Transcript

In a bustling meeting room, a group of diverse collaborators gathered, eager to embark on a collaborative cross-sectoral research project. Excitement and curiosity filled the room, but as they delved into the nitty-gritty of their collaboration, a complex web of dilemmas concerning their different roles and alliances emerged.

The first dilemma that arose was the multiplicity and blurriness of collaborators' roles. One individual wasn't just a researcher; she was also a project lead and a woman with a unique perspective to offer. Another collaborator brought not only specialized skills but also international expertise, further complicating the role dynamic. They had entered this collaboration with certain preconceived assumptions about each other's roles, but it became apparent that these assumptions were just the tip of the iceberg.

As they discussed how to define and assign roles, the room buzzed with questions. How should collaborators explicitly assign activities and responsibilities based on their expertise or wishes? And how would implicit assumptions about roles, influenced by background knowledge and self-presentation, affect their collaborative dynamics?

The collaborators soon realized that these questions were not easily answered. Roles were not fixed; they were dynamic and subject to change throughout the collaboration. This fluidity allowed for innovation and the crossing of field boundaries, fostering reflexivity and responsiveness, which were integral to their vision of responsible research and innovation (RRI). Embracing and celebrating the multiplicity of roles seemed essential for their endeavor.

However, another layer of dilemmas emerged. While flexibility and multiplicity enriched their collaboration, there was a fine line between this and losing sight of the collaboration's core purpose. Strict role predefinition and assignment could be exploitative, perpetuating gender roles or hierarchies between junior and senior researchers. Unexamined role and task divisions could reproduce wider societal imbalances.

The aim to be transparent as an important aspect of their shared sense of conducting a responsible collaboration also loomed large. In a collaborative environment where roles and alliances were blurred, how could they ensure clarity and accountability? Matters related to emotional labor and relationship maintenance were often relegated to certain individuals, typically women or those in less powerful positions.

Yet, the collaborators understood that it was unrealistic to imagine a purely unpolitical world. Their roles within the collaboration were inherently influenced by the roles they played in their broader lives and society. The complexity of social relations and roles was inextricably linked to their pursuit of responsible collaboration and societal engagement.

As they grappled with these dilemmas, the collaborators realized that striking the right balance between flexible, dynamic roles and clear, responsible collaboration was the key to success. They would need ongoing dialogue and a commitment to challenging assumptions and hierarchies to navigate these complex terrain effectively. The path ahead was far from straightforward, but it was laden with the potential for profound discoveries and meaningful societal impact.