative projects, **personal, emotional, embodied, messy, insoluble matters are in risk of being silenced or neglected** (Latimer and Gómez 2019, 251; Davies & Horst 2015, 375). If **collaborative environments** do not allow for personal doubts, disagreements, lack of knowledge or concerns to be shared among partners it **might conceal exposures and social condemnation**. On the other hand, if personal commitment and intimacy is expected from each partner in a team, such expectations **may unintentionally exploit and dictate people's privacy** (Gilson 2011; Latimer and López Gómez 2019, 247-263).

Therefore, it is important to articulate the pros and cons of, on the one hand, sharing one's own personal concerns and insecurities with collaborators to build mutual trust and inclusivity and, on the other hand, avoiding sharing to ensure a more neutral and project focused collaboration.

? **Reflective questions exercise**

These reflective questions are designed to prompt thoughtful introspection into the delicate balance of vulnerability in collaborative endeavors.
Sum up and write down your main takeaways from your reflection on the dilemma.

1. What do you think of this dilemma and its relevance to your current or future collaboration?
Consider individually before taking turns sharing your considerations.

2. How personal and professional do you feel you can be towards each other, and how personal/professional do you want your collaboration to be?
It can be quite challenging to discuss such matters. If addressing your own collaboration feels daunting, you can reflect on and incorporate examples from other collaborative relationships you've been in that might be relevant to discuss from a slight distance. For instance, what does it mean to you if emails end with "Best," "Yours," or "X"? How important is it to you if colleagues know about your personal life, such as family relationships, and so on?
For inspiration you can watch the following video on care ethics on our platform. Caring Collaborations: What works? Reflect afterwards on what it adds to your discussion and your reflection on how to handle your collaborators vulnerability.
Take a round and share with each other your reflections. Write down as you please.

3. Have there been opportunities at the beginning or during your collaboration for participants to express their doubts and concerns? Does expressing doubt or concerns feel vulnerable to you, or does it come across as a more professional performance? Please explain to each other how so?

4. Could you as a team collectively challenge what it means to be professional? Being professional probably doesn't always mean being impersonal, or does it? Can you think of examples where one or the other has been the case – perhaps some specific instances?

5. Can you come up with a description of how you would like to be professional and personal together? You can turn it into your set of values.

6. Consider whether you could dedicate time during meetings for sharing doubts and concerns about both the collaborative process and potential disagreements about the methodologies and theories etc. used for the project?

7. How could you acknowledge collaborators that do not wish to share their doubts?

8. How can you support collaborators if they disagree with for instance the principal investigator or most of the group?

9. Have you (as a team leader perhaps) experienced sharing your own vulnerabilities and confusions as an opportunity to reflect on the knowledge limits of your discipline, sector, or a theory or culture? What happened?

Dilemma 4: Are Collaborations Truly Legitimate? Illuminating the Dynamics of Legitimization and Power

This dilemma is especially pertinent during the initial phase of collaboration but may also be relevant in other phases.

Social sustainable collaborations contain social alliances. In the pursuit of professional **legitimacy**, the collaborating partners may reinforce each other through reference to previous mutual experience – they might mention how they have performed similar tasks ("it's not the first workshop I organize, so it should work"), became affiliated with relevant institutions ("You happen to know these people, so it should be an easy task for us to establish a dialogue"), or managed to build up a network (Avelino, 2021; Garrett-Jones et al., 2005). In this strategic game of establishing legitimacy, which does not necessarily take place on a conscious level, **there may be power dynamics at play** that simultaneously **include and exclude** (Rondinelli & London, 2017).

Doing **responsible collaborative research and innovation** means **reflecting** upon these potential power mechanisms that include some and exclude others (Branch & Duché, 2022). If legitimation practices occur to a pronounced degree, they may indicate that some group members do not feel recognized and therefore **seek acknowledgment**. Also, responsible research and innovation (RRI) means reflecting upon how such **power asymmetries** may affect the **research process** – from the formulation of research questions, objectives, research design, methods in use, to the thematization of analysis and its findings (Dupret & Eschweiler, 2022). For collaboration projects extending beyond research, the same may apply.

In the **collaborative journey, the subtle dance of legitimization is accompanied by emotion work** – an integral aspect of navigating these power dynamics. Partners might engage in **emotion work** to convey the sincerity of their commitment, emphasizing the emotional labour invested in addressing societal problems (Dupret & Pultz, 2021; Huynh et al., 2011). The **emotional distress** arising from **varying perceptions** of the collaborative project's importance can shape the **collaborative experience** (Dupret et al., 2024). **Acknowledging** and **addressing** this **emotion work** becomes **crucial for fostering genuine mutual agreement and preventing the reinforcement of conventional power dynamics.**

? **Reflective questions exercise**

These questions help you think about the advantages and disadvantages of putting effort into creating social alliances and strong relationships for collaboration, while also being mindful of how these social dynamics might hinder inclusion. Sum up and write down your main takeaways from your reflection on the dilemma.

1. What do you think of this dilemma of navigating social strives for legitimacy, needs for recognition and the emotion work at play? Is the dilemma of relevance to your current or future collaboration? Does it bring anything to mind?

Consider individually before taking turns sharing your considerations.

Please, to support your reflections you can visit the video on emotion work on the platform.

2. Does your collaboration have a strict hierarchical structure based on conventional claims for legitimacy (seniority, affiliation, etc.)? How does it affect your collaborative process?

3. Does it happen frequently that partners feel the need to establish or repair their legitimacy in the process of collaboration? Why can it be the case? Can it be because they feel that their voices are not heard?

4. What would it require to establish mutual legitimacy without reinforcing conventional hierarchies?

5. Do you question established hierarchies and inequalities through the way you design, perform or communicate your project?

Dilemma 5: Cross-disciplinarity vs mono-disciplinarity?

This dilemma is especially pertinent during the consolidation phase of collaboration but may also be relevant in other phases.

Research on complex wicked problems may call for collaborations between **different disciplines** (Dupret et al. 2022). **Cross-disciplinary collaborations have the potential of to improve the integrative approach** to global issues through **knowledge sharing** and **knowledge translation** (Federici 2012). However, cross-disciplinary collaborations also come with **constraints:** They are **time-consuming** since it takes great effort to clarify and understand language, concepts, methods, knowledge standards, values and norms different from one's own. Also, they might be **intersectional biased** or for instance biased in terms of **valorizing qualitative research** over **quantitative** – or vice versa (Dupret et al. 2022; Latour 2004).

? **Reflective questions exercise**

The following questions aim to kickstart reflections about the potential biases and dilemmas of approaching complex societal problems through interdisciplinary encounters.
Sum up and write down your main takeaways from your reflection on the dilemma.

1. What do you think of this dilemma of cross-disciplinary hardships? Is the dilemma of relevance to you? Reflect on your experience.

Please consider individually before taking turns sharing your considerations of working in cross-disciplinary teams.

2. Are there certain disciplines that are easier to collaborate with than others? If so, why?

Please think of some examples to support your points and that you can share with your group. Once everyone is ready, take turns sharing your reflections. Allow the conversation to explore the aspects that each of you brings to the table.

To further support your conversation, you might find the following questions helpful. Feel free to adapt to your own situation:

3. What role does achieving mutual understanding play in your experience of working in cross-disciplinary collaboration?

4. Do you dedicate time in collaborative spaces for "translation" of discipline-specific language (concepts, epistemologies, methodologies)?

5. Does collaboration with certain disciplines cause unease for you? What are the sources of this unease?

6. Have you tried to openly discuss your presumptions and uncertainties about your collaborator's discipline? What happened?

Dilemma 6: Cross-cultural collaborations – navigating differences or encountering common ground?

This dilemma is especially pertinent during the consolidation phase of collaboration but may also be relevant in other phases.

Academic collaborations increasingly include partnerships across countries. Partners collaborating on a specific project, often carry out tasks online while remaining in their respective home countries. Being **physically dispersed** means that they might be entering the collaborative space with **culturally in-built** ideas **and** norms regarding what working together is and should be; what hierarchies are 'normal'; how meetings take place; how tasks are carried out, prioritised and distributed. Also, partners working from a physical distance might lack the silent but nonetheless important **tacit knowledge** that one would be equipped with if physically together and chatting over lunch, by the coffee machine during breaks, etc. These aspects have profound, but oftentimes unspoken effects on the dynamics of working together. As unquestioned norms and common sense they tacitly affect new collaborations even if they are not intended. Collaborating in an intercultural team can accentuate how knowledge is always shaped by one's particular history, culture and physical presence or absence.

? **Reflective questions exercise**

Responsible research and innovation require the art of making the cultural codes of collaborative research in different countries visible and negotiated. This requires active engagement with intercultural skill development, starting with reflections initiated by questions like those below.
Sum up and write down your main takeaways from your reflection on the dilemma.

1. Does the dilemma of collaborating cross-culturally resonate with you?

Please reflect individually on your experiences of working in cross-cultural teams. What is your experience and what are the dilemmas from your perspective?
Please think of some examples to support your points and that can be shared with your team.
Once everyone is ready, take turns sharing your reflections. Allow the conversation to explore the aspects that each of you brings to the table.

To further support your conversation, you might find the following questions helpful. Feel free to adapt to your situation:

2. How could you consider the different ways your collaborators understand and engage with the world?

3. How much disparity or settlement should there be between collaborators within a team? And how can this goal (that you define) be ensured?

4. What challenges you the most in how your collaborators perceive and define the problem you're working on together?

5. What would it require for you to approach the collaborative matter of concern in a different way?

6. How could you ask your collaborator to suggest a new way of reaching out to for instance relevant stakeholders?

Dilemma 7: Cross-sectoral collaboration– amplifying resources or generating misunderstandings?

This dilemma is especially pertinent during the initiating phase of collaboration but may also be relevant in other phases.

How to deal with differences in resources, working styles and opportunities that collaborative partners from different sectors bring? How to avoid, systemic and interpersonal misunderstandings and possible misuse of outputs?

Cross-sectoral research collaborations are aimed at **enhancing** knowledge democracy and the creation of better interlinkages between research and society including industry, government, and civil society at large. At the same time, cross-sectoral collaborations can be a source of **divergence in expectations** leading to conflicts. This can be reflected in different values (for instance freedom of research and speech), working styles, terminology, time resources, funding structures, expectations about process, outcome, and impact.

? **Reflective questions exercise**

The following questions are designed to prompt thinking about the advantages and disadvantages of working in collaborations across different sectors. They help highlight variations in time resources, funding structures and impact expectations. **Sum up and write down your main takeaways from your reflection on the dilemma.**

1. What do you think of this dilemma of cross-sectoral collaborations? What does it tigger in you? Reflect on your experience and potential worries.

Please take a few minutes to reflect individually on your experiences of working in cross-sectoral teams. Have you experienced any situations where cross-sectoral dilemmas have arisen, or can you imagine situations and dilemmas related to the description above? Think of examples to support your points and that you can share with your group.

Once everyone is ready, take turns sharing your reflections. Allow the conversation to explore the aspects that each of you brings to the table.

To further support your conversation, you might find the following questions helpful. Feel free to adapt to your situation:

2. Do you take time to address available resources and constraints which come from collaborator's positioning in different sectors?

3. Do you acknowledge you own privileges or limitations which come from your position in academia/private business/ NGO? How do you use this knowledge in the collaborative process?

4. What challenges you the most in the way your collaborators perceive/define the problem you work together with? How would it be possible for you to consider different ways of understanding and being in the world of your collaborators?

5. How do you ensure that these often important and potentially conflict-prone collaboration issues are addressed?

Dilemma 8: Managing personal differences in collaboration

This dilemma is especially pertinent during the consolidation phase of collaboration but may also be relevant in other phases.

How do we manage personal differences in collaborations? Some individuals bring a social, committed, and respectful approach to their work—always on time and willing to share with a positive mindset. However, others may differ, influenced by structural, social, and organizational factors, as well as individual trajectories (Dupret et al. 2022).

These differences manifest in personal working styles, habits, energy levels, production paces, and communication styles. Recognizing these personal differences is essential for fostering a collaborative environment that reflects on collective frames, inclusion, and responsiveness within the partnership. This may call for the need to integrate elements of emotion work (See handbook 'Theoretical Basis' section, pp. 22-23 and see video on Moodle platform: Understanding and Managing Emotion Work in Collaborations).

Acknowledging personal differences and needs enables collaborators to feel seen and included. However, solely attributing issues to personality may divert attention from underlying structural conditions and broader inequality issues (Avelino 2021; Dupret et al. 2022; Garrett-Jones et al. 2005).

? Reflective questions exercise

The intent of the following questions is to initiate contemplation on the advantages and drawbacks of acknowledging individual perspectives and approaches that can influence collaborations. It is essential to consider these aspects to prevent personal differences from being overlooked and potentially evolving into sources of conflict and tension. Additionally, the questions prompt awareness of structural conditions that may impact collaborations.
Sum up and write down your main takeaways from your reflection on the dilemma.

1. What do you think of this dilemma about managing personal differences? Is it of relevance to you? If, how so?

Please start to reflect individually on the role of personality in collaborations. The idea about 'private selves' might be a cultural construction? Have you experienced situations where personality issues marked you collaboration?

Think of examples to support your points and that you can share with your group. Once everyone is ready, take turns sharing your reflections. Allow the conversation to explore the aspects that each of you brings to the table.

To further support your conversation, you might find the following questions helpful. Feel free to adapt to your situation:

2. Have you attempted to 'get to know' your collaborators, for instance, in terms of their professional, institutional, or educational background, or their preferences in music, food, or leisure activities? What insights would such knowledge bring to your collaboration? Would you gain collectively from it, or would it only be disruptive?

3. Have you provided your partners with the opportunity to discuss any personal or institutional constraints on the extent and way they collaborate? For instance, could partners feel overruled in specific situations? Of feel unsure about how to formulate themselves politely? Or be afraid to address lack of resources?

4. What is holding you back from sharing a particular (perhaps personal?) perspective on your project or work together? Are you holding someone else back?

Of relevance to this question would be to watch the following [video](#) Example of emotion work in collaborations.

Dilemma 9: Are you an excellent researcher or an excellent collaborator?

This dilemma is a relevant concern throughout a collaboration process. It might be highly relevant for academics and less so for partners from other institutions, private businesses, and NGOs, although the dilemma also applies there and can certainly impact all partners involved in the collaboration process.

How should one **balance collaborative efforts with academic excellence** ensuring top performance in accordance with metrics? Policy makers and funders, such as the European Commission, increasingly require collaborative, interdisciplinary, intersectoral and intercultural engaged research designs that can be of advantage in academic career development. Collaborative research is a **fruitful ground for transformative social change** through **democratic deliberation and social innovation**, but it is also **time consuming and takes a lot of effort** going through some of the potential tensions, uncertainties, misunderstandings, and pressures that are displayed in the 11 dilemmas presented in this handbook and on our platform.

Building relationships and building trust create a different impact than an article output being indexed. Hence, **collaborative research can turn out to be at odds with contemporary research evaluation criteria that increasingly rely on quantitative metrics** (Fleming & Sturdy, 2009). This strand calls for a re-evaluation of how impact, evaluation and excellence are defined and approached in research, particularly where societal engagement is involved. It highlights the need for qualitative or context-dependent ways for conducting these endeavours, considering the time and relational aspects involved in stakeholder interactions, which other partners may also recognize (cf. Dupret et al. 2022, Reed et al. 2021).

? **Reflective questions exercise**

The paradox in collaborative research is evident as funders demand coopera-
tion, yet researchers may experience a lack of support and acknowledgement at
university level, causing a misalignment with research evaluation metrics. Inte-
grating responsible research dimensions like reflexivity and transparency in col-
laborations requires additional effort. The questions posed here prompt reflec-
tion on the dilemma of balancing collaborative research with meeting excellence
measures and institutional goals.
Sum up and write down your main takeaways from your reflection on the dilemma.

1. What do you think of this dilemma about being an excellent collabo-
rator while meeting excellency criteria and measures? Does it resonate
with you, even if you might not be a researcher yourself? If, how so?

Please take a few minutes to reflect individually about the dilemma before you take
turns sharing your reflections. Allow the conversation to explore the aspects that
each of you bring to the table.

To further support your conversation, you might find the following ques-
tions helpful. Feel free to adapt to your situation:

2. For researchers: Is collaborative research an asset or an obstacle for
you in terms of conducting responsible research? And in terms of your
academic career? Why? Do you have to compromise?

3. For practitioners: Do the benefits of collaborating with researchers
outweigh challenges such as extra time needed, negotiating different
institutional logics?

4. How does your collaborative experience contribute to your goals
and ambitions of conducting research for social change?

5. Do you feel that collaborative research is backed up by support
structures (in your organisation, by funding bodies or at the policy level)?

Dilemma 10: The art of setting boundaries – are you a yes-sayer or a no-sayer?

The following questions aim to kickstart dialogic reflection on the pros and cons
of embracing new tasks and ideas while also being able to speak up and set
boundaries at the right time.

Entering a collaboration across sectors, cultures, and disciplines **requires an open-
ness and willingness** to engage with peers, but also **expressing one's boundaries** is
crucial to the success of a collaboration (Umantseva, Dupret & Lazoroska, forthcom-
ing).

There are various **types of boundaries**. Some come from the **personal realm** hav-
ing to do with motivations for participation, interest in the topic that collaborators
gather around, energy level, health, time available; others are determined by **institu-
tional conditions** such as one's tenure, allocation of hours, and yet other boundaries
might be **structural or tabooed conditions** enlisted in power hierarchies (Bellacasa,
2011; Katz & Ahmed, 2020). For example, in a male-dominated environment women
or queer person may find it challenging to say 'hell no' or even be taken seriously in
meetings or they may face resistance when proposing alternative ideas.

Considering there is no generally agreed upon way to conduct collaborations, there
are also no guidelines or outspoken explicit standards about how to experience or
express boundaries. Where there is no language for addressing these matters, col-
laborations seemingly need to flow without any explicit alignment of needs, expec-
tations, and boundaries of one's engagement. However, there is a time for 'yes', and
there is a time for 'no'. A 'no' raises boundaries, and even if it is not always easy to
articulate, it serves to protect what is precious to us. It is the only way we can create
time for our priorities and the things and people we love (Katz & Ahmed, 2020).

Boundaries thus are tricky and setting them is a **risky practice** – for who wants to
be the spoilsport? Setting boundaries are vital, as collaboration both depends on
practices that establish connections and exchange, as well as limits (Haraway, 1988).
The former should not threaten the existence of the latter.

[?] Reflective questions exercise

The following questions aim to kickstart reflections about the pros and cons of addressing personal perspectives and approaches that may affect collaborations while bearing in mind that addressing these personal dimensions at the same time risks silencing structural conditions that may also affect collaborations.
Sum up and write down your main takeaways from your reflection on the dilemma.

1. What do you think of this dilemma about the crucial ability to say yes and say no?

Take your time to consider individually your past experiences of you saying yes and saying no to collaborators. What were the consequences in terms of good and bad for you and others?

Write down a couple of examples before you take turns in your team sharing your reflections. Allow the conversation to explore the aspects that each of you bring to the table. Ask clarifying questions and encourage each other to delve deeper.

To further support your conversation, you might find the following questions helpful. Feel free to adapt to your situation:

2. Do you set aside time to reflect on the personal and professional resources you can leverage for a project collaboration, and evaluate what is negotiable?

3. Should it be up to individuals to consider such resources, or should it be organized more systematically in your collaborative activities?

4. If you notice that in the collaborative space your boundary is transgressed, how do you communicate it? Do you communicate it at all? Would you even be aware of it in time?

5. How do we become better at being aware of our boundaries and expressing them early on in a collaborative space?

Dilemma 11: Output or learning experience – what matters most?

This dilemma is especially pertinent during the completing phase of collaboration but may also be relevant in other phases.

Managing diverse interpretations of project goals poses a paradox (Avelino, 2021). Balancing the need for clear milestones, deadlines, and deliverables, while fostering mutual understanding, respect, and care during the collaboration process, is challenging (Bellacasa, 2011; Davies & Horst, 2015). **Tensions may arise between working efficiently towards meeting external obligations and allowing space for internal growth, fostering relationships and learning opportunities within the team** (Dupret & Eschweiler, 2022; Garrett-Jones et al., 2005).

Navigating **Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI)** introduces a paradox as it functions as a **"boundary object",** interpreted diversely across social worlds be it sectors or cultures (Dupret et al., 2022; Ruggiu, 2019). Some argue that RRI agendas, while fostering opportunities, may constrain research by imposing uniform procedures, neglecting discipline-specific knowledge and local practices. This approach risks jeopardizing the nuanced understanding gained through years of immersion and collective effort (Latimer, 2019). **Aligning RRI with a democratic tradition** underscores the need to prioritize collaborative research processes over outcomes, emphasizing the significance of relationships in a collaboration (Dupret et al., 2022).

Acknowledging this awareness is vital for project success, requiring a willingness to engage in mutual personal reflection and learning (Dupret & Pultz, 2021; Davies & Horst, 2015; Dupret et al., 2022).

? **Reflective questions exercise**

The following questions prompt reflection on balancing output and joint development for optimal impact in your collaboration.
Sum up and write down your main takeaways from your reflection on the dilemma.

1. What do you think of this dilemma of giving priority to output, impact and deliveries vs engaging in a joint development process? How to get the priorities right – when and how?

Please take a few minutes to reflect individually on your experiences of working in or with RRI. Is it a democratic endeavour or a value that should be preserved and acknowledged, or is collaboration a means to achieve desired and sought-after results? It's rarely an either-or scenario, so try to reflect on your own perspectives and perhaps add nuances.

Think of examples to support your viewpoints and write down notes that enables you to share with your group.

Once everyone is ready, take turns sharing your reflections. Allow the conversation to explore the aspects that each of you brings to the table.

To further support your conversation, you might find the following questions helpful. Feel free to adapt to your situation:

2. Is there a space in your collaboration to consider what makes you curious and excited about this research project? What keeps you going? What occupies your thoughts?

3. Have you thought about your own 'best practice' for a social responsible collaboration?

4. Do research collaborations give you food for thought and open new research horizons or exhaust you? What can you do to make the collaborative process an exciting endeavor for yourself and your partners?

5. Can you create space in your collaboration for discussing it?

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