



**Roskilde
University**

Collaborative Dilemma Guide

A Handbook for Elevating Best Team Practices

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COLLABORATIVE DILEMMA GUIDE

A Handbook for Elevating
Best Team Practices



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COLLABORATIVE DILEMMA GUIDE

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Best Team Practices

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I.
Introduction

ROSKILDE UNIVERSITY

Stenslund & Dupret, 2023

Welcome to a guiding handbook that delves into the heart of research for societal engagement and social innovation. In an era where the boundaries of academia and the wider world blur, this guide seeks to be an indispensable compass for those seeking to initiate, consolidate, and finalize collaborations that transcend the confines of ‘traditional’ research that solely took place within universities.

This handbook is a shortened version of the full report titled Research Collaboration for Societal Engagement and Social Innovation: Guidelines and Reflections for Best Practice (Dupret, Umantseva, Lazoroska 2023). The handbook is aimed at collaborating partners – both researchers and partners from various sectors in society – who wish to work on their collaboration. Collaborative endeavors include often-hidden social dynamics, which may characterize the work environment of all affiliated parties and ultimately what partners are able to achieve together. In short: collaborations leave their mark on the success of any project, so why not become an expert?

The primary goal and purpose of this book is to ‘professionalize’ your ‘take’ on collaborations that engage partners from diverse sectors in society (private, public and third sector parties) with a focus on engagement and social innovation in its broadest sense.

It aims to boost your understanding and make you – together with your partners – reflect on the practices in your team. The book seeks to support you in your way of becoming an always better version of you as a collaborator. Being a great, responsible and caring collaborator is not a personal skill to be mastered; however, it is a result of collective hard work that holds the entire team accountable.

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 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 relational and socio-psychological aspects of your collaborative endeavors – 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 relational and socio-psychological 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 N° 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/re-erua/>)

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 scientific literature review focusing on research collaboration from a care perspective (Umantseva et al., forthcoming), and the empirical investigation of collaborative trajectories between

researchers and external 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 specific projects. 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 (Dupret et al. 2022).

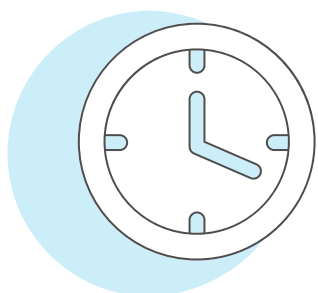
This guide invites thoughtful reflections and offers novel ways to bridge the gap between bottom-up perspectives and social innovation, RRI and inter-relational thinking. We hope you find this guide not only insightful but also immensely useful in your quest to bridge the gaps between academia and society,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

II. Traversing Collaborative Skill Development

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.

? How to get started?

Developing your interpersonal skills and those of your team is a time-consuming endeavor. 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 handbook 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 handbook, 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 exercises provided on the platform. Engaging with one dilemma requires approx. 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, investigating 33 hours in total each. A scope of work that is well-suited for designing a seminar around the Dilemma Guide.

Estimated time investment

Content	Individual preparation	Team discussions
Introduction	1 hr	2 hrs
Dilemma 1	1 hr	2 hrs
Dilemma 2	1 hr	2 hrs
Dilemma 3	1 hr	2 hrs
Dilemma 4	1 hr	2 hrs
Dilemma 5	1 hr	2 hrs
Dilemma 6	1 hr	2 hrs
Dilemma 7	1 hr	2 hrs
Dilemma 8	1 hr	2 hrs
Dilemma 9	1 hr	2 hrs
Dilemma 10	1 hr	2 hrs
Dilemma 11	1 hr	2 hrs
Total (33 hrs):	11 hrs	22 hrs

? How to navigate? *No wrong or right way*

The Moodle platform is organized around 11 dilemmas that commonly arise in collaborative situations. These dilemmas stem from interviews with researchers and external stakeholders currently involved in cross-sectoral collaborations and have been curated by consulting the latest research literature. The dilemmas cover diverse and equally significant themes having a key focus on stakeholder engagement, gender equality, ethics, open access, governance, and science education.



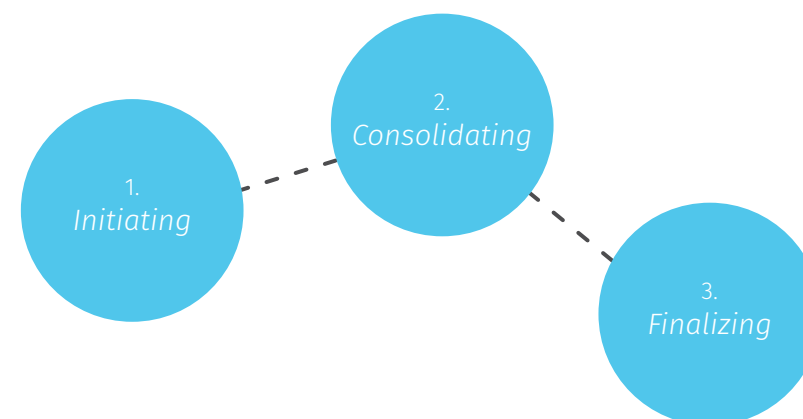
The series of dilemmas you encounter on our platform follows a thematic structure and thus lacks linearity. This means there is no cumulative build-up of your knowledge, but rather a gradual development of mutual understanding—both within your members (especially when you engage in the exercises) and 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 exercises, and you have the freedom to select from the 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.

→ 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: 1 initiation, 2 consolidation and 3 finalization. Each phase may be characterized by typical dilemmas worth exploring to handle them on an informed basis.



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*: Navigating the Power Dynamics of Legitimacy in Collaborative Research
- *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?

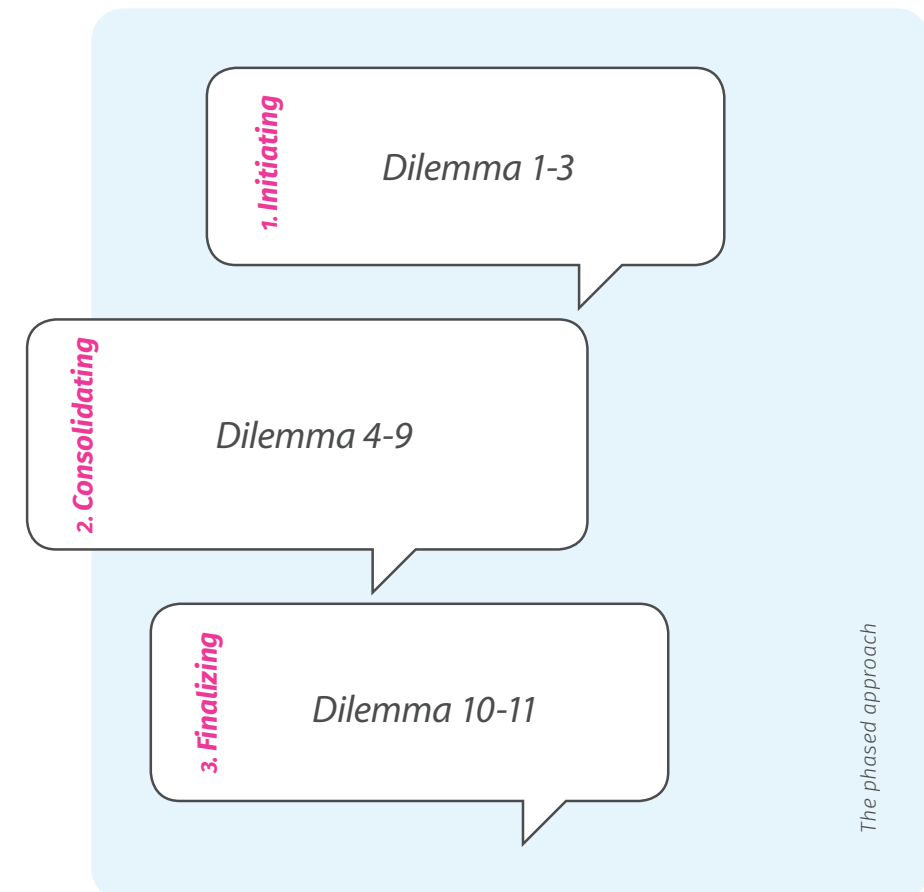
Finalizing

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.



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 the 'professionalization' of research collaboration kick-offs and consolidation phases, with a focus on relational and socio-psychological aspects. In simpler terms, when we talk about professionalizing, we are referring to making collaborative practices, opportunities and challenges clear through a process that involves different perspectives. This helps offer insights and guidance to researchers and external partners who want to get involved with society.

III. *Navigating Relational Waters as the Best Practice*

As cross-sectoral collaborators, 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 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, some emphasizing personal gains over societal interests. Moreover, 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 into best practices becomes a nuanced exploration of the inter-relational dimension within the organizational fabric, emphasizing the need for adaptable strategies in navigating these relational waters.

IV. 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.

→ 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).

→ 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.

→ 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 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 researchers 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 collaborating, considering potential coercive consequences (Fraser 2016). Overall, it underscores the importance of empathy, responsiveness, and relationship-building in decision-making, advocating for a more compassionate, just, and caring world (Bellacasa 2017).

The theoretical anchors of collaborative research emphasize a societally 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 reflections on responsibility. This guide (handbook and platform) further addresses the impact of both individual researchers and the collaborative process on responsibility, highlighting the importance of intentions and morally defined actions in maintaining and repairing ‘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).

V.

Collaborative Dilemmas 11+

In this chapter, we present an introduction to 11 analytical collaborative dilemmas. Each dilemma is accompanied by reflective questions for you and your partners. These dilemmas 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 – hence, 11+.



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 impediments 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 inter-relational 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 and sectors. The approach, informed by RRI, social innovation traditions, and ethics of care, acknowledges the intricacies and challenges inherent in addressing internal and external concerns within collaborative research.

Embarking on the intricate journey of transdisciplinary collaboration, this guide (handbook and platform) delves into the core dilemmas inherent in collaborative research. The complexities that emerge from engaging collaborators spanning universities, disciplines and sectors are at the forefront of our exploration. Informed by the principles of Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI), social innovation traditions, and the ethics of care, our approach recognizes the multifaceted challenges that permeate both the internal dynamics and external considerations within collaborative research.



Within these collaborative landscapes, eleven distinct dilemmas come to the fore. These dilemmas extend beyond mere technical challenges; they traverse the realms of the individual, the inter-

subjective and the institutional, reflecting the intricate nature of the modern research landscape. Unraveling these dilemmas requires a nuanced understanding of the forces at play, acknowledging that collaborative endeavors are often marked by tensions and complexities that resist easy resolution.

Join us as we navigate the terrain of collaborative research, dissecting the dilemmas that researchers encounter in their pursuit of impactful and meaningful outcomes. These dilemmas, intricately woven into the fabric of collaborative endeavors, serve as points of reflection and insight, offering a deeper understanding of the challenges that shape the collaborative research landscape.

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 resources and deadlines, can jeopardize collaboration. It may hinder transparency, 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 collaborators unilateral leadership (Smolka et al., 2012).

To counter the pitfalls of an 'organic' ad-hoc approach, collaborators may consider 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 introspection should account for diverse institutional logics, workflows and the objectives of transdisciplinary stakeholders.

? Reflective questions

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 collaboration. This reflection should also consider various institutional logics, workflows and objectives of transdisciplinary stakeholders.

- 1.** Does your project have the time, space and capacity required to address issues such as different planning styles, resources available or project feedback methods?
- 2.** How do you think your external collaborators would feel most comfortable building a trusting relationship with you? Through complying with ethical guidelines and procedures? Or by giving them the mandate to decide what to do next, and how to define the problem of concern in your mutual project?
- 3.** Have you experienced that not raising one of your own issues of concern in a collaboration has bounced back at a later stage in the collaboration? What happened? How did you solve the conflict?
- 4.** How do you deal with questioning the big and small premises of the project along the way?

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, particularly 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 expertise, personal skills and institutional contexts in combinations, enriching collaborative knowledge production and promoting innovation and reflexivity.

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

? Reflective questions

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:

- 1.** Try to map your own roles and relations and try to do it together with your collaborators, academic colleagues and external stakeholders)
- 2.** How do collaborators define their own and each other's roles?
- 3.** What roles are formally (and explicitly) defined i.e. head of studies, head of research, coordinator, responsible for the funds, responsible for the mobilizing of volunteers etc.
- 4.** What roles are implicit i.e. wishes, aspirations, background knowledge about the local environment?
- 5.** How are roles connected to tasks (and hierarchy of tasks) in your project?
- 6.** What roles change throughout the collaboration? Which roles would you like to develop?
- 7.** Can the change of your own and your partners' roles help us rethink and reconceptualize inclusion? In what ways?

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 that they 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 research, personal, emotional, embodied, messy, insoluble matters are at 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

These reflective questions are designed to prompt thoughtful introspection into the delicate balance of vulnerability in collaborative endeavors:

- 1.** Have there been opportunities at the outset, or during your collaboration, for the participants to express their doubts and concerns?
- 2.** Could you 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?
- 3.** How could you acknowledge collaborators that do not wish to share?
- 4.** Have you experienced sharing your own vulnerabilities and confusions as an opportunity to reflect on the knowledge limits of your discipline, sector or a theory? What happened?

Dilemma 4: Navigating collaborative dynamics of legitimacy and emotion work

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

Research 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, become affiliated with relevant institutions, or managed to build up a network (Avelino, 2021; Garrett-Jones et al., 2005). In this strategic game, 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 means reflecting upon these potential power mechanisms that include some and exclude others (Branch & Duché, 2022). If legitimization 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 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).

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 labor 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

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:

- 1.** Does your collaboration have a strict hierarchical structure based on conventional claims for legitimacy (seniority, affiliation etc.)? How does it affect your collaborative process?
- 2.** Does it happen frequently that partners feel the need to establish 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?
- 3.** What would it require to establish mutual legitimacy without reinforcing conventional hierarchies?
- 4.** 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 socio-ecological issues requires collaboration between different disciplines (Dupret et al. 2022). Cross-disciplinary collaborations enhance 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

The following questions aim to kickstart reflections about the potential biases and dilemmas of approaching complex societal problems through interdisciplinary encounters:

- 1.** What role does mutual learning and unlearning play in your cross-disciplinary collaboration?
- 2.** Do you dedicate time in collaborative spaces for “translation” of discipline-specific language (concepts, epistemologies, methodologies)?
- 3.** Does collaboration with certain disciplines cause unease for you? What are the sources of this unease?
- 4.** 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 collaborate on a specific project, often carrying out tasks online while remaining in their respective home countries. Being physically dispersed means that they might be entering the collaborative space with culturally ingrained and unyielding ideas and norms regarding what working together is and should be; what hierarchies are 'normal'; how meetings take place; how tasks are prioritized and distributed 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 and culture.

? Reflective questions

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:

- 1.** How would it be possible for you to take different ways of understanding and being in the world of your collaborators into account?
- 2.** What challenges you most in the way your collaborators perceive and define the problem you are working on together?
- 3.** What would it require for you to approach the collaborative matter of concern in a different way?
- 4.** How could you ask your collaborator to suggest a new way of reaching out to 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, working styles, terminology, time resources, funding structures, expectations about process, outcome and impact.

? Reflective questions

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.

- 1.** Do you take time to address available resources and constraints which come from your collaborator's positioning in different sectors?
- 2.** 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?
- 3.** What challenges you the most in the way your collaborators perceive/define the problem you are working on together? How would it be possible for you to consider different ways of understanding and being in the world of your collaborators?

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 interpersonal 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 individual aspects is essential for fostering a collaborative environment that reflects on collective frames, inclusion and responsiveness within the partnership, integrating elements of emotion work (Dupret & Eshweiler, 2022).

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

? Reflective questions

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.

- 1.** Have you attempted to get to know your collaborators and inquired about their motivations for participating in your project?
- 2.** Have you provided your partners with the opportunity to discuss any constraints on the extent and way they collaborate?
- 3.** What is holding you back from sharing a particular perspective on your project or work together? Are you holding someone else back?

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

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

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, taking into consideration the time and relationality involved in stakeholder interactions (cf. Dupret et al. 2022, Reed et al. 2021).

? Reflective questions

The paradox in collaborative research is evident as funders demand cooperation, yet researchers may experience a lack of support and acknowledgement at university level, causing a misalignment with research evaluation metrics. Integrating responsible research dimensions like reflexivity and transparency in collaborations requires additional effort. The questions posed here prompt reflection on the dilemma of balancing collaborative research with meeting excellence measures and institutional goals:

- 1.** 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? For practitioners: Do the benefits of researchers outweigh challenges such as extra time needed, negotiating different institutional logics?
- 2.** How does your collaborative research contribute to your goals and ambitions of conducting research for social change?
- 3.** 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?

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

Entering a collaboration across sectors, cultures, and disciplines requires an openness and willingness to engage with peers, but also expressing one's boundaries shows is shown as fruitful to the success of the collaboration (Umantseva, Dupret, & Lazoroska, forthcoming). There are various types of boundaries; some come from the personal realm having to do with motivations for participation, interest in the topic that collaborators gather around, energy level, health, time available, etc.; others are determined by institutional 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).

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, collaborations seemingly need to flow without any explicit alignment of needs, expectations, 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? But they are essential, as collaboration both depends on practices that establish connections and exchange, as well as boundaries and delimitations, be it of the new object that the collaboration is attempting to constitute, or of the personal integrity and well-being of those involved (Haraway, 1988; Umantseva, Dupret, & Lazoroska, forthcoming). The former should not threaten the existence of the latter.

? Reflective questions

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:

- 1.** Do you dedicate time for reflection and self-reflection on the personal and professional resources one can mobilize for a project / collaboration at hand and evaluate what is negotiable?
- 2.** If you notice that in the collaborative space your boundary is transgressed, how do you communicate it? Do you communicate it at all?
- 3.** 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 across different sectors, 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 (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 (Latimer, 2019). 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

The ensuing questions prompt reflection on the collaboration’s outputs, impacts and objectives, excluding personal preferences and empowering potential benefits from the equation.

- 1.** How do you create the space to have fun? Is there space in your collaboration to think about what makes you curious and excited about this research project?
- 2.** Have you thought about what your own best practice is for collaborative research?
- 3.** 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? Can you create space in your collaboration for discussing it?



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