Transcript

In a dimly lit room adorned with an eclectic mix of potted plants and mismatched chairs, a group of researchers and NGO' partners, and representatives from the local municipality office and a couple of interested entrepreneurs gathered, their excitement palpable. They had secured funding for their collaborative cross-sectoral research project, and the possibilities seemed endless. Each participant, although relatively new to one another, wore a hopeful smile and eagerly shared their motivations and interests for embarking on this journey to create social innovation.

The atmosphere crackled with what they affectionately called "collaborative excitement." In this initial phase, everyone agreed on almost everything, and new ideas were welcomed with open arms. They reveled in the flexibility and organic nature of their collaboration, where there were no strict structures, no stringent timelines, just the promise of creative exploration.
However, beneath the surface of this exhilarating beginning lay the seeds of a collaborative dilemma. While it was easy to ride the wave of enthusiasm in those early days, contemporary academia work conditions and limited funding for all partners provided time constraints that did not allow for an endless, unstructured journey. The need for timelines and milestones began to creep into their discussions, sparking a dilemma that would shape the trajectory of their collaboration.

As they delved deeper into their project, the once-fluid and improvisational approach began to show its cracks. The "organic" workflow, initially celebrated for its free-spirited nature, now posed challenges. It hindered transparency, inclusivity, and reflexivity, creating barriers that impeded the productivity of their collaboration. Questions and doubts became uncomfortable to voice, transforming the collaboration into a "no-questions-asked" unspoken agreement.
The "no-questions-asked" mode brought its own set of problems. Decisions were expected to be accepted without resistance, giving the most experienced collaborator the authority to lead, unopposed. Hierarchies solidified, and the learning process stalled. The flaws of their organic workflow only became apparent in the final stages, when they realized their differing expectations had silently shaped the course of their collaboration.
On the other hand, there was an alternative path, one of formalized and procedural collaboration. Following a structured plan from the start seemed like the solution to their problems. But this approach, too, had its dilemmas. It threatened to stifle creativity, enthusiasm, and the natural flow of ideas. It created a divide between the collaborators and their emotional connection to the project, to the world, and to each other. The rigid planning mentality distanced them from the core essence of their work and the reasons they embarked on this journey.

The collaborative dilemmas at this crossroads were clear. How much planning and guidance should be provided for an inclusive process? Who should take charge? The collaborators now faced a critical choice: to embrace the organic excitement and risk stumbling in the final stages, or to adopt a formalized approach and potentially sacrifice their creative spirit.
The room buzzed with tension as they grappled with this decision, recognizing that finding the delicate balance between structure and spontaneity was the key to a successful collaboration. The journey ahead promised to be challenging, but with open dialogue, mutual respect, and a shared vision, they hoped to navigate the collaborative dilemmas and create something truly meaningful together.