

**UNIVERSIDAD POLITÉCNICA DE MADRID**  
Escuela Técnica Superior de Ingenieros Industriales



# **Cultivating Collaboration Capability in Sustainability Transitions**

*An Exploratory Approach from the Organisational Perspective*

## **DOCTORAL THESIS**

Submitted for the degree of Doctor by:

**Irene Ezquerro Lázaro**

Architect

Madrid, 2024



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**Doctoral Degree in Management Engineering**

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*A mi hijo, Íñigo.*



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# Abstract

We live in an era of multiple interconnected transitions, interwoven with challenges such as climate change, pandemics, economic and geopolitical instability, and the crisis facing liberal democracy. To navigate complexity and uncertainty, anticipation and collaboration are deemed essential, with this research focusing on the latter.

Collaboration is widely recognised as crucial in addressing global challenges, as evidenced by the 2030 Agenda or the Paris Agreement. Transition management literature emphasises the pivotal role of collaboration in governance and innovation, facilitating the integration of interests among public and non-state stakeholders while fostering knowledge creation and exchange.

Multi-stakeholder collaboration has been a growing trend in recent decades. However, its impact has been questioned due to persistent challenges in envisioning new socio-technical systems and scaling up transformative innovations. Transformational collaboration, characterised by high levels of engagement and trust, is necessary to co-create systemic changes at an appropriate pace, but organisations face barriers in collaborating at this high level due to competing institutional logics and hierarchical, fragmented structures.

Therefore, enhancing collaboration capability is imperative for navigating sustainability transitions and strengthening democracies. However, the cultivation of this capability remains a relatively underexplored topic. This research aimed to address this gap by exploring the following overarching question: How can organisations strategically cultivate collaboration capability within the context of sustainability transitions? The purpose was to develop a framework of organisational strategies for implementing changes in practices, structures and culture, with a particular emphasis on the design of learning experiences.

The research adopted a transdisciplinary, qualitative, exploratory and interpretive approach, employing a threefold methodological strategy to enhance credibility and validity. Firstly, an integrative literature review was conducted to clarify the phenomenon under study, synthesising frameworks from transition management, organisational theory and pedagogy. Subsequently, an interview-based grounded theory study was undertaken with individuals experienced in collaboration, aiming to identify practical actions to help organisations initiate and sustain changes to enhance their collaboration capability. Additionally, a multiple-case

study identified design factors conducive to cultivating collaboration capability in learning experiences. Grounded theory proves valuable when existing literature fails to address the research question, while case studies provide detailed descriptions essential for exploring phenomena in their real-life context, particularly when the research question seeks to understand “how.”

Given its nature, this research contributes to transdisciplinary knowledge by integrating insights from three disciplinary academic fields and non-academic expertise. The results provide clues that may prove relevant in other contexts and initiates several avenues for further research.

Specifically, this thesis sheds light on the potential role of organisations in cultivating collaboration capability within sustainability transitions. The findings highlight the importance of addressing individual learning, organisational changes in practices, strategies and culture, and systemic transformation in an integrated manner. Additionally, practical recommendations include the relevance of relational interaction design, encompassing temporal and spatial considerations, as well as the significance of both individual and organisational self-awareness, particularly in managing emotions and power dynamics.

# Resumen

En una era de múltiples transiciones interconectadas, ligadas a importantes desafíos de carácter global como el cambio climático, las pandemias, la inestabilidad económica y geopolítica, o la crisis que atraviesa la democracia liberal, navegar la complejidad e incertidumbre requiere anticipación y colaboración. En esta última se centra esta investigación.

La colaboración es reconocida como un mecanismo fundamental para abordar los desafíos globales, como demuestran la Agenda 2030 o el Acuerdo de París. La literatura sobre gestión de las transiciones subraya el papel de la colaboración en la gobernanza y la innovación, al facilitar la integración de intereses entre instituciones públicas y no gubernamentales y fomentar la creación e intercambio de conocimientos.

En las últimas décadas, la colaboración multiactor ha seguido una tendencia creciente, pero su impacto se ha cuestionado dadas las dificultades para generar nuevas visiones y escalar las innovaciones. La colaboración transformacional, caracterizada por altos niveles de compromiso y confianza, es crucial para cocrear transformaciones sistémicas a la velocidad adecuada. No obstante, las organizaciones enfrentan obstáculos para alcanzar este nivel de colaboración, como dinámicas competitivas y estructuras jerárquicas y fragmentadas.

Por lo tanto, es imperativo mejorar la capacidad de colaboración para navegar las transiciones hacia la sostenibilidad y fortalecer las democracias. Sin embargo, cómo cultivar esta capacidad sigue siendo un tema relativamente poco explorado en la investigación académica. Esta tesis tiene como objetivo abordar esta brecha de investigación a través de la siguiente pregunta: ¿Cómo pueden las organizaciones cultivar estratégicamente la capacidad de colaboración dentro del contexto de las transiciones hacia la sostenibilidad? El propósito es desarrollar una teoría sobre las estrategias organizativas para implementar cambios en las prácticas, estructuras y cultura, con un énfasis particular en el diseño de experiencias de aprendizaje.

La investigación adopta un enfoque transdisciplinar, cualitativo, exploratorio e interpretativo, y emplea una estrategia metodológica triple para mejorar su credibilidad y validez. Primero, se llevó a cabo una revisión bibliográfica integradora para aclarar el fenómeno de estudio, poniendo en diálogo marcos de la teoría de las transiciones, la teoría organizativa y la pedagogía. Posteriormente, la teoría fundamentada permitió identificar acciones prácticas que ayuden a las

organizaciones a iniciar y sostener cambios que incrementen su capacidad de colaboración a partir de entrevistas a individuos con experiencias intensivas en este ámbito. Además, un estudio de casos permitió identificar factores de diseño para cultivar capacidad de colaboración en experiencias de aprendizaje. La teoría fundamentada resulta valiosa cuando la literatura existente no aborda la pregunta de investigación, mientras que los estudios de casos ofrecen descripciones detalladas esenciales para explorar fenómenos en su contexto real, especialmente cuando la pregunta de investigación busca comprender “cómo.”

Dada su naturaleza, esta tesis contribuye al conocimiento transdisciplinar al integrar saberes de tres campos académicos disciplinares y conocimiento experto. Los resultados proporcionan pistas que podrían resultar relevantes en otros contextos y plantean nuevas preguntas para futuras investigaciones.

Específicamente, esta tesis arroja luz sobre el papel potencial de las organizaciones en el desarrollo de la capacidad de colaboración en las transiciones hacia la sostenibilidad. Los hallazgos destacan la importancia de abordar las sinergias entre aprendizaje individual, cambio organizativo y transformación sistémica, la relevancia del diseño relacional de las interacciones, incluyendo consideraciones temporales y espaciales, así como la autoconciencia individual y organizativa, especialmente en la gestión de emociones y dinámicas de poder.



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# Abbreviations and Acronyms

AoH	Art of Hosting
EC	European Commission
EDD	El Día Después
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
EU	European Union
HEI	Higher Education Institutions
IDG	Inner Development Goals
itdUPM	Innovation and Technology for Development Centre at the Universidad Politécnica de Madrid
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
Q&A	Questions and Answers
RQ	Research Question
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SDSN	Sustainable Development Solutions Network
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UPM	Universidad Politécnica de Madrid



*Muchos sueños posibles fueron inviables  
por el exceso de certeza de sus agentes, por el  
voluntarismo con que pretendían modelar  
la Historia en lugar de hacerla con los otros,  
realizándose en este mismo proceso.*

Paulo Freire, *A la sombra de este árbol* (1997)



# 1. Introduction

We live in a context of multiple and interconnected transitions, characterised by heightened levels of complexity and interdependence (Sachs et al., 2019). Persistent issues such as climate change, pandemics, geopolitical conflicts, economic inflation, coupled with a deep citizen disenchantment with economic policies and democratic institutions, create an environment of “radical uncertainty” (Costas, 2023, p. 24).

Scholars have coined the term “wicked problems” to describe these issues, which lack definitive statement or single solutions, and whose constraints are constantly evolving (Churchman, 1967; Roberts, 2000). Additionally, the concept of “polycrisis,” inspired by Edgar Morin, is increasingly used to depict the complexity and interconnectedness of global risks (Henig & Knight, 2023; L. Klein et al., 2023). In polycrisis, systemic risks transcend their original global systems and the resulting harms from the interacting crisis surpass the cumulative effects they would produce in isolation (Lawrence et al., 2022). In navigating complexity and interconnectedness, two strategies are deemed crucial: anticipation and collaboration (World Economic Forum, 2023). This thesis is interested in the latter.

Collaboration has been acknowledged as a key mechanism to address global challenges. Notably, the 2030 Agenda assigns its last Sustainable Development Goal (SDG17) to “revitalise the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development” (United Nations. General Assembly, 2015, p. 26). This initiative, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships, aim to mobilise financial resources and knowledge, build capacities, enhance policy coherence and macroeconomic stability. The imperative for collaborative action is further emphasised in other international policy documents such as the Paris Agreement (United Nations, 2015b) and the European Green Deal (European Commission, 2019).

Transition management literature acknowledges collaboration as pivotal in both governance and innovation. In transition governance, collaboration is essential to integrate the interests of public and non-state stakeholders in policymaking (Ansell, 2012; Barandiarán et al., 2023; Fenton et al., 2016; Khan, 2013). Moreover, collaboration plays a critical role in fostering creativity and facilitating knowledge exchange in transition experiments, promoting learning across different scales of the system (Dóci et al., 2022; Gugereff et al., 2023; Hartley et al., 2013; Loorbach

et al., 2015). Additionally, collaboration is seen as paramount for knowledge creation in a wide range of fields, including research (Bolger, 2021a) and business (Behnam et al., 2018).

Despite the growing trend of multi-stakeholder collaboration (Stott, 2023), authors argue that existing partnerships often struggle to envision new socio-technical systems and scale up transformative innovations (Loorbach et al., 2020). Challenges include effectively involving stakeholders in transition governance (Fenton & Gustafsson, 2017; Perry & Atherton, 2017) and the ambiguity surrounding the concept of collaboration itself (Gajda, 2004; Lozano, 2007). In this regard, only transformational collaboration, characterised by high levels of engagement, trust and interaction, can facilitate the collective generation of transformative change at the systemic level at an appropriate pace (J. E. Austin & Seitanidi, 2012).

However, organisations face significant barriers to collaborate in transformational ways due to competing institutional logics, hierarchical structures and fragmented systems (Bögel et al., 2019; Coenen et al., 2015; Crosby & Bryson, 2010; Freeth & Caniglia, 2020; Hamann & April, 2013; Læg Reid & Verhoest, 2010). From a sociological perspective, individualistic and competitive attitudes are intensifying, influenced by neoliberalism, polarisation and declining community cohesion (Sennett, 2012).

Therefore, it is imperative to enhance collaboration capability to effectively navigate the complex and interconnected dynamics of sustainability transitions (Almeida et al., 2021) and reinforce democracies (Barandiarán et al., 2023). Collaboration capability is a multi- and cross-level concept that affects individuals, teams, organisations, networks and systems (Blomqvist & Levy, 2006). In essence, it represents the ability of individuals and organisations to effectively co-create value to achieve shared objectives (Almeida et al., 2021; Bezerra et al., 2020).

Nevertheless, the literature has overlooked the ways in which individuals and organisations can cultivate collaboration capability, as a prerequisite for transitions (Goyal & Howlett, 2020; Stam et al., 2023; van Mierlo & Beers, 2020). The research is driven by the need to assist organisations in building this capability as a means to enhance their contribution to addressing global challenges. In particular, this thesis seeks to explore the strategies organisations can design and implement to initiate and sustain changes towards collaboration,

with particular focus on learning experiences that foster the cultivation of collaboration capability in the context of sustainability transitions.

The researcher's motivation to explore this topic stemmed from her professional experience at the Innovation and Technology for Development Centre at the Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, where she has been involved in facilitating collaborative arrangements and organisational change processes since 2017. Nevertheless, her interest in collaboration originated during her studies in architecture and urbanism at the same university, where she sought to integrate diverse knowledge to devise more creative and effective solutions to urban challenges.

In her professional experience, she observed that collaboration capability is often assumed when designing collaborative processes and partnerships, overlooking the numerous barriers individuals and institutions encounter due to a lack of skills and organisational conditions (such as cultural, spatial, procedural constraints). Collaboration is often perceived as inherent rather than recognised as a capability that needs to be cultivated. This highlights the importance of not only focusing on facilitation strategies, as extensively discussed in the literature (Stott, 2023), but also on capacity building and organisational changes, as it is the purpose of this thesis. At the same time, she perceived collaborative contexts as unique opportunities to foster comfort in collaboration, a viewpoint emphasised by Freeth and Caniglia (2020).

Therefore, this research serves both theoretical and practical aims. Its main objective is not to uncover a universal “truth,” but rather to offer a framework useful for practitioners seeking to cultivate collaboration capability within their organisational contexts. The overarching question guiding this research is:

— *How can organisations strategically cultivate collaboration capability within the context of sustainability transitions?*

The investigation was divided into two specific inquiries:

— *RQ1: What specific strategies can organisations adopt to initiate and sustain changes in their practices, structures and culture conducive to collaboration capability?*

— *RQ2: How can organisations design and implement learning experiences that effectively cultivate collaboration capability in the context of sustainability transitions?*

To address these research questions, the investigation pursues the following goals:

- O1. Characterise the collaboration capabilities essential for driving transformative change in sustainability transitions (Chapter 3).
- O2. Identify organisational and pedagogical approaches conducive to cultivating collaboration capability in sustainability transitions (Chapter 3).
- O3. Explore and understand the specific strategies employed by organisations to initiate and sustain changes in their practices, structures and culture, with the aim of enhancing collaboration capability (Chapter 4).
- O4. Explore and understand the specific design elements employed in several learning experiences aimed at cultivating collaboration capability within the context of sustainability transitions (Chapter 5).
- O5. Develop a framework to strategically cultivate collaboration capability within organisational settings in the context of sustainability transitions (Chapters 4, 5 and 6).

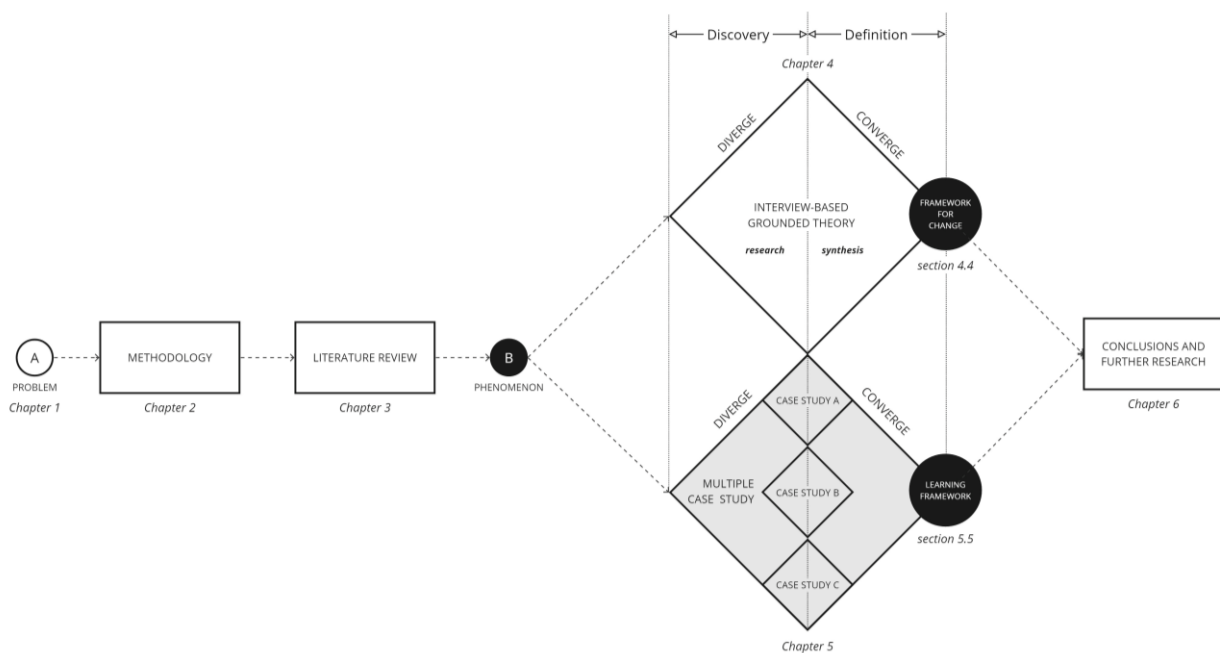
The empirical investigation centred on exploring learning experiences from two perspectives: individual lifelong learning trajectories (Chapter 4) and the design of learning contexts (Chapter 5). Embracing a qualitative approach (section 2.1) rooted in an interpretivist philosophy (section 2.2), the study recognises knowledge construction as a result of social actors' perceptions and interactions. Given the unexplored nature of the phenomenon under study, an exploratory approach was adopted (section 2.3.2), involving immersion in three study contexts over extended periods.

The research employed two complementary strategies, an interview-based grounded theory study (Chapter 4) and a multiple-case study (Chapter 5), to enhance the credibility and validity of the findings. Both methodologies are deemed suitable for gaining insight in a phenomenon in its early stages of research (Glaser & Strauss, 2010; Yin, 2003). Specifically, grounded theory is particularly valuable when existing literature fails to address the research question (Goulding, 2002), whereas case studies provide extensive descriptions that are beneficial for exploring a phenomenon in its real-life context, especially when the research question aims to understand "how" (Yin, 2003). The data collection and analysis processes (refer to sections 2.3.5.3 and 2.3.5.4 for grounded theory, and sections 0 and 2.3.6.4 for the multiple-case study) followed an iterative and systematic approach, with techniques being applied flexibly, in accordance with Charmaz's (2006) recommendations.

This thesis sheds light on the role organisations can play in cultivating collaboration capability in the context of sustainability transitions, providing

valuable theoretical and empirical insights. By integrating transition management, organizational theory and educational frameworks, the research expands the understanding of collaboration capability as a multidimensional and relational phenomenon. Furthermore, it delves into the complex interplay among individual learning, organizational change and systemic transformation, recognised by scholars as a challenging endeavour (Stam et al., 2023). The empirical findings are also diverse and enrich the understanding of the phenomenon, offering insights from individuals with extensive collaborative experiences and detailed description of three Spanish cases. This contributes to a literature that has traditionally been dominated by scholars and cases from northern Europe (Escario-Chust et al., 2023). The research concludes by proposing two preliminary frameworks: one outlining organisational strategies to facilitate changes in practices, structures and culture and the other guiding the design of learning experiences for cultivating collaboration capability.

Finally, this thesis is organised into six chapters (see Figure 1.1).



**Figure 1.1.** Thesis outline

Source: Own work, based on the double diamond design process (D. Gustafsson, 2019)

Chapter 1, the current chapter, offers an overview of the study by justifying its relevance, describing the research background and the researcher's motivations, defining key concepts, stating the aim and questions and outlining the methods employed to address the research goals.

Chapter 2 (page 7) outlines the methodological approach. It specifically describes the philosophical assumptions, delineates the research design including details on data collection and analysis, discusses ethical issues and addresses the research validity.

Chapter 3 (page 41) provides an overview of existing literature and a conceptualisation of the phenomenon under study. In particular, it examines the nature of change in sustainability transitions, the pivotal role of collaboration in driving this change, essential capabilities and skills for effective collaboration, assessment methods, and explores diverse pedagogical and organisational approaches to cultivating collaboration capability.

Chapter 4 (page 80) describes the findings from the interview-based grounded theory study aimed at addressing RQ1, concluding with the introduction of a framework for fostering collaboration within organisational contexts.

Chapter 5 (page 130) reports the results of the multiple-case study, offering a detailed description of the three examined cases along with a cross-case synthesis. It culminates in the proposal of a learning framework tailored for designing educational experiences to cultivate collaboration capability within organisational settings, thereby responding to RQ2.

Finally, Chapter 6 (page 199) presents the conclusions of this thesis, examining the main theoretical and empirical contributions, discussing practical implications, evaluating the extent to which the research aim and questions have been addressed, and identifying limitations and potential avenues for further research.



## 2. Methodological Design

This chapter outlines the methodology employed to address the research questions and objectives announced in the Introduction. It begins with a brief overview of the methodological design, underscoring its pertinence to management research and the rationale for adopting a qualitative approach (Section 2.1). Next, the philosophical assumptions are explained (Section 2.2), followed by a detailed presentation of the research design (Section 2.3). This subsection delves into the research scope (Section 2.3.3), the methods of data collection and analysis (Sections 2.3.4, 2.3.5 and 2.3.6), with a focus on ethical considerations (Section 2.3.7). Finally, it concludes with a reflection on the limitations and a discussion on the validity of the results (Section 2.3.8) and a timeline (Section 2.3.9). Section 0 provides a summary of the research strategy.

### 2.1. Introduction to the Methodological Design

The term “methodology” refers to the way in which the research is conducted; in other words, how the researcher approaches the problem and seeks an answer (Taylor & Bogdan, 1996). Methodology thus encompasses the entire research process, from defining research questions to acknowledging the researcher's worldview, considering aspects such as epistemology, ontology and axiology. This involves selecting the most appropriate research strategy, which extends to decisions about data collection and analysis methods.

Management research, such as this thesis, encompasses both comprehending (understanding “how”) and improving organisational practices (Tranfield & Starkey, 1998). The aim to bridge theory and practice explains the practical and transdisciplinary nature of this research field.

In recent decades, the British Academy of Management has engaged in a vigorous debate on enhancing the societal relevance and impact of management research — as demonstrated by initiatives like the Management Impact Book Series (British Academy of Management, 2022). Nevertheless, scholarly literature suggests that the optimal development path for the discipline requires a balanced mix of basic and applied research — a symbiotic relationship between theory and practice (Huff

& Huff, 2001). Consequently, management research is expected not only to advance knowledge but also to address organisational challenges effectively, while contributing to the common good (Huff & Huff, 2001).

Transdisciplinarity is essential for tackling complex societal problems that cannot be adequately addressed through disciplinary perspectives alone, especially those where social, technical and economic development intersects with values and culture (McGregor, 2015b), as in this research. The concept of transdisciplinarity was introduced by Jean Piaget in 1970, seven centuries after the establishment of disciplinarity, as a novel approach that recognises human knowledge as complex and emergent (Nicolescu, 2005b).

According to Edgar Morin (2003), complexity resembles a fabric, an interwoven structure characterised by intricacy, uncertainty, ambiguity and disorder. Classical science adheres to a paradigm of simplification, typically emphasising reduction and disjunction in knowledge (Morin, 2005). It presumes the existence of a singular reality that follows a predetermined path (McGregor, 2015a). Conversely, transdisciplinarity aligns with the paradigm of complexity, requiring an understanding of the relationship between the whole and the parts of a system and thus emphasising both distinction and conjunction (Morin, 2003, 2005). The Nicolescuian approach bridges human knowledge (the Subject) with scientific knowledge (the Object), acknowledging multiple levels of realities that interact and may even entail contradictions (McGregor, 2015a).

Furthermore, transdisciplinarity entails more than the integration of knowledge from various disciplines (Bursztyn & Drummond, 2014; Tranfield & Starkey, 1998). It goes between, across and beyond disciplines (McGregor, 2015b; Nicolescu, 2005a) with the objective to forge a connection between scholars and decision-makers and encourage collaborative knowledge creation (Litre et al., 2019). Consequently, in management studies, the transformation of “knowledge into reliable, legitimate and transparent data that stakeholders can use in decision-making” (Litre et al., 2019, p. 145) is imperative to fulfil its practical objectives.

In addition to being transdisciplinary, this thesis is both multi- and interdisciplinary, as it engages in dialogue across diverse fields of study (transition management, organizational theory, and pedagogy) and integrates their knowledge, epistemologies, methods and languages to address a complex problem (Bursztyn & Drummond, 2014; Litre et al., 2019; Nicolescu, 2005b).

Furthermore, the practical and transdisciplinary essence of management research carries significant methodological implications. Drawing on methodologies from various disciplines, particularly the social sciences, management research increasingly leans towards embracing a qualitative approach (Goulding, 2002; Saunders et al., 2007), as it is the case in this investigation. Unlike quantitative methods, qualitative research aims not only generating knowledge for scientific purposes, but also to produce changes in the studied issue or produce knowledge relevant to practical implications (Flick, 2015b). Qualitative research transcends the simplistic numerical versus descriptive data dichotomy, involving the researcher as an observer in the empirical world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2018), qualitative researchers delve into the natural settings of phenomena, aiming at comprehending and interpreting them through the meanings attributed by individuals. They assert that interpretive practices not only make the world visible but also hold a transformative power. Through observation and interviewing, researchers guide participants in reflecting on their situations, potentially leading to shifts in understanding or behaviour (Flick, 2015a; Maxwell, 2019). As a result, qualitative research assumes a political and moral dimension, actively shaping and influencing the landscape it seeks to understand.

The following section further explores the philosophical assumptions underpinning this research endeavour.

## 2.2. Philosophical Assumptions

The research philosophy encompasses fundamental assumptions that shape the researcher's worldview, which require elaboration before delving into the methodological design. Three key assumptions define a research philosophy and guide methodological decisions: *epistemology*, *ontology* and *axiology*.

*Epistemology* dictates what is considered acceptable knowledge within a specific field of study, influencing the decisions that affect the relationship between the researcher and the object of study. *Ontology* concerns the nature of reality, discerning between objectivity or subjectivity, while *axiology* addresses the role of values that the researcher brings to the study (Saunders et al., 2007).

Typically, two epistemological perspectives are distinguished: positivism and interpretivism. Positivist research is conducted in an objective manner, seeking to observe reality for the purpose of testing and establishing hypotheses or law-like

generalisation, a common approach in the realms of physical and natural sciences (Saunders et al., 2007). In contrast, interpretivist research endeavours to understand a phenomenon within a specific (unique) social context utilising the perspectives of the subjects involved (Saunders et al., 2007).

This thesis adopts an interpretivist philosophy, well-suited for investigating complex and dynamic phenomena such as organisational capability and culture (Saunders et al., 2007) and educational processes (Jorrín Abellán et al., 2021). Unlike positivism, interpretivism focuses on researching among people rather than objects, emphasising knowledge construction through social interaction (Creswell, 2013). That is why interpretivism is also referred to as social constructivism. This epistemology is inherently subjective. Subjectivist view considers that “social phenomena are created from the perceptions and consequent actions of social actors” (Saunders et al., 2007, p. 108).

Phenomenology, an intellectual tradition within interpretivism, aims to describe phenomena through the perspectives of those who have experienced it (Moustakas, 1994; Neubauer et al., 2019), focusing on understanding both “what” and “how” individuals experience without necessarily exploring underlying causes (Jorrín Abellán et al., 2021). Interpretivist researchers typically study small samples of subjects to capture the context’s significant influence on outcomes (Jorrín Abellán et al., 2021; Saunders et al., 2007), as in this research. This approach is commonly employed in management research, particularly in addressing change management issues (Goulding, 2002).

This thesis specifically aims to comprehend the phenomenon of “cultivating collaboration capability in organisational settings” by exploring the experiences of individuals engaged in complex collaborative environments focused on sustainability transitions.

As outlined in the definition of qualitative enquiry (section 2.1), the phenomenological approach requires the researcher to become an integral part of the study’s context. Consequently, understanding the researcher's values and basic beliefs and the role they play in decision-making (*axiology*) becomes crucial. Such decisions encompass choosing the research problem and context, aligning with a specific paradigm, selecting data collection and analysis techniques, and determining how findings are presented (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

In this case, the author’s professional environment influences her perspective, actively engaged in a movement that positively regards collaboration. Through

daily experiences, she consistently confronts and overcomes barriers to foster positive collaborative experiences. This perspective shapes her belief in collaboration as a vital pathway, if not the only one, toward a more sustainable model. Consequently, the research problem was deliberately chosen to highlight the significance of collaboration in addressing wicked problems.

Furthermore, the adoption of a phenomenological interpretivist perspective underscores the commitment to placing people at the heart of the research, as the primary source of knowledge. The author aims to directly listen and learn from the experiences of individuals engaged in complex collaborative environments, emphasising their beliefs, fears, and learning trajectories. Extracting the essence of a phenomenon from the participants' perceptions requires the researcher to maintain an empathetic stance (Saunders et al., 2007). This study also involves ethical decisions regarding data collection, processing and analysis, including obtaining informed consent, coding interviews and cross-checking transcripts with key informants (see further details on ethical issues in section 2.3.7).

In addition to conventional scientific formats such as articles and the doctoral thesis manuscript, the author seeks to disseminate results in practical formats accessible for practitioners. This includes lectures, training materials, guidelines and other documents relevant to daily professional practice (refer to Appendix E for further insight into the dissemination strategies already implemented).

In essence, this approach combines empathetic engagement with systematic and rigorous methods, ensuring that the results offer depth, richness and broader implications applicable to diverse contexts.

## **2.3. Research Design**

### **2.3.1. Purpose of the Research**

As delineated in the Introduction, the purpose of this research is to propose a framework aimed at assisting organisations in fostering collaboration capability in sustainability transitions. The overarching question guiding this research is:

- *How can organisations strategically cultivate collaboration capability within the context of sustainability transitions?*

This overarching question is divided into two specific questions:

- *RQ1: What specific strategies can organisations adopt to initiate and sustain changes in their practices, structures and culture conducive to collaboration capability?*
- *RQ2: How can organisations design and implement learning experiences that effectively cultivate collaboration capability in the context of sustainability transitions?*

To address these research questions, the investigation pursues the following theoretical and practical objectives:

- O1. Characterise the collaboration capabilities essential for driving transformative change in sustainability transitions (Chapter 3).
- O2. Identify organisational and pedagogical approaches conducive to cultivating collaboration capability in sustainability transitions (Chapter 3).
- O3. Explore and understand the specific strategies employed by organisations to initiate and sustain changes in their practices, structures and culture, with the aim of enhancing collaboration capability (Chapter 4).
- O4. Explore and understand the specific design elements employed in several learning experiences aimed at cultivating collaboration capability within the context of sustainability transitions (Chapter 5).
- O5. Develop a framework to strategically cultivate collaboration capability within organisational settings in the context of sustainability transitions (Chapters 4, 5 and 6).

### **2.3.2. Exploratory Study**

The development of collaboration capability within professional environments is a contemporary phenomenon that remains relatively underexplored in current research. To address this gap, an exploratory study was chosen, combining interview and case study methodologies to comprehensively examine the learning and change conditions towards collaboration capability within organisational settings.

Exploratory studies aim to understand poorly defined problems or uncover new insights, potentially leading to future research questions, hypotheses and theories (Casula et al., 2021; Robson, 2002; Stebbins, 2001). This research approach requires flexibility and open-mindedness in data collection and interpretation (Stebbins, 2001). Typically likened to a journey into uncharted territory where researchers engage in conversations to gain deeper insights, this approach is a transformative experience that encourages reflection and leads to a deep

understanding of both the topic and oneself (Charmaz, 2006; Saunders et al., 2007; Yin, 2003).

While some scholars advocate for a deductive approach, exploratory studies like this one typically employ inductive or inductive/deductive approaches (Casula et al., 2021; Charmaz, 2006). This blended approach entails the systematic collection and analysis of data with the objective of developing new theory, a methodological perspective commonly referred to as grounded theory (as detailed in section 2.3.5). Both exploratory study and grounded theory approaches are consistent with the interpretivist epistemology, described in section 2.2. It is important to note that in management research, theory building serves practical applications rather than purely academic pursuits (Saunders et al., 2007), as it is the case of this research.

### **2.3.3. Research Scope and Delimitation**

Given the exploratory nature of this research, initially, the focus was broad, essential for comprehensively understanding the complex interplay of factors influencing the cultivation of collaboration capability within diverse organisational settings engaged in sustainability transitions. As the exploration progressed, the scope gradually narrowed, delving into innovative learning experiences conducive to cultivating collaboration capability with a transformational perspective.

Therefore, this research focuses on defining a framework grounded in common factors observed across different sectors and organisation types. The aim is to assist organisations in self-reflection, action and change towards cultivating collaboration capability. The research includes a comprehensive definition of collaboration capability as a multidimensional phenomenon. However, it does not intend to establish an assessment scale, uncover organisation- or sector-specific insights, or incorporate any statistical analysis of the insights derived from the qualitative inquiry. Moreover, it is important to clarify that the research does not seek to uncover insights relevant to conflict resolution.

The research's temporal and geographical scope is centred around the Innovation and Technology for Development Centre at the Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, where the author has been actively involved since 2017. Consequently, the research is limited to the Spanish context, albeit always in consideration of global transitions and trends, which may impact findings due to specific cultural nuances. However, the study does not include a comparison of results with experiences from other geographical contexts or cultures, a potential area for future research.

Nevertheless, the inclusion of Spanish cases enriches the literature, offering perspectives beyond those typically found in studies dominated by scholars from northern Europe.

**Table 2.1.** Research delimitation

<b>The research covers...</b>	<b>The research excludes...</b>
The comprehensive definition of collaboration capability as a multi-dimensional phenomenon.	A statistical analysis of the insights emerged from the qualitative analysis.
The identification of typical strategies employed by organisations in Spain to initiate and sustain changes towards collaboration across diverse sectors.	The comparison of results with other geographical contexts or cultures.
The extraction of practical implications to aid organisations in reflecting and taking action towards cultivating collaboration capability.	The identification of factors in specific organisations or sectors or with specific focus on conflict resolution
The definition of a framework for the design and implementation of learning experiences conducive to collaboration capability.	The development of an assessment scale of collaboration capability.

Source: Own work

The research employs a multi-method approach to comprehensively understand the phenomenon under study. This included an integrative literature review (section 2.3.4), an interview study (section 2.3.5) and a multiple-case study (section 2.3.6) to effectively meet the research objectives. The investigation combined a cross-sectional study, involving interviews conducted from June 2022 to October 2022, with a longitudinal study encompassing three cases studied from September 2018 to October 2023. Further details regarding these methods are provided in the subsequent subsections.

### **2.3.4. Research Method 1: Integrative Literature Review**

The literature review offers an overview of the existing research and knowledge on a specific subject, encompassing main theories, trends and school of thoughts, key contributors, gaps and unanswered questions. It entails an interactive dialogue between the researcher and existing literature offering a critical evaluation of strengths and weaknesses in previous research. This involves recognising previous studies while remaining open to exploring beyond established frameworks and knowledge (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). As a result, it may extend beyond the initial research stages, evolving as an ongoing process that requires refinement based on empirical findings and shifts in research direction (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012; Saunders et al., 2007).



While exploratory studies typically initiate data collection without an initial theoretical framework to prevent contamination of emergent analysis categories by preexisting concepts (Glaser & Strauss, 2010; Saunders et al., 2007; Stebbins, 2001), it was deemed necessary to conduct a literature review in this investigation. This served to refine the scope of the phenomenon under study and to define key concepts, particularly those associated with broad terms such as “transition” or “collaboration.” However, to stay open to data analysis, the categories were not predetermined by the literature review; rather they emerged through a continuous dialogue between data analysis and literature.

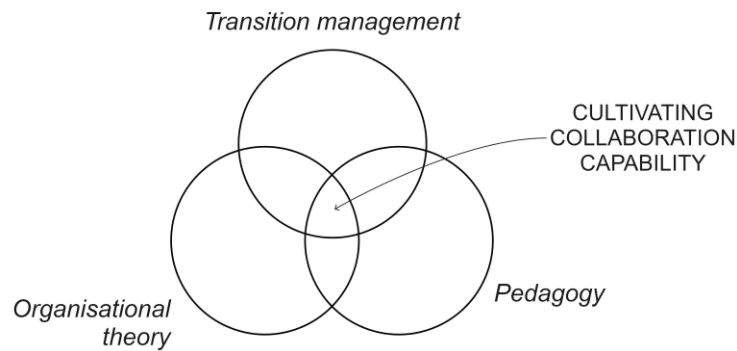
The literature review employs an integrative methodology, which synthesises theoretical and practical literature to offer a comprehensive understanding of a specific phenomenon, proving particularly effective when the aim is to develop theory while ensuring practical applicability (Whittemore & Knafl, 2005). The process spanned from September 2020 to July 2023. For methodological rigour, this research follows the five-step methodology outlined by Whittemore and Knafl (2005) for conducting integrative literature reviews:

1. Problem identification

Recent theoretical and empirical work highlights the significance of collaborative approaches in sustainability transitions, revealing gaps concerning the development of collaboration capability.

2. Literature search

This stage employed a keyword-based approach, focusing on exploring the intersection of three pivotal concepts for this research, namely “collaboration capability,” “learning” and “sustainability transition.” This research aimed to enrich the scholarly discourse by integrating insights from three distinct domains: transition management, organisational theory and pedagogy (see Figure 2.1). Integrating various disciplines is a common practice in management studies (Saunders et al., 2007). The main goals were to gain a comprehensive understanding of the contextual landscape (sections 3.1 and 3.2), conceptualise “collaboration capability” (section 3.3) and identify relevant organisational and educational approaches to cultivate it (section 3.4).



**Figure 2.1.** Interdisciplinary approach to the cultivation of collaboration capability

Source: Own work

The literature search drew upon a diverse range of sources, including primary, secondary and tertiary literature. The systematic process unfolded in four distinct steps outlined in Table 2.2, starting with a broad exploration and progressively focusing on more specific aspects. It involved a snowball approach, initially defining key words, exploring their intersections, examining the nuanced concept of collaboration capability, and reviewing previous literature on organisational and learning strategies at individual, organizational, and systemic levels to foster collaboration capability.

**Table 2.2.** Outline of the snowball methodology for the literature search phase

Step	Objectives	Concepts	Sources
01	Definition of key words, drivers and challenges.	Sustainability Transition Collaboration Capacity, capability, skill	Dictionary Articles and reviews, books Theses, Reports
	Previous research on the intersection between the key words.	Collaboration in sustainability transitions (transformational)	Articles in peer-reviewed scientific papers
02	Deepening on collaboration capability	Components at the individual, organisational and system level Assessment: metrics and methods	Articles in peer-reviewed scientific papers
03	Previous research on “cultivating collaboration capability”	Collaborative learning Organisational learning Social learning	Articles and reviews in peer-reviewed scientific papers Books
04	Dialogue between data collected and theory	Dialogue, power, conflict, nonviolent communication, sociology of space, etc.	Articles and reviews, books, newspaper articles, theses, reports, dictionary

Source: Own work

The identification of key words, crucial terms relevant to the research question, involved an initial reading supplemented by a dictionary to ensure precision selecting terms essential to the study’s focus. This was particularly important as the researcher dealt with very broad concepts like “collaboration.” Insights from Almeida et al.’s (2021) literature review and Blomqvist and Levy’s (2006) conceptualisation further informed and enriched the development of the keyword frameworks. The selected keywords were then refined to harmonise with existing scholarly discourse. Key questions to address were:

- *What type of change is involved in sustainability transitions?*
- *How does collaboration contribute to sustainability transitions?*
- *What specific forms of collaboration are required?*
- *What capabilities and skills are needed for effective collaboration?*
- *Do individuals and organisations possess these capabilities? How can collaboration capability be assessed?*
- *What methodologies and pedagogical approaches are most conducive to fostering collaboration capability within the framework of sustainability transitions?*

A comprehensive approach was adopted, utilising online databases and libraries. Two relevant databases, Scopus and Web of Science, were employed to gather a diverse array of sources, including journal articles, reviews, book chapters and conference papers. Structured keyword-based searches conducted in databases used search strings as those included in Table 2.3.

**Table 2.3.** Examples of structured keyword-based search (October 2021)

Search string	Documents retrieved (Scopus)
Learning AND collaborati* AND ( "collaboration capability" OR "collaborative capability" OR "collaborative capacity" ) AND sustainability AND transition	0
learning AND ( "collaborati* capability" OR "collaborati* capacity" ) AND sustainab* AND transition	1
Learning AND collaborati* AND (“collaboration capability” OR “collaborative capability” OR “collaborative capacity”)	82
"collaborati* capability" OR "collaborati* capacity"	413

Source: Own work

Inclusion criteria specified English language materials without territorial or temporal restrictions. This stage facilitated a thorough understanding of existing research on the topic, shedding light on identified gaps and potential avenues for further research.

Furthermore, extensive searches were conducted in the libraries of both the Universidad Politécnica de Madrid and the Education Faculty of the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, encompassing both Spanish and English books. This phase supplemented the initial search with foundational texts, providing insights into disciplinary fundamentals and key authors. All references were systematically categorised using the open-source bibliographic reference manager, Zotero.

### 3. Data Evaluation

The criteria guiding the evaluation and inclusion of references in this investigation focused on key aspects of quality and relevance. Priority was given to references that made a direct contribution to addressing the research questions, with a specific emphasis on works published in reputable, peer-reviewed journals or from well-established academic presses, ensuring a high standard of scholarly rigour. Rigorous and reliable methodology was another critical criterion, with a careful assessment of the credibility and reputation of the authors.

Additionally, the research aimed to incorporate a diversity of perspectives, acknowledging the importance of varied viewpoints in enriching the overall discourse. References that made substantial conceptual contributions to the understanding of the phenomenon under investigation were also favoured.

The literature review was concluded when subsequent searches predominantly retrieved references that had already been reviewed.

### 4. Data Analysis

The data analysis stage aimed at crafting an innovative synthesis of the existing literature on the subject. Analytical categories encompassed defining “transition,” “collaboration” and “collaboration capability,” identifying its inherent components, and exploring various aspects of the learning process, including organisational and pedagogical approaches conducive to cultivating collaboration capability.

### 5. Presentation

The conclusions are initially presented in Chapter 3. However, the deliberate effort to maintain a continuous dialogue between theoretical frameworks and empirical findings has led to the integration of references to relevant literature throughout all chapters of this thesis. This ensures a cohesive presentation of knowledge, contributing to the development of the framework elaborated throughout the research and synthesised in Chapter 6.

## 2.3.5. Research Method 2: Grounded Theory

### 2.3.5.1. Grounded Theory as a Research Strategy

In a broad sense, grounded theory is the “discovery of theory from data systematically obtained from social research” (Glaser & Strauss, 2010, p. 2). In fact, grounded theory emerges organically from observations of the behaviour, words and actions of the individuals under study, evolving through a continuous interplay between data collection and analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 2010; Goulding, 2002). It is thus considered an inductive/deductive approach (Saunders et al., 2007), which understands “*theory as a process*; that is, theory as an ever-developing entity, not as a perfect product” (Glaser & Strauss, 2010, p. 32).

In contrast to Glaser and Strauss, Charmaz (2006) argues that the observer cannot be separated from the data. As a result, grounded theories are subjective constructions of reality, an “*interpretive* portrayal of the studied world, not an exact picture of it” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 10).

The question guiding this study is:

- *RQ1: What specific strategies can organisations adopt to initiate and sustain changes in their practices, structures and culture conducive to collaboration capability?*

Grounded theory is deemed an appropriate strategy when there is limited existing theory on the phenomenon or the existing literature does not address the research needs (Goulding, 2002), as it is the case in this thesis. Additionally, it has proven valuable in addressing several management issues, particularly those involving employee or consumer behaviours (Goulding, 2002; Saunders et al., 2007).

A traditional qualitative method for conducting grounded theory is through interviews with “experts,” individuals with relevant experiences in the subject (Charmaz, 2006; Saunders et al., 2007). Interview literally means “exchange of views;” it is a guided conversation that facilitates the construction of knowledge through dynamic interaction —questioning and listening— between the interviewer and the interviewee. It provides a unique opportunity to delve into the meanings individuals attribute to their everyday experiences (Kvale, 2011).

### 2.3.5.2. Criteria for the Selection of Key Informants

The selection of key informants followed a flexible and incremental approach, suitable for exploring underdeveloped concepts, particularly within grounded

theory methodology (Flick, 2015a). The data collection process aimed at theory generation is termed “theoretical sampling” (Glaser & Strauss, 2010). This method involves intentional sampling decisions made as the research progresses, driven by continuous data collection, coding and analysis. In other words, decisions on further data collection are driven by the need to effectively inform the emerging theory, identifying what is lacking in the existing data (Flick, 2015a; Robson & McCartan, 2016), a process demanding theoretical sensitivity from the researcher (Glaser & Strauss, 2010).

Initially, the researcher possessed practical knowledge concerning various aspects of building collaboration capability, including access to projects, processes, partnerships, platforms and other collaborative arrangements. This initial understanding served as a foundation for initiating the research endeavour.

**Table 2.4.** Basic characteristics of key informants and interviews

Number	Gender	Age	Sector	Date	Location	Duration
1	Woman	47	Company	4 <sup>th</sup> July 2022	Online	28 min 47 s
2	Woman	60	Lawyer / Professor	7 <sup>th</sup> July 2022	Online	29 min 58 s
3	Woman	47	Multilateral agency	28 <sup>th</sup> July 2022	In-person	50 min 06 s
4	Man	17	Student	21 <sup>st</sup> Sept. 2022	Online	30 min 00 s
5	Man	50	Nonprofit / Academia	21 <sup>st</sup> Sept. 2022	Online	34 min 42 s
6	Woman	56	Public sector	22 <sup>nd</sup> Sept. 2022	Online	27 min 04 s
7	Man	61	Company	26 <sup>th</sup> Sept. 2022	In-person	24 min 16 s
8	Woman	53	Nonprofit	27 <sup>th</sup> Sept. 2022	In-person	24 min 32 s
9	Man	57	Nonprofit	5 <sup>th</sup> Oct. 2022	Online	26 min 39 s
10	Woman	42	Participant in Spanish Citizen Assembly	13 <sup>th</sup> Oct. 2022	Online	34 min 41 s
11	Man	51	Nonprofit network	17 <sup>th</sup> Oct. 2022	In-person	53 min 13 s

Source: Own work

Interview studies typically involve conducting anywhere from 5 to 25 interviews (Kvale, 2011). In this research, a total of 11 subjects were interviewed in three distinct time frames (July, September and October 2022) until reaching saturation, when new interviews yield diminishing returns in generating novel insights (Kvale, 2011). The primary aim was to understand the learning process associated with collaboration capability as perceived by individuals engaged in intricate collaborative environments oriented towards sustainability transitions.

Acknowledging potential variation in life experiences related to gender, age and sector, subjects were intentionally selected to ensure diversity based on these criteria (see Table 2.4). However, it is important to note that this diversity is not pursued for the purpose of data representativity or statistical generalisations; instead, it aims to achieve a more profound understanding of the phenomenon under study.

### **2.3.5.3. Data Collection for the Interview-Based Grounded Theory**

The research employed semi-structured interviews as the primary method for collecting data to inductively construct theory. This study places significant emphasis on individuals' life experiences and their perceptions of how they cultivate collaboration capability, considering these insights as valuable data for theory development. The researcher preferred semi-structured interviews instead of in-depth ones, considering her limited experience as an interviewer. Accordingly, she developed an interview guideline (see Appendix C, Table C1) following Kvale's (2011) recommendations, which she applied flexibly, introducing new, more precise questions or topics as necessary.

Interviews were conducted in Spanish both online (seven interviews) and in person (four interviews) at the itdUPM office, located on the university campus, which was perceived as a neutral environment by the interviewees. A junior researcher assisted the author by recording the interviews and requesting clarification when responses were unclear. The recordings were saved in the researcher's personal cloud storage within UPM services, protected with an alphanumeric password. The interviews were transcribed using Sonix transcription software.

Participants were informed about the possibility of their anonymised interviews being included in a research study and were assured of their freedom to withdraw at any time, ensuring adherence to ethical standards of autonomy, confidentiality and voluntary participation. Additionally, they had the opportunity to review the transcriptions to omit or clarify comments, as well as to rephrase key points they felt were not adequately explained.

### **2.3.5.4. Data Analysis for the Interview-Based Grounded Theory**

Analysis involves a “transformative process in which the raw data are turned into ‘findings’ or ‘results’” (Lofland et al., 2006, p. 198). In grounded theory, coding and analysis are central to the process of theory development from empirical evidence (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 2010).

Often, the analysis of interviews occurs without strict adherence to a specific method, as researchers blend various techniques and approaches, a practice termed “bricolage” by Kvale (2011). This approach was adopted in this research and involved the following stages:

1. Reading the full transcript

The process began with a thorough reading of the complete transcripts to immerse oneself in the data and obtain a general understanding. Grounded theory methods encourage the exploration of ideas about data through analytical writing since the early stages of the research (Charmaz, 2006). Consequently, the researcher documented initial interpretations of the analysis or surprising findings in memos and brief texts.

2. Coding line by line and assigning meaning

Following Charmaz’s (2006) guidance, codes were assigned to segments of interview line by line to identify patterns, recurrent themes and meanings. Coding involves assigning one or more keywords to a segment of text to allow for identification of a statement (Kvale, 2011). This coding process, known as open coding in grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 2010; Saunders et al., 2007), was facilitated using Atlas.ti 23 software. Analytic codes were not derived from the literature review or preconceived hypotheses, but directly from the data, as advocated by grounded theorists (Charmaz, 2006).

3. Describing initial codes and constructing a narrative

Initial codes were described, following the guidelines of Muñoz-Justicia and Sahagún-Padilla (2017). All code descriptions are provided in Appendix B and an illustrative example is presented in Table 2.5.

These descriptions served as the foundation for constructing a narrative that connects the experiences of the different interviewees (Kvale, 2011), thereby providing an interpretative understanding of the phenomenon under study. These initial codes are provisional and completely grounded on data (Charmaz, 2006).

Additionally, the researcher identified initial recurrent topics (or categories). Significant segments and the associated codes and narratives were revisited to gain a more profound understanding.



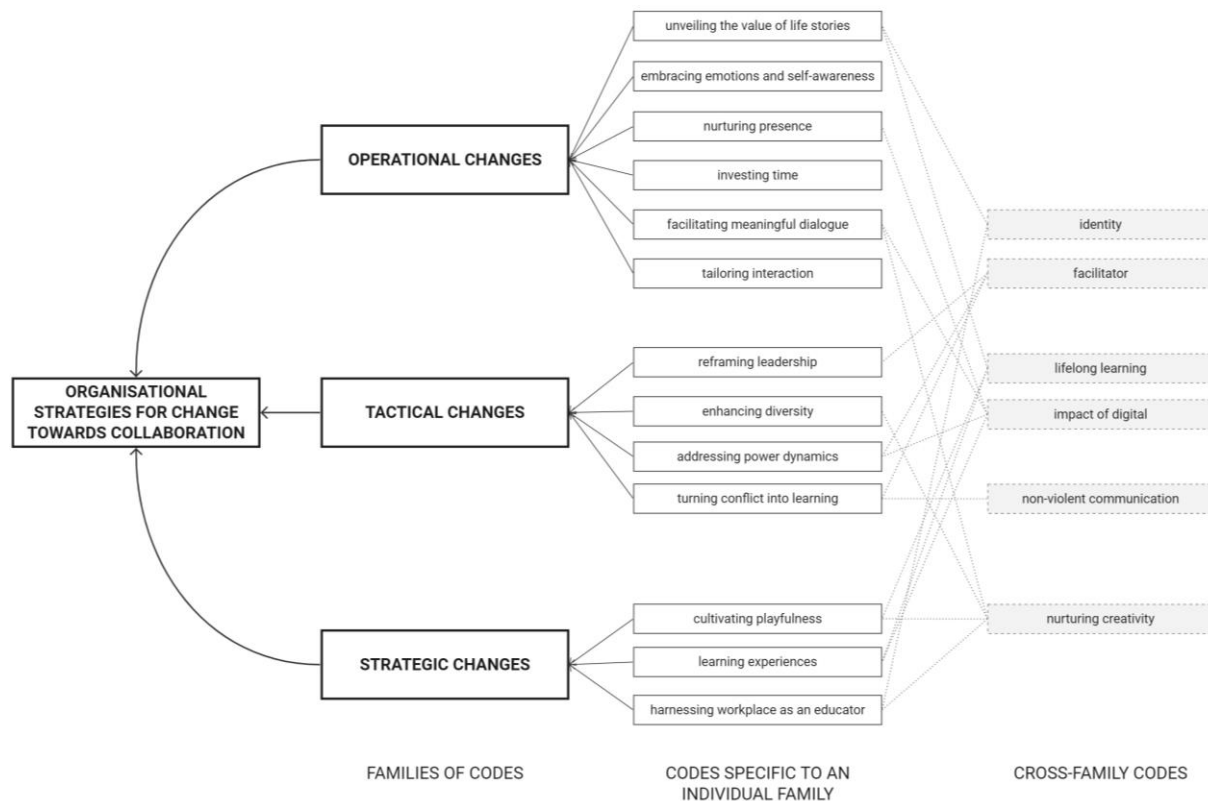
**Table 2.5.** Examples of code descriptions

<b>Label</b>	<b>Element</b>	<b>Description</b>
LEADERSHIP	Short definition	Reframing leadership: from sustaining power to empowering
	Code description	Description of leadership characteristics and styles for successful collaboration, as well as shifts in organisational roles and strategies aimed at changing practices and mindsets in this domain. .
	Use	When these perceptions are primarily informed from their personal experiences in leadership roles. They may also draw from broader professional insights and observations.
	Avoid	When they refer to theoretical concepts on leadership that are not grounded in personal experiences or to power imbalances (see label “POWER”)
	Example	“You need to approach the process with the mindset that you have the capacity to create a space where, through collaborative efforts, the outcome is enhanced. It's about cultivating an environment where empowerment, power-sharing, delegation, and authority distribution prevail over exerting power over others” (Woman, 53, nonprofit).
PRESENCE	Short definition	Nurturing presence and attention
	Code description	Narratives on the learning process of being attentive and present in the moment, both physically and mentally,
	Use	Interviewees describe strategies they employ to develop presence and attention when they collaborate, as well as experiences of profound connection with others or, on the contrary, instances where collaboration failed due to perceived absence of presence.
	Avoid	Avoid when “presence” refers to face-to-face interaction without conveying a sense of attentiveness and consciousness.
	Example	“To arrive calmly, serenely, without stress, without rush... With the feeling that you have thought about this conversation, that you have worked on it... So that you create a quality space in which you can be centred and prepared” (Woman, 53, nonprofit).

Source: Own work based on Muñoz-Justicia and Sahagún-Padilla (2017)

#### 4. Axial coding

The researcher meticulously examined the relationships between the codes and categories emerged during the initial open coding process (Saunders et al., 2007). Figure 2.2 depicts the diagrams utilized by the researcher during this stage. Subsequently, questions and hypotheses were formulated and verified using the data, allowing for their modification, expansion or removal based on the findings (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).



**Figure 2.2.** Axial coding diagram

Source: Own work

## 5. Selection phase

The most significant or frequent codes were selected to integrate extensive volumes of data (Charmaz, 2006), resulting in a manageable list of labels (see Appendix B for a comprehensive list of all final code descriptions) and categories.

## 6. Theoretical integration

Insights were consolidated in an open-ended scheme (Glaser & Strauss, 2010). This process involved engaging in dialogue not only with the literature review but also with new references and sources, aiming to enrich the analysis by incorporating diverse perspectives and insights.

## 7. Iteration of steps 2 to 6

The dialogue between the code descriptions, the narrative under construction and the literature fostered the emergence of novel ideas and insights. Consequently, the researcher revisited the transcriptions and the line-by-line coding to uncover new meanings. This iterative process involved repeating steps 2 to 6 until reaching

a saturation point, characterised by minimal emergence of new insights (Charmaz, 2006).

#### 8. Theoretical coding

Glaser (1978) conceptualised theoretical codes as frameworks for understanding how codes interrelate forming hypotheses potentially integrated into a theory. These integrative codes aided the researcher in guiding the analysis towards theoretical direction and in crafting an analytic and cohesive narrative (Charmaz, 2006).

The dynamic interplay between analysis and theory led to the emergence of three overarching families of codes: operational, tactical and strategic changes (see Table 2.6 for the definition of families and Figure 2.2 for the relationship with codes), aligned with the transition management levels outlined by Loorbach and van Raak (2006).

#### 9. Final report construction

Finally, the findings were synthesised into a continuous interpretive text (Kvale, 2011), which incorporates quotes from the interviews. This comprehensive final report presented in Chapter 4 of this document, encapsulates both theoretical insights and practical implications.

**Table 2.6.** Definition of theoretical families

<b>Family</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Included codes</b>
Operational changes	Changes related to personnel, resources, tangible practices and specific projects within an organisation or a collaborative setting, typically spanning a short-term time horizon of fewer than five years	Unveiling the value of life stories, Embracing emotions and self-awareness, Nurturing presence, Investing time, Facilitating meaningful dialogue, Tailoring interaction
Tactical changes	Structural changes in leadership and governance models, organisational architecture and strategies, covering a mid-term horizon of five to ten years.	Reframing leadership, Enhancing diversity, Addressing power dynamics, turning conflict into learning
Strategic changes	Cultural changes in broader societal systems, with a long-term time horizon extending up to 30 years.	Learning experiences, Cultivating playfulness, Harnessing the workspace as an educator

Source: Own work

## 2.3.6. Research Method 3: Multiple case study

### 2.3.6.1. Multiple Case Study as a Research Strategy

A case study involves a deep dive into the specificity and complexity of a singular case, capturing the researcher's interest due to both its uniqueness and typicality (Stake, 2010). This empirical inquiry is commonly employed to “investigate a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 2003, p. 13). It proves particularly valuable when the research question seeks to understand “how” something happens and when existing literature on the phenomenon is limited, as in this research, since it provides rich empirical descriptions from diverse data sources (Simons, 2011; Yin, 2003).

Case studies have been widely applied across various fields, including transition management (Geels, 2002; Kern & Howlett, 2009), organisational theory (Eisenhardt, 1989), sustainability (G. Austin, 2013; Moreno-Serna, Sánchez-Chaparro, et al., 2020; Ramísio et al., 2019) and education (Merriam, 1988). They are particularly used to analyse collaborative arrangements (Moreno-Serna, Purcell, et al., 2020; Stott, 2005) and processes of organisational learning and change related to sustainability (Ameli & Kayes, 2011; Soberón et al., 2020), given their multidisciplinary and cross-cutting nature.

Case studies serve both exploratory and descriptive purposes, allowing for an inductive approach for theory development (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 1981). Grounded in an interpretive paradigm, the researcher adopts an engaged role, actively participating in the analytical process rather than observing from an external standpoint. While recognising the limitations for scientific generalisation, case studies are valued for their ability to offer generalisability to theoretical propositions —analytical generalisation— rather than to broader populations —statistical generalisation— (Yin, 2003, p. 10).

In essence, this case study predominantly served an exploratory purpose, seeking to develop a framework for designing learning experiences that foster collaboration capability. The guiding question was:

- *RQ2: How can organisations design and implement learning experiences that effectively cultivate collaboration capability in the context of sustainability transitions?*

However, it is important to note that the unit of analysis, the “learning experience” and the refined research question were defined as the interview study analysis progressed. Prior to this, the researcher was engaged in broad observational study within the research contexts.

Employing a multiple-case design, this research enhances robustness (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2003), gathering additional evidence and providing examples to build a framework applicable across various organisational contexts. In this regard, the case also serves a descriptive purpose, aiming to provide insights into practical experiences that could be beneficial for other contexts.

### **2.3.6.2. Criteria for the Selection of the Cases**

The selection was methodologically driven, considering the relevance and potential of the cases to encompass a diverse array of design and contextual factors aligning with the research goals. All cases involve predominantly in-person learning experiences, within broader collaboration processes related to sustainability transitions. Additionally, they are grounded in a transformational collaboration framework and include meticulous design considerations related to collaboration capability. Specifically, three cases were selected for the study:

- Case A involves a four year seminar programme at a Spanish public university, focusing on fostering interdisciplinary research for sustainability.
- Case B describes a two-edition summer course aimed at promoting collaboration among cities and stakeholders engaged with climate-neutrality transitions.
- Case C is an annual gathering within a diverse ecosystem, designed to facilitate democratic and multi-stakeholder dialogue to foster reflection and action in sustainability transitions.

Table 2.7. Basic characteristics of the case studies

Case	Transition context within sustainability	Organisational context	Target audience	Targeted level of learning	Location	Duration	Data collection
A	Higher Education transformation	Universidad Politécnica de Madrid	Researchers	Individual	Madrid, Spain	4 years, 1 session / month	Sept. 2018-May 2023
B	Cities Climate-neutrality	citiES2030	Municipal public servants	Organisation	Santander, Spain	2 editions, 4 and 3 days respectively	March 2022-October 2023
C	Democratic	El Día Después	Professionals	System	Soria, Spain	2 editions, 2 days per edition	March 2020-October 2022

Source: Own work

Case A was strategically chosen at the outset of the research due to the researcher's active involvement in its development. This case allowed for an exploratory analysis conducted concurrently with the literature review, facilitating a deeper understanding and delineation of the phenomenon under investigation.

On the other hand, Cases B and C were selected after the interview study for descriptive purposes, following complementarity criteria. These criteria sought to ensure diversity in terms of duration, format, location, target audience and targeted level of collaboration capability (see Table 2.7). Their selection aimed to enhance the overall understanding of the phenomenon and validate theoretical propositions that emerged from the initial stages. This validation process, known as "theoretical replication," is grounded on the principle of ensuring that findings have broader applicability beyond a specific case (Yin, 2003).

### 2.3.6.3. Data Collection in the Multiple Case Study

Case studies, as employed in this research, rely on multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2003), such as participant observation, document analysis and in-depth interviews. Access to data was facilitated by the active involvement of itdUPM in the studied contexts.

#### *Participant observation*

The researcher conducted participant observation during extended periods of time in the three cases under study (see Table 2.8). Participant observation is a data collection technique that enables researchers to observe while actively engaged in the context being studied (Stake, 2010; Yin, 2003). Its utilization in management research has been limited, although it is deemed a valuable tool when combined with other methods (Saunders et al., 2007).

**Table 2.8.** Timeline of Data Collection for Multiple Case Study

Case	Data Collection period	Duration
A	September 2018 – May 2023	4 years and 9 months
B	March 2022 – October 2023	1 year and 8 months
C	March 2020 – October 2022	2 years and 8 months

Source: Own work.

Qualitative researchers typically adopt a non-interventionist approach, aiming to observe events as they naturally unfold and construct personal interpretations based on their fieldwork experience (Stake, 2010). This naturalistic approach was

applied in cases B and C, where the researcher participated as an observer in design and evaluation meetings as well as during implementation phases.

By contrast, her involvement in the design team of case A prompted the adoption of an action case methodology, a hybrid approach combining elements of case study and action research (Braa & Vidgen, 1999). While case studies are centred around observation, understanding and interpretation of phenomena (Stake, 2010), action research is designed to initiate changes in practice through a systematic learning process involving diagnosis, action planning, action taking, evaluation and learning (Latorre Beltrán, 2004; Susman, 1983). As a consequence, in the action case, the researcher functions as an agent of change, actively contributing to the creation of “actionable scientific knowledge” (Coughlan & Coughlan, 2002). This practical orientation underscores the particular relevance of action cases within the field of organisational studies (Braa & Vidgen, 1999).

In this study, data collection encompassed primary observations, experiential data (the researcher’s perceptions and feelings during observation), and secondary observations (statements made by other participants), all meticulously recorded in a research diary. Hence, data collection and analysis occurred iteratively (Saunders et al., 2007).

### *Secondary data*

Concurrently with observations, documents from various sources were collected and reviewed (see Table 2.9 for details and Appendix D for the specific sources of case study analysis), enriching the observations with additional data.

**Table 2.9.** Document analysis

Case	Types of documents analysed
A	Design and systematisation documents, meeting minutes, written and recorded materials, results of surveys, reports from interviews and focus groups,
B	Design documents, presentations, systematisation and evaluation reports, websites.
C	Design, systematisation and evaluation documents and presentations, video recordings, websites.

Source: Own work

### *Semi-structured interviews*

Finally, in case studies B and C, four semi-structured interviews were conducted with the programmes’ designers and managers in January 2024 to triangulate data collection and analysis (refer to Table 2.10 for details and to Appendix D,



Table D17 for the interview guideline). Moreover, this aimed to compare the various topics and theoretical propositions that emerged from the interview study (explained in section 2.3.5) and were already observed in Case A, with those encountered in cases B and C.

**Table 2.10.** Basic characteristics of case study interviews

Case	Gender	Role	Date	Duration
B	Man	Programme designer (2 <sup>nd</sup> edition)	11 <sup>th</sup> January 2024	1h 1min 58s
	Woman	Programme designer (1 <sup>st</sup> edition)	18 <sup>th</sup> January 2024	1h 3min 15s
C	Man	Programme manager	16 <sup>th</sup> January 2024	49min 22s
	Woman	Designer	23 <sup>rd</sup> January 2024	1h 18min 46s

Source: Own work

Similar to the grounded theory interview study, interviews were conducted in Spanish and face-to-face at the itdUPM office. Interviewees were informed about the research study and their option to withdraw participation at any stage. Videos were recorded and transcriptions were facilitated by Sonix software.

The specific data collection strategies employed in each case are elaborated in subsections 5.1.2, 5.2.2 and 5.3.2.

#### 2.3.6.4. Data Analysis in the Multiple Case Study

The researcher utilised Yin's (2003) guidelines as a foundation for selecting strategies and techniques to analyse the case studies. However, she applied them flexibly rather than rigidly, as suggested by Charmaz (2006), given the exploratory nature of the study and its aim to develop theory.

##### *Analytic strategy: Developing a case description*

Developing a case description as an analytic strategy involves constructing a narrative that provides a comprehensive and accurate portrayal of the case.

Although the initial purpose of this case study did not prioritise description, the researcher found this strategy appropriate for delving into the study contexts and exploring them thoroughly. Indeed, description serves as a method to identify an embedded unit of analysis and establish links (Yin, 2003). Consequently, exploration and description emerge as intertwined processes, as commonly observed in both case studies and grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006; Simons, 2011; Stake, 2010).

Therefore, in this research, description was not an end in itself but rather a means of exploring study contexts (organisations, partnerships and other collaborative arrangements) and identifying within them a unit of analysis: learning experiences aimed at cultivating collaboration capability at the individual and organisational levels. Furthermore, the descriptions facilitated the researcher in establishing relations between design elements and collaboration capability.

In drafting the report (Chapter 5), the researcher sought to develop a comprehensive illustration of how the elements identified through the interview study were put into practice within the context of learning experiences. Given the underexplored nature of the phenomenon under study, these descriptions may be seen as a valuable contribution in themselves.

#### *Analytic techniques: Immersing in the case*

Concerning the analytic techniques, the researcher employed a combination of different approaches.

Initially, each case was analysed independently, as they possessed intrinsic meaning on their own, aiming to find an explanation of the role of the different design decision on collaboration capability. In this study, like many case studies, “the links may be complex and difficult to measure in any precise manners,” leading to the construction of explanations in a narrative form and reflecting certain theoretical propositions (Yin, 2003, p. 120).

Following the grounded theory analysis, several theoretical propositions were discovered in the form of organisational strategies significantly influencing collaboration capability, prompting further exploration of their manifestation in the studied cases. In this phase, the goal was to identify general explanations regarding these theoretical propositions and fitting each of the individual cases.

Specifically, the manifestation of theoretical propositions was compared across the three case studies using a table of analysis, following the principles of cross-case synthesis technique (Yin, 2003). In particular, four “how” questions emerged that could be analysed in a cross-case detailed manner through argumentative interpretation:

- *How did collaborative approaches to governance and design provide a collaborative learning approach?*
- *How were interaction methods designed to meet the collaboration goals?*

- *How did the decisions made regarding space and time influenced the development of collaboration capability?*
- *How did the intermediary role unfold in the design and implementation of the learning experiences?*

These questions served as guiding inquiries to refine the focus and identify specific design elements that could illustrate how organisations can design and implement learning experiences to cultivate collaboration capability in the context of sustainability transitions. As a consequence, they informed the design and analysis of the semi-structured interviews conducted within case studies B and C.

### **2.3.7. Ethical Issues**

Ethics encompasses both the selection of the purpose of the research and the researcher's conduct towards individuals with whom she interacted during the research process (Kvale, 2011; Saunders et al., 2007; Simons, 2011). It is crucial to establish a respectful and equitable relationship with participants in the study, ensuring their dignity, integrity, and trust, fostering open communication and problem-solving, while considering both participants' interests and the researcher's responsibility to produce public knowledge (Simons, 2011). Regarding the latter point, Kvale (2011) argues that an interview study's purpose should aim to improve the human situation under investigation, transcending its mere scientific value. Therefore, this research aims to generate scientific actionable knowledge with practical implications that can be beneficial both in the studied contexts and the organisations of the interviewees.

#### *Grounded theory: interviews*

As noted by Kvale (2011), ethical considerations in interview research affect every stage of the research process, extending beyond the interview itself and relying, to some extent, on the integrity of the researcher. Different ethical strategies were employed.

Firstly, all participants were informed about the potential use of the conversations for research purposes and had the option to withdraw at any time. Informed consent (see Appendix B) was obtained, with parental consent in the case of the 17-year-old student.

Secondly, at the beginning of each interview, the researcher meticulously outlined the research objectives, emphasising the voluntary and confidential nature of participation, and promptly addressed any questions that arose, as suggested by

Kvale (2011). Clarifying the specific use of data posed a challenge due to the exploratory nature of the study, yet participants understood and agreed to this circumstance.

Thirdly, transcriptions were shared with the respective interviewees allowing them to indicate aspects they prefer to keep confidential (e.g., names of individuals, institutions or locations), to remove segments or add nuances to more accurately represent their perspectives. Notably, this presented an unexpected challenge as two interviewees felt uncomfortable seeing their spoken words transformed into a written text and subsequently modified the transcriptions extensively to align with formal written standards. In these instances, the researcher compared both versions and chose to preserve the original, which was richer in meaning, supplementing it with notes where necessary to incorporate any additional insights from the revised version. However, being sensitive to this concern expressed by interviewees, the researcher seek to translate their oral style into a written form that harmonises with their typical modes of expression, envisioning how they would prefer to express their statements in writing, as recommended by Kvale (2011).

Following the revision process, interviews were anonymised to safeguard the confidentiality of the participants' identities and the video recordings were securely stored in the researcher's personal cloud storage, protected by a strong alphanumeric password, as suggested by Saunders et al. (2007).

Finally, during the analysis, the researcher endeavoured to remain faithful to the received testimonies, preserving the meanings given by the interviewees in accordance with Simons' (2011) recommendation. This involved extensively integrating direct references from the interviews to enrich the text.

### *Case study*

During the fieldwork of the case study, the researcher cultivated reliable and trustworthy relationships with the individuals involved in each case, following Simons' (2011) suggestion.

Given the exploratory nature of the research, the researcher actively immersed herself in the study contexts before selecting them for investigation. This integration posed no issues as it occurred within a university setting and involved collaboration with a team of researchers. However, once specific programmes within these contexts were chosen as case studies, permission was sought from programme managers.

Upon approval, additional documentation was requested, along with their participation in in-depth interviews to supplement participant observation data. The interviews adhered to the same ethical principles outlined for the grounded theory study. Nonetheless, transcriptions were intentionally omitted from the Appendix to safeguard participants anonymity, aligning with principles of confidentiality and harm avoidance advocated by Simons (2011).

### **2.3.8. Data Validity and Limitations of the Methods Employed**

Qualitative research has been commonly seen as unsystematic and biased (Charmaz, 2006). Traditionally, the quality and credibility of research, whether quantitative or qualitative, has been assessed based on validity, reliability and generalisability. According to Saunders et al. (2007):

- Validity refers to the accuracy of data collection methods in measuring their intended concepts and the alignment of research findings with the research purpose.
- Reliability is related to the consistency of data collection techniques in producing similar results and the transparency in data interpretation. Threats on reliability often include participant or observer bias and error.
- Generalisability, often referred to as “external validity,” denotes the applicability of research findings to other contexts.

However, many qualitative researchers argue that these concepts are deeply rooted in a positivist tradition, which advocates for an objective and universal model of knowledge, and are thus inadequate for qualitative research (Charmaz, 2006; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Glaser & Strauss, 2010; Kvale, 2011).

As outlined in the description of the philosophical assumptions (section 2.2), this research adopts an interpretivist approach, recognising the subjective nature inherent in qualitative research (Charmaz, 2006). Nonetheless, it is imperative not to disregard the matter of quality and credibility in this study. Specifically, four strategies were implemented.

Firstly, the researcher sought to obtain rich, substantial and relevant data to acquire the most comprehensive understanding of the topic, as suggested by Charmaz (2006). To achieve this objective, the fieldwork spanned over an extended period, involving immersion in the studied contexts for 4 years and 9 months (case A), 1 year and 8 months (case B) and 2 years and 8 months (case C). Moreover, in the interview-based grounded theory study, the inclusion of a diverse array of key

informants was intended to capture a broad spectrum of detailed descriptions regarding their perspectives and actions.

Secondly, the research employed various *triangulation* strategies for both data sources and methods. Data source triangulation involves examining if the phenomenon and interpretations persist across different moments, spaces, or interaction contexts, while methodological triangulation entails combining different data collection techniques (Stake, 2010). Specifically, the research incorporates three longitudinal case studies and a cross-sectional interview study, utilising techniques such as interviews, document analysis and participant observation. Additionally, the research implemented a form of theoretical triangulation (Stake, 2010), since input from other researchers in diverse fields of study provided contrasting perspectives to the researcher's decisions and interpretations at various stages of the investigation. In this regard, her dynamic working context at itdUPM facilitated this process, serving as a conducive space for reflection, contrast and iteration among a stable group of 20 to 30 researchers. Throughout the thesis, the author actively sought feedback from experts in relevant fields for her research. This input was instrumental in refining the inclusion and exclusion criteria for the literature review, selecting key informants and case studies, defining and selecting codes in the interview study and enhancing interpretations and descriptions during the final stages of the analytic process. However, Simons (2011) cautioned that while triangulation contributes to credibility, it does not guarantee research validity.

Thirdly, the investigation process looked for *reflexivity*, as advocated by qualitative researchers (Charmaz, 2006; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Reflexivity involves acknowledging that data stem from interpretations made by both participants and researcher, thereby recognising that the researcher's background can significantly influence the results (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). In this respect, the researcher informed readers of her presence and subjectivity in the different methods employed (Stake, 2010), recognising her personal assumptions regarding the study topic. Specifically, she has clarified her point of view, delineating the decisions she made regarding epistemology (interpretivism), ontology (subjectivism) and axiology (ethical considerations). Additionally, throughout the data collection and analysis process, the researcher consistently challenged her assumptions by questioning both the data and her interpretations and underpinned the findings with complementary literature.

Finally, for the researcher, the quality of her research was also associated with the readability of this document. This presented challenges given the abundance of complex concepts and the non-linear process of developing collaboration capability. To address this, the researcher aimed to highlight the most compelling insights (Stake, 2010), present straightforward ideas and clarify concepts (Charmaz, 2006) to simplify the readers' comprehension.

### **2.3.9. Timeline**

The research timeline is outlined in Table 2.11.

Table 2.1.1. Research timeline

Tasks /Quarter	2020				2021				2022				2023				2024	
	q4	q1	q2*	q3	q4	q1	q2	q3	q4	q1	q2	q3	q4	q1	q2	q3	q4	
Developing the thesis project	█	█																
Literature review																		
Fieldwork 1: Interview study																		
Fieldwork 2: Case Study A (**)																		
Fieldwork 3: Case study B																		
Fieldwork 4: Case study C (***)																		
Interview Analysis																		
Case study Analysis																		
Draft and publication Article Case A																		
Draft writing: Literature review																		
Draft writing: Grounded theory																		
Draft writing Case studies																		
Draft writing: Final report																		

Source: Own work.

\*Note: maternity leave

\*\* Note: Observations for Case A started in September 2018, two years prior to the official commencement of the PhD.

\*\*\*Note: Observations for Case C started in March 2020, six months before the official commencement of the PhD.



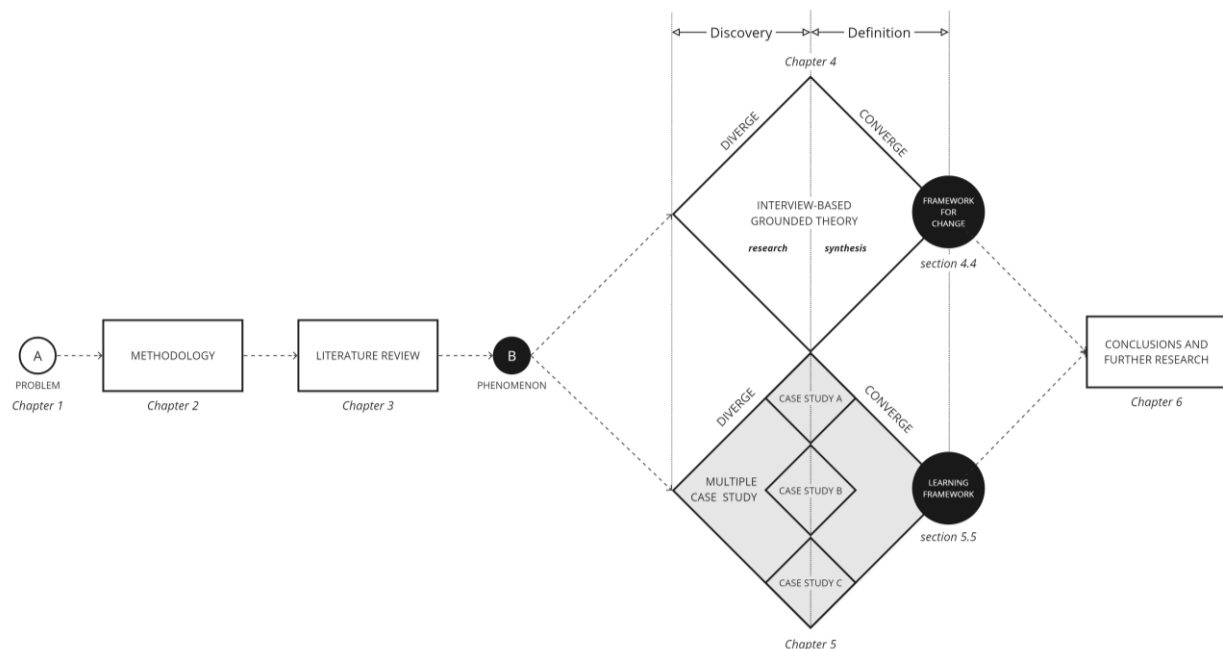
## 2.4. Summary of the Research Strategy

The main purpose of this thesis is to develop a framework to strategically cultivate collaboration capability within organisational settings in the context of sustainability transitions.

Since the cultivation of collaboration capability in organisational settings is a phenomenon underexplored in the literature, this research adopted an exploratory approach. Consequently, the researcher metaphorically positioned herself as an intrepid explorer venturing into uncharted territories, engaging in several contexts of study and dialoguing with the people she encountered.

In this endeavour and with the aim of building theory, the researcher embraced an interpretivist philosophy, a branch of qualitative research that recognises knowledge construction as a product of social actors' perceptions and interactions within society. This epistemological stance thus acknowledges subjectivity in understanding real phenomena (ontology).

In line with the conventions of qualitative research, this study has delved deeply into small, rather than large, theoretical samples. In pursuit of validity and credibility, a diverse array of methodologies, data sources and data collection techniques was employed (see Figure 2.3 for an overview of the research outline).



**Figure 2.3.** Thesis outline

Source: Own work, based on the double diamond design process (D. Gustafsson, 2019)

Initially, an integrative literature review, summarised in Chapter 3, was conducted to clarify the phenomenon under study, particularly considering the nuanced definitions of key concepts such as “collaboration” and “transition.”

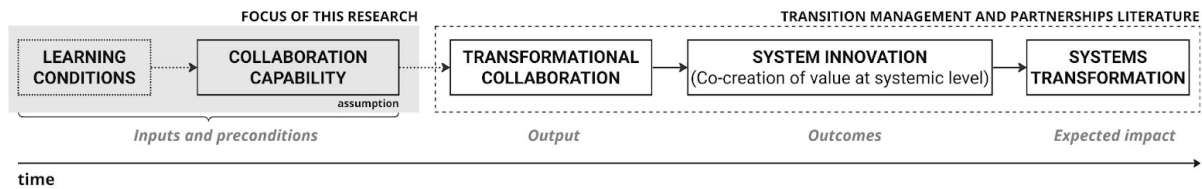
Subsequently, an interview-based grounded theory study was deemed appropriate to uncover the specific strategies within organisational settings that could foster collaboration capability (RQ1), drawing from the personal experiences of 11 individuals with extensive collaborative backgrounds. This entailed a systematic, iterative process of coding and reflexive analysis, aimed at challenging the researcher’s assumptions and culminating in the development of an initial proposed framework in Chapter 4.

Moreover, a multiple-case study served as a complementary methodological strategy. Case studies are considered valuable when the research question pertains to “how,” existing knowledge is scarce and the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are ambiguous, as was evident in this research. Indeed, the researcher immersed herself in three study contexts for extended periods, even commencing before the official start of her thesis. Specifically, she engaged in participant observation, she analysed secondary data and conducted semi-structured interviews. It is worth mention that the unit of analysis — learning experiences— was defined after the completion of interview analysis. This case study resulted in the second part of the framework, described in Chapter 5, specifically focusing on the design elements of learning experiences that facilitate the development of collaboration capability (RQ2). Additionally, within the same chapter, the detailed case descriptions are provided to illustrate how three distinct organisational contexts have designed and implemented learning experiences.

Finally, the design and implementation of this methodological strategy evolved into a process of learning and self-discovery for the researcher. Beyond the specific methods and techniques, this endeavour pushed her to follow her curiosity, challenge her assumptions and expand her understanding of collaboration, both in theory and practice.

### 3. Understanding the Phenomenon Under Study

This literature review starts by highlighting a crucial assumption in the theory of change<sup>1</sup> behind transition management literature (refer to Figure 3.1): the system possesses adequate collaboration capability to address the transition. However, cultivating collaboration capability entails investing or aligning a minimum viable amount of resources, including time and skills, which does not happen spontaneously without intentional effort from organisations. Consequently, this assumption evidences a significant research gap: the means to cultivate collaboration capability essential for collaborative governance and value co-creation at the systemic level.



**Figure 3.1.** The Theory of Change of Collaboration in Sustainability Transitions

Source: Own work

More specifically, authors acknowledge that the urgency to address global sustainability challenges requires a collaborative approach to leverage diverse perspectives and to foster collective action. The role of collaboration in sustainability transitions has been widely recognised in both the academic (Lozano, 2007; Moreno-Serna, Sánchez-Chaparro, et al., 2020; Stott, 2023) and policy literature (International Council for Science, 2017; Mazzucato, 2019; United Nations. General Assembly, 2015, 2021). In particular, collaboration is supposed to facilitate knowledge sharing, creativity, collective problem-solving and joint decision making (Ansell, 2012; Hartley et al., 2013; Lozano, 2007). Collaboration capability is therefore a prerequisite for transitions, enabling or preventing change depending on whether it is low or high respectively.

However, when describing the conditions for change to happen, little attention has been paid to the specific capabilities needed for collaboration to contribute

<sup>1</sup> A Theory of Change is “a comprehensive description of how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a particular context” (Centre for Theory of Change, n.d.).

effectively to transitions (Jordan, 2021). The discussion has predominantly centred on “what” —what needs to be changed and learned— rather than delving into the “how” —which involves working together effectively and mastering the art of collaboration. Furthermore, the argument that humans are inherently cooperative beings (M. A. Nowak & Highfield, 2012; Sennett, 2012; Tomasello, 2009) has led to the assumption that individuals already know how to collaborate when entering collaborative environments, such as interdisciplinary teams or multi-stakeholder partnerships (Freeth & Caniglia, 2020). Hence, collaboration capability has been taken for granted despite empirical evidence suggesting that individuals and organisations are unprepared to collaborate in a transformational manner (Bögel et al., 2019; Coenen et al., 2015; Freeth & Caniglia, 2020; Hamann & April, 2013). This poses a risk for the expected change to take place.

Therefore, strengthening collaboration capabilities is crucial for effectively navigating the complex and interconnected nature of sustainability issues (Almeida et al., 2021). Despite the extensive literature on learning within transition studies, the conditions that contribute to enhance collaboration capability are still underexplored (Goyal & Howlett, 2020; Pahl-Wostl et al., 2008; Stam et al., 2023; van Mierlo & Beers, 2020). Besides, there is still little understanding on the accurate assessment of this capability (Gajda, 2004; Seitanidi & Ryan, 2007; Stott, 2023).

In view of the above, the main purpose of this chapter is to establish the research perspective, define overarching concepts such as “transformation” or “collaboration”, and narrow down the study phenomenon based on existing literature at each level of the proposed theory of change (Figure 3.1). A theory of change framework was considered an appropriate approach to structure the literature review since it allows to map backwards in time (Taplin et al., 2013) from a long-term goal —in this case, the sustainability transition— and its associated outcomes —the co-creation of value at the system’s level— to the earliest changes that need to take place —the development of collaboration capability. Accordingly, the theoretical framework seeks to answer several relevant questions at the beginning of this research:

- *What type of change is involved in sustainability transitions?*
- *How does collaboration contribute to sustainability transitions?*
- *What specific forms of collaboration are required?*
- *What capabilities and skills are needed for effective collaboration?*

- *Do individuals and organisations possess these capabilities? How can collaboration capability be assessed?*
- *What methodologies and pedagogical approaches are most conducive to fostering collaboration capability within the framework of sustainability transitions?*

To address these questions, this chapter is structured as follows: Section 3.1 outlines the role of multi-stakeholder collaboration in governance and value co-creation within sustainability transitions, drawing insights from transition management literature. Following this, Section 3.2 delves into the specific nature of collaboration necessary for producing systemic changes, using the Collaborative Value Creation framework. Subsequently, Section 3.3 is devoted to the conceptualisation of “collaboration capability,” the central term for this investigation. Section 3.4 then lays the groundwork for understanding the prerequisites for developing collaboration capability, drawing upon transition management, organisational and educational frameworks. Finally, Section 3.5 concludes by summarising the key insights gathered in this literature review.

### **3.1. The Expected Impact of Collaboration in Transitions**

Despite being identified decades ago, sustainability issues unfortunately remain largely unresolved. Today, the need for a transition towards sustainability is supported by a broad scientific consensus on the urgency to take action (IPCC, 2018, 2022) and by major political agreements at the global, regional and local levels (e.g., the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement in 2015, the European Green Deal in 2019, among others). This trend has led to the development of ambitious mission-driven innovation policies, particularly notable in the European Union, which have proven to be effective in aligning actors towards common sustainability goals (Mazzucato, 2018, 2019; Mazzucato & Penna, 2020). Collaboration is increasingly recognised as vital in complex and dynamic environments where there is no single owner of the problem and success may depend on the contributions of many different stakeholders connected in networks extending beyond traditional value chains (Annunziata et al., 2018; E. P. Weber & Khademian, 2008). The aim of this section is to describe the expected impact of collaborative arrangements in sustainability transitions and the reasons underpinning the relevance of collaboration in this context.

### 3.1.1. The Context of Sustainability Transitions

The global context of lack of sustainability is characterised by highly complex and persistent problems that require a transition (Sachs et al., 2019). Sustainability transitions are “long-term, multidimensional, and fundamental transformation processes through which established socio-technical systems shift to more sustainable modes of production and consumption” (Markard et al., 2012, p. 956). These are the result of the simultaneous and interconnected evolution of the culture, structures and practices of a societal system or subsystem (Rotmans & Loorbach, 2009). Societal systems include different levers such as technological, organisational, economic, institutional, social, cultural and political (van den Bergh et al., 2011) and three levels, namely niche, regime and landscape (Geels, 2002). This complexity makes sustainability to be defined as a “wicked problem,” characterised by ambiguous definitions, numerous stakeholders and decision makers with conflicting values and intricately intertwined consequences within the entire system (Churchman, 1967).

**Table 3.1.** Types of change

<b>Features</b>	<b>Incremental</b>	<b>Reform</b>	<b>Transformation</b>
Core Questions	How can we do more of the same? Are we doing things right?	What rules shall we create? Who should do what? What are the rewards?	How do I make sense of this? What is the purpose? How do we know what is best?
Purpose	To improve performance	To understand and change the system and its parts	To innovate and create previously unimagined possibilities
Power and relationships	Confirms existing rules.  Preserves the established power structure and relationships among actors in the system.	Opens rules to revision.  Suspends established power relationships; promotes authentic interactions; creates a space for genuine reform of the system.	Opens issue to creation of new ways of thinking and action.  Promotes transformation of relationships with whole-system awareness and identity; promotes examining deep structures that sustain the system.
Action Frames	Mediation	Negotiations	Visioning

Source: Waddock et al. (2015, p. 20).

Therefore, transformative change, distinct from incremental or reformative approaches, is imperative for sustainability transitions (Waddock et al., 2015): unlike incremental change, which involves gradual improvements within existing frameworks, and reform, which addresses deficiencies within the current system, transformational change challenges assumptions, established norms, power dynamics and practices; it aims to envision and experiment with new, and even

unforeseen, ways of thinking and acting (refer to Table 3.1 for further insight into the differences). Consequently, while transformational change inevitably triggers conflict (Sennett, 2012), embracing “productive conflict,” rather than avoiding it, serves as a foundation for transformative change (Stott, 2017).

Transition management is a field of study that seeks to operationalise the sustainability transitions. Within this framework, multi-stakeholder collaboration is supposed to take place at all levels of activity (Loorbach & van Raak, 2006)

- The operational level involves short-term changes in concrete practices and projects within the sub-system, typically spanning less than five years.
- The tactical level is characterised by structural changes in the mid-term (5-10 years) that affect institutions and regimes.
- The strategic level encompasses long-term cultural changes that influence the societal system.

These three levels and their characteristics are summarised in Table 3.2.

**Table 3.2.** Transition management levels and their focus

Levels	Focus	Problem scope	Time scale	Level of activity
Operational	Practices	Concrete/project	Short-term (0-5y)	Within sub-system
Tactical	Structures	Institutions/regime	Mid-term (5-10y)	Subsystem
Strategic	Culture	Abstract/societal system	Long-term (30y)	System

Source: Loorbach & van Raak (2006, p. 9)

In particular, collaboration plays a role in both governance and innovation (Peris-Blanes et al., 2022) in the four stages of the transition management cycle (Loorbach & van Raak, 2006): problem structuring, establishment of the transition arena and envisioning; developing coalitions and transition agendas; mobilising actors and executing projects and experiments; and evaluating, monitoring and learning. The following sections delve into the role of collaboration in governance (Section 3.1.2) and innovation (Section 3.1.3) in the context of sustainability transitions.

### 3.1.2. Collaborative Governance

Collaborative or network governance is a looser form of governance—in relation to the traditional, hierarchical and siloed forms of public governance—where non-state stakeholders participate in policy making (Khan, 2013; Mulgan, 2009; Sørensen, 2006). Transition management literature points to the need for collaborative governance, in coexistence with public governance (Cramer, 2022), to

integrate in policy making the goals and interests of public and non-state stakeholders (Ansell, 2012; Beck et al., 2023; Fenton et al., 2016; Guarnieri et al., 2023). Involving the different levels of the public administrations (multi-level governance) is as important as the participation of private and civil society organisations and citizens (Eckersley, 2018; Fenton & Gustafsson, 2017; Haarstad, 2016; Smith, 2012).

The potential of networks in governing wicked problems is explained by their flexibility, their capacity to solve problems, administrate shared resources, create learning opportunities and address shared goals (E. P. Weber & Khademian, 2008). Their participation has been associated with a number of positive outcomes. These include more inclusive and complex transition visions (Späth & Knieling, 2020), as well as an increase in legitimacy (Palm & Thoresson, 2014), in resilience (Kapucu et al., 2023) and in the scope of the transition (Fenton et al., 2016).

However, scholars acknowledge the difficulties associated with effectively involving a network of stakeholders in transition governance (Fenton & Gustafsson, 2017; Glicken, 2000; Perry & Atherton, 2017). Authors particularly emphasise the challenges faced by public organisations, which are called to facilitate and coordinate the effective implementation of sustainability transitions (Fenton et al., 2016; Klijn & Koppenjan, 2015; Provan & Kenis, 2008; Shtjefni et al., 2024). Competing institutional logics and cultures (Crosby & Bryson, 2010), hierarchical and siloed structures resulting from the long-standing trend towards fragmentation, specialisation and decentralisation (Becher, 2001; Lægneid & Verhoest, 2010; Max-Neef, 2005; Ryan & Walsh, 2004), as well as the scarcity of financial and human resources and mechanisms to promote social dialogue (Shtjefni et al., 2024), stand out as the main obstacles to collaboration.

Reflecting this emerging political trend, citizen assemblies are increasingly being adopted by governments as a form of collaborative governance (Casado Da Rocha, 2023; Lacelle-Webster & Warren, 2021). In these deliberative democracy mechanisms, randomly selected citizens deliberate and propose solutions and recommendations to policymakers (Fournier, 2011). Within this literature, collaboration is suggested to play a role in strengthening democratic systems. However, these assemblies are often associated with slow and costly processes, prompting scholars to explore alternative approaches to expand citizens' collaborative and deliberative capacities (Casado Da Rocha et al., 2023).



### 3.1.3. Collaborative Innovation for Systemic Change

In transition management literature, multi-stakeholder collaborative innovation is particularly important in two transition instruments, arenas (Rotmans & Loorbach, 2009) and experiments (Neuens et al., 2013), reflecting the dual nature of innovation in transitions, encompassing both systemic (Grin et al., 2010; Sachs et al., 2019) and local aspects (Coenen et al., 2012; Wittmayer et al., 2014).

*Transition arenas* are virtual, open and dynamic networks that operate as a legitimate experimental space with the support (but not the dictation) of political actors or regime powers (Kemp & Loorbach, 2003; Rotmans & Loorbach, 2009). More precisely, it is “a group of people that reach consensus with each other about the need and opportunity for systemic change and coordinate amongst themselves to promote and develop an alternative” (van der Brugge & van Raak, 2007, p. 9). Recent examples suggest that while transition arenas typically involve approximately 15 to 20 “frontrunners,” with five individuals showing a longer-term commitment and forming a core group (Rotmans & Loorbach, 2009), the actual number of participants can surpass this range and may even take the form of an ecology of intermediaries<sup>2</sup> (Soberón et al., 2022). Through interaction, the involved actors develop and agree on a “shared perception of a problem, a long-term orientation on the future with joint objectives, a common agenda and strategic actions and experiments” (Loorbach & van Raak, 2006, p. 7). It is worth highlighting that a transition arena differs from a network of actors: while the network is tied by complementary interests of the actors involved, the transition arena is bound by a common belief in a specific change, even if participants have divergent interests (Loorbach et al., 2015).

*Transition experiments* are “real-life developments of drastically alternative ways of working and/or thinking, fitting into envisaged new system approach” (Neuens et al., 2013, p. 114). Two key characteristics of transition experiments should be highlighted: their high risk of failure and their focus on knowledge and learning (Rotmans & Loorbach, 2009). Certainly, the ultimate goal is to establish a portfolio of transition experiments led by multi-stakeholder partnerships. This approach facilitates cross-experiment learning, ensures coherent evaluation, and reinforces

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<sup>2</sup> Intermediaries are “agents who connect diverse groups of actors involved in transition processes and their skills, resources and expectations” (Sovacool et al., 2020, p. 1).

the contribution of each experiment to the systemic change goal (Loorbach et al., 2015).

Ensuring diversity and participation of the most relevant perspectives of the system addressed, including public, private, social, academic, creative and communicative actors, civil society and intermediaries, is essential for the effectiveness of the transition process (Barandiarán et al., 2023; Escario-Chust et al., 2023; Loorbach, 2007). The Quintuple Helix innovation model is an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary framework in which the aforementioned actors, with consideration for the perspective of the natural environment, exchange knowledge and know-how to tackle the challenges of socioecological transition (Carayannis et al., 2012). Collaboration is supposed to spur creativity and innovation at every stage, from the definition of complex problems to the design, test and dissemination of creative solutions (Hartley et al., 2013), and to facilitate exchange and learning between innovations at different scales of the system (Dóci et al., 2022; Gugerell et al., 2023).

However, Espiau (2022) warn of the significance of the cultural dimension, which encompasses a society's shared beliefs, values, and narratives, in shaping its capacity for innovation and transformation. More specifically, Escario-Chust et al. (2023) highlight the lack of participation tradition in southern Europe, where a significant burden of responsibility is often placed on public administrations. This prevailing culture may pose challenges, at least to the initial stages of collaborative innovation and governance.

Furthermore, some scholars argue that achieving deeper changes will require deeper levels of collaboration than experienced so far (Moreno-Serna, Purcell, et al., 2020; Sachs et al., 2019). Hence, it is essential to delve deeper into what is meant by “collaboration” in the context of sustainability transitions.

### **3.2. The Need for Transformational Collaboration**

As described in previous sections, collaborative attitudes are recognised as a critical success factor for transitions (Bögel et al., 2019). Collaboration is increasingly seen as paramount for innovation and knowledge creation (Blomqvist & Levy, 2006) in a wide range of fields, including public policy (Huxham & Vangen, 2000), research (Bolger, 2021b) or business (Behnam et al., 2018). This idea is reinforced by game theory, which recognises cooperation as an integral part of the progress of humanity, leading to better outcomes compared to individual efforts

(M. A. Nowak & Highfield, 2012). Robert Wright's (2001) theory of non-zero-sum interactions suggests that as society becomes increasingly complex, diverse and interdependent, it tends to evolve towards forms of interaction where outcomes are not simply the sum of individual gains and losses; instead, cooperative actions can generate outcomes that benefit all parties involved, suggesting advantages over individualism in complex social contexts.

Consequently, multi-stakeholder collaboration has emerged as a growing trend over the past half century (Dyer & Singh, 1998; Kale & Singh, 2007). However, the implicit assumption that collaboration is a “good thing” per se has resulted in limited attention to its actual impact on sustainability transitions (Donahue, 2004; Huxham & Vangen, 2000). In particular, both scholars and practitioners concur that multi-stakeholder partnerships are failing at producing creative alternatives to the current socio-technical system and at scaling up the impact of locally rooted transformative innovations (Loorbach et al., 2020). Among the factors contributing to the challenges of transformative innovation and scalability, Loorbach and colleagues (2020) identify a focus of policy and innovation efforts on optimising existing systems rather than envisioning new ones. According to Casado da Rocha et al. (2023) shared visions can emerge from co-creation processes of future scenarios —prospective dimension— and from the identification and description of a minimum consensus among various societal perspectives —descriptive dimension.

Additionally, Smith and Raven (2012) argue that the scalability of niche innovations may depend on additional processes of change within the regime, as well as in the broader society and economy. Traditionally, policy-driven and social innovation have followed a linear process centred on technology development, starting with a pilot project in a specific context and potentially gaining systemic properties through market mechanisms (Goyal & Howlett, 2020; Köhler et al., 2019; Mulgan et al., 2007; Murray et al., 2010). Nevertheless, this traditional innovation journey is not consistent with the multi-dimensional, multi-level and co-evolutionary nature of transitions. Systems innovation requires not only innovating within the parts of the system but also reimagining the way they interconnect and learn from each other (Mulgan & Leadbeater, 2013).

Indeed, the term “collaboration” is ambiguous and has been overused for any type of interpersonal or inter-organisational relationship, as a synonym for “communication”, “coordination” or “cooperation” (Gajda, 2004; Lozano, 2007). In organisational studies, collaboration is literally defined as “working together for

mutual benefits” (Parung & Bititci, 2008, p. 656). Benefits include the integration of different perspectives when solving problems (value co-creation), the optimization of financial and human resources (cost-effectiveness) and the access to knowledge, information and learning (Lozano, 2007). Collaboration thus entails a win-win view of problem solving, since partners voluntarily join forces by sharing tangible and intangible resources, responsibilities and risks, for the purpose of creating value and accomplishing something that they could not do alone (Roberts, 2000; Stott & Murphy, 2020). Nonetheless, Stott (2017) points out that it is not all benefits and that some risks may emerge when engaging in a partnership. She specifically highlights the loss of autonomy, the conflicts of interest, the implication of resources, the implementation challenges and the reputation impact. It is therefore important to question when it is appropriate to collaborate and what level of engagement is involved (Dyer et al., 2014; Stott, 2023).

In this regard, the literature has developed different frameworks aiming at conceptualising the depth of a collaborative relationship. Particularly relevant is the so-called *collaboration continuum*, in which collaboration is understood as an evolving process from low to high levels of integration (J. E. Austin & Seitanidi, 2012; Himmelman, 2002). Two frameworks merit attention: Firstly, Himmelman (2002) delineates five stages ranging from low to high levels of variables such as trust, commitment and formality, with “collaboration” representing the highest level as it encompasses a shared purpose, resource sharing and mutual learning. Secondly, Austin and Seitanidi (2012) distinguish four stages based on the direction and use of resources of different nature (e.g., money, reputation, knowledge, capabilities, infrastructure, relationships, etc.): philanthropic (unilateral transfer of resources), transactional (reciprocal exchange), integrative (co-creation of value) and transformational (co-creation of transformative change at the level of the system).

The analysis and intersection of these frameworks (Table 3.3) suggests that only the integrative and transformational stages align with the definition of collaboration as a process of co-creating value. Specifically, only the transformational stage may prove beneficial in the realm of sustainability transitions, as it enables the collective generation of transformative change at the systemic level at an adequate pace (J. E. Austin & Seitanidi, 2012; EIT Climate-KIC, 2018; Sachs et al., 2019).

**Table 3.3.** Crossing the *Collaboration Continuum* Frameworks

Categories <sup>(1)</sup>	Networking	Coordination	Cooperation		Collaboration	
Categories <sup>(2)</sup>			Philanthropic	Transactional	Integrative	Transformative
Level of engagement and trust	Low	>	>	>	>	High
Level of interaction	Exceptional	Sporadic	Infrequent	>	>	Intensive
Information exchange	x	x	x	x	x	x
Common purpose		x	x	x	x	x
Sharing of resources			x	x	x	x
Mutual learning					x	x
Co-creation of value			Sole	>	>	Conjoined

Source: Own work based on the collaboration continuum. Note: Categories (1) correspond to Himmelman (2002) while Categories (2) are from Austin and Seitanidi’s (2012) framework.

However, it is important to acknowledge that “transformational collaboration” remains a theoretical concept, given the limited number of practical examples documented in the literature (Moreno-Serna, Purcell, et al., 2020; Moreno-Serna, Sánchez-Chaparro, et al., 2020). Despite the scarcity of case studies, five characteristics can be elucidated drawing on the research conducted by scholars such as Austin and Seitanidi (2012), Hamann and April (2013) and Loorbach et al. (2020):

- A systemic shared purpose, which entails aligning the core activities and competencies of partners towards the common purpose of transforming the socio-technical system;
- High levels of trust and commitment, evidenced in the integration of resources and the shared assumption of risks and responsibilities;
- Intensive, continuous and creative interaction, aiming at co-creating value and envisioning alternatives to the current unsustainable regimes;
- A distinctive style of leadership, often referred to as “collaborative” or “integrative” leadership (Alexander et al., 2001; Crosby & Bryson, 2010; Huxham & Vangen, 2000), not limited to facilitators or leaders, but encompassing all individuals and organisations engaged in collaboration (further elaborated in subsection 2.3.2);

- Mutual learning and the enhancement of partners capabilities, as inherent outcomes of collaborative interaction.

Furthermore, transformational collaboration demands specific individual and organisational capabilities, as detailed in the following section.

### **3.3. Collaboration Capability: A Conceptualisation**

Since numerous challenges arise when engaging in collaborative arrangements, individuals and organisations must cultivate specific capabilities to effectively participate in transition arenas and experiments (Almeida et al., 2021; Romero et al., 2009). In this research, the ability to collaborate is referred to as “collaboration capability.” As a fundamental concept for this research, the following section is devoted to reach a shared comprehension and delineate the essential skills required for transformational collaboration in the context of sustainability transitions.

#### **3.3.1. Clarifying Preliminary Concepts**

Before delving into the exploration of “collaboration capability,” it is important to provide a brief explanation of the main terms used to describe individual and organisational abilities. The terms “capacity,” “capability” and “skill” are often used interchangeably in the literature (Vincent, 2008), making it challenging to discern their subtle differences solely from dictionary definitions (Nagarajan & Prabhu, 2015). To enhance readability and facilitate interdisciplinary dialogue, this subsection aims to clarify the nuanced distinctions among these related concepts by providing concise definitions for each term, in order from the most specific to the most abstract concept.

*Skills* are the set of tools enabling individuals to effectively accomplish specific tasks (Nagarajan & Prabhu, 2015). Complementing knowledge, attitudes and values, skills are categorised into cognitive, meta-cognitive, social, emotional, practical and physical domains<sup>3</sup> (OECD, 2018). These are commonly dichotomised

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<sup>3</sup> The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) provides various examples of different types of skills in its position paper titled *The Future of Education and Skills. Education 2030*. Cognitive skills encompass abilities such as critical thinking and creative thinking. Meta-cognitive skills involve learning to learn and self-regulation. Social and emotional skills include empathy, self-efficacy and collaboration. Practical skills refer to competencies like using communication technology devices. Physical skills encompass attributes such as strength, flexibility, and speed (OECD, 2018, p. 15).

into hard skills, which emphasise cognitive and technical aspects, and soft skills, which focus on interpersonal and behavioural categories (M. R. Weber et al., 2011).

*Capacity* is an individual's potential to perform a particular task, including cognitive, physical, social, emotional, creative or communicative endeavours (e.g., the maximum extent to which they are able to receive, retain or conveying information effectively). In organisational contexts, "capacity" typically refers to the available quantity of people and resources, encompassing financial assets, infrastructure, equipment, network, time, skills, and data, among other factors (Vincent, 2008). While its definition varies depending on sector, size, culture and mission, it generally comprises six dimensions (Cox et al., 2018):

- Leadership entails establishing a clear vision, sharing it, and providing necessary information for its realisation, typically carried out by the individuals in directive roles within an organisation.
- Strategy involves the presence of plans facilitating the achievement of short and long-term goals.
- Structure and Governance refer to the institutional rules, policies and processes governing delegation, management and coordination of roles and responsibilities.
- Skills encompass the appropriate mix of employees that can effectively and adaptively perform complex activities involving cognitive, technical and interpersonal skills.
- Human capital involves activities like identification, recruitment, training and management of employees.
- Accountability entails the organisation's transparency and responsibility in disclosing its activities and finances both internally and externally.

The organisational environment, encompassing elements such as legal, institutional and cultural frameworks, is considered determinant for organisational capacity. Meanwhile, organisational communication and culture, which includes beliefs, attitudes, values and behaviours, are often overlooked but significantly influence capacity building (Cox et al., 2018).

*Capability* is capacity put into practice and refers to the ability of both individuals and organisations to learn in order to adapt to a constantly changing environment. For individuals, capability represents the potential to acquire new skills to meet upcoming needs (Nagarajan & Prabhu, 2015). Indeed, "capable people are more

than competent, they are creative, know how to learn, have a high level of self-efficacy, can use competencies in novel as well as familiar situations and work well in teams” (Nagarajan & Prabhu, 2015, p. 8). Similarly, for organisations, capability refers to the ability to integrate, develop and adjust internal and external resources to effectively respond to changing circumstances (Teece et al., 1997). Capabilities are defined as high-level routines (Winter, 2000), dynamic (Winter, 2003) and critical for performance (Platt & Wilson, 1999). As will be discussed below, the term “capability” adequately reflects the dynamic nature of collaboration, which necessitates continuous learning and adaptation.

In today’s complex and dynamic world, individuals and organisations often need to (a) acquire new knowledge and *skills*, (b) maintain their *capabilities* (processes and means of collaborating) flexible and adaptable enough to be easily and quickly deployed in different contexts, and (c) look outside for *capacities*, when they do not have sufficient expertise in house (Vincent, 2008). It is therefore important to differentiate between capacity-building and capability-building: the former focuses on learning to improve existing resources while the latter emphasises learning as a way to optimise the use of resources to improve performance (Platt & Wilson, 1999). Furthermore, capability building is seen as an adaptation process, which takes place collectively and collaboratively within groups and organisations (Vincent, 2008). Strengthening the ability to collaborate involves not only increasing resources (i.e., gaining comfort in collaboration) but also learning to use them collaboratively to gain efficiency.

### **3.3.2. Collaboration: A Multi-level and Multidimensional Capability**

Achieving effective collaboration in sustainability transitions necessitates the cultivation of a certain readiness for collaboration by both individuals and organisations (Almeida et al., 2021; Romero et al., 2009). This readiness is often conceptualised using different terms, such as “network capacities,” “cooperative capabilities,” “alliance capability,” with “collaboration capability” emerging as the most common based on the literature review conducted by Almeida et al. (2021).

Broadly, “collaboration capability” is the ability of individuals and organisations to work together effectively and co-create value in order to achieve a common goal (Almeida et al., 2021; Worley et al., 2010). In the context of sustainability transitions, this concept specifically refers to the ability to jointly address sustainability challenges (Bezerra et al., 2020).



However, Blomqvist and Levy (2006) expanded on this concept, defining collaboration capability as a multi- and cross-level construct that encompasses individuals, teams, organisations, networks and systems. While there is limited research on the combination and interdependence of levels, these authors highlight that the collaboration capability of a system is augmented by the capabilities of its constituent parts. Nevertheless, Weber and colleagues (2007) argue that the will for long-term collaboration between public, private and social actors and their continuous interaction are not sufficient for a system to possess a high capacity to collaborate. They argue that factors such as compliance for the law, trust in institutions and respect for hierarchy and authority are also essential for success at the system level.

The organisational and individual levels, which are particularly relevant to this research, are examined in greater detail in the subsequent subsections.

#### **a. Organisational Level**

In very general terms, collaboration capability at the organisational level means the readiness of “leadership to support collaborative activities, allocate/assign resources (money, staff, technology and information) across organisational boundaries, and attach to a common ground for successful collaboration (common operating principles, common ontology, interoperable infrastructures, and cooperation agreements)” (Romero et al., 2009, p. 4693). Scholars have approached this concept through different theoretical lenses, notably as either a transactional or a relational capability.

The transactional perspective, prevalent in the private sector, views collaboration as the exchange of resources, skills or knowledge aimed at enhancing competitive advantage and performance (Almeida et al., 2021; Choi & Hwang, 2015). The aim is to produce a synergistic effect whereby the combined resources become more valuable as they are rare and difficult to imitate (Dyer & Singh, 1998). This perspective is also referred to as resource-based approach.

Conversely, the relational approach defines collaboration as the ability to find, develop, establish and manage relationships both within and outside the organisation (Blomqvist & Levy, 2006; Lambe et al., 2002). Pless and Maak (2005) referred to this as relational intelligence, a mix of emotional factors (such as empathy and care) and ethical considerations (such as reflection and orientation). According to them, contemporary leaders and organisations must possess the capabilities to “connect and interact effectively and respectfully with people and

stakeholders from various backgrounds, diverse cultures and with different interests, inside and outside the organization, at home as well as across distances, businesses, sectors, countries and cultures” (Pless & Maak, 2005, p. 2). These capabilities are supposed to contribute to making mature and context-sensitive decisions while creating sustainable and trustful relationships. Blomqvist and Levy (2006) also highlighted the crucial role of trust, communication and commitment in collaboration capability:

- Trust is a multidimensional phenomenon, both rational and emotional, which refers to the beliefs about a partner’s capabilities and future behaviours.
- Commitment involves instrumental and emotional dimensions, and brings together attitudes, expectations and behaviours assessed in terms of concrete actions and material investments.
- Communication serves as a catalyst for the construction of a trustworthy atmosphere.

Furthermore, the literature recognises that collaboration entails the continuous development of knowledge and skills, leading to its conceptualisation as a dynamic capability (Allred et al., 2011). Dynamic capabilities make organisations more flexible to adapt to changing environments by building, integrating and configuring their resources, skills, processes and practices accordingly (Hofmann et al., 2012). Consequently, collaboration capability encompasses the ability to learn from collaborative experiences and successfully apply insights in future endeavours (Ulbrich et al., 2009).

Scholars acknowledge the limited evidence concerning the specific organisational capabilities beneficial for collaboration, as they heavily rely on context and organisational culture (Almeida et al., 2021), and this is a focal point for further exploration in this research. However, the literature highlights the primary drivers for collaboration capability at the organisational level (Blomqvist & Levy, 2006; Pless & Maak, 2005; Stott, 2023; Sullivan et al., 2006), which are classified across seven dimensions:

- Environment involves factors such as supportive legal and institutional frameworks and the presence of intermediaries that can facilitate collaborative endeavours.
- Culture encompasses the positive narratives, beliefs, values and attitudes towards collaboration, often based on previous successful collaboration stories, as well as high levels of trust and communication.

- Leadership requires a commitment to collaboration and the adoption of collaborative leadership approaches.
- Strategy involves a shared mission that aligns organisational incentives and agendas.
- Structure and Governance include cross-cutting structures, agreements and accountability mechanisms that facilitate collaborative decision-making and the management of resource and communication flows.
- Operations encompass aspects such as providing time for relationship-building, and establishing suitable mechanisms for pooled budgets and joint appointments.
- People refers to employees with relational skills and a sense of community.

Nevertheless, the cross-level nature of collaboration capability makes organisations very dependent on the skills of the individuals who are part of them. Thus, a deeper understanding of collaboration capability at the individual level becomes imperative.

#### **b. Individual Level**

Transition management literature emphasises the critical importance of individual collaboration capability across all phases of the transition process, especially in effectively building visions, agendas and experiments (van der Brugge & van Raak, 2007).

From an anthropological perspective, human beings are “adapted for acting and thinking cooperatively in cultural groups” (Tomasello, 2009, p. xv). Collaboration is thus an inherent human capacity, which is studied as the evolutionary resource that has made it possible for our species to adapt to an increasingly complex world (M. A. Nowak & Highfield, 2012; Sennett, 2012). It is indeed illustrative how the size of the human brain has grown proportionally to the size of the social groups, allowing humans to manage a large number of relationships and build very complex social systems (Dunbar, 2009). While all individuals possess the capacity for collaboration in theory, its development is very dependent on the context and the individual’s life experiences. In this regard, American sociologist Richard Sennett (2012) warns that the prevailing culture of individualism and competitiveness in Western societies may undermine collaboration capabilities.

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) considers collaboration as central to educating a new generation of professionals to meet the challenges of sustainability (Lambrechts et al., 2013; Valdés et al., 2018; Wiek et al., 2015).

Indeed, collaboration has garnered increasing emphasis within significant competency frameworks outlined by major international organisations. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *competency* encompasses “the mobilisation of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to meet complex demands” in unknown and evolving circumstances (OECD, 2018, p. 5). The competency frameworks of three institutions deserve particular attention:

- The OECD has developed successive frameworks, starting with the Definition and Selection of Key Competencies, or DeSeCo (1997-2005), and continuing with the ongoing development of the Learning Framework 2030<sup>4</sup> (see Appendix A, Table A1. Collaboration skills in the key competencies of the OECD's DeSeCo project Table A1 and Table A2).
- The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has fostered successive initiatives<sup>5</sup> through the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014) and the Education 2030 Agenda, since 2015 (see Appendix A, Table A3).
- The European Commission, through the Joint Research Centre, has developed the *GreenComp* (2022), which is the European sustainability competence framework (see Appendix A, Table A4).

These frameworks aim to delineate the necessary competencies to equip individuals, from childhood to adulthood, with the tools to address both current and future sustainability challenges. It is important to note that these institutions adopt distinct approaches to education. The OECD's educational approach is pragmatic and economy-oriented (Ramos Ramiro, 2022). From their perspective, competencies serve as fundamental instruments for enhancing employability and driving economic growth, impacting both individual living standards and countries' competitiveness (OECD, 2019). Conversely, UNESCO embraces a more holistic and human rights-centred vision of education, understanding it as a means to foster peace, social justice, gender equity and sustainable development (UNESCO International Bureau of Education, 2017). Lastly, the EU envisions

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<sup>4</sup> Its vision and principles were articulated in the position paper *The future of education and skills. Education 2030* (OECD, 2018).

<sup>5</sup> These efforts are encapsulated in documents such as *Reconceptualizing and Repositioning Curriculum in the 21st Century. A Global Paradigm Shift* (UNESCO International Bureau of Education, 2017) and *Issues and Trends in Education for Sustainable Development* (UNESCO, 2018).

learning as a catalyst for driving change towards a future that operates within planetary boundaries (European Commission. Joint Research Centre, 2022).

In addition to these international frameworks, collaboration holds a prominent mention in relevant research. Worth mentioning is the study conducted by Wiek and colleagues (2011, 2015) on key competencies for sustainability in higher education institutions (see Appendix A, Table A5). Moreover, the recently developed framework within the Inner Development Goals<sup>6</sup> (IDG) initiative provides a complementary perspective on aforementioned models (see Appendix A, Table A6, Table A7 and Table A8), since it accentuates the significance of values, attitudes and the relationship to self (Jordan, 2021).

In these frameworks, the understanding of collaboration capability has evolved from a transactional to a transformational approach, serving different purposes, including:

- Working effectively and respectfully in teams (European Commission. Joint Research Centre, 2022; UNESCO International Bureau of Education, 2017; Wiek et al., 2015);
- Negotiation (OECD, 2005);
- Conflict management and resolution (OECD, 2005, 2018; UNESCO, 2018; Wiek et al., 2015);
- Acting as a catalyst for cultivating a generation of changemakers (European Commission. Joint Research Centre, 2022; Heiskanen et al., 2016; Kordas et al., 2015);
- Serving as a tool for fostering shared and inclusive visions aimed at transformation (European Commission. Joint Research Centre, 2022; Jordan, 2021);
- Partnership building (European Commission. Joint Research Centre, 2022; OECD, 2005);
- Facilitating the creation of value, innovation and problem-solving (European Commission. Joint Research Centre, 2022; Jordan, 2021; OECD, 2018; Wiek et al., 2011);

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<sup>6</sup> The Inner Development Goals is a non-profit, open source and science-based initiative aiming at identifying and supporting “the development of relevant abilities, skills and qualities for inner growth, through consciously supportive organizations, companies and institutions, to better address the global challenges” (Jordan, 2021, p. 3).

- Enabling meaningful participation in democratic processes (European Commission. Joint Research Centre, 2022).

Furthermore, the analysis of these frameworks sheds light on the concept of individual collaboration capability and allows for several conclusions to be drawn:

- Collaboration capability should be nurtured throughout life, from primary to higher education and lifelong learning, encompassing formal, non-formal and informal education (Cebrián et al., 2020).
- Attitudes and values (e.g., trust, empathy, presence) are as important as skills when collaborating (Jordan, 2021).
- Several levels of acquired competence can be distinguished, ranging from basic skills for effective teamwork, intermediate abilities encompassing conflict resolution and varied collaboration roles, to advanced proficiency demanding leadership and innovation skills (Wiek et al., 2015).

Specifically, collaboration competency involves a range of skills and attitudes, including networking, coalition and consensus building, leadership, empathy, adaptability, pluralistic thinking, presence, appreciation, communication, facilitation and negotiation, among others (Jordan, 2021; Loorbach, 2007; OECD, 2018; UNESCO, 2018; Wiek et al., 2015). To delve deeper into these skills as components of collaboration capability, this research categorises them into three groups, namely leadership, dialogue and emotional intelligence, which are outlined as follows.

### *Leadership*

Leadership is considered central for creating and sustaining cross-sector collaborations (Crosby & Bryson, 2010). Within sustainability transitions, leaders are commonly referred to in the literature as “change agents” (Heiskanen et al., 2016; Kordas et al., 2015) or “transition managers” (Loorbach, 2007) and do not necessarily have to be directly involved in sustainability professions (OECD, 2019; Wiek et al., 2015). Specifically, these individuals are defined as “anyone who has the skill and power to stimulate, facilitate, and coordinate the change effort” (Lunenburg, 2010, p. 1) within and outside organisations (Heiskanen et al., 2016). However, these frameworks view leadership far from the concept of heroism, emphasising it as a quality that all individuals can develop, aligning with recent literature on the subject (Bligh, 2011; Collinson et al., 2018). It is also seen as dynamic, allowing individuals to assume both leadership and follower roles simultaneously (Wiek et al., 2011).

Indeed, traditional hierarchical relationships are inadequate in multi-stakeholder arrangements (Huxham & Vangen, 2000). This has prompted the exploration of concepts like “collaborative” or “integrative” leadership (Archer & Cameron, 2009; Page, 2010). Integrative leadership, which can be formal or informal, brings “diverse groups and organizations together in semi-permanent ways, and typically across sector boundaries, to remedy complex public problems” and leveraging the strengths of each sector or organisation (Crosby & Bryson, 2010, p. 211).

Complexity requires integrative leaders to deploy a set of specific skills (Alexander et al., 2001). These include systems thinking, power sharing, political acumen, a belief in the value of collaboration and the sensibility on who and what must be integrated (Crosby & Bryson, 2010). Additionally, collaborative leaders must cultivate mobilisation skills (Jordan, 2021) and demonstrate proficiency in navigating complexity and ambiguity effectively, turning conflicts and tensions into opportunities for creativity and innovation (Hamann & April, 2013), while understanding interconnections (OECD, 2018). Lastly, in terms of attitudes and values, they are expected to demonstrate a willingness to engage with others to change the status quo (European Commission. Joint Research Centre, 2022). Additionally, they should embody optimism, humility, empathy and courage, be capable of showing trust and maintaining trusting relationships, embrace an inclusive mindset and cultivate a sense of appreciation, gratitude and joy (Jordan, 2021).

### *Dialogue*

Social or interpersonal competence plays a pivotal role in collaboration capability in sustainability transitions. It encompasses “the ability to motivate, enable, and facilitate collaborative and participatory sustainability research and problem solving”, as well as “the capacity to understand, compare and critically evaluate different positions, perspectives and preferences” (Wiek et al., 2011, p. 211).

Indeed, collaboration and conflict are seen as two sides of the same coin, highlighting the necessity of effective communication skills. These involve not only articulating ideas in a verbal or written format (OECD, 2005; Wiek et al., 2015), but also active listening, adapting communication to different audiences and promoting genuine dialogue (Jordan, 2021). Managing conflict constructively, skilfully advocating for one’s views, identifying areas of agreement and disagreement and reframing problems are crucial aspects (Jordan, 2021; OECD, 2005). Moreover, creating inclusive visions and narratives requires understanding

opposing ideas deeply, incorporating diverse (and even conflictive) stakeholder input and consensus building (European Commission. Joint Research Centre, 2022; Kordas et al., 2015; Wiek et al., 2015). Embracing diversity, sometimes referred to as “intercultural competence”, involves understanding and respecting others’ needs, perspectives and actions, and demonstrating empathy (Jordan, 2021; UNESCO, 2018).

### *Emotional intelligence*

Recognising the inherent discomfort in collaboration (Freeth & Caniglia, 2020), competency frameworks increasingly incorporate skills and attitudes for emotional management. This includes emphasising ego management skills like self-regulation, self-control, self-efficacy and adaptability (OECD, 2018). Developing these skills entails gaining a deeper understanding of one’s feelings, thoughts and body to respond intentionally and non-reactively in complex situations (Jordan, 2021). To this end, the IDG framework underscores four key attitudes:

- Presence: the ability to maintain a non-judgemental, open-ended state of awareness in the present moment.
- Self-awareness: maintaining a realistic self-image, reflective contact with one’s own thoughts, feelings and desires, and the capacity for self-regulation.
- Humility: the capacity to act according to situational needs regardless of personal importance.
- Perseverance: sustaining engagement and determination, especially during prolonged efforts and when results take time to materialise.

In essence, collaboration is a multi-level and multidimensional capability. As an organisational capability, collaboration permeates every dimension of an organisation: personnel, operations, structures, strategy, leadership and governance models, culture and environment. When it comes to individuals, collaboration capability encompasses various skills, behaviours and attitudes, including integrative leadership, inclusive and problem-solving dialogue skills, ego management and emotional intelligence. Moreover, collaboration is recognised as a dynamic capability, requiring continuous learning and adaptation across all phases of the transition process, highlighting the need for nurturing it throughout life.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge a limitation of this theoretical framework, which predominantly draws on Western references rooted in Judeo-Christian philosophical traditions. This may not fully capture the diversity of human



experiences and perspectives on collaboration. Future research and international frameworks should aim to broaden the scope to include a wider range of cultural and philosophical paradigms. For instance, concepts like Ubuntu, originating from Southern African traditions, emphasise the importance of reciprocity among individuals and communal well-being. Similarly, the notion of Sumak Kawsay, from indigenous Andean cultures, highlights embedding individuals within a network of cooperative and harmonious relationships with both the community and the natural environment (UNESCO & UNESCO Global Independent Expert Group on the Universities and the 2030 Agenda, 2022). These philosophies prioritise collaboration as valuable in itself, moving away from transactional views (Stott, 2017). Additionally, insights from Eastern philosophical traditions, notably Buddhist philosophy, could offer valuable perspectives on emotional intelligence, presence and mindfulness.

### **3.3.3. Assessing Multi-level Collaboration Capability**

Several scholars highlight the challenge of assessing collaboration capability due to its inherently intangible outcomes (Gajda, 2004; Lozano, 2007) requiring inductive inference for causality (Skelcher & Sullivan, 2008). Studies often employ effectiveness and performance as indicators of organisational collaboration capability (Skelcher & Sullivan, 2008; Stott, 2023). Nevertheless, nurturing collaboration capabilities typically relies on an enabling environment, necessitating a systemic and multilevel assessment approach. Such an approach should encompass intra-organisational, inter-organisational and environmental factors (Seitanidi & Ryan, 2007), ranging from individual skills to supportive regulatory frameworks (Stott, 2023). The complexity of integrating these diverse levels, dimensions and indicators explains the scarcity of documented evaluation experiences in the literature. Nonetheless, a synthesis of existing studies identifies a series of key indicators, which are described below

Recent research emphasises the need of further exploring assessment tools and methods concerning individuals (Cebrián et al., 2020). Literature typically describes experiences within the educational domain, primarily conducted in classroom settings where evaluation often relies on observation, group activities, and self-assessment. Webb (1995) proposes four potential dimensions for assessing individual collaboration capability in the context of a group activity:

- Individual learning, demonstrated through acquisition of new knowledge or skills;

- Individual aptitude for learning from collaboration;
- Group productivity, measured by the quantity and quality of collaboratively completed tasks;
- Individual's collaboration skills, including coordination, communication, decision-making, conflict resolution and negotiation.

Lai (2011) identifies several challenges in discerning genuine progress or learning concerning collaboration skills and in decoupling individual and group performance. Furthermore, in the realm of organisational literature, different outputs and outcomes are suggested to demonstrate partnership effectiveness, and thus inferred a certain collaboration capability of the partners. These encompass, at the individual level, the acquisition of knowledge and skills, the improved performance, the efficient use of time and resources, the establishment of new connections and opportunities, and the capacity to influence other organisations (Stott, 2017).

However, authors acknowledge that “individual collaborative capacity does not necessarily translate into organizational or sectoral capacity” (Skelcher & Sullivan, 2008, p. 759). Romero et al. (2009) identify five components of organisational “readiness for collaboration” from their assessment of organisations before and after their participation in collaborative networks: context (i.e., ecosystem, value chain, products and services, etc.), value co-creation processes, resources, structure and knowledge management. Although specific indicators for each component are not elaborated, they argue that readiness is particularly evidenced “in the provision of staff, budget, training, technology and other resources to support collaboration” (Romero et al., 2009, p. 4693). They also emphasise the importance of past collaborative experiences in shaping collaboration capability both at the organisational and inter-organisational levels,, an idea also supported by Moreno-Serna et al. (2021). Intermediary organisations or individuals are also crucial (Stott, 2023), along with an understanding of power dynamics and responsibilities (Seitanidi & Ryan, 2007).

Finally, at the level of the system, Stott (2023) emphasises the role of supportive legal, regulatory, political, economic and cultural frameworks in collaboration capability. Moreover, Weber and colleagues (2007) propose a framework aimed at evaluating the evolution of collaboration capability resulting from a collaborative process engaging a stakeholder ecosystem. The data collection involves interviews and surveys targeting both leaders and citizens, with a focus on three dimensions:

- Vertical capacity: support for the law and compliance;
- Horizontal capacity: social capital, institutional commitment;
- Vertical-horizontal capacity: trust, honesty, good faith bargaining, utility of collaborative problem solving approaches, willingness to work together in the short and the long term.

Building upon the notion that the collaboration capacity of a system depends on the capabilities of its constituent parts (Blomqvist & Levy, 2006), it can be inferred that fostering collaboration within individuals (in the short term) and organisations (in the medium term) is imperative to instigate long-lasting cultural shifts. These timelines resonate with the stages delineated by Loorbach and van Raak (2006) within transition management literature, which specify the time required for niche innovations to change structures (5-10 years) and culture (30 years). This approach should not be perceived as incremental. Individual, organisational and systemic change processes towards collaboration must occur simultaneously; however, the resulting changes will not become apparent until these timeframes have elapsed. Table 3.4 summarises the concept of collaboration capability, considering the various levels and variables identified throughout this section.

In conclusion, assessing collaboration capability presents challenges given its multifaceted nature, characterised by blurred boundaries across various levels and dimensions. Due to the abstract nature of this conceptualization, this research aims to acquire a practical understanding of the diverse factors affecting collaboration capability and organisations' capacity to influence them. The author aims to identify specific facilitators and obstacles, and foster a more targeted strategy for improving collaboration capability. This endeavour aligns with the primary objective of this investigation, particularly elucidated in Chapter 4.

**Table 3.4. Variables influencing collaboration capability at all levels**

<b>Transition level</b>	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Time Scale</b>	<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Influential Factors</b>
Operational	Practices	Short-term (0-5y)	Personnel	Diverse and skilful employees: integrative leadership, emotional intelligence and dialogue
			Resources	Allocation of time and budget for relationship-building
			Operations	Joint appointments, pooled budgets...
			Communication	Ability to connect and interact effectively and respectfully across diverse backgrounds and cultures Conflict management skills
Tactical	Structures	Mid-term (5-10 y)	Structure/Governance	Establishment of cross-cutting structures and mechanisms for distributed decision-making
			Strategy	Collaborative mission aligning individuals, partners and agendas
			Leadership	Emphasis on integrative leadership and relational intelligence
Strategic	Culture	Long-term (30y)	Organisational culture	Cultivation of positive beliefs, values and attitudes towards collaboration Fostering trust, commitment and effective communication
			Inter-organisational	Existence of intermediary organisations Understanding of power dynamics Existing legitimacy Existing narratives on collaboration with other sectors and actors Institutional commitment
			Ecosystem	Support and compliance with legal frameworks Existence of trust, honesty and goodwill in collaborative efforts
	Environment		Supportive frameworks: legal, regulatory, political, economic and cultural	

Source: Own work

### 3.4. Building Collaboration Capability in Transitions

Sustainability transitions involve both a process of learning (Pahl-Wostl et al., 2008) and cultural change (Hoover & Harder, 2015; Soini & Dessein, 2016), necessitating the development of new capabilities by individuals, organisations and the society at large to adapt to changing contexts (Dzhengiz, 2020). Social and organisational learning are recognised as crucial for understanding, governing and making progress in transitions (Rotmans & Loorbach, 2009). However, while much attention has been given to the design and adoption of innovative technologies and policies, the cultural and behavioural aspects of learning remain underexplored in the context of sustainability transitions (Goyal & Howlett, 2020). Few studies have focused on the development of collaboration capability at the individual or intra- and inter-organisational (Luzzini et al., 2015). The assumption that collaboration arises simply from bringing individuals together has proven to be false (D. W. Johnson & Johnson, 2014), highlighting the need for a deeper understanding of the factors conducive to cultivating collaboration capability. This research endeavours to address this gap by delving into these conditions and their implications.

In transition and organisation studies, limited attention has been devoted to the development of collaboration capability, despite some scholars have explored how learning occurs in transitions (H. Johnson & Thomas, 2007; van Mierlo et al., 2020; van Mierlo & Beers, 2020). However, a number of educational theories address collaboration as a learning outcome (D. W. Johnson & Johnson, 2014; Laal, 2013), drawing on the insights of pedagogues like Dewey and psychologists like Vygotsky, who emphasise the importance of a social context, interaction and active learner engagement when learning to collaborate (Piaget, 1981; Vygotsky, 1995). Thus, this section aims to bridge educational, organisational and transition management frameworks, in order to understand how collaboration capability is developed.

#### 3.4.1. Experiential Learning

According to a study on adult learning, individuals acquire knowledge by facing and overcoming challenges, incorporating their personal experiences and views of life (McDermott, 1983). Similarly, learning to collaborate is *experiential* in nature, with the acquisition of essential knowledge and skills occurring through hands-on experiences (Kolb & Kolb, 2017; Laal, 2013). When these experiences take place in real-world collaborative contexts, learning is also *situated* (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Stein, 1998). Therefore, individuals who have not experienced situated

collaboration need to be provided with contexts in which they can engage in such enriching experiences. This approach is consistent with the principles of organisational learning theory, which posits that learning takes place in enabling organisational environments (Senge, 2006; Senge et al., 2007).

Transitions offer fertile ground for learning to collaborate by collaborating, with transition arenas, teams, experiments serving as enabling environments. Transition arenas, in particular, empower participants by developing a shared understanding of challenges and a collective agenda, which can then be translated into their organisational contexts (Loorbach et al., 2015). Similarly, citizen assemblies serve as rehearsal spaces for deliberation, consensus-building and envisioning actionable futures (Casado Da Rocha, 2023; Casado Da Rocha et al., 2023).

Indeed, sustainability transitions are increasingly defined as a process of learning-by-doing and doing-by-learning in networks (Goyal & Howlett, 2020; Pahl-Wostl et al., 2008), characterised by its dynamic and nonlinear nature. Transition scholars emphasise the importance of both structure and agency in fostering learning, knowledge management and integration (Gugerell et al., 2023). Structure encompasses the rules governing actors' interactions, along with tangible and intangible resources that determine their capacity to act and reshape these rules (Gugerell et al., 2023). Dóci et al. (2022) delve into the Viable Cities Transition Lab Forum as an illustration of learning infrastructure within the context of Swedish cities transition to climate neutrality. This forum facilitates the sharing of tacit knowledge through direct, often unconscious interactions. However, the precise conditions necessary for these learning infrastructures to enhance collaboration capability remain understudied, motivating further exploration in Chapter 5 of this research.

Therefore, gaining collaboration capability involves a *collaborative* and *social* process, where collaboration serves as both an outcome and a fundamental aspect of learning. This process relies on interaction and necessitates changes at both the individual and group levels.

### 3.4.2. Collaborative Learning

Collaborative learning<sup>7</sup>, developed by David and Roger Johnson since the 1960's, is a methodology aimed at sense-making, collective knowledge creation and problem-solving within small, heterogeneous groups (D. W. Johnson et al., 2000; Laal, 2013). Diversity within these groups is essential for success, but it must be balanced by symmetry in action, knowledge and status (Dillenbourg, 1999), making this approach widely applicable in multicultural contexts (Sharan, 2018; Shonfeld & Gibson, 2018).

However, “learning to collaborate” and “collaborative learning” should not be confused. The former focuses on developing individuals’ skills, attitudes and behaviours necessary for effective collaboration (Freeth & Caniglia, 2020), while the latter places collaboration at the core of the learning methodology and process (D. W. Johnson et al., 2000). Nevertheless, the latter has proven to effectively contribute to the development of collaborative skills (D. W. Johnson & Johnson, 2014). Therefore, collaboration is both a means and an outcome of learning (Stam et al., 2023).

To facilitate building collaboration capability, a shared responsibility for one’s own and other’s learning is crucial (Dillenbourg, 1999). Johnson and Johnson’s theory of social interdependence emphasises *positive social interdependence* (e.g., common goals and outcomes, interpersonal bonds, behavioural influence, communication) where “the actions of individuals promote the achievement of joint goals” (D. W. Johnson & Johnson, 2009, p. 366). This fosters a sense of shared responsibility and motivates group members to support each other in reaching common objectives, aligning with the concept of collaboration capability. Through *promotive interaction*, individuals demonstrate trustworthiness, commitment, lower levels of stress and effective support to their peers, echoing key elements of collaboration capability highlighted by Blomqvist and Levy (2006). They willingly share resources, accurately consider others’ perspectives and explore different points of view while challenging others’ reasoning to foster better and more creative decisions (D. W. Johnson & Johnson, 2009).

Furthermore, collaborative learning emphasises the collective construction of meaning and knowledge, although scholars acknowledge the persistence of challenges in establishing common epistemologies and managing interpersonal

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<sup>7</sup> Also known as “cooperative learning”.

tensions (Haider et al., 2018; J. T. Klein, 1996; Strober, 2011). Indeed, the learning experience of gaining collaboration capability entails a degree of discomfort, which, when properly addressed, can lead to significant growth (Freeth & Caniglia, 2020). Individuals typically develop collaboration capability through active participation in challenging collaborative experiences, where they encounter and navigate differences, such as cultural, disciplinary and political perspectives. Reflecting on these experiences often results in changes in their collaborative approach (Caniglia et al., 2016). In this regard, scholars have drawn parallels between the process of building collaboration capability and the process of fostering a partnership (Moyer et al., 1999). These processes are considered to mutually reinforce each other, forming a virtuous circle, where learning in situ and together from collaborative experiences fosters the success of collaborative relationships (Kendall et al., 2012; J. T. Klein, 1996). Hence, it can be inferred that the more advanced stages of collaboration (integrative and transformational) are particularly conducive to mutual enhancement of collaboration capability, due to the high levels of interaction and integration among the involved parties (J. E. Austin & Seitanidi, 2012).

Therefore, cultivating collaboration capability is inherently a social endeavour.

### **3.4.3. Social Learning**

According to Vygotsky's studies in the early 20th century, individual mental functions are socially constructed. A central concept of socio-cultural theory is the *zone of proximal development*, which is "the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peer" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). This theory suggests that individuals are more likely to acquire and internalise new knowledge, psychological tools and skills when working with others who possess complementary knowledge and experience (Shabani et al., 2010). Consequently, learning is viewed as a social phenomenon, in which the greater the interaction, the greater the development of individual capabilities.

Social learning, often confused with the methods needed to facilitate it, has been defined in multiple ways in the literature (Rodela, 2011). However, its definition is deeply related to change. According to Reed and colleagues (2010), the process of social learning involves three key aspects:



- Evidencing a shift in understanding among individuals involved, ranging from recall of new information to deeper changes in attitudes, worldviews or epistemological beliefs (refer to section 3.4.3.a);
- Occurring through diverse forms of social interaction, including direct interaction like conversation, as well as mediated interactions through mass media, telephone or apps (refer to section 3.4.3.b);
- Extending beyond the individual experiences to encompass broader social units or communities of practice within society (refer to section 3.4.4)

Subsequent subsections will explore these three aspects in detail.

### **a. Individual Change**

In an era increasingly characterised by individualism, cultivating collaboration capability requires a process of unlearning deep-rooted mindsets, values, attitudes and behaviours (Sennett, 2012).

Individual change, a complex phenomenon encompassing cognitive and behavioural shifts, is influenced by a myriad of intrinsic and environmental factors. Empirical studies suggest that adults are more receptive to learning when they are confronted with real-world problems within specific contexts, enabling them to draw upon personal knowledge and experiences (McDermott, 1983). Additionally, cultural context, societal norms and pressures, as well as the desire for acceptance and validation from peers serve as powerful motivators for behavioural change, as identified in the field of Social Psychology (A. Nowak & Vallacher, 1998).

Hence, cultivating collaboration capability in organisational contexts necessitates the provision of real-world collaborative experiences and a culture that promotes a positive attitude toward collaboration, thereby encouraging individuals to embrace collaborative approaches. Despite the general assumption that collaborative arrangements create very unique learning opportunities (J. E. Austin & Seitanidi, 2012; Himmelman, 2002), the literature reveals the difficulties of a process that can be frustrating at times. Inkpen (1998) suggests three main reasons for the failure to learn within collaborative arrangements: undervaluation of tacit knowledge, unsupportive organisational culture and ineffective knowledge transfer connection practices. Thus, establishing appropriate organisational structures and practices is crucial for individual learning to take place. However, individual learning and organisational change do not necessarily occur at the same pace (H. Johnson & Thomas, 2007).

## **b. Social Interaction**

Interaction, encompassing both direct and mediated, reflective and generative forms, is widely acknowledged across various fields as a key mechanism for learning (Argyris & Schön, 1999; Dóci et al., 2022; Nooteboom, 2000; Senge, 2006; van Mierlo & Beers, 2020), organisational change (Ford & Ford, 1995; D. Grant & Marshak, 2011), building social cohesion and fostering meaningful collaboration (Bohm, 2004; Freire, 2000; H. Johnson & Thomas, 2007). However, limited attention has been directed towards the dynamics of interaction, namely the space, time and methods conducive to reflection, sense-making and knowledge integration (Dóci et al., 2022; Stott & Murphy, 2020).

In organisational and transition management studies, interaction is deemed pivotal in capacity building and collaboration. In particular, interactive approaches have gained momentum in the field of organisational learning since the 1990's (H. Johnson & Thomas, 2007). Formerly, learning was seen as an individual process in which an employee individually acquires a certain knowledge or skill that he or she then applies in the workplace, privileging explicit knowledge. Conversely, contemporary perspectives view capacity building as a complex, interactive adaptation process occurring collectively and collaboratively in a positive organisational environment where dialogue, trust-building and the construction of shared meaning are fostered (Argyris & Schön, 1999; H. Johnson & Thomas, 2007; Senge et al., 2007). This approach recognises that knowledge is tacit, that is to say intangible and stored in people's minds (Kucharska & Kowalczyk, 2016), but also in many "locations," such as bodies, routines or conversations (Reed et al., 2010).

In Paulo Freire's theory of dialogical action, also known as Critical Pedagogy, dialogue assumes a central role in challenging assumptions, fostering empathy and building a shared understanding (Freire, 2000). This perspective aligns with the approach of organisational scholars as Senge and colleagues (2015). In Freire's framework, dialogue is not merely a tool for engaging individuals in collaborative tasks; it encompasses both reflection and action, constituting "an indispensable component of both the process of learning and knowing" (p. 17). This iterative process of discursive interaction and reflective action is also discussed by transition scholars like van Mierlo and Beers (2020). As Senge et al. (2015) express, "reflection means thinking about our thinking, holding up the mirror to see the taken-for-granted assumptions we carry into any conversation and appreciating how our mental models may limit us" (p. 28). Thus, interaction fosters self-

assessment and self-knowledge, essential skills for cultivating collaboration capability.

In fact, dialogue<sup>8</sup> is seen as the arena where individuals collaborate to reflect and act towards transformative change. It is an epistemological relationship whose emerging shared meaning is “the glue (...) that holds people and societies together” (Bohm, 2004, p. 7). However, the term “dialogue,” employed in a variety of contexts and fields like literature, philosophy, politics, and conflict resolution, is often associated with problem-solving discussions in conflict situations (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022; Oxford University Press, 2022). Concepts such as interreligious, intercultural or social<sup>9</sup> dialogue illustrate this negative perception. Moreover, the confusion in the use of terms like “discussion,” “debate” or “negotiation” underscores the necessity to clarify the fundamental disparity between dialogue and discussion systems (see Table 3.5).

**Table 3.5.** Differences between dialogue and discussion systems

Discussion system	Dialogue system
Disruption	Creativity
Playing against	Playing with
Competition (win-lose)	Win-win
Agreement or prevalence of one view over another	Understanding and questioning one’s own assumptions
Deference of one’s own arguments and thoughts	Suspension of thoughts, impulses, judgements

Source: based on Bohm et al. (1991) and Bohm (2004).

The discussion system operates on competitive principles, characterised by initial disagreement where participants hold opposing views. The objective is to reach an agreement or establish dominance of one perspective through the discussion (Moreno et al., 2020). In contrast, the dialogue system is founded upon principles of creativity, collaboration and win-win outcomes, fostering an environment where personal assumptions are both understood and challenged (Bohm, 2004).

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<sup>8</sup> The term “dialogue” finds its etymological roots in the Greek word *dialogos* (meaning “through the word”), denoting a conversation between two or more individuals. However, a more adequate reflection of its collective and dynamic essence can be found in the etymology of ‘conversation’, derived from the Latin *conversare* (signifying “to turn together”), highlighting that dialogue is a collaborative endeavour.

<sup>9</sup> Social dialogue is a negotiation between government representatives, managers and workers on issues of common interest relating to social and economic policy.

Essentially, dialogue embodies an exploratory and creative process among equals from which a new understanding, not necessarily representing a midpoint between differing positions, can emerge (Bohm et al., 1991). Freire (2000) emphasises that genuine dialogue requires profound love of the world and its people, along with humility, faith, hope, trust and critical thinking. Therefore, learning to engage in dialogue is akin to cultivating collaboration capability.

Meaningful dialogues hinge upon several crucial conditions (Bohm et al., 1991):

- Cultivating a spirit of exploration: fostering a creative process conducive to the emergence of new understanding;
- Suspending of judgements: creating an open and receptive atmosphere that encourages active and unbiased listening from both participants and oneself.;
- Encouraging discussion on any subject of interest, including areas of dissatisfaction or frustration;
- Curating a medium-sized and diverse group: ensuring a range of 20 to 40 participants offering heterogeneous perspectives;
- Arranging participants in a circular formation to promote face-to-face interaction and open communication;
- Implementing temporal conditions: scheduling regular meetings with at least a one-week interval between sessions, limiting sessions to a maximum of 3 hours to uphold participation quality and highlighting the evolving nature of the process to avoid institutionalisation;
- Involving skilled facilitators in fostering horizontal dialogue and guiding the collective meaning-building process using a supportive “leading from behind” approach.

With regard to the last condition, the role of intermediaries in facilitating interaction, collaboration and learning is widely acknowledged in organisational and transition research (Cunha et al., 2022; Ehnert et al., 2018; Hamann & April, 2013; Kivimaa et al., 2019; Moreno-Serna et al., 2021; Soberón et al., 2022). Intermediaries, as defined by Sovacool et al. (2020), are “agents who connect diverse groups of actors involved in transition processes and their skills, resources and expectations” (p. 1). These intermediaries can be individuals, organisations or multi-organisational platforms (Hyysalo et al., 2018). Their roles in learning encompass gathering, processing and integrating knowledge, while in collaboration, they are tasked with network creation and management, mediation and translation between actors and interests, trust-building and conflict management (Hodson & Marvin, 2012; Howells, 2006; Sovacool et al., 2020;

Stewart & Hyysalo, 2008). However, the intersection of intermediaries' roles in learning and collaboration, particularly their contribution to building collaboration capability, remains underexplored (Soberón et al., 2023). This knowledge gap will be addressed in Chapter 5.

Finally, social learning is associated with changes at the group level, which will be studied in relation to organisational learning and change.

### 3.4.4. Organisational Learning

The literature frequently blurs the boundaries between collaboration, learning and change (Stam et al., 2023), recognising transition initiatives, capacity building and collaboration as drivers of organisational change (Bögel et al., 2019; Brinkhurst et al., 2011; Cox et al., 2018; Fullan, 2016; Hoover & Harder, 2015; Lozano, 2006; Purcell & Chahine, 2019). At the same time, scholars that move away from the traditional dichotomy between change agents and recipients view organisational change as a collective and participatory process (Armenakis et al., 1993; Brinkhurst et al., 2011; van de Ven & Poole, 1995). Scholars suggest that interaction and communication serve as the generative mechanism for change, rather than merely tools to leverage it (Armenakis & Harris, 2002; Beckhard & Pritchard, 1992; Ford & Ford, 1995; Kotter, 1995; Rafferty et al., 2013). This underscores the critical role of interpersonal and social dynamics in the organisational change process (D. Grant & Marshak, 2011).

Organisational change theory typically identifies three phases (Armenakis et al., 1993; Armenakis & Harris, 2002): *readiness*, crucial for successful change, entails cognitive and emotional disposition toward change, namely collaboration in the scope of this research; *adoption* refers to the period in which the change is experienced but could still be rejected; while *institutionalisation* establishes change as a standard practice. These phases may overlap in a continuous process (Rafferty et al., 2013), emphasising change as an iterative trial-and-error process, facilitating organisational learning and improvement. Indeed, readiness for change is deemed a valuable capability in the current complex and dynamic world (Vakola, 2013), leading organisations towards flexible learning and adaptation models and enhancing resilience to internal and contextual changes (Marshak & Grant, 2008; Senge, 2006). This approach aligns with the perspective of collaboration as a dynamic capability.

In this regard, Argyris and Schön (1999) introduced the concept of “feedback loops” to describe the process of organisational learning. These loops involve iterative cycles of action (knowledge creation) and reflection (sense-making and negotiation of meaning), facilitating both individual learning and the generation of proposals for organisational change (Dillenbourg, 1999; H. Johnson & Thomas, 2007). In the realm of developing collaboration capability, sense-making entail reflecting on governance experiences, collaborative practices and tools (Gugerell et al., 2023), potentially resulting in the improvement of existing practices or the questioning of prevailing rules and values (Argyris & Schön, 1999; Stam et al., 2023). The challenge lies in influencing individuals in a way that impacts organisational behaviour (Huxham & Vangen, 2000).

As demonstrated throughout this section, learning to collaborate in organisations is more than correcting mistakes in collaborative actions. Progress in building collaboration capability should be observed from lower to higher levels of learning and change (see Table 3.6) that should coexist (Argyris & Schön, 1999; Dzhengiz, 2020; Stam et al., 2023):

- Single-loop learning: improvement of existing practices (doing things right);
- Double-loop learning: changes in practices and structures (doing the right things);
- Triple-loop learning: shifts in value frames, norms and decision-making processes (understanding how we decide what is right).

**Table 3.6.** Characteristics of feedback loops

Loop level	Questions	Focus	Type of change	Level of complexity
Single-loop	Are we doing things right?	Actions	Incremental change (reacting)	Simple (like following a recipe)
Double-loop	Are we doing the right things?	Frame for actions	Reformist change (reframing)	Complicated (like making a rocket)
Triple-loop	How do we decide what is right?	Values, purpose	Transformational change (transforming)	Complex (like raising a child)

*Note:* Based on the tool developed by Tamarack Institute (n. d.).

In essence, enhancing collaboration capability entails not only improving existing practices and introducing new interaction methods to enhance efficiency but also encompasses challenging institutional logics and assumptions regarding collaborative work or other sectors. It therefore involves learning to learn from collaborative experience. The concept of “learning organisation”, introduced by Peter Senge, describes an environment “where people are continually learning how to learn together” (Senge, 2006, p. 3). Such organisations are particularly effective

in enhancing collaboration capability as they foster dialogue, co-creation, knowledge exchange and integration.

The learning organisation approach extends to inter-organisational contexts. Collaborative arrangements serve as places where people are continually learning together how to collaborate. This reinforces the notion that collaboration is not only an outcome but also a fundamental aspect of the learning process. According to Dzhengiz (2020), inter-organisational learning is influenced by three dimensions: partner, partnership and environmental characteristics. Regarding partner characteristics, two organisational capacities are deemed crucial for collaboration and inter-organisational learning (Dzhengiz, 2020):

- Absorptive capacity, which refers to the necessary knowledge and value base that enables a partner organisation to learn.
- Disseminative capacity, which is the ability to share knowledge effectively with partners so that they can easily put it into practice.

Concerning partnership, governance structures are suggested to impact how partners learn from each other in terms of degree and type. Lastly, environmental conditions influencing inter-organisational learning, as defined by Dzhengiz's research, manifest in the form of external pressures (coercive, mimetic or normative).

In summary, developing collaboration capability involves a continuous and multi-layer process of change within an environment characterised by discursive interaction and reflective action. The literature emphasises the significance of simultaneous social, organisational and inter-organisational learning, highlighting its experiential, situated and collaborative nature. Critical success factors include environmental pressures, organisational culture, knowledge building and sharing practices, as well as structural and governance frameworks. This research aims to contribute, particularly in Chapter Results from a Multiple Case Study<sup>5</sup>, to gaining a deeper empirical understanding of the conditions for learning, which is crucial for enhancing collaboration capability within both intra and inter-organizational contexts.

### **3.5. Conclusions from the Literature Review**

This literature review has refined the research scope, focusing on the phenomenon of “cultivating collaboration capability” and has clarified key concepts for the research, such as “transformation,” “collaboration” and “collaboration capability.”

Furthermore, the questions posed at the beginning of the chapter have been addressed, and their answers are succinctly summarised below:

- *What type of change is involved in sustainability transitions?* Transitions require a transformation, which is a profound change at the systemic level that challenges assumptions, norms, power structures and practices, with the goal of envisioning and experimenting with novel, and sometimes unforeseen, ways of thinking and action.
- *How does collaboration contribute to sustainability transitions?* Collaboration serves as a catalyst for sustainability transitions by facilitating collaborative governance, fostering collective action, promoting knowledge exchange and the co-creation of innovative solutions at the required scale and pace. Its significance is acknowledged in transition arenas and experiments, as well as across operational, tactical and strategic activity levels.
- *What specific forms of collaboration are required?* Sustainability transitions require deep levels of collaboration, particularly in the form of “transformational collaboration,” which stands out as the sole stage capable of generating co-creation and effecting transformative changes at a systemic level. This collaboration stage is defined by a systemic shared purpose, elevated levels of trust and commitment, mutual learning, as well as intensive, continuous and creative interaction, among other distinctive attributes.
- *What capabilities and skills are needed for effective collaboration?* Collaboration emerges as an essential skill in today's complex and interconnected world. This literature review contributes to a comprehensive understanding of “collaboration capability” as a multi-level and multi-dimensional concept, encompassing cognitive, social, emotional and ethical skills, alongside attitudes and values. Essential components include integrative leadership, dialogue skills and emotional intelligence. Moreover, as a dynamic capability, collaboration involves meta-cognitive skills, notably the capability to learn from experience.
- *Do individuals and organisations possess these capabilities? How can collaboration capability be assessed?* Scholars suggest that individuals and organisations often lack the readiness to engage in transformational collaboration, acknowledging the challenge of assessing this phenomenon due to its intangible outcomes and multi-layered nature. Variables affecting collaboration capability encompass diverse factors, from the presence of supportive legal or political frameworks to the allocation of resources for relationship-building, among others. However, assessing collaboration capability accurately presents challenges.



- *What methodologies and pedagogical approaches are most conducive to fostering collaboration capability within the framework of sustainability transitions?* The merge of transition management, organisational and educational frameworks offers valuable insights into the multi-layered and continuous process of learning to collaborate. The need for a supportive environment (within and between organisations) becomes evident due to the experiential, collaborative and social nature of cultivating collaboration capability. In addition, simultaneous enhancement of capabilities at individual, organisational and inter-organisational levels is required.

Once the phenomenon under study has been clarified, this research seeks to gain insight on the factors influencing collaboration capability within organisational contexts, viewed as systems rather than mere mechanisms. The aim is to identify strategies for organisational change (Chapter 4) and design elements for learning environments conducive to collaboration capability (Chapter 5).

## 4. Results from an Exploratory Interview Study

This chapter presents the synthesis of an exploratory interview study aimed at gaining a practical understanding of the factors organisations can leverage to cultivate collaboration capability. Insights were gathered from individuals across various sectors and levels of experience and seamlessly integrated with additional literature, enriching an interdisciplinary perspective on the phenomenon under study. Eleven in-depth interviews were conducted between June and September 2022, following Kvale's methodology (2011), transcribed with Sonix and codified using Atlas.ti (see Appendix B for outline and transcripts).

The recurring theme of collaboration's transformative power surfaced prominently in the interviews. An interviewee from the private sector (Man, 61) remarked, "Multi-stakeholder collaboration transforms your view of the world and your capacity to relate to others." Indeed, the practice of collaboration was perceived as a dynamic process of change requiring continuous learning and adaptation. As one participant from the nonprofit sector (Woman, 53) expressed: "I was thinking about recent processes in which I want collaboration to emerge and I am not succeeding. This challenges me a lot. What do I have to change? What do I have to do differently to make it happen?"

This section presents the findings derived from the analysis and synthesis of the interviews, organising insights into three analytical dimensions of change for collaboration capability—operational, tactical and strategic—, inherited from the theoretical framework.

### 4.1. Operational Changes

The operational change level centres on tangible practices and specific projects within a subsystem, typically spanning a short-term time horizon of fewer than five years (Loorbach & van Raak, 2006). Within the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 2, this encompassed dimensions such as personnel, resources and organisational operations, which entail the various activities and processes necessary for achieving the organisation's goals and ensuring its functioning. In this research, the last dimension places special emphasis on communication practices.

### 4.1.1. Unveiling the Value of Life Stories

Interviewees highlighted that the intimate circles of individuals, such as family and friendship networks, play a significant role in shaping collaboration capability (Man, 17, student; Man, 50, nonprofit and academia). A respondent from the nonprofit sector stated, “Flexibility, teamwork, communication skills, problem-solving skills, dealing with uncertainty... These kinds of issues are not included in the curriculum. You have to bring them with you from home” (Man, 51, nonprofit network). Indeed, family and community dynamics are viewed as pivotal in nurturing collaboration skills, with the journey of learning to collaborate perceived as lifelong, beginning in childhood and requiring a sense of community.

During the interviews, life stories emerged as highly relevant to collaboration capability. Although organisations cannot influence employees’ biographies, individual life trajectories are considered valuable for the organisation —not only for recruitment but also for cultivating a collaborative organisational culture and internal cohesion. Exploring personal histories, such as childhood interests, family background, and uncommon skills, can uncover unique capabilities that enhance collaboration within an organisation. Discussions of this nature are not new. However, interpreting the responses as strategic assets for a more collaborative organisation presents an innovative perspective.

An interviewee from the public sector raised a concern about organisations potentially developing collaborative skills mainly in already competent individuals, who are naturally more inclined to participate in collaborative efforts. This issue is particularly evident in public institutions, where managers lack the autonomy to select team members. Consequently, cultivating collaboration skills in the workplace relies partly on pre-existing personal skills. To address this challenge, personalised development plans are suggested, ensuring all individuals have opportunities to refine their collaborative skills through practical experiences. This proactive approach is essential in breaking the potential cycle of reinforcing collaboration primarily in proficient individuals.

#### **Finding 1: Unveiling the Value of Life Stories**

Effective collaboration skills often stem from personal experiences outside of work, like family and friends. Individual life stories are key assets for organizational collaboration, urging recognition beyond professional achievements. Personalized development plans are vital to ensure all individuals enhance their collaborative skills.

#### 4.1.2. Embracing Emotions and Self-awareness

The interviewees unanimously acknowledged that “cultivating collaboration capability” is a deep inner process challenging personal values, behaviours, attitudes and assumptions. It is crucial to recognise that collaboration inherently involves a degree of conflict and frustration (Stott, 2017). This process requires “to place yourself in a different place from where you usually place yourself” (Woman, 53, nonprofit). Learning to collaborate, as described by a participant from the private sector, “is about knowing yourself better” (Woman, 47); it is a process intricately linked to one’s emotions and attitudes. In the words of an interviewee from the private sector: “this process has to do with the way you are and the way you feel” (Man, 61).

Collaboration, according to these insights, penetrates deeply into the self. But what exactly does this “self” component entail? A 61-year-old participant from the private sector shed light on the concept of self-awareness within the context of multi-stakeholder collaboration: “Awareness means having time to take some perspective, look at what is happening and interpret it, and then go back to action.” In other words, he describes self-awareness as the ability to take a step back, analyse the situation, interpret it and then proceed to action. This meta-analysis, he emphasised, requires a certain emotional maturity to maintain distance and prevent defensive reactions and hasty judgements, which can contaminate the process. Learning to collaborate therefore involves a kind of dissociation between subjective experience and objective observation: “Emotional distance means not feeling too tied to your role or defended position.” On the contrary, “you need to be open to ask yourself: What is going on? What kind of relationships are being established?”

Moreover, participants highlighted the interconnection between personal and professional lives, challenging the artificial separation traditionally maintained. When arriving at the workplace, an individual already carries a significant emotional burden, even if this is merely the result of day-to-day tasks (e.g. preparing meals, dressing a child or a dependent person, traffic jams, public transport delays...). The COVID-19 pandemic, as revealed in the interviews, opened a window into the private lives of colleagues, since the background of the meeting frames and sounds revealed a little piece of life.

According to the literature, awareness encompasses emotional, cognitive, motivational and psychological processes. The IDG initiative, fostering leadership

skills for sustainable development, defines “awareness” as the understanding of a process that happens at the time of the phenomenon or shortly afterwards (Jordan, 2021). Two perspectives are delineated: complexity awareness and self-awareness.

On the one hand, complexity awareness involves an openness to understanding that “certain issues might be complex, and perhaps complex in ways that one is not yet aware of” (Jordan, 2021, p. 16). According to a seventeen-year-old interviewee, his youth helped him to be open to new ideas and learning: “I always attend meetings with an open mind, because I’m very young and I know I don’t know a lot about a lot of things.” (Man, 17, student).

On the other hand, self-awareness is the ability to reflect on one’s thoughts, feelings and desires, fostering a realistic self-image and self-regulation (Jordan, 2021). According to UNESCO, self-awareness is “the ability to reflect on one’s own role in the local community and (global) society, continually evaluate and further motivate one’s actions, and deal with one’s feelings and desires” (2018, p. 45). A 53-year-old woman from the nonprofit sector shared her gratitude for her organisation’s support in working on individual feelings, attitudes and behaviours to enhance listening skills and empathy. She particularly stressed the necessity of professional facilitation, involving psychologists, coaches and mentors, in these self-awareness processes.

However, emotional support in organisations and networks is often an exception rather than the rule. Traditional organisational theories have prioritised cognitive aspects and performance over emotions, leaving little space for personal reflection or understanding emotional processes (Zietsma et al., 2019). However, emotions play a fundamental role in social dynamics, and particularly building trusting relationships that enable people with diverse perspectives to work together, fostering organisational learning and change (Zietsma et al., 2019). The design and facilitation of collaborative environments has often focused on creating the conditions for building trust between actors (Sloan & Oliver, 2013), but less attention has been paid to the awareness and emotional processes. Furthermore, architectural designs of workplaces typically prioritise open and flexible models but neglect emotional well-being, hindering intimacy (Figure 4.1). Architect Mauro Gil-Fournier advocates for “affective architectures,” which are spaces fostering

affection, community-building and emotional support<sup>10</sup>. He emphasises the role of nature in creating safe spaces for silence, reflection and emotional expression.



**Figure 4.1.** Examples of open offices: Johnson Wax Building and Bat Haus Coworking.

Sources: The Library of Congress (left) and Shridhar Gupta (right), both retrieved from Unsplash

## **Finding 2: Embracing Emotions**

Learning to collaborate entails working with emotions. Understanding both positive and negative emotions can empower individuals to gain comfort in navigating complex collaborative settings and thus strengthening their collaborative skills. Introducing self-awareness routines and practices within organisations and partnerships is essential for addressing emotional challenges that may arise. Professional facilitation is desirable for these reflection processes. The spatial design of collaborative environments significantly conditions these processes, urging a reconsideration of architectural approaches to include emotional well-being.

### **4.1.3. Nurturing Attention**

An additional element brought by the interviewees was the concept of “presence,” which also emerged in the literature review as a crucial skill in collaboration capability. Defined as the “ability to be in there and now, without judgement and in a state of open-ended presence” (Jordan, 2021, p. 15). As articulated by an interviewee from the nonprofit sector, presence is “to arrive calmly, serenely, without stress, without rush... With the feeling that you have thought about this

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<sup>10</sup> Mauro Gil-Fournier is testing this approach in the design of a room at the Cardiac Infant Clinic in Bogota in order to help health professionals manage emotions and tensions that may arise in the complex situations they face. Further information at: <https://www.maurogilfournier.com/home>

conversation, that you have worked on it... So that you create a quality space in which you can be centred and prepared” (Woman, 53, nonprofit). In other words, presence refers to a state of attention. The mindfulness movement has delved into the concept of presence, offering exercises and tools to train individuals in cultivating this capability. Some organisations use mindfulness practices at the beginning of online meetings in order to help participants transition from prior tasks and focus on the session's objectives.

However, interviewees described how the pandemic impacted the sense of presence, particularly in virtual meetings. While organisations adapted rapidly to social distancing, the screens hindered concentration and focus. A 51-year-old interviewee from the nonprofit sector emphasised that the screen fatigue resulting from simultaneous tasks during video calls significantly altered both professional and relational involvement: “The screen wears you down. When you’re on a video call, you are at the same time sending emails or looking at WhatsApp. Therefore both professional and relational involvement is very different and it is affected” (Man, 51, nonprofit network). Furthermore, he drew attention to a gender issue, noting that the pandemic's shift to remote work might disproportionately affect women, potentially regressing progress made in achieving work-life balance: “Women have fought for many years to work out of the house and with the pandemic and online meetings, they have returned to the house. There is a significant bias and a significant risk of regression.” Indeed, women continue to bear the burden of caring responsibilities and there is a risk that homeworking will push them back into the home, making it more difficult for them to balance work and private life, and thus to be present—in a cognitive sense—at work. Recent research validates concerns regarding attention challenges posed by digital tools like Zoom, as it demonstrates reduced neural activity during Zoom conversations compared to in-person interactions, suggesting online faces fail to engage social neural circuits effectively (Zhao et al., 2023). These differences in neural activity underscore the importance of natural, face-to-face interaction and social context in understanding human facial expressions, potentially affecting collaboration capability.

To address the challenges of maintaining presence, interviewees suggested the incorporation of nature into workspaces as an effective strategy. Scientific research, including the Attention Restoration Theory, confirms nature’s positive impact on cognitive functions (e.g., concentration, memory, creativity, etc.) and well-being (e.g., improved sleep quality, reduced stress, etc.). Studies show that

exposure to natural environments enhances memory and attention spans (up to 20% improvement after an hour interacting with nature), with even indirect exposure, like viewing pictures, showing notable benefits (Berman et al., 2008). This research suggests that nature's restorative effect is due to its ability to modestly capture attention and reduce directed attention compared to urban environments.

The influence of visual and auditory atmospheres on human behaviour is well-documented. Natural conditions, such as fresh air, daylight or low levels of noise are considered to have a profound impact on cognitive functions (Bringslimark et al., 2009; Colenberg et al., 2021). Conversely, certain conditions, such as darkness or dim illumination, stimulate inhibition and enhance creativity since they help to perceive a freedom from constraints (Steidle & Werth, 2013). Finally, regarding the auditory conditions, a variety of birdsongs<sup>11</sup> are perceived to contribute to attention restoration and stress recovery (Ratcliffe et al., 2013). Therefore, there is scientific evidence to assert that visual and acoustic natural atmospheres, whether indoor or outdoor, significantly contribute to a sense of presence and self-awareness, and can indirectly affect collaboration capability.

Moreover, introducing outdoor practices, such as “walkshops,” has proven effective in fostering connections, creativity and collaboration. A walkshop, defined as an itinerant working session conducted outdoors, uses the materiality of a landscape as a tool for facilitating reflection” and has “the capacity to productively alter social dynamics through enabling embodied encounters and challenging existing hierarchies, and the power to alter established patterns of thought through the combination of unmediated outdoor experiences with different social dynamics” (Wickson et al., 2015, p. 245). Scholars argue its usefulness, particularly addressing ethical issues that may arise during collaboration.

Considering the importance of employees' wellbeing in sustainable productivity (Cantera & Alonso, 2024), organisations are encouraged to use nature and outdoor practices as fundamental elements. According to office design expert Jeremy Myerson, cited in *The Guardian*, in the era of “knowledge workers,” companies “are now using offices as a way of recruiting and retaining workers. A groovy place is a

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<sup>11</sup> A study of the King's College London based on 26,856 assessments to 1,292 participants estimated that the impact on mental well-being of hearing or seeing birds can last up to eight hours (Hammoud et al., 2022).



magnet” (Martin, 2016). Hence, such initiatives possess the potential to attract and retain skilled workers.

### **Finding 3: Nurturing attention**

Organisations ought to be aware of the factors conducive to cultivating attention (a sense of presence) among employees, acknowledging the limitations of digital tools and advocating for face-to-face interaction and outdoor activities. Integrating nature into workplace design and incorporating outdoor routines emerges as a powerful strategy to enhance cognitive, emotional and social neural functions, thereby promoting well-being, a critical element for sustainable productivity and talent retention.

#### **4.1.4. Strategic Time Investment**

Examining the temporal dimension of collaboration is crucial, as time plays a vital role in developing comfort, trust, awareness, and resolving conflict —fundamental components of effective collaboration.

Collaboration capability depends on the investment of time to cultivate a sense of comfort. A participant from the Spanish Climate Citizen Assembly reported experiencing a gradual increase in comfort and a deeper understanding of each other’s strengths over time: “As the sessions progressed, a growing sense of comfort emerged. We got to know each other. We gained a clear understanding of each person’s strengths and abilities” (Woman, 42). Similarly, a 17-year-old student highlighted the impact of prolonged engagement in overcoming the fear of expressing opinions: “After being engaged in the initiative for an extended period, you overcome the fear of expressing your opinion and start feeling much more at ease.”

Furthermore, the intricate connection between collaboration and conflict underscores the essential role of time in creating awareness, trust and understanding among parties. Deliberation and a slower pace were highlighted by a representative from the nonprofit sector: “When collaborating with diverse stakeholders, especially those speaking different languages [in a sense of technical vocabulary and mental model], it becomes essential to take the time to engage in conversations and review or read materials in order to facilitate meaningful discussions with them” (Man, 51, nonprofit network). Similarly, another interviewee from the private sector associated trust<sup>12</sup> with a certain degree of

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<sup>12</sup> The concept of trust will be further discussed in subsection 4.2.3.

predictability on the behaviour of others, emphasising the need for time to cultivate mutual understanding and trust, thereby reducing tension levels and allowing other forms of interaction to emerge (Man, 61, private sector). Time for adaptation is paramount, particularly in interpersonal dynamics, creating opportunities for “comprehending concepts and brainstorming on how we can actively engage and influence the unfolding process” (Man, 51, nonprofit network). Furthermore, in collaboration and conflict situations, especially those involving vulnerable individuals, time assumes a calming and patient quality. An example involving refugees highlighted the need for patient, calm, and straightforward communication to address the heavy burden of anxiety and fear carried from previous experiences of violence:

When refugees come out of a context of war, conflict, social tension or discrimination, they often carry a heavy burden of anxiety, fear, frustration, and, at times, an embedded inclination toward violence. This doesn't necessarily signify an unwillingness to collaborate with others, but rather stems from their prior exposure to violence. Addressing this necessitates a patient, calm and straightforward form of communication. It was very slow work, very awareness-raising, but it resulted in a situation of peace and calm. (Woman, 47, multilateral organisation)

Balancing patience and efficiency becomes crucial in high-conflict scenarios, where negotiations need to be swiftly resolved to ensure personal safety, as noted by the same interviewee.

Persistence and consistency also emerged as integral temporal factors for collaboration capability. Testimonies underscore the need to insist and repeat concepts and processes over time, gradually building trust. According to one of the interviewees, “it is not a one-time deal where you offer kind words and then move on. We followed a weekly routine, making sure to engage and communicate with everyone consistently” (Woman, 56, Public sector). In essence, in her view, establishing a sense of process involves setting and fulfilling small goals and commitments consistently, thereby earning trust gradually.

The term “insistentism” was humorously introduced by an interviewee from the nonprofit and academic sectors, emphasising the importance of repeatedly underscoring concepts in complex and conflict-ridden situations. According to him, the ability to sustain processes over time is crucial for positive impacts on collaboration. He explained it as follows:

When the group of actors responsible for carrying out an action is convinced of the importance of specific elements, it becomes essential to emphasise, reiterate and persist. In other words, the capacity to repeatedly underscore these concepts is crucial, particularly in complex and conflict-ridden situations where numerous factors are at play. In such scenarios, you may find that an action seems ineffective at a given moment, but in a different context or due to changes in circumstances, that same action can ultimately yield a significant impact. (Man, 50, nonprofit and academia)

Despite the prevailing emphasis on speed, efficiency, and technological productivity in professional environments, interviews highlight the significance of time in cultivating comfort, adaptation and trust for effective collaboration. Persistence, consistency and the ability to sustain processes over time are deemed crucial skills for collaboration.

#### **Finding 4: Strategic Investment in Time for Collaboration**

Organisations should recognise the time dedicated to developing collaboration capabilities as a strategic investment with a promising long-term return. Temporal conditions entail the establishment of structured and flexible time frames to foster comfort, actively listening, mutual understanding of mental frameworks and behavioural patterns, and persistently reiterate key aspects and actions as often as needed.

#### **4.1.5. Facilitating Meaningful Dialogue**

As seen in the literature review, interaction plays a pivotal role in developing collaborative skills (Blomqvist & Levy, 2006; D. W. Johnson & Johnson, 2009) shaping shared visions (Freire, 2000; Loorbach & van Raak, 2006) and fostering transformational collaboration (J. E. Austin & Seitanidi, 2012).

Interviews consistently highlight dialogue as the primary means of learning. Participants emphasise the value of sharing stories and ideas (Woman, 42, participant in the Spanish Citizen Assembly), asking questions (Man, 57, nonprofit) and challenging assumptions (Woman, 53, nonprofit) through dialogue rather than solitary learning methods. A participant from the Climate Citizen Assembly expressed this sentiment: “I enjoy being in the company of people who know a lot of things and share stories with me. That’s how I truly absorb knowledge” (Woman, 42). This interviewee also emphasised the pleasure of learning through listening to others, rather than learning individually: “You can

hand me a book, but perhaps one evening, over a couple of glasses of wine you'll explain the book to me and I'll understand it better.”

This perspective resonates with existing literature, which emphasises dialogue as a powerful tool for learning across various disciplines, including pedagogy, philosophy, psychology, organisational and communication studies. Conversations are widely regarded as potent pedagogical tools, both within and beyond the confines of the classroom, due to their inherently democratic nature (Hooks, 2010). Scholars argue that dialogue contributes to cultivating a profound, dynamic, adaptive and responsive understanding of the world, fostering mutual respect, critical reflection and shared understanding (Freire, 2000; Wells & Arauz, 2006). By overcoming individual assumptions, it facilitates the emergence of innovative solutions (Bohm, 2004), while also cultivating a culture of continuous learning and improvement, thus enhancing organisational adaptability (Senge, 2006).

The interviewees demonstrated confusion regarding terminology, as they used various terms interchangeably to describe dialogue. For example, terms such as “negotiation” (Woman, 56, public sector; Woman, 60, lawyer and professor), “debate” (Man, 17, student), “conversation,” “meeting,” and “gathering” (Man, 62, private sector), “talk” (Woman, 42, participant in the Spanish Citizen Assembly), “discussion” (Woman, 60, lawyer and professor), and “consultations” (Woman, 47, multilateral agency) were utilised as if they were synonymous, despite their differing meanings.<sup>13</sup>

Dialogue, as defined in Chapter 2, embodies an exploratory, creative and horizontal process capable of fostering new understandings without necessarily leading to agreement (Bohm et al., 1991). Emphasising the differences between participants at the start of a conversation can hinder the dialogue process. An interviewee involved in peace processes noted that “the more you try to persuade (or educate) the other side of the merits of your arguments, the more difficult it is to reach an agreement. And conversely, the more you try to express your own reality without the intention of reaching agreement, the more you naturally look for elements of connection” (Man, 50, nonprofit and academia). Therefore, to improve collaboration capability, dialogue spaces should prioritise understanding (active listening and empathy) over achieving consensus. This finding aligns with David Bohm’s (1991) perspective, emphasising that consensus should not be

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<sup>13</sup> It is not the purpose of this thesis to provide a detailed definition of each of these terms.

imposed, nor should conflict be avoided. Paulo Freire (2000) also echoes this point of view, stating that dialogue should not manipulate or domesticate individuals:

In the theory of dialogical action, there is no place for conquering the people on behalf of the revolutionary cause, but only for gaining their adherence. Dialogue does not impose, does not manipulate, does not domesticate, does not 'sloganize.' This does not mean, however, that the theory of dialogical action leads nowhere; nor does it mean that the dialogical human does not have a clear idea of what she wants, or of the objectives to which she is committed. (p.168)

In this quote, Freire clarifies that this absence of imposition does not imply a lack of purpose. Dialogue fosters democratic and participatory engagement, where individuals actively collaborate rather than passively accept imposed beliefs or slogans.

Hence, dialogue introduces a significant degree of uncertainty, making outcome prediction challenging. As intrinsic to collaboration, dialogue demands individuals to adapt to one another, resulting in time-consuming processes (Ulbrich et al., 2009) that may not universally apply or suit every context, as noted by the interviewee from the multilateral organisation (Woman, 47). This approach clashes with the prevailing culture in many contemporary organisations, demanding a strategic commitment to dialogue as a facilitator of collaboration. Organisations must recognise dialogue as "the preferred mode of interaction for collaboration" (Woman, 53, nonprofit) in specific context whether it be an organisation, department, project, partnership, or otherwise and commit to implementing this process without a sense of urgency.

Nevertheless, current global trends present obstacles to fostering genuine and effective dialogue today. These include:

- Increased fragmentation of public discourse and social polarisation, exacerbated by the COVID-19 lockdown, as a consequence of the formation of filter bubbles on social media platforms, which limit interactions to like-minded individuals while hindering dialogue with differing perspectives (Modgil et al., 2021);
- Proliferation of fake news, undermining trust in information and hindering the establishment of consensus based on verifiable facts (Pennycook & Rand, 2021);

- Overwhelming access to information, which can blur the lines between opinion, information and knowledge (Garcés, 2021);
- Political correctness, which may discourage open and honest dialogue by promoting self-censorship and fear of being perceived as insensitive or inappropriate (Heath & Borda, 2021);
- Remote work and reliance on screens, which pose challenges in building trustful relationships due to reduced opportunities for informal interactions (Irving et al., 2020; Zhao et al., 2023).

Overall, interviewees highlighted the importance of face-to-face interactions in cultivating meaningful relationships, contrasting them with virtual encounters that tend to fragment personal experiences. One interviewee illustrated this point highlighting the significant impact of social distancing measures in the deterioration of the professor-student relationship:

Imagine how it feels to be a Professor in front of the camera. There are supposed to be 60 or 100 people online, but you don't see anyone's face (...) For students, attending a lecture is of great importance, not just for the social aspect but also for the connection between the message giver and the listener. (Woman, 62, lawyer and professor)

Concerns about the lack of spontaneity and serendipity in remote interactions underscore the delicate balance between structured and organic elements that contribute to the richness of interpersonal dynamics.

Interviewees also shared insights on the necessary capabilities for effective dialogue at both individual and organisational levels, revealing various narratives and preconceived ideas. Examples include:

- Young people may not show interest in discussing broader societal issues that do not directly affect their daily lives (Man, 17, student);
- In school, students are often categorised in four profiles: reticent, silent due to lack of knowledge, dominating despite being uninformed and those who react emotionally to disagreements (Man, 17, student);
- Nonprofit organisations are perceived as having greater capacity for collaboration and dialogue: “In the business sector, people are highly focused on achieving objectives. Conversely, in the nonprofit sector, there is a greater willingness to negotiate, actively listen, reach agreements, and share for the common good” (Woman, 47, private sector).

The interviews underscore the significance of clear and simple communication. An interviewee from the Citizen Assembly recommended avoiding overly complex language and striving for clarity. She emphasised the assembly's culture of straightforward communication, where everyone ensures mutual understanding by explaining unfamiliar terms: "everyone speaks in a simple manner, and we can understand each other perfectly. When someone uses a word you don't understand, there is always someone who explains it to you" (Woman, 42, participant in the Spanish Citizen Assembly).

Moreover, active listening emerged as a crucial skill for meaningful dialogue, with participants emphasising the importance of understanding and empathising with others' perspectives (e.g., Woman, 47, private sector; Woman, 56, public sector; Man, 50, nonprofit and academia; Woman, 47, multilateral agency; Man, 57, nonprofit; Woman, 42, participant in the Spanish Citizen Assembly). Listening is also linked to self-discovery (Engle & Slade, 2018). Using Otto Scharmer's (2009) classification<sup>14</sup>, insights from the interviews mainly refer to empathic listening:

It is about wanting to understand, to know the people you're engaged in dialogue with. In essence, it is a strategy aimed at comprehending where they are coming from, what underlies their aspirations, their life plans. Having this prior information is a valuable opportunity for learning. (Man, 57, nonprofit)

However, listening also possesses a creative and transformative nature (Bohm et al., 1991). As one interviewee in the private sector emphasised, "It is crucial to remain receptive to everything they express (...) to integrate their insights in a manner that permits you to adapt aspects of your arguments, facilitating the ongoing exchange and effective communication of your message" (Woman, 47). In collaborative efforts, dialogue must also incorporate generative listening, defined as "listening from the emerging field of the future" (Scharmer, 2009, p. 12). Generative listening requires attentiveness and openness, demanding the collective search for meaning throughout the dialogue process (Engle & Slade, 2018).

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<sup>14</sup> In his Theory U, Otto Scharmer (2009) distinguishes four types of listening: *downloading*, where habitual judgments are reaffirmed; *object-focused* or *factual* listening, which involves paying attention to new or contradictory data; *empathic* listening, which involves connecting with others on a deeper level; and *generative* listening, which taps into a deeper realm of emergence and potential futures.

Open-mindedness and valuing diverse opinions were highlighted as essential for creating an inclusive dialogue space, as also recognised in the literature (Jordan, 2021; UNESCO, 2018; Wiek et al., 2011). The aim is to foster an environment where individuals feel valued and their perspectives are acknowledged positively, without questioning the validity of their problems or viewpoints (Woman, 56, public sector). This approach “cultivates a type of communication that ensures a positive recognition of what the other person can contribute” (Woman, 53, nonprofit), fostering a sense of empowerment and mutual understanding.

Furthermore, the practice of asking meaningful questions was emphasised as integral to dialogue and building mutual understanding. Asking is a means of “understanding one’s contributions and potential challenges,” as well as “the perspectives of others, their unique strengths and the difficulties they might face” (Man, 57, nonprofit). It also helps to comprehend “why someone behaves in a particular way or even why they don’t do something” (Woman, 53, nonprofit). These interviewees recognize the value of training themselves to ask questions that enhance their understanding of others’ needs. Learning to ask involves a stance of curiosity, seeking to understand the others and the world, and overcoming the fear of showing vulnerability or lack of knowledge. While a personal practice, organisations should foster a culture that encourages open questioning, where asking is perceived positively.

In summary, organisations can foster the implementation of practices such as:

- Intentionally designing dialogue processes as exploratory and creative endeavours, recognizing the need for time investment and acceptance of uncertainty in achieving clear outcomes;
- Cultivating shared epistemologies and using simplified language to enhance communication effectiveness;
- Prioritising face-to-face interactions whenever feasible, as they are essential for fostering meaningful relationships and empathy;
- Allowing flexibility in processes to accommodate spontaneity and serendipitous moments;
- Encouraging a culture of open questioning that values understanding over consensus, fostering curiosity, and embracing vulnerability and gaps in knowledge.



**Finding 5: Facilitating Meaningful Dialogue**

Effective collaboration through meaningful dialogue necessitates organisational commitment, manifesting in the adoption of new practices like exploratory and creative dialogue processes, the establishment of shared epistemologies, prioritisation of face-to-face interaction to bolster personal connections, and fostering a culture conducive to open questioning.

**4.1.6. Tailoring Interaction Through Active Listening**

Each interaction offers a new chance to enhance individuals' collaborative skills. However, it is crucial to tailor the interaction process to the specific context, as highlighted by several interviewees. In particular, a respondent succinctly stated, "Every context is unique, and thus each process is different. There is no standard rule for how to conduct these types of processes" (Man, 50, nonprofit and academia). He also emphasised the challenge of navigating complex and unpredictable systems, where unforeseen changes such as wars, energy crises, and shifts in organisational reputation can significantly alter the desirability and approach to collaboration.

This point of view highlights the need to recognize the singularity of each collaborative and dialogical context, rejecting a one-size-fits-all approach. This perspective resonates with Priya Parker's insights in *The Art of Gathering: How we Meet and Why it Matters* (2018), where she stresses the importance of customising gatherings to precise objectives.

Listening processes are recognised as valuable mechanisms to gain an understanding of a context, as noted by the same interviewee (Man, 50, nonprofit and academia). Specifically, social listening tools enable the discovery of shared narratives regarding existing challenges and opportunities, as well as the interpretation of the system of values, beliefs and behaviours that influence decision-making within a community (Espiau, 2018). Listening is pivotal for enhancing collective action efficacy by leveraging collective intelligence (Engle & Slade, 2018). Unlike isolated consultations, community listening processes not only allow for gathering information, but also involve shared analysis among local stakeholders, fostering the construction of a collective narrative and linking initiatives across different scales (from community projects to legislative changes), mitigating initial power imbalances (Espiau, 2018). Consequently, these processes unfold over time, spanning from the diagnostic phase to co-design, implementation and evaluation.

Therefore, integrating community listening tools across organisational processes, spanning from diagnosis to evaluation, can deepen comprehension of the ecosystem, its culture, values, attitudes, and beliefs, as well as the narratives surrounding change and collaboration. This comprehensive understanding is essential for tailoring collaborative endeavours. Moreover, this integration also fosters stronger relationships within the local context.

#### **Finding 6: Tailoring Interaction Through Active Listening**

Each interaction offers a chance to develop collaborative skills, but customising the interaction process to fit the specific context is essential. Recognising the singularity of each situation is paramount. To tailor collaborative efforts effectively, organisations can integrate community listening tools into their operations across all project phases, including diagnosis, co-creation, implementation, and evaluation. This integration enables a deeper understanding of the ecosystem, including narratives on challenges and opportunities, values, beliefs, attitudes, and culture, while also nurturing stronger local relationships.

## **4.2. Tactical Changes**

The tactical level involves structural changes, covering a mid-term horizon of five to ten years (Loorbach & van Raak, 2006). These changes encompass elements such as leadership and governance models, organisational architecture and strategies, all of which influence organisational culture.

### **4.2.1. Reframing Leadership: From Sustaining Power to Empowering**

Leaders share responsibility for cultivating collaboration capability by establishing favourable learning environments and leveraging them to foster comfort within complex collaborative processes (Freeth & Caniglia, 2020). The consensus among interviewees underscores the necessity of redefining leadership paradigms within organisations, which have proven inadequate in effectively addressing complex issues that demand collaborative solutions, as also highlighted in the literature review (Archer & Cameron, 2009; Bligh, 2011; Collinson et al., 2018; Crosby & Bryson, 2010; Huxham & Vangen, 2000; Page, 2010).

According to an interviewee from the nonprofit sector, leaders must approach the collaborative process with a mindset geared towards sharing power rather than exerting it (Woman, 53). She articulated this perspective stating, “You need to approach the process with the mindset that you have the capacity to create a space where, through collaborative efforts, the outcome is enhanced. It's about cultivating an environment where empowerment, power-sharing, delegation, and

authority distribution prevail over exerting power over others” (Woman, 53, nonprofit). When cultivating collaboration capability, the delineation between the roles of leaders and participants becomes less distinct. In the opinion of the interviewees, a good leader is not omniscient or a superhero but rather resembles a constant gardener, aligning with the literature review. Effective leaders understand the importance of surrounding themselves with diverse individuals possessing specific skills and fostering their growth. Testimonies underscore the importance of seeking external support in navigating complex situations, especially when encountering challenges beyond their expertise and when conflicts reach an impasse. One of the interviewees explicitly challenged the notion that leaders can do everything on their own and highlighted the humility required to acknowledge limitations: “The notion that leaders know how to do everything and can solve every problem is inaccurate. We are human. Just as in life, there are times, many times, when you don't know” (Woman, 53, nonprofit).

An interviewee from the private sector referenced to the Art of Hosting and Harvesting Conversations that Matter<sup>15</sup> (AoH), an innovative leadership approach that emphasises the establishment of meaningful spaces for dialogue and co-creation. AoH prioritises the integration of diverse capacities and the harnessing of collective wisdom. In his words, the AoH entails “creating the right time, appropriate spaces, designing the process and each of the interventions... Generating a space that transcends mere trust, extending to awareness” (Man, 61, private sector). This “allows individuals to be aware of what is happening, to perceive themselves in the process and recognise various layers —the purely negotiating layer, the objective layer of information and data, the emotional layer, or the collective layer...” (Man, 61, private sector). Undoubtedly, these methodologies facilitate open communication, deep listening and the exploration of complex challenges, fostering the emergence of collective intelligence. They serve as a way to unlock transformative change within individuals, organisations and communities.

Moreover, using nonviolent communication was emphasised as a pivotal aspect of leaders’ capabilities, a finding not previously highlighted in the literature review (refer to Section 4.2.4 for further details on this matter). As articulated by one interviewee, this approach fosters an environment where everyone feels not only

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<sup>15</sup> Further information about the Art of Hosting at: <https://artofhosting.org/>

completely valued and acknowledged but also recognises their meaningful contribution to the relationship (Woman, 53, nonprofit). The ability to express this mutual appreciation becomes a cornerstone in establishing and nurturing collaborative relationships. This testimony emphasises the importance of communication methods that not only avoid harm but actively cultivate a sense of worth and significance within the relational and collaborative context.

Therefore, in line with existing literature (Hamann & April, 2013; Kivimaa et al., 2019; van Lente et al., 2003), a novel leadership role is proposed—one that encompasses being intermediaries, facilitators, trainers and coaches. This role aims to distribute power, allow for individual growth and for meta-reflection on the collaboration process, and provide support to participants in managing emotions that may arise.

#### **Finding 7: From Sustaining Power to Empowering**

Leaders play a pivotal role in establishing conducive conditions for learning to collaborate. Cultivating collaboration capability requires a paradigm shift in leadership, emphasising the imperative of power-sharing. The multifaceted role of leaders, encompassing functions as intermediaries, facilitators, trainers and coaches, proves crucial in creating spaces for reflective collaboration and effective emotional management. This approach underscores the necessity for developing new skills, grounded in nonviolent communication and deep listening.

#### **4.2.2. Enhancing Diversity**

In the interviews, the lack of diversity was recognised as a significant limitation affecting perspectives and collaboration. Participants emphasised the importance of actively seeking out diverse viewpoints, ensuring representativity (Woman, 47, multilateral agency; Woman, 56, public sector; Woman, 53, nonprofit). This includes engaging with profiles which are relevant to the context (e.g., women, young individuals, minorities...) with the aim to leave no one behind and make everyone feel part of the conversation. In the experience of the interviewees,

The goal is to create a smaller yet more inclusive group that authentically represents the diverse needs of the population we intend to engage with. This approach not only enhances awareness, but also ensures that the outreach effort comprehensively addresses the diverse array of needs. (Woman, 47, multilateral agency)

We made an effort to have everyone represented, not just community leaders, but also individuals as well, especially those who we knew were

deeply concerned or among the most active in disseminating information.  
(Woman, 56, public sector)

Scholars recognise that diversity fosters creativity and problem-solving, essential for addressing complex challenges in the context of sustainability transitions (Hartley et al., 2013; Loorbach, 2007). However, defining diversity extends beyond demographics to encompass a variety of knowledge sources, including experiential and cultural viewpoints often undervalued compared to conventional expertise or data-driven knowledge (Woman, 53, nonprofit).

In organisational contexts, diversity can naturally arise, as observed by the woman from the multilateral organisation who noted the distinction between "those in need and those providing assistance" (Woman, 47). However, intentional efforts are often required to foster diversity. Interviewees acknowledged their organisations' shortcomings in terms of diversity, including aspects such as class, background, origin, race, sexual orientation and generational differences. Therefore, diversity should be incorporated as a criterion in recruitment strategies.

However, fostering diversity presents challenges, demanding diverse relational capital to engage with individuals from different backgrounds. Cultivating shared relational environments is vital to serve as reservoirs of trust and diversity, as will be discussed in case C. It also entails creating inclusive contextual frameworks that extend beyond traditional spaces like offices or auditoriums, ensuring equal participation for all. For instance, an interviewee from a nonprofit working with individuals experiencing poverty and social exclusion highlighted the challenges they face when involving these individuals in decision-making processes. He emphasised the complexity of integrating their perspectives into organisational dynamics despite efforts outlined in their theory of change, strategic plan, and official documents: "Although we have accumulated specific experiences, there's still a pressing need to systematically and comprehensively integrate them into our organisation, considering that they logically won't be within the organisation forever, as we aim to help them overcome their vulnerability" (Man, 51, nonprofit network). An interviewee from the public sector also recognised that diversity often makes meetings difficult to manage (Woman, 56). Thus, careful selection of individuals with appropriate expertise within the organisation is crucial for ensuring inclusive processes. According to her, collaborating with colleagues who possess deeper understanding of subjects and key stakeholders is essential for addressing areas like gender equality where sensitivity and specialised knowledge are required (Woman, 56, public sector). Nevertheless, expertise for inclusivity

extends beyond subject knowledge to understanding context, narratives, and sensitivities. This perspective introduces new elements in the conceptualisation of collaboration capability constructed in the literature review (section 3.3).

Therefore, embracing diversity is not an overnight process; it demands structural changes within organisations. These changes range from revising hiring policies to a paradigm shift in how they manage relationships, adopting a more open approach. Furthermore, organisations need to review both internal and external processes to make them more inclusive.

### **Finding 8: Enhancing Diversity**

Organisations often lack the diversity they strive to achieve. To address this, they must engage in introspection, both within their internal structures and their external interactions. This involves acknowledging and embracing various dimensions of diversity such as gender, age, origin, race, sexual orientation, and religion. Additionally, organisations should integrate a wider range of knowledge, including experiential, cultural, emotional, and generational. These reflections should inform revisions to recruitment policies and relational strategies. Externally, organisations should cultivate shared reservoirs of trust and diversity. Internally and externally, processes should be reviewed to foster inclusivity.

Nevertheless, in diverse environments, differences in identities, perspectives and experiences can create power imbalances. Those with more privilege and influence may dominate discussions, marginalising those with less representation. Thus, embracing diversity requires a thorough grasp of power dynamics within organisations and collaborative settings, aiming to rectify any imbalances that arise.

### **4.2.3. Addressing Power Dynamics**

Recognizing and addressing power imbalances is a key challenge in fostering collaborative relationships, as noted by scholars such as Seitanidi and Ryan (2007) and Stott and Murphy (2020). Empowering individuals within collaborative environments is crucial for effective collaboration and learning. Insights from interviewees shed light on various forms of power imbalances, such as between professors and students (Man, 17, student; Woman, 60, lawyer and professor), educated and uneducated individuals (Woman, 42, participant in the Spanish Citizen Assembly), and vulnerable communities and nonprofit organisations (Woman, 47, multilateral agency; Man, 51, nonprofit network). These imbalances can hinder active participation and collective knowledge construction, inhibiting collaboration capability. For instance, the young interviewee highlighted the

importance of feeling comfortable and included in the collaborative process to facilitate meaningful participation:

Everyone's gotta feel comfortable, you know? There have been times where I joined in on discussions, and I could tell that some people really knew their stuff about the topic. When it was my turn to participate, I was like, 'Maybe I'll say something dumb'. So, it is all about feeling that you are in the right place. (Man, 17, student)

#### **a. Increasing power awareness**

An initial step involves developing an awareness of one's power and being willing to share it generously to facilitate effective collaboration and achieve common goals. The discourse analysis of the interviews offers valuable insights into individual power perceptions. Despite variations, all participants expressed a sense of empowerment within their contexts, especially those for whom collaboration is integral to their professional roles. Specifically, three distinct roles emerged regarding how interviewees subconsciously perceive themselves within the collaborative framework:

- As equals within the ecosystem;
- As individuals distinguished from “the others” (e.g., community, refugees, excluded groups...);
- As omniscient participants, feeling capable of influencing the design of the collaborative process.

Understanding power on an individual level involves assessing one's emotions and attitudes towards its use. According to an interviewee, meaningful dialogue requires believing in one's ability to create a collaborative space where power is shared rather than wielded for control:

To engage in meaningful dialogue, it is imperative to position yourself with the belief that you possess the power to facilitate a space where, through collaborative efforts, the impact will be enhanced. In other words, it involves crafting a space where power is shared, delegated, and distributed, rather than wielded as a means of control over the other person. (Woman, 53, nonprofit)

Furthermore, organisations inherently possess power and are often associated with a certain degree of power, often derived from their purpose. The interviewee from the multilateral organisation stressed that organisational affiliations alone

may not ensure positive perceptions. Similarly, another respondent acknowledged that her organisation is frequently perceived as influential in the third sector. She explained,

Our organisation has been often labelled as quite assertive, right? And I myself have occasionally acknowledged. Our organisation is inherently driven by the desire to exert influence, where 'influence' entails the act of persuading others to adopt 'our truth'. Consequently, engaging in collaborations with external entities presents a significant challenge for us. It entails the recognition that our beliefs do not constitute an absolute truth.  
(Woman, 53, nonprofit)

She also described internal efforts to adopt a more humble approach to collaboration through coaching and training, suggesting it as a valuable strategy for other organisations.

Finally, understanding the ecosystem and its complex power dynamics is central in power awareness. Sometimes, the emphasis on fostering horizontal relationships can result in overlooking existing power imbalances, especially in the early stages of collaboration. The interviewee with experience in peace processes (Man, 50, nonprofit and academia) stressed the importance of conducting a system analysis at the beginning of the collaborative process. This analysis involves identifying key actors within the system, their objectives, actions, connections, disconnections and gaps. Scholars underscore the challenges in determining the incumbent stakeholders for a transition process (Fenton et al., 2016), often resulting in the oversight of several actors in conventional stakeholder analyses. For instance, as per the insights provided by the interviewee (Man, 50, nonprofit and academia), this has been the case of religious institutions, which wield a significant influence in conflict-ridden regions like Colombia or the Basque Country in Spain. The multilateral organisation representative highlighted the importance of including an understanding of identity, history and cultural belief in ecosystem analysis. In her experience, understanding these nuances has been crucial for the success of collaborative efforts, especially in participatory processes aimed at developing policies to address gender-based violence. As she pointed out,

While there exists a wealth of philosophy, numerous doctoral theses, and extensive theory on this subject, it is crucial to recognise that each country, each culture, each population, each person may hold distinct and deeply



personal perceptions and feelings regarding an issue as intimate as this form of violence. (Woman, 47, multilateral agency)

Theoretical frameworks, particularly in the works of Leda Stott (2005, 2017, 2023) on partnerships, highlight the importance of contextual analysis. Stott notes that some organisations invest significant time, typically one to one and a half years, in developing this analysis due to its inherent value. She recommends conducting this analysis iteratively to account for the evolving nature of the context, which can change significantly, as demonstrated by events like a pandemic, armed conflicts, or energy crises. This comprehensive approach involves addressing questions related to skills, motivation, organisational readiness, and the facilitative nature of political and legal frameworks for collaboration.

#### **b. Balancing power dynamics**

Since power imbalances persist within the system, proactive steps must be undertaken to create the conditions for equitable and symmetrical participation, aiming to address and rectify power dynamics. Interviews offer interesting insights into organisational strategies, revealing a complex interplay between symmetry and trust.

Trust is highlighted in the literature as a crucial element for relation-oriented collaboration capability (Blomqvist & Levy, 2006), fostering social capital, reducing transaction costs, and facilitating problem-solving within organisations and communities (E. P. Weber et al., 2007). Its connection to power resides in its definition as the belief in a partner's abilities and future behaviour when encountering risks (E. P. Weber et al., 2007). Interviewees stressed that trust is cultivated through honest, transparent conversations, fostering a sense of complicity in the relationship (Woman, 53, nonprofit). Some acknowledged that partnerships often begin from a personal-professional relationship (Woman, 47, private sector), and that friendship can blossom from partnerships (Man, 57, nonprofit), although trust and friendship should not be confused.

Furthermore, trust is highlighted as the enabling factor that permits individuals “to accept that there will be mistakes, difficulties and moments where sensitivities may arise, and stay confident on the reliability of the partners” (Man, 57, nonprofit). Trust is thus crucial to manage sensitivities and crises effectively. The interviewee also highlighted cohesion, which complements trust and involves a sense of interdependence within the group. Trust and cohesion are built on understanding each other's strengths and weaknesses, fostering belief in the

feasibility of collaborative work. In essence, trust and cohesion serve as the “glue” that prevents collaboration from breaking down in the face of challenges.

However, trust and cohesion do not emerge spontaneously; rather they must be deliberately cultivated over time as invaluable assets, since they are very difficult to restore once lost. As Freire (2000) suggests, trust finds its roots in dialogue: “Whereas faith in humankind is an *a priori* requirement for dialogue, trust is established by dialogue” (p.91). According to the Brazilian pedagogist, trust emerges from the collective experience of individuals engaging in dialogue to critically address and transform their world (Freire, 2000). Establishing co-responsibility from the outset is essential, as emphasised by a respondent from the public sector, who stressed,

It cannot be a one-way relationship; it has to be a two-way relationship. It's not about the community presenting their problem, and us questioning the legitimacy of their problem, and then providing a solution. No. Once the concerns of the community are laid out, collectively, we must narrow the challenge down and collaboratively build real solutions. (Woman, 56, public sector)

As seen in section 3.4.2, scholars emphasise the importance of cultivating interdependence among participants in collaborative learning settings (D. W. Johnson & Johnson, 2009). This entails visualising and verbalising the contributions and the synergies within the group, recognising that collaboration transcends mere addition. It involves creating an awareness of outcomes greater than the sum of individual efforts, as expressed by a respondent from a nonprofit organisation: “convincing ourselves that together we add up, and certainly, will be much more effective in social transformations” (Woman, 53).

Additionally, factors such as language, timing and location, spatial arrangement, body position, interdependence and the presence of a facilitator were mentioned as elements that can significantly impact both trust and power balance (e.g., Woman, 47, multilateral agency; Woman, 56, public sector; Man, 17, student).

Starting with small, time-bound projects with defined budgets was suggested as an effective strategy in the experience of a public sector representative (Woman, 56). This approach emphasises an incremental progress and learning in collaboration, which is consistent with the collaboration continuum defined by Austin and Seitanidi (2012). Initial meetings are deemed pivotal for getting to

know each other, openly and calmly discussing collaboration paths and addressing challenges (Man, 47, private sector; Man, 57, nonprofit):

The first step is getting to know each other. Understanding one another is fundamental to establish individual parameters. In an initial meeting, without pressure but calmly, it's crucial to explore collaboration paths by outlining the enabling elements and the challenges (Man, 47, private sector).

Furthermore, interviewees highlighted the significance of the physical and logistical environment in fostering symmetry and comfort during collaborative interactions. This involves various considerations, including:

- Arranging participants in a spatial configuration that promotes open and equal dialogue, such as positioning oneself on an equal footing with others: “If the person is sitting, then sit, and if that person is standing, stand. It's all about the physical and logistical environment (...) that makes the individual feel aware and empowered” (Woman, 47, multilateral agency);
- Selecting a venue that is perceived as neutral or familiar by all participants, or located within the territory of individuals who may be more vulnerable in the collaborative process (Woman, 56, public sector; Man, 17, student).

Assessing the neutrality of a location poses a significant challenge. According to the woman from the public sector, a town hall meeting room qualifies as a neutral meeting venue. However, the student holds a different perspective, suggesting that institutions or public buildings may impose a sense of intimidation or discomfort upon individuals. This divergence in viewpoints underscores the subjective nature of evaluating the neutrality of a space and highlights the importance of listening methods highlighted in section 4.1.6 to consider participants' perceptions and experiences when selecting meeting venues.

Moreover, temporal conditions are crucial for ensuring equitable participation, with gender perspective playing a key role, although interviewees did not directly address this issue.

Respondents also highlighted the importance of effective communication, including the use of accurate information, a language tailored to the most vulnerable participants, and non-verbal cues, such as maintaining eye contact, observing reactions and using gestures to foster closeness and engagement during interactions (Woman, 56, public sector; Woman, 47, private sector). Additionally, they stressed the importance of avoiding premature judgments and embracing the

validity of diverse perspectives, transcending mere tolerance, as highlighted by the student and the representative from the multilateral organisation.

Finally, the facilitator’s role was considered essential in promoting comfort, trust and symmetry in collaborative environments. They offer support and encourage participation, particularly caring for participants who may feel less confident or experienced, as highlighted by the 17-year-old student.

In essence, trust, symmetry and power balance need to be cultivated over time, through dialogue, in order to contribute to relation-oriented collaboration capability. Selecting appropriate interaction venues, attending to non-verbal communication, and establishing and demonstrating conditions of co-responsibility and interdependence emerged as pivotal factors discussed in the interviews. Table 4.1 presents a summary of the factors for managing power in collaborative environments that contribute to collaboration capability.

**Table 4.1.** Summary of factors for power management

<b>Category</b>	<b>Factors for power balance</b>
Who?	Mapping the ecosystem Power analysis, including cultural and historical aspects Individual and organisational power awareness processes
Where?	A neutral venue or in the territory of those that may be more vulnerable
When?	At an adequate time, particularly for the most vulnerable in the process (particular attention to gender issues)
How?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language (the one spoken by those that may be more vulnerable)</li> <li>• Body position at the same level (sit, stand...)</li> <li>• Symmetrical attitude (more than tolerance, accepting others’ arguments as valid)</li> <li>• Non-verbal communication (eye contact, attentive gestures, observing reactions,...)</li> <li>• Using reliable information</li> <li>• Establish co-responsibility</li> <li>• Evidence interdependence</li> <li>• A facilitator that provides support and encouragement</li> </ul>

Source: Own work

### **Finding 9: Addressing Power Dynamics**

Organisations need to proactively address power dynamics in collaborative settings through strategic actions. Three pivotal strategies stand out from the interviews: firstly, implementing coaching and training programmes to foster self-awareness of individual and organisational attitudes towards power and cultivate a culture of power sharing; secondly, conducting comprehensive ecosystem analyses for each transition arena, focusing on identifying power relationships and recognising traditionally overlooked stakeholders; and finally, intentionally designing interaction contexts to achieve balanced power relations, emphasising trust and cohesion through various dimensions including spatial arrangements, temporal considerations, and effective verbal and non-verbal communication, among other tactics.

#### **4.2.4. Transforming Conflict Into a Learning Opportunity**

In collaborative environments, a convergence of diverse backgrounds, ideas, and values is commonplace, leading to the natural emergence of conflict. This conflict arises from perceived differences in needs, values, or objectives, encompassing various scenarios such as:

- Misunderstandings derived from different mental frameworks and languages (Woman, 60, lawyer and professor; Woman, 42, participant in the Spanish Citizen Assembly; Woman, 56, public sector; Woman, 47, private sector);
- Assumptions and preconceived notions about sectors or actors, often labelling them as either “good” or “bad,” as described by a nonprofit representative (Man, 51): “In our interactions with various entities, we frequently assumed a defensive posture, expecting potential rejection of our proposals. Over time, I've cultivated an approach that is free from preconception;”
- Delving into sensitive topics during collaborative efforts, such as discussions surrounding the arms trade, highlighted by a nonprofit participant (Man, 57);
- Engaging in inherently conflict-ridden situations, where individuals may carry emotional and psychological burdens into collaboration. As articulated by a representative from a multilateral agency, “When individuals flee from a situation of war, conflicts, social tensions, or discrimination, they experience heightened anxiety, profound fear, significant frustration, and often carry a certain level of embedded violence within themselves” (Woman, 47).

However, conflict should not be viewed as something to be avoided, but rather as an opportunity for growth, innovation and improved decision-making, requiring skilled management to harness its potential for creativity and relationship-building. Scholars such as Hamann and April (2013) advocate for the transformation of conflict and failure into catalysts for innovation, a sentiment

echoed by Freeth and Caniglia (2020) and Kendall et al. (2012) who emphasised the role of discomfort in fostering relational capabilities. Consequently, conflict emerges as a crucial element in the process of learning to collaborate. This raises the question: What specific conditions during interactions facilitate conflict as a driver for learning to collaborate?

As underscored by the interviewees, effective conflict management transcends navigating disagreements, entailing the cultivation of an environment where individuals feel valued and respected, ultimately leading to a sense of achievement, pride and shared purpose. They emphasise that constructive conflict arises when participants feel safe to express diverse viewpoints without fear of judgement. Promoting open and respectful communication is a fundamental principle, as advocated by the Nonviolent Communication movement established by Marshall Rosenberg (2003). This approach to interpersonal communication emphasises the cultivation of empathy through the expression of needs and feelings while actively listening to others. Engaging in explicit and transparent discussions about restrictions and boundaries, as emphasised by a 57-year-old respondent from the non-profit sector, is essential for effective collaboration. Additionally, documenting these conversations is crucial. In his words,

When the dialogue is geared toward taking action, particularly with the aim of instigating change, then we are dealing with more substantial matters. In such cases, the timely lifting of restrictions and openly understanding them becomes absolutely critical. This is the challenging part, but addressing these challenges sooner rather than later is imperative. (Man, 57, nonprofit)

In some partnerships, particularly those with greater experience, restrictions are openly addressed from the outset. There is explicit discussion about what can and cannot be said, establishing boundaries that are crucial for the success of collaboration. Elevating these restrictions early on and documenting them is essential. (Man, 57, nonprofit)

In this context, ensuring the well-being of vulnerable individuals is essential for the success of conflict resolution strategies. Effective mediation or facilitation, such as The Art of Hosting methodologies, as mentioned in the interviews, offers structured frameworks to guide participants in navigating conflicts productively. Therefore, during the early stages of collaborations, participants engage in a deliberate listening phase characterised by intentional silence, enabling them to

grasp the perspectives and nuances of others before engaging in active dialogue and collaboration (Woman, 42, participant in the Spanish Citizen Assembly; Man, 57, nonprofit; Man, 17, student). Moreover, the importance of concentrating on shared elements rather than differences was also emphasised (Man, 51, nonprofit network). This cultivation of an “active listening” culture, where participants genuinely strive to comprehend their partners' goals, helps transform conflict into valuable learning experiences.

Furthermore, the 60-year-old lawyer stressed the value of embracing dialogue “in the style of Plato,” since she perceived a deficiency in verbal communication, highlighting the need for more thoughtful and profound conversations. In this regard, a nonprofit sector interviewee stressed the importance of avoiding assumptions about shared concepts and urged individuals to recognise potential disparities in understanding. As he stated, “We cannot assume that the concepts we handle are universally understood. First, we need to ensure our own comprehension, and second, confirm that others interpret them in the same way. We need to translate ourselves” (Man, 51, nonprofit network). Similarly, a private sector interviewee echoed this sentiment, advocating for allocating sufficient time for situations to unfold and for individuals to progress through alignment phases (Man, 61, private sector).

Lastly, promoting a sense of humour and celebrating even small achievements emerges as a crucial factor in alleviating tensions and conflicts. A 56-year-old respondent from the public sector emphasised the importance of finding happiness and pride in reaching mutually satisfactory solutions. Similarly, a participant from the nonprofit sector highlighted humour as a tool for building emotional connections and facilitating collaboration (Man, 57). While recognising that humour does not eliminate collaboration challenges, he emphasised its ability to lighten the atmosphere and foster a more positive outlook on collaboration beyond “what seems like a path laden with obstacles” (Man, 57, nonprofit).

In conclusion, organisations must proactively implement strategies to transform conflict into opportunities for learning and collaboration. These strategies include:

- Encouraging open, constructive, and profound dialogue, drawing on principles of Nonviolent Communication;
- Facilitating a translation effort and fostering the development of a shared language, while encouraging self-reflection on individual and group understanding;

- Transparently addressing and documenting sources of conflict;
- Engaging in explicit discussions about restrictions and boundaries from the outset;
- Utilising effective mediation techniques, such as those outlined in *The Art of Hosting*, when needed;
- Promoting a sense of humour and celebrating achievements to alleviate tensions and enhance empathy, recognizing the inherent challenges of collaborative processes.

### **Finding 10: Transforming Conflict Into a Learning Opportunity**

Conflict is inherent to collaboration. Therefore, organisations need to implement strategies to turn conflict into opportunities for cultivating collaboration capability, such as promoting open and profound dialogue, addressing and documenting conflicts transparently from the outset, utilising effective facilitation techniques, fostering humour and celebrating achievements.

## **4.3. Strategic Changes**

At the strategic level, changes concentrate on culture, addressing abstract aspects and broader societal systems, with a long-term time horizon extending up to 30 years (Loorbach & van Raak, 2006). Collaborative culture encompasses favourable narratives, beliefs, values and attitudes towards collaboration (Stott, 2023; Sullivan et al., 2006). Consequently, organisations must consider how to harness cultural change to foster collaboration effectively.

The cultivation of collaboration capability extends beyond traditional educational environments; it is a continuous and dynamic journey encompassing personal, academic and professional life paths. This section delves into the role organisations can play in fostering a collaborative culture, focusing on the provision of immersive experiences (section 4.3.1), the cultivation of a playful culture (section 4.3.2) and the reimagining of workspaces to serve as educational tools, as advocated by pedagogists (section 4.3.3).

### **4.3.1. Understanding Collaborative Projects as Immersive Experiences**

During the interviews, participants reflected on the role of formal learning environments in cultivating collaboration capability, noting that such skills are often overlooked in curricula despite growing demand in the labour market. Participants identified four specific areas within education where the reinforcement of collaboration skills is seen as essential:



- In schools, participants emphasised the need for greater encouragement of dialogue skills, noting that many students struggle with oral presentations due to inadequate training (Man, 17, student).
- At the university level, they noted the historical emphasis on hard skills over relational skills, creating an academic gap between training and job expectations, particularly in professions like law where interpersonal abilities are crucial but often overlooked (Woman, 56, public sector).
- Vocational training programmes targeting vulnerable groups must also prioritise the development of relational skills to ensure effective customer service (Man, 51, nonprofit network).
- The Spanish civil service training system predominantly focuses on theoretical learning, offering limited opportunities for practical experience and soft skills development. This lack of practical application, coupled with constraints related to time and authorisation from managers, poses significant barriers to cultivating collaboration capability within the public sector through formal learning (Woman, 56, public sector).

However, some interviewees pointed out specific formal training contexts where collaborative experiences have been established. In primary and secondary school, collaboration is often addressed through complementary activities like discussion clubs and participatory budgeting, which help develop communication, reasoning and listening skills (Man, 17, student). Nevertheless, the challenge remains that these experiences are frequently extracurricular and heavily rely on the willingness of teaching staff. In higher education, another participant (Man, 51, nonprofit network) highlighted the positive impact of service-learning, an educational approach involving partnerships between universities and social or civil society organisations. Through service-learning, students actively engage in nonprofit projects, gaining knowledge, empathy, and critical thinking skills. The interviewee shared a personal example where a Law student provided information on minimum income requirements in a leaflet and tailored training sessions for foreigners with limited knowledge of the Spanish language and system. “Service learning encourages students to cultivate non-transactional relationships in a professional environment. It's a way of learning to collaborate,” concluded the participant.

Organisations can play a role in enhancing collaboration skills within formal education contexts, if they understand their collaborative projects as immersive experiences:

- Advocating for a more robust inclusion of collaboration competence in curricula, ensuring that individuals are better prepared for collaborative work environments from the start of their careers;
- Offering practical learning experiences, such as internships, enabling students to gain valuable experience in collaborative settings;
- Incorporating collaboration into onboarding pathways and internal training programmes tailored to each employee’s professional trajectory, without forgetting the experiential nature of cultivating collaboration capability.

#### **Finding 11: Understanding Collaborative Projects as Immersive Experiences**

Organisations have a responsibility in offering a conducive environment to cultivate collaboration capability. While challenges persist, organisations can enhance collaboration by advocating for curriculum changes, providing practical experiences, and integrating collaboration into training programs, while recognizing the experiential nature of collaboration learning.

### **4.3.2. Cultivating a Culture of Playfulness**

The process of learning to collaborate is not a finite endeavour confined to specific educational contexts but rather an ongoing and dynamic journey which spans throughout one’s lifetime. As individuals travel through the stages of their personal, academic and professional trajectories, the learning journey unfolds as a continuous quest for adaptability, effective communication and the orchestration of collective actions and interests.

This journey towards developing collaboration capability begins in childhood. One interviewee remembered how street play served as a vital context for learning collaborative skills, emphasising the necessity of cooperation<sup>16</sup> among peers: “Collaborative play wasn’t just an option, it was an imperative. We were literally kicked out of the house at a certain hour and our parents would say ‘Come back for lunch.’ After lunch they would send us out again until the afternoon” (Man, 50, nonprofit and academia). Conversely, another interviewee noted that competitive dynamics were more prevalent in childhood games, with cooperation becoming more significant in adolescence, particularly in activities like leading summer camps (Man, 51, nonprofit network). Also sports were perceived as inherently

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<sup>16</sup> In the collaboration continuum, “cooperation” denotes a looser level of integration than “collaboration.” See section 3.2 for more details.

competitive. Nonetheless, a younger interviewee stated that team sports present an opportunity to foster collaboration through collective decision-making and strategy implementation: “In a football match, decisions must be made collaboratively. I believe it's a secure environment because you feel comfortable with your team. You can propose ideas, and everyone deliberates on them because, after all, it's a team” (Man, 17, student).

Scholars in pedagogy and psychology, including Vygotsky, Piaget, Montessori, and Tonucci, have extensively explored the role of play in cognitive development. They argue that play provides a safe space for children to explore and experiment, independently constructing their understanding of the world. This perspective extends to architecture and urbanism, particularly in the design of public spaces like playgrounds. These spaces are conceived as areas for freedom and spontaneous interaction, promoting dialogue and collaborative learning experiences among children of different ages and backgrounds. Such social interaction fosters social cohesion and active community participation, enhancing collaboration skills from an early age.

Post-conflict contexts offer valuable insights into the design of playgrounds. Dutch architect Aldo Van Eyck (1918-1999) designed over 700 playgrounds in post-war Amsterdam over three decades, advocating for spaces that encourage children's creativity and offer flexibility in use (see Figure 4.2 for an illustration). Similarly, Colombian architect Giancarlo Mazzanti's designs aim to address inequality and conflict wounds, illustrated by his construction of numerous schools in Colombia's north region (see Figure 4.3 for examples). Inspired by Loris Malaguzzi's Reggio Emilia philosophy, Mazzanti's projects embrace the idea of the classroom environment as a “third educator,” emphasising the role of physical space alongside adults and peers in fostering interaction and exploration.

However, the idea of specialised spaces exclusively for children's play faced criticism from Jane Jacobs in her seminal work *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961). Jacobs argued that vibrant, diverse and adequately broad city sidewalks present a better opportunity compared to parks and playgrounds for fostering children's spontaneous play and nurturing a sense of community culture:

In real life, only from the ordinary adults of the city sidewalks do children learn - if they learn it at all - the first fundamental of successful city life: People must take a modicum of public responsibility for each other even if they have no ties to each other. (Jacobs, 1961, p. 82)

Her perspective aligns with the African proverb asserting that “it takes a village to raise a child.” Essentially, creating a safe and nurturing space for children’s growth and development is a collective responsibility of the entire community. Jacobs believed that this communal responsibility could only be achieved through casual play on sidewalks, in coexistence with adult neighbours.



**Figure 4.2.** Playground structure designed by Aldo Van Eyck.

Source: Photographed by Cas Oorthuys in 1962. Archive of the Aldo + Hannie van Eyck Foundation.



(a)



(b)



(c)

**Figure 4.3.** Examples of Spaces as Educators

Note. Baby Gym in Barranquilla (a and b) and Marinilla Educational Park (c) in Colombia.

Source: Rodrigo Dávila, Equipo Mazzanti



**Figure 4.4.** Drawing of Francesco Tonucci, also known as 'Frato' (1998).

Italian psycho-pedagogue Francesco Tonucci, known for influencing various parents' movements, particularly in the post-pandemic United States and Europe (Saner, 2021), similarly supports children's autonomy to engage in free play in the streets (see Figure 4.4). He advocates for urban design grounded in children's perspectives over those of drivers, prioritising inclusivity and ensuring that no one is left behind (Tonucci, 1991).

Unfortunately, contemporary children are experiencing a decline in outdoor activity and increasingly adopting individualistic lifestyles. According to a recent article in *The Guardian*, "British children spend half the time their parents did playing in the street" (H. Grant, 2019). Urban areas, in particular, are witnessing this trend, as highlighted by Tonucci in his *City of Children* experiment (Tonucci, 2009). Several factors contribute to this shift, even in regions with favourable outdoors conditions, including the proliferation of a spatial model relying on private mobility, heightened safety concerns, a decline in birth rates fostering a protective parenting culture, and busy schedules filled with extracurricular activities due to the challenges of reconciling work and family life (Pascual, 2016). These challenges limit children's freedom, boredom, creativity and opportunities for collaborative play. Given the preceding arguments, the absence of street play, a consequence of contemporary Western lifestyles, may potentially impact children's collaborative skills, consequently affecting those of future adults.

Indeed, organisations hold a significant responsibility for the amount of time children spend engaging in outdoor play, as organisational policies directly influence the delicate balance of work-life reconciliation. Policies implemented by organisations, such as flexible working hours, remote work and parental leave options, shape the opportunities and constraints parents face in facilitating

outdoor play for their children. Furthermore, conciliation policies have been shown to positively affect employees' commitment to the organisation (Cantera & Alonso, 2024).

Recognised as an essential aspect of childhood, as highlighted in Article 31 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations. General Assembly, 1989), play represents an intrinsic characteristic of human culture, transcending this early life stage (Huizinga, 1951). However, play in adulthood tends to be relegated to a secondary concern, perceived as a superfluous activity in a productivity-focused world. Moreover, the concept of play has evolved into a form of consumption, where activities like video gaming, sports and escape rooms<sup>17</sup> have become popular in leisure time.

In *Homo Ludens* (1951), Huizinga defines “play” as a voluntary, free, temporary, non-utilitarian and non-profit activity, intentionally situated outside the bounds of “ordinary” or “real” life, providing a space free from judgement, for creativity and spontaneity. Play is governed by rules, with “fair play” representing “good faith expressed in play terms” (Huizinga, 1951, p. 211). In essence, the violation of these rules disrupts the game and diminishes its value. On an individual level, play nurtures creativity and encourages imaginative exploration, while socially, it fosters community and involves reaching agreements. However, Huizinga observed a decline in genuine play within culture noting that modern civilisation no longer engages in true play: “civilization today is no longer played, and even where it still seems to play it is false play —I had almost said, it plays false, so that it becomes increasingly difficult to tell where play ends and non-play begins” (1951, p. 206). This shift towards “false play” results from the professionalisation and regimentation of activities, such as sports, leading to an “over-seriousness” that stifles creativity and spontaneity in such a way “the real play-spirit is threatened with extinction” (Huizinga, 1951, p. 199).

This seriousness extends to organisational contexts, where room for experimentation and failure is often limited, while some of humanity’s most remarkable discoveries have emerged from accidents, chance occurrences or mistakes. Playful environments facilitate creative thinking, making play a powerful tool for fostering inhibition, spontaneity and serendipity in collaborative

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<sup>17</sup> According to an article published in The Guardian, in 2019 there were almost 1,500 escape rooms in the United Kingdom. This trend has its roots in previous trends such as Dungeon and Dragons in the 1970’s or the adventure games in the 1980’s (Usborne, 2019).

relationships. Nevertheless, this perspective should not lead to naivety. The effectiveness of play in fostering trust and creativity in adults is highly dependent on cultural and contextual factors. A comparison of experiences in two conflict contexts highlights the importance of cultural sensitivity in employing playful strategies:

In [context 1] we initiated discussions using a game to encourage personal interactions. However, in [context 2], employing this approach would yield an opposite effect, because it is a culture that tends to be introspective, where personal elements are often regarded with suspicion and unease. Consequently, initiating the conversation with a more formal or rational discussion proved to be more effective, with the introduction of personal aspects upholding gradually. In contrast, within [context 1], diving directly into content might be perceived as excessively cold. (Man, 50, nonprofit and academia)

In conclusion, play can serve as a powerful strategy for triggering creativity, reducing the fear of failure and promoting collaboration in a judgement-free atmosphere. However, its success is not guaranteed and can be significantly impacted by cultural factors. Recognizing and adapting to these cultural nuances can enable organisations to create environments where play becomes a valuable tool for enhancing creativity and collaboration, benefiting both the workforce and the organisation as a whole.

### **Finding 12: Cultivating a Culture of Playfulness**

Play serves as a valuable instrument for fostering spontaneity, creativity and collaboration, easing concerns about failure and judgement, whether in childhood or adulthood. Organisations contribute to this by fostering conciliation policies and promoting a culture of play among employees. This culture encourages temporary, voluntary activities, with established rules, unlocking creativity and providing a non-judgemental space for building relationships. However, cultural sensitivity and adaptability are crucial for ensuring the success of play-based strategies in developing collaborative capabilities within organisations.

### **4.3.3. Harnessing the Workspace as an Educator**

When asked about cultural or environmental factors, interviewees often struggled to provide clear responses. Insights from various participants underscored an intuitive understanding of how physical space can influence the dynamics of conversation. For instance, a 61-year old individual from the private sector noted, “Setting up meetings in a circle, when possible, serves as a means to open up the

conversation and avoid the usual hierarchical structure.” This observation demonstrates a keen awareness of the subtle yet significant role spatial arrangements can play in shaping collaborative interactions. However, in general, interviewees exhibited a notable lack of precision in their responses. This ambiguity can be attributed to the inadequacy of the questions in precisely defining the key concepts and the complexity of understanding the influence of space on human behaviour.

Given the limited insights obtained from the interviews, the following subsection is enriched by a literature-based reflection, drawing upon the concept of the “environment as an educator” derived from Reggio Emilia philosophy. This theory argues that the environment can serve as an educator, stimulating communication, cohesion and shaping community behaviour, thus influencing organisational culture (Cagliari et al., 2017; Hoyuelos, 2005; Malaguzzi, 2021). Certainly, spatial considerations can have a significant influence on human behaviour and, at the same time, the use of space during interpersonal interactions is greatly influenced by cultural factors (Hall, 1990). This explains the importance of meticulous design for both indoor and outdoor workspaces within organisational settings to contribute to a collaborative culture.

#### **a. A Multidisciplinary Approach to the Influence of Space in Social Interaction**

Exploring the influence of spatial patterns in social interaction requires a multidisciplinary approach transcending the physical and material dimension of space. Many scholars have contested the idea of space as a passive container, instead defining it as a social construct shaped by relationships and forms (Lefevbre, 1991). According to Castells (2005), space is a dynamic process reflecting social relationships and functioning both as material support with symbolic significance and as a product of social practices and processes. Essentially, spatial configurations suggest ways of behaving and gradually shape cultural norms (Löw, 2016), acting as an active force that moulds social relationships and can either reinforce or challenge existing power imbalances.

Spanish tobacco factories provide an example of how spatial layout impacts social dynamics, particularly notable for their exclusively female workforce.<sup>18</sup> Initially,

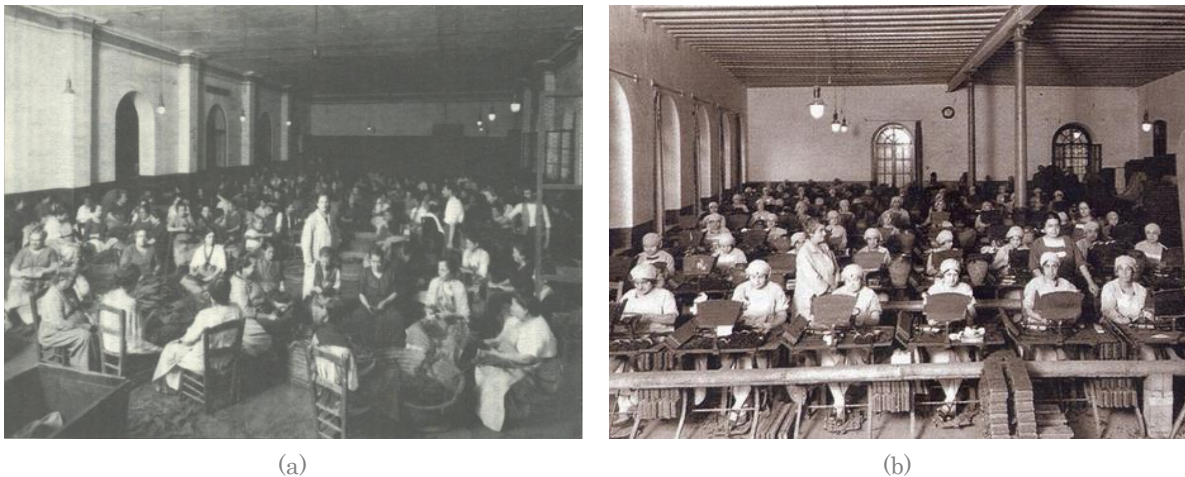
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<sup>18</sup> Several factors contributed to this phenomenon: women received lower wages than men, their dexterity in the rolling of cigarettes, explained by the size of their hands, and the prevailing belief



during manual production, cigar makers worked in circular formations, fostering strong social networks among groups of three to ten women (see Figure 4.5.a). With mechanisation, the layout shifted to rows, causing resistance due to disruption in established dynamics (see Figure 4.5.b). Research by Beatriz Martins Orozco and Yolanda Riquelme García indicates that the circular configuration encouraged solidarity and mutual care among workers (La Liminal, n.d.).

Gonzalo Bilbao's famous painting, *The Cigar Makers* (1915, Figure 4.6), vividly captures the camaraderie among workers, depicting the space not just as a workplace but also as a nurturing environment for activities like nursing and breastfeeding. Conversely, the transition to row configuration prioritised individual work at a faster pace, reflecting a shift away from collaborative values. Therefore, mechanization led to the loss of the space that had previously fostered trust and conviviality among the women, thereby reducing their collaboration capability.



**Figure 4.5.** Configuration of the workspace at the Tobacco Factories before and after mechanisation at the beginning of the 20th century.

Source: La Liminal. Note: (a) before and (b) after mechanisation.

that women, simply by virtue of their gender, would be compliant and submissive (González Romero, 2019).



**Figure 4.6.** The cigar makers portrayed by Gonzalo Bilbao in 1915

Source: Museo de Bellas Artes de Sevilla

The relationship between spatial arrangements and human behaviour has been studied by the field of proxemics, introduced by American anthropologist Edward T. Hall in 1966. In *The Hidden Dimension*, he describes the research of Osmond and Sommer, who identified two main spatial configurations (Hall, 1990):

- Sociopetal patterns, such as radial shapes, encourage social cohesion (Figure 4.5.a);
- Sociofugal patterns, like grid layouts, create a distance between individuals (Figure 4.5.b).

Consequently, incorporating sociopetal configurations in workplaces may potentially enhance relationships and foster individual and organisational collaboration capability. Then, the question arises whether the sociopetal pattern has been traditionally used in the architectural design of workspaces throughout the 20th century and the initial decades of the 21st century.

#### **b. The Evolution of Spatial Patterns in Workplaces**

Throughout the 20th century, a growing emphasis has been placed on social interaction, teamwork and creativity in the design of office buildings in Western countries (Monje Pascual, 2016). The following subsection offers a chronological overview of significant shifts in design principles and functional approaches.

In the early 1900s, the prevailing spatial configuration was linear, characterised by towering structures symbolising authority and hierarchy (Monje Pascual, 2016). Workspaces were organised to facilitate individual, systematic and repetitive tasks, with managers typically situated on higher floors, reflecting a rigid pyramid model of organisational structure. Billy Wilder's acclaimed film, *The Apartment* (Wilder, 1960), which offers a glimpse into the dynamics of a New York office Tower in the 1950s, housing an insurance company with over 30,000 employees. The film zooms in on the 19th floor, where the protagonist, C.C. Baxter, occupies desk 861. This expansive, cold and imposing space, as depicted in Figure 4.7, is meticulously organised, with a strict timetable dictating the schedules of the 19th floor employees to avoid congestion in the 16 lifts.<sup>19</sup> This setup, focused on individual work, provides limited opportunities for interaction, mainly confined to managers' private offices and lift rides, where the emotional connection between the main characters blossoms.



**Figure 4.7.** Office-wide view in the Billy Wilder's film *The Apartment* (1960)

Moving into the 1930s, there was a transition to modular configurations, marked by the introduction of prismatic layouts and the establishment of business districts on the outskirts (Monje Pascual, 2016). This model facilitated the coexistence of managers and employees on the same floor, albeit with the former segregated in individual offices. Jacques Tati's film *Playtime* provides a caricature of this modernist office model (Tati, 1967). The central character, Mr. Hulot, navigates through a dehumanised, modular and sterile architectural landscape (see Figure 4.8), where monotony prevails and social interaction is inhibited.

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<sup>19</sup> The opening scene of the film is not to be missed: <https://youtu.be/GpTa7kgLqrU> (up to minute 1:37).



**Figure 4.8.** Offices in Jacques Tati's film *Playtime* (1967)

This portrayal echoes the insights of French anthropologist Marc Augé, who argues that “supermodernity produces non-places” (1995, p. 78). Augé defines “non-places” as spaces lacking relational, historical, or identity-related qualities, where individuals remain anonymous and solitary. Examples include airports, supermarkets and motorways, although the perception of a space as a non-place is subjective. Conversely, “anthropological places create the organically social” (Augé, 1995, p. 94). These spaces are characterised by shared rules (identity), social connections (relationships) and historical significance (temporal dimension).

Some architects criticise architectural education for neglecting the perspective of the user and overlooking future relationships within buildings (Chinchilla, 2020). Edward T. Hall (1990) argues that mammoth office buildings are constructed without understanding occupants' needs, with a conventional idea in the United States of America that additional space beyond job requirements is unnecessary. Moreover, Hall identifies a historical “mistrust of subjective feelings as a source of data” (1990, p. 52).

However, offices started to integrate naturalised courtyards to promote relaxation and social interaction in the 1930s (Monje Pascual, 2016), as exemplified by the Ford Foundation headquarters in New York, constructed in 1968 (Figure 4.9). As already discussed in previous sections, nature has shown to be effective in enhancing cognitive functions, promoting mindfulness and improving overall well-being.

In the 1960s, criticism arose against linear and modular office design due to their rigid structures, which hindered flexible team arrangements. This led to a shift

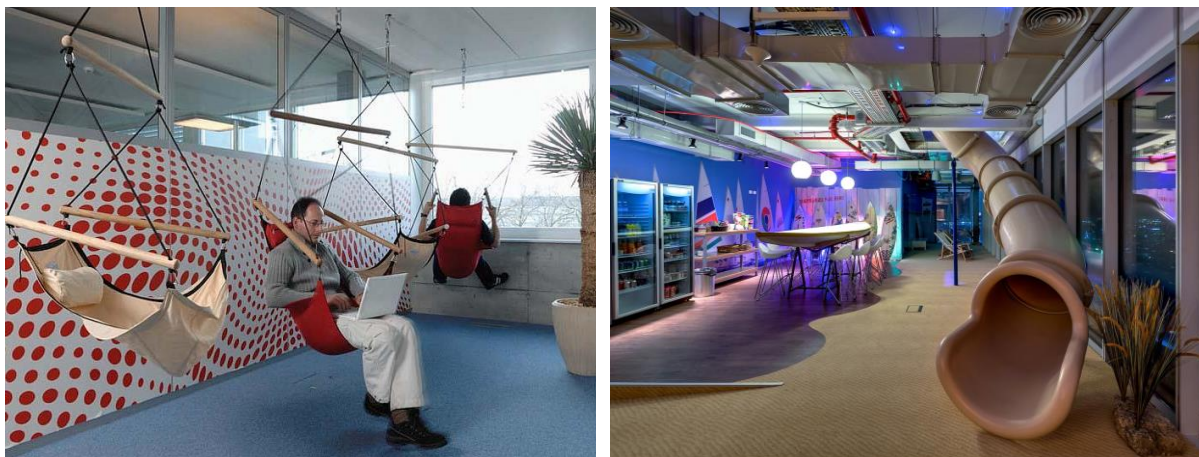
towards more flexible office models that prioritised teamwork and physical proximity, while also considering acoustic insulation and areas for individual focus (Monje Pascual, 2016).



**Figure 4.9.** Inner courtyard of the Ford Foundation's Headquarters in New York (1968)

Source: Kevin Roche, John Dinkeloo and Associates

With the proliferation of the internet and laptops, in the 1990s, organisations embraced horizontal, distributed and collaborative models. To foster relaxed team dynamics, creativity and learning, playful elements like sofas, hammocks, artificial grass and game tables were introduced (illustrated in Figure 4.10 with examples from Google offices worldwide). However, this approach has faced criticism, citing concerns about staff infantilization and compatibility issues with different organisational cultures (Fairs, 2016).



**Figure 4.10.** Examples of Google Offices: swings in Zurich (a) and slide in Tel Aviv (b)

Source: andrewarchy profile in Flickr (left) and Dezeen (right)

Interviewees emphasised the importance of informality in building trust and fostering creativity, highlighting the critical role of informal exchanges in learning and cohesion. An interviewee from the nonprofit (Man, 51, nonprofit) stated, “Internal cohesion suffers when you don’t personally know the people you collaborate with. The informal part of the meeting, coffee breaks, are essential. When you get to know people more personally, it’s much easier to work with them” (Man, 51, nonprofit). Serendipity emerges as a pivotal factor in cultivating collaboration, as highlighted by Irving et al. (2020). British architect Frank Duffy (2012) underscored the value of circulation and interstitial spaces in encouraging serendipitous encounters and stimulating both intra and inter-organisational interactions. For instance, kitchenettes and cafeterias serve as essential hubs for social interaction, as perceived by this interviewee, where numerous ideas take shape, challenging the notion of secondary spaces in workplace design.

However, researchers Ethan Bernstein and Ben Waber (2019), from the Organisational Behaviour Unit at Harvard Business School, caution that open spaces may not always lead to desired interactions: “More interaction is not necessarily better, nor is less” (Conclusion section, para. 1). They argue that the goal should be to facilitate the right interactions among the right people at the right times, rather than simply increasing overall interaction, demonstrating that “optimizing collaboration doesn’t have to entail a radical overhaul of office space” (“Less can be more”, para. 1-2). Therefore, there is no one-size-fits-all model for an ideal workspace that fosters collaboration. Each organisation should define its own depending on its purpose, activities and culture.

### **Finding 13: Harnessing the Workplace as an Educator**

There is no one-size-fits-all model for workspaces conducive to collaboration. Organisations should tailor their environments to align with their goals, activities and cultures, ensuring that meaningful interactions occur among the right individuals at opportune moments. Achieving this requires a holistic understanding of space, encompassing anthropological, social and cultural dimensions beyond mere physicality. Spaces are defined by shared rules (identity), a temporal (historical) and a relational dimension. By embracing sociopetal patterns, workplaces can enhance interaction and cohesion among employees. While open and flexible spaces facilitate diverse interactions and foster serendipity, effective interaction design is essential to orchestrate meaningful interactions.

### **c. Organisational Location Policies: Towards Decentralisation and Integration**

The dynamics of interaction in both physical and virtual work environments is intricately linked with the urban context (Duffy, 2012). The location of workplaces

holds significant implications for both organisational dynamics and urban development. While economic factors and logistical concerns often dictate location choices, organisations have a profound impact on city models and community life. Although traditionally seen as separate entities, there is a growing recognition of the symbiotic relationship between organisations and their urban environment. By selecting locations that prioritise connectivity and integration with the surrounding community, organisations may foster collaboration capability. Embracing decentralisation in favour of centralised office districts aligns with the principles of the 15-minute city, facilitating closer ties between organisations and their local environments. This shift requires a re-evaluation of outdated models and a reimagining of workplace locations to maximise the alignment of the organisational purposes and the local impact, when possible.

**Finding 14: Decentralisation Policies and Integration in the Neighbourhood**

Organisational location choices significantly impact both urban development and collaboration dynamics, highlighting the growing importance of integrating workplaces with their surrounding communities for enhanced collaboration capability.

#### **4.4. Conclusions and Proposal for a Framework for Change**

To conclude, the semi-structured interviews offered valuable insights into the role organisations can play in cultivating collaboration capability. Learning to collaborate is a continuous and evolving journey that challenges established cultures, values and assumptions. Organisations must undergo a process of unlearning and implement operational, tactical and strategic changes simultaneously, even though the outcomes may manifest over different timeframes (see Figure 4.11).

To summarise, the main findings are as follows. At the operational level, which involves changes in practices and processes within a subsystem over the short term, organisations may undertake the following key actions:

- Value individual life stories (e.g., childhood interest, family background, unique skills) as strategic assets in recruitment processes.
- Incorporate collaboration skills (including knowledge about nonviolent communication and facilitation methods) into personalised development plans.
- Invest time strategically for collaboration, allowing flexibility to accommodate spontaneity and serendipitous moments.

- Nurture attention and prioritise face-to-face meetings for fostering meaningful relationships and empathy.
- Implement community listening tools across all project phases to gain deeper insights into the ecosystem.
- Encourage a culture of open questioning, valuing understanding over consensus.
- Introduce facilitated self-awareness routines.
- Foster shared epistemologies and simplify language for effective communication.
- Customise interaction processes to specific contexts, designing dialogue intentionally as an exploratory and creative endeavour and accepting uncertainty in achieving clear outcomes.
- Reconsider architectural approaches to prioritise emotional well-being. Integrate nature into workplace design and incorporate outdoor activities to enhance cognitive, emotional, and social functions.

At the tactical level, which entails structural changes over a mid-term horizon (5-10 years), affecting leadership, governance models, organisational architecture and strategies, organisations may:

- Enhance diversity in demographic and knowledge terms through revised recruitment policies and relational strategies.
- Reframe leadership roles to empower rather than sustain power, incorporating functions like intermediary, facilitator, and coach.
- Implement coaching and training programs to foster power-awareness and a culture of power sharing.
- Encourage open, constructive dialogue based on nonviolent communication principles.
- Design interaction contexts to achieve balanced power relations, emphasising trust and cohesion, including spatial and temporal considerations as well as effective verbal and non-verbal communication.
- Conduct comprehensive ecosystem analyses to identify power relationships and overlooked stakeholders.
- Transparently address and document conflict sources, engaging in explicit discussions about restrictions and boundaries and using effective mediation techniques.
- Cultivate shared ecologies, as trust and diversity reservoirs.



- Promote humour and celebrate achievements to alleviate tensions and enhance empathy.

Finally, at the strategic level, encompassing changes that impact culture and broader societal systems over the long-term, organisations may:

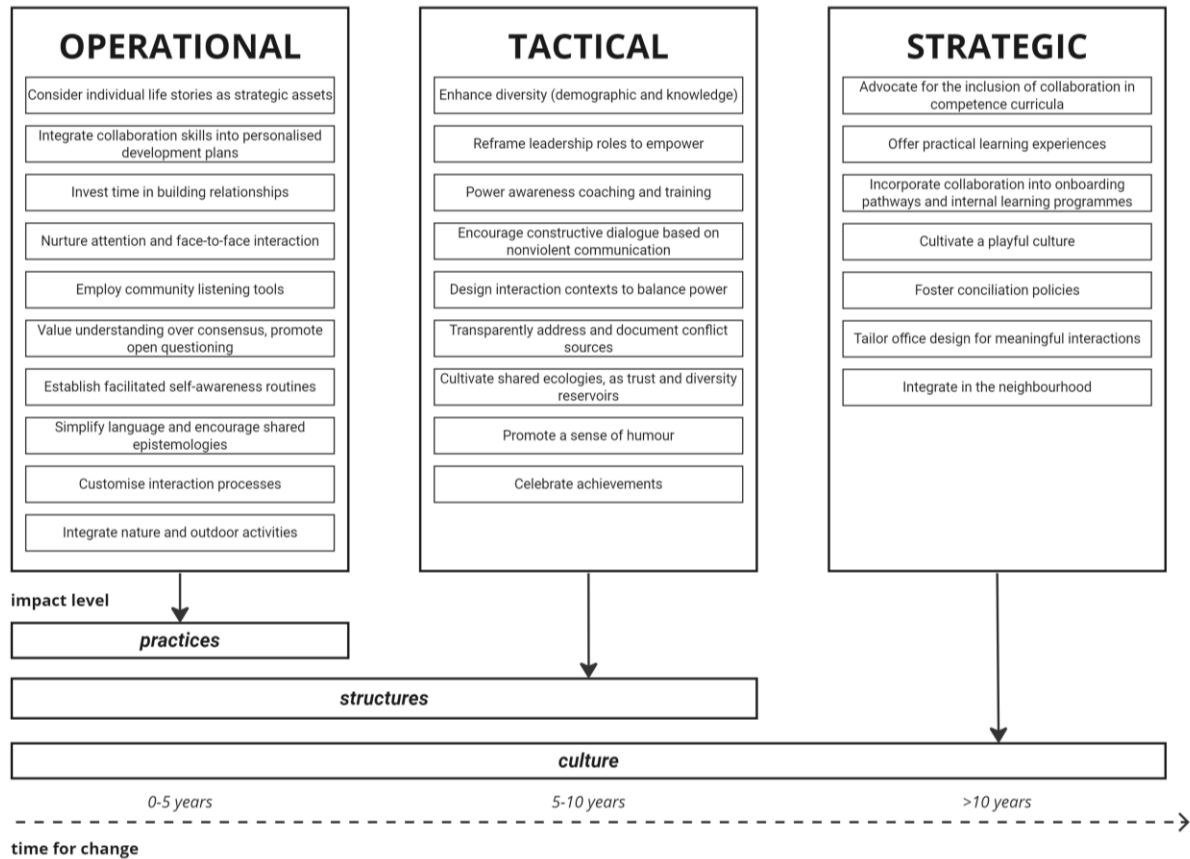
- Advocate for the inclusion of collaboration competence in curricula.
- Offer practical learning experiences like internships in collaborative settings.
- Incorporate collaboration into onboarding pathways and internal training programs.
- Cultivate a playful culture with temporary, voluntary activities to unlock creativity and build relationships.
- Foster conciliation policies.
- Tailor workplace design for meaningful interactions among individuals (including flexible and sociopetal configurations).
- Integrate the office and its activities with the neighbourhood it is located in.

Table 4.2. Summary of the strategic changes to cultivate collaboration capability in organisational settings

Transition level	Focus	Time Scale	Dimension	Strategies for change
Operational			Personnel	Value individual life stories as strategic assets in recruitment policies Incorporate collaboration skills into personalised development plans
			Resources	Investing time for collaboration, allowing flexibility, spontaneity and serendipity Reconsider architectural approaches to prioritise well-being. Introduce nature
	Practices	Short-term (0-5y)	Operations	Nurture attention and prioritise face-to-face meetings Implement community listening tools to gain deeper insights into the ecosystem Introduce facilitated self-awareness routines Incorporate outdoor activities to enhance cognitive, emotional and social functions.
			Communication	Encourage open questioning Foster shared epistemologies and simplify language Customise interaction processes to specific contexts, designing dialogue as an exploratory and creative endeavour and accepting uncertainty
Tactical			Structure/Governance	Cultivate shared ecologies, as trust and diversity reservoirs Design interaction contexts to achieve balanced power relations
	Structures	Mid-term (5-10 y)	Strategy	Enhance diversity in demographic and knowledge terms Implement coaching/training programmes to foster power-awareness and a culture of power-sharing Conduct detailed ecosystem analyses to identify power relationships and overlooked stakeholders Transparently address and document conflict sources, engaging in explicit discussions about restrictions and boundaries and using effective mediation techniques
			Leadership	Reframe leadership roles to empower rather than sustaining power, incorporating functions such as intermediary, coach and facilitator Encourage open and constructive dialogue based on nonviolent communication Promote a sense of humour and celebrate achievements
			Organisational culture	Incorporate collaboration into onboarding pathways and internal training programmes Tailor workplace design for meaningful interactions Foster conciliation policies Cultivate a playful culture with temporary voluntary activities to unlock creativity and build relationships
Strategic	Culture	Long-term (30y)	Inter-organisational	
			Ecosystem	Offer practical learning experiences like internships and internal training programmes
			Environment	Advocate for the inclusion of collaboration competence in curricula Integrate the office and its activities within the neighbourhood it is located in

Source: Own work

This exploratory interview study, enriched with novel theoretical insights, contributes to the theoretical framework by providing practical strategies that organisations can undertake to cultivate collaboration and improve their collaborative processes. Rather than providing a universal solution, the proposed framework (summarised in Table 4.2 and depicted in Figure 4.11) introduces a fresh approach to encourage organisations to review their current models and continually improve their collaboration capability.



**Figure 4.11.** Framework 1: Strategic changes to cultivate collaboration capability at the organisational level

Source: Own work

## 5. Results from a Multiple Case Study

Based on interviews with key informants, the previous chapter identified significant strategies influencing collaboration capability from an organisational perspective. This chapter aims to further explore the design factors of in-person learning environments conducive to cultivating collaboration capability, utilising a multiple case study. The cases encompass three in-person learning environments specifically designed to enhance collaboration capability, offering valuable insights across different levels:

- Within a single organisation, exemplified by an interdisciplinary seminar programme at a Spanish public university (Case study A);
- Within a multi-stakeholder platform, illustrated by a summer course aimed at connecting Spanish cities involved in the European Mission for climate-neutral cities (Case study B);
- Within an ecosystem, showcased by an annual meeting organised by a multi-stakeholder network born during the COVID-19 lockdown (Case study C).

Across each case, the author's involvement has varied, with direct participation in the design team for Case A and external observation for Cases B and C. Different methods and sources have been employed for data collection, including direct and participant observation, document analysis and interviews. To facilitate cross-case analysis, a uniform structure has been adopted for all cases, encompassing:

- Case study overview;
- Methods and sources employed for primary data collection;
- Context, including the transition context, the significance of collaboration within it, the organisational context and the case's origin and inception;
- Results, with particular emphasis on governance, spatial and temporal design, interaction methods and the intermediary role;
- Evidence demonstrating the impact on collaboration capability;
- Conclusions drawn from the case study.
- Following the descriptions, the final subsection consolidates the contributions to the research derived from this multi-case study.



## **5.1. Case Study A: An Interdisciplinary Seminar Programme at a Public University**

### **5.1.1. Overview of Case Study A**

Case study A, a single case study, was chosen for its extensive timeframe of four years and its broad institutional scope, which included an organisational change strategy. This study focuses on analysing a seminar programme at a Spanish public university, the Universidad Politécnica de Madrid (UPM), seeking at strengthening interdisciplinary research and collaboration among various stakeholders as a means to increase the institution's research impact on SDGs. This initiative was part of a long-term institutional strategy supported by both governing bodies and renowned professors and researchers within this university, combining elements of top-down and bottom-up approaches. Running from 2018 to

2022, the strategy led to the creation of a new academic structure: the interdisciplinary research communities.

Over its duration, the programme conducted 28 sessions across six series (see Appendix D, Table D5), encompassing diverse formats such as institutional declarations, workshops, and inspiring conversations with experts from academia, private, public and civil sectors. With over 2,000 participants (see Table D5), 80% of whom were from the internal research community, the project's longevity allows for a longitudinal analysis of its outcomes. Moreover, its varied formats offer valuable insights into the design factors necessary for fostering a learning environment conducive to collaboration capability, contributing to the achievement of the research objectives.

### **5.1.2. Methods and Sources for Primary Data Collection in Case A**

Case A was examined using an action case methodology, a hybrid approach combining aspects of traditional case study, which emphasises observation, understanding and interpretation, with action research, which focuses on producing changes in practice (Braa & Vidgen, 1999). In the action case framework, researchers are not merely observers; instead, they actively engage in co-creating “actionable scientific knowledge” (Coughlan & Coughlan, 2002). Consequently, the author played an active role in designing, managing and evaluating the programme, providing her with access to confidential data and firsthand observation of the process. The data collection phase spanned from September 2018 to May 2023. During this period, the author was engaged in participant observation, attending meetings of the Steering Group, the Design and Management Team and the Evaluation Team.

The analysis incorporated a diverse range of information sources, as outlined in Appendix D. These sources included crucial documents related to the case (Table D2) and to other associated initiatives (Table D3), including written and recorded materials from organised activities and meta-evaluation materials like annual reports. Additional data collection methods encompassed surveys (see Table D10 and Table D11 for the questions and Table D4 for the results) and focus groups, as well as semi-conducted interviews (see Table D17 for the guideline), resulting in:

- An anonymous online survey at the conclusion of each session to measure participants' satisfaction in terms of interest, usefulness, and effectiveness in

achieving the programme's goal of fostering a more collaborative research culture.

- An online survey titled “The Thermometer of Interdisciplinarity” (see Table D11) conducted in Seminars 1, 2 and 3 to understand the research community's perception of the shift towards collaboration, assessing “readiness for change”. This survey received 271 responses (>10% of the research community), with 48.8% from women.
- At least 12 informal conversations with UPM professors to identify relevant interdisciplinary topics aligned with cross-cutting challenges related to the SDGs.
- Eight interviews conducted in March 2021 with coordinators and facilitators of eight recently established research communities to understand the initial collaboration capability within each community and the varied forms of collaboration and governance developed.
- A focus group organised in December 2021 involving 42 participants (coordinators, facilitators, interdisciplinary community members and representatives from the Vice-Rector's Office for Research and Innovation) to establish a common understanding of the strengths and obstacles of the collaborative model within the university, defining strategies for improvement and evolution.
- Five focus groups conducted between February and June 2022 with facilitators of 12 research communities aimed at co-creating a model for the creation, management and operation of interdisciplinary communities.

### 5.1.3. Case A Context

#### a. Collaboration for Sustainability in Higher Education Institutions

The common framework established by the SDGs, and particularly SDG 17, has proven to be a driving force for collaboration in higher education, encouraging universities to forge novel partnerships with government, industry, and the community in both research and education (SDSN Australia/Pacific, 2017; United Nations. General Assembly, 2015). Simultaneously, they emphasise the cultivation of multi-, trans- and interdisciplinarity (refer to section 2.1 for a definition of these related concepts), as endorsed by the European University Association (2021) and the International Council for Science (2017).

Higher education institutions (HEI) worldwide are expected to play a role in sustainability transitions through their interconnected missions —teaching,

research and community engagement—, and their campus operations (Cortese, 2003; Filho et al., 2017; Lozano et al., 2015; Trencher, Yarime, et al., 2014). As a consequence, certain HEIs are initiating significant changes to make transformative contributions to sustainability and collaborate with other stakeholders (Lumbreras et al., 2023; Purcell & Haddock-Fraser, 2023).

In Teaching, there is increasing momentum around student-staff partnerships,<sup>20</sup> driven by the aim of fostering a more egalitarian culture (Matthews et al., 2019). These partnerships are a “reciprocal process through which all participants have the opportunity to contribute equally, although not necessarily in the same ways, to curricular or pedagogical conceptualization, decision-making, implementation, investigation, or analysis” (Cook-Sather et al., 2014, pp. 6–7). Such collaborations extend beyond traditional teaching, encompassing research activities and institutional quality enhancement (Kligyte et al., 2021). Benefits include increased engagement and awareness (Felten et al., 2014), as well as a cultural shift towards collaboration and inclusivity (Matthews et al., 2018). However, demonstrating institutional impacts remains challenging due to the difficulties of scaling up and sustaining these initiatives in the long term (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017).

In research, interdisciplinary collaboration is increasingly common, particularly among sustainability-focused researchers. Scholars advocate for the coexistence of disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches to enhance HEI’s scientific contribution to sustainability challenges (Bursztyrn & Drummond, 2014). Cross-cutting structures like interdisciplinary research centres are proposed as a means to build a new layer of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research on top of existing disciplines (Bolger, 2021a). However, assuming that researchers inherently possess the skills to collaborate in interdisciplinary projects often underestimates the challenges involved in establishing common epistemological frameworks (Freeth & Caniglia, 2020). Universities face the task of providing adequate support for interdisciplinary research within traditional academic structures and disciplines. Effective interdisciplinary research requires sustained communication, appropriate incentives, time, skilled facilitators and seed funding for initial and risky exploration (Bolger, 2021b; Freeth & Caniglia, 2020).

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<sup>20</sup> By staff, we mean individuals in academic and non-academic roles, including faculty, researchers and other professionals. The movement “Students as partners” is born as a reaction to the rhetoric of ‘students as consumers’, cultivated in the context of increasing neoliberalisation of higher education (Matthews et al., 2018).



Proximity and shared physical spaces,<sup>21</sup> are deemed critical to overcoming epistemological differences and enhancing collaboration capabilities.

Traditionally, community engagement in HEI focused on market and technological aspects, which has been critiqued by several authors (Cuesta-Claros et al., 2021; Jarvis, 2001; Trencher, Yarime, et al., 2014). Conversely, Trencher et al. (2014) advocate for universities as collaborators in sustainability transitions, partnering with societal actors to co-create solutions.<sup>22</sup> These partnerships often involve collaborations with municipalities to address local and regional challenges while enhancing research agendas (Stephens & Graham, 2010; Trencher, Bai, et al., 2014; Yarime et al., 2012). Varying intensities of co-creation can be distinguished, from co-producing knowledge to transforming society (Trencher et al., 2017). Since collaboration between HEIs and external stakeholders is often transactional (refer to section 3.2 for a definition),<sup>23</sup> instances of genuine co-creation processes remain relatively rare (Moreno-Serna, Sánchez-Chaparro, et al., 2020). For instance, living labs involve the collaborative development of sustainable technologies and services, fostering applied research in real-world settings (König & Evans, 2013). Some initiatives even treat university campuses as miniature communities, focusing on the co-creation of institutional strategies across academic and operational domains (Purcell et al., 2019).

However, universities face various barriers to collaboration, similar to those explained in section 3.1.2 for the public sector, encompassing cultural, motivational, economic and organisational dimensions. The emphasis on individual learning and competition within higher education often results in professionals lacking cooperative skills (Cortese, 2003). Additionally, universities'

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<sup>21</sup> In the literature, these shared physical spaces are known as “co-creation spaces” or “trading zones.” As an example, Discovery Park at Purdue University is a complex of facilities which provides an open and collaborative research environment to co-create solutions for sustainable development challenges, especially those related to global health, global security and defence, sustainable energy, water and food systems. Academic disciplines such as science, technology, engineering, mathematics, social sciences and digital solutions converge in this space, in collaboration with policy makers and business leaders.

<sup>22</sup> The concept of universities serving as co-creators of sustainable development solutions has been termed the “transformative university” (Trencher, Yarime, et al., 2014). Cuesta-Claros et al. (2021) conducted an interesting literature review exploring various university models, defining their role in society.

<sup>23</sup> Transactional relationships between HEIs and other social agents involve a bilateral exchange where the HEI provides a service such as studies, reports, methodology designs in exchange of a compensation.

hierarchical and conservative nature, coupled with entrenched Cartesian and Newtonian paradigms, reinforces specialisation and incrementalism, hindering interdisciplinary collaboration (Bijl-Brouwer & Malcolm, 2020; Lozano et al., 2013). Silos further impede HEIs from promptly addressing societal needs<sup>24</sup> (Lozano et al., 2015; Stephens et al., 2008; United Nations, 2015a). Academic career incentives favour specialisation over interdisciplinary collaboration (Bolger, 2021a), while research efforts prioritise publishing in peer-reviewed journals, often with limited impact<sup>25</sup> (Biswas & Kirchherr, 2015) and neglecting dissemination and practical application (Thoilliez & Valle, 2015). Economic barriers, including reduced public funding and financial dependence on private resources, have compelled HEIs to accept conditions imposed by funders,<sup>26</sup> leading to what Jarvis (2001) terms “servile collaboration,” with a loss of control over knowledge production. The commodification of HEIs has further transformed the roles of professors and researchers into managers, reducing their dedication to traditional tasks like studying or preparing lectures (Ordine, 2013) and limiting their energy for building long-term relationships and fostering collaboration (Bolger, 2021a).

In summary, collaborative efforts within HEIs are increasing, yet, universities still face numerous barriers that make collaboration a demanding and still insufficiently acknowledged endeavour. These challenges impede the sector's ability to engage in innovative and transformative collaboration, limiting its potential contribution to the SDGs (Lozano et al., 2015).

#### **b. Organisational Context: Universidad Politécnica de Madrid**

UPM is a medium-sized public university in Spain's capital, founded in 1971 by consolidating several technical education centres, most with over a century of history. Its main objectives, as per its Statutes (please refer to Appendix D, Table D1, for all the sources used to describe the organisational context), include the creation, development, transmission and critique of science, technology and

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<sup>24</sup> According to the *Global Sustainable Development Report* developed by the United Nations (2015a), there is typically a gap of at least eighty years between the scientific identification of environmental issues and causes and the implementation of effective policy actions to mitigate harm.

<sup>25</sup> Biswas and Kirchherr (2015) estimated that “an average paper in a peer-reviewed journal is read completely by no more than 10 people” (p. 2).

<sup>26</sup> It is common for the private funder to request exclusive exploitation rights to the results of the research - intellectual property and patent rights - and for contracts to include confidentiality clauses.

culture. Currently, the UPM comprises 17 faculties, 23 research centres and 5 research institutes, spread across four campuses. With approximately 40,000 members in its academic community, including students, researchers, lecturers and staff<sup>27</sup>, UPM offers a wide range of academic programmes<sup>28</sup> and boasts a robust research capacity, with over 200 research groups and a strong record in patents and publications.

In recent years, the UPM has demonstrated its commitment to SDGs through various initiatives as a result of the efforts of both the governing bodies and the academic community. The SDG Seminar programme, the case under study, served as a platform to foster collaboration between these top-down and bottom-up sustainability initiatives.

### **c. SDG Seminars: Origin and Inception**

In early 2018, the Vice-Rector for Research, Innovation and Doctorate at the UPM recognized the need for increased interdisciplinary collaboration among professors and researchers across UPM faculties. This initiative was driven by the anticipation of shifts<sup>29</sup> in European research and innovation policies towards multidisciplinary teams and collaboration with non-academic entities. Following this vision, an internal call for proposals (please refer to Appendix D, Table D2 for this and other documents associated to the SDG Seminar programme) was launched in April 2018 with a budget of €60.000. The call sought three-year projects to foster interdisciplinary dialogue through a seminar programme. It emphasised the importance of showcasing UPM's contributions to Research, Development and Innovation (R&D&I), including its scientific structures, infrastructures and services, and selecting speakers based on their scientific and

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<sup>27</sup> The academic community gathers 34,039 bachelor's and master's degree students, 2,088 PhD students, more than 3,000 researchers and lecturers, and 1,761 staff members (see "La UPM en cifras" in Appendix D, Table D1).

<sup>28</sup> UPM offers Additionally, the university provides a comprehensive academic portfolio, consisting of 55 Bachelor's degrees, 95 Master's degrees, and 44 PhD programs, covering a wide range of technical disciplines, including Engineering (Aeronautical and Space, Agronomy, Civil, Industrial, Marine, Organisational, etc.) as well as programs in Architecture and Physical Education (see "La UPM en cifras" in Appendix D, Table D1).

<sup>29</sup> This vision was validated by subsequent EU policies, including economist Mariana Mazzucato's (2018, 2019) studies on mission-oriented innovation and the Horizon Europe framework programme (European Commission., 2021).

technological excellence. Inclusivity across the entire academic community was also prioritised.

A group of eight professors, each with a distinguished scientific career and expertise in different fields,<sup>30</sup> collaborated on a proposal (refer to Appendix D, Table D2). Half of them led prominent UPM research centres (CEIGRAM, CBGP, IFN, itdUPM), while the other half coordinated UPM's involvement in major European research initiatives such as the Knowledge and Innovation Communities of the European Institute of Technology.<sup>31</sup> Their proposal stood out for integrating the SDGs as a framework for the Seminars, recognising sustainability challenges as wicked problems requiring interdisciplinary answers. By leveraging SDGs, they aimed to foster connections between researchers and topics. Additionally, they embraced a theory of change inspired by the 2030 Agenda, envisioning that diversified and interconnected research would expedite learning and drive transformation towards sustainability (EIT Climate-KIC, 2018). Their objective was to cultivate an interdisciplinary knowledge community at UPM by directing research efforts towards sustainability issues, aligning with the growing expectation for universities to actively contribute to SDGs across all missions (International Council for Science, 2017; Mazzucato, 2018; SDSN Australia/Pacific, 2017).

Their proposal, “UPM Seminars: Technology and Innovation for the SDGs” (from now on, SDG Seminars) was approved by the Vice-Rector's Office for Research in July 2018. The main design principles included collaborative selection of topics, formats, and speakers, sessions lasting 1.5 to 2 hours during lunchtime, interactive audience participation, and seven types of seminars serving different purposes: working sessions for topic selection and speaker input, keynote speeches by prominent researchers, debates among UPM units and with external and internal actors, presentations of UPM research lines and results, discussions with societal

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<sup>30</sup> The promoters' fields included Agronomy, Biotechnology, Computer Science, Health Information Systems, Geological and Mining Engineering, Nuclear Engineering, Open Science, and Organisational Engineering.

<sup>31</sup> The European Institute of Technology (EIT) created the Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KIC) to boost innovation in Europe, stimulate economic growth, generate employment opportunities, and nurture the entrepreneurs of the future. The KICs are partnerships that bring together businesses, research centres and universities. They allow the development of innovative products and services in areas such as climate change or healthy living, the creation of new businesses and entrepreneurial training. Further information at: <https://eit.europa.eu/global-challenges/knowledge-and-innovation-communities>.

actors, workshops for interdisciplinary projects, and sessions to publicise available resources and services (refer to Table D6 for a detailed description of each type). These diverse formats aim to promote dialogue, share cutting-edge research, address societal challenges, and facilitate interdisciplinary collaboration across different areas of expertise within the university. Sessions were recorded, and materials were shared online, with core design principles maintained and adjustments made based on context and feedback throughout the three-year implementation period.

#### **5.1.4. Case A Results**

The following subsections will delve into the main results of the programme, offering inspiring insights into how learning to collaborate unfolds within an academic setting.

##### **a. Collaborative Governance and Design**

The governance strategy, inspired by scholars like Brinkhurst et al. (2011), emphasised active intrapreneurship by faculty and staff as the key to long-term change in HEIs. The programme proposed a collaborative governance model, consisting of:

- A steering group, including the Vice-rector and the eight professors who promoted the proposal, meeting every two or three months and tasked with managing institutional relations and designing the programme strategy.
- An enabling node featuring representatives from diverse research structures, and playing a crucial role in providing legitimacy and fostering a safe and collaborative environment.
- A technical team, responsible for coordinating activities, managing speakers, liaising with key UPM units, and producing communication and systematisation materials.

The broader academic community played a significant role in selecting cross-cutting topics, evaluating the programme, and suggesting new methodologies and activities. Professors with expertise in selected topics contributed to seminar design, ensuring rigorous interdisciplinary discussion. They particularly ensured a solid foundation for the thematic focus, proposing meaningful questions to be addressed, and suggesting speakers.

The collaborative governance model introduced several challenges. Firstly, there was the delicate task of managing participants' expectations and establishing a

shared vision for the potential of this collaborative space, all while ensuring alignment with the programme's overarching objectives. A crucial aspect involved ensuring that every voice was heard and their contributions integrated into the programme's roadmap, a challenging balance between inclusivity and maintaining focus. Secondly, the team grappled with the challenge of achieving symmetry among disciplines, with each researcher often feeling their own field held greater importance. Achieving interdisciplinary dialogue without compromising the rigour and depth of discussions was also a challenge. Lastly, the programme faced a hurdle rooted in a linear and hierarchical view of change processes, leaving little room for emergent dynamics. This manifested in conflicts when participants' proposals deviated from the institutionally predefined path. However, both the team and the professors in the steering group agreed that adopting this governance model was essential for establishing legitimacy, fostering a shared responsibility and building momentum for change toward collaboration.

#### **b. Interaction Methods**

The case employed a learning-by-doing dialogue-based approach to change inspired by Ford and Ford (1995) to foster collaboration capability among faculty and researchers. This approach aimed to create a supportive environment through dialogic conversations, focusing on exploring how different fields contribute to SDGs and identifying opportunities for collaboration.

A seminar programme was deemed an appropriate tool to enhance collaboration within academic contexts, as a traditional space for interaction, participation, collective knowledge construction and communication in HEIs (Bossdorf et al., 2010; Chalvatzis & Ormosi, 2021; Neugebauer et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2017). By framing seminars as spaces of "conversations for change," the case sought to highlight their potential for facilitating cultural transformation and collaboration. This decision was motivated by the alignment between the values and practices inherent in the traditional seminar format, including interdisciplinary dialogue, symmetry and the pursuit for collaborative solutions (Herrán, 2011), and the desired change towards enhancing collaboration capability. The design was also influenced by Priya Parker's (2018) concept of gathering as a relational challenge rather than a merely logistical, as conventionally perceived.

Thus, the programme placed special emphasis on the careful design of interaction spaces, aligning with the role attributed to dialogue in section 4.1.5 as a means of learning and enhancing collaboration capability.

*A Typology of Conversations for Change*

With the aim of designing an innovative, diverse and stimulating space of conversations for change, five conversation types (see Appendix D, Table D7) were meticulously crafted, based on the model developed by Ford and Ford (1995) and considering the proposal:

- Opening conversations, held at the beginning of each academic course to showcase institutional support and establish a vision for change;
- Conversations for Connection, functioning as marketplaces of initiatives to promote mutual understanding across disciplines;
- Inspirational Conversations, expanding perspectives and fostering dialogue between scientists and practitioners;
- Conversations for Action, facilitating co-creation workshops to concretize collective actions towards sustainability; and
- Conversations for Closure, held at the conclusion of specific stages to summarise outcomes and discuss continuity and opportunities for ongoing efforts.

The dialogue-based change process was structured around consecutive series of conversations: initiative, connection, inspirational, action and closure. Two types of series were implemented: opening and thematic. The opening series focused on introducing researchers to the SDGs and establishing a common understanding of the HEIs' role in sustainability, while thematic series delved into specific SDG-related topics to foster interdisciplinary connections and identify potential leaders that could drive the development of interdisciplinary research and knowledge communities. The series topics were selected based on the interests expressed by faculty and researchers during the opening series, namely: energy transition and climate change, circular economy, sustainable natural resource management, and sustainable cities. Sessions were live-streamed, recorded, and shared on Youtube, excluding the workshops, with summaries emailed to participants to maintain engagement and a cohesive thread connecting the various sessions and seminar series (please refer to Appendix D, Table D2, to access the recorded and written materials).

From October 2018 to March 2020, the program operated as planned, organising a total of one opening series and three thematic series, including two initiative conversations, ten conversations for understanding (both for connection and

inspiration), three conversations for action and a closure conversation (refer to Figure D2 in Appendix D for a visual representation of the conversation flow).

Due to the COVID-19 lockdown, interaction methods were adapted to virtual platforms, employing Zoom Seminars and Meetings in seven virtual sessions from November 2020 to June 2021. In Zoom Seminars, panellists had camera and microphone privileges, while the audience could only engage through written questions in the chat or Q&A section. However, the support team enabled microphone access for participants with relevant questions, fostering a warmer interaction. Conversely, in Zoom Meetings, there was no distinction between panellists and participants, allowing up to fifty to one hundred active participants with camera and video access, depending on the licence. Rules were set to ensure orderly participation and prevent interruptions.

In 2022, the programme transitioned to autonomous organisation by the research community, no longer relying on support from the facilitation team. A guideline was developed to aid researchers in independently designing, implementing and evaluating seminars (please, see Appendix E for a link the guideline). However, observations indicated a decrease in focus on interaction design and a diversity of formats serving different purposes.

### *The Quality of Interaction*

The quality of interaction was linked to creating an environment conducive to exchanging ideas and building relationships, engaging a diverse audience, and establishing a cohesive narrative for continuity.

Space for exchange between the speakers and the audience were always included in the design of the sessions, whatever the type of conversation, albeit with different levels of interaction (see Appendix D, Table D8). Various interaction strategies were employed, including question time, short speeches, group dynamics, surveys and an app for question submission and voting. During inspirational sessions, the level of interaction remained moderate to low and the exchange was bidirectional, involving questions, responses and remarks between speakers and participants for at least 15 out of the 90 minutes of the session. From the start of the session, participants were encouraged to submit their questions and vote the ones posted by other participants via Sli.do app<sup>32</sup> that they accessed

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<sup>32</sup> This app is available at [slido.com](https://www.slido.com).



from their mobile phones, tablets or laptops. Connection sessions had higher interaction levels, featuring pitches by researchers, group activities and networking coffee space. The most interactive were the action conversations, functioning as workshops for co-creating future planning towards a sustainable university, with efforts made to ensure diversity,<sup>33</sup> equal participation and symmetry in interaction. Particular attention was placed at the physical layout and the preparation of the sessions with the moderators and facilitators. However, the interaction outcomes extended beyond the seminar room, with structured discussions serving as catalysts for informal dialogues, fostering new relationships and collaboration capabilities in spaces like lobbies and cafeterias close to the venue.

The design prioritised diversity, recognising it as a fundamental strategy for cultivating collaboration capability, as elucidated in Chapter 4. Key strategies aligned with the principle of inclusivity and comprised:

- An itinerary approach covering different faculties and campuses, with venues strategically chosen to involve researchers closely linked with session themes;
- Distributed communication through UPM's departments and influential word-of-mouth;
- Real-time monitoring mechanisms for informed decision-making, and
- Live streaming sessions for broader dissemination, demonstrating significant impact with videos garnering over 500 views within days of publication and proving to be a vital experience for ensuring the programme's viability during the COVID-19 lockdown.

The program saw significant and diverse participation, engaging nearly 2000 individuals, with 80% from UPM's academic community, nearly half of whom were women—a substantial proportion especially given that women represent only 24.7% of the UPM's research community. Notably, 140 research groups, representing about 67% of UPM's research groups were involved, demonstrating widespread engagement across disciplines, campuses, faculties and research centres. The breakdown of participants by community underscores the percentage representation of professors (41.3%) and researchers (25.3%) across different categories within the institution, as well as students (16.3%) and staff (2.5%), who were not initially targeted (refer to the participation figures in Appendix D, Table

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<sup>33</sup> Including researchers from different positions, university staff, PhD students and managers.

D9). The initiative also attracted external participants, including faculty and researchers from other universities, public servants and private sector representatives. Additionally, over 40 distinguished individuals from various sectors and more than 60 members of the academic community, including PhD students, faculty and researchers at different academic positions, participated as panellists in the dialogues.

In terms of efficacy, four aspects are worth highlighting:

- Punctuality: Sessions consistently adhered to strict timeframes, running from 90 to 120 minutes, and ending promptly to accommodate participants' schedules.
- Visual engagement: Utilisation of visual tools, such as maps illustrating connections between research areas and SDGs (see Appendix D, Figure D3 for an illustration), promoted interdisciplinary perspectives and stimulated collaborative initiatives.
- Adaptive<sup>34</sup> approach: Sessions were tailored based on past outcomes and contextual factors, such as policy changes or funding opportunities; continuous evaluation through post-session surveys allowed for participant feedback and suggestions.
- Communication strategy: A dynamic communication plan ensured ongoing engagement and facilitated participation of new individuals throughout the process.

Maintaining efficacy relied on a balanced blend of repetition —establishing a ritual— and adaptability, where coherence was paramount. This coherence was fostered through a visual identity and the development of a cohesive narrative, referred to as the “change message” within Armenakis and Harris (2002) readiness for change framework, which evolved with each interaction. To reinforce this narrative and ensure the legitimacy of the process, a UPM representative, such as a Vice-Rector or school dean, was present at every session.

### **c. Spatial and Temporal Context**

The programme spanned 2.5 years with official support from the Vice-Rector's Office for Research. This timeframe was deemed appropriate for demonstrating an impact on collaboration capabilities, providing ample time to cultivate regular

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<sup>34</sup> The assessment framework was based on “developmental evaluation” (Gamble, 2008; Patton, 1994, 2010).

meeting practices and establish trustworthy relationships. Sustaining interest and active participation posed challenges, addressed by establishing a structured temporal framework —sessions were held either once a month or every two weeks, consistently at the same time— to create a ritual. Rituals are recognised for fostering meaningful collaboration in professional, political and community life (Sennett, 2012). The notion of ritual enriches the discussion on time in section 4.1.4, reinforcing the importance of continuous processes and repetition —referred to as “insistentism” by one interviewee— in establishing trust, a critical component of collaboration capability.

To facilitate participation, sessions were strategically scheduled during lunchtime (outside of class hours) and diverse venues across faculties and campuses were carefully selected. Both time and location were discussed in Chapter 4 as factors influencing trust and power dynamics. This approach sought to encourage the engagement of researchers from different disciplines, involve all faculties and managers, and mitigate inequalities between central and peripheral campuses.

Despite the changing venues, two design factors contributed to a sense of unity and ritualistic effect: decorative elements (e.g., a SDG wheel and plants) and a consistent session structure, including a short institutional opening, participation guidelines, dedicated space for dialogues in various formats, question and answer dynamics, and a concluding satisfaction survey.

However, spatial challenges included ensuring broad participation in smaller faculties or peripheral campuses and a lack of suitable spaces for large group dialogues (please see Appendix D, Figure D1 for illustrations). The observation highlighted hierarchical patterns in UPM spaces, which typically segregate knowledge holders and learners. Traditional spaces, characterised by dim lighting and poor accessibility conditions, hindered meaningful and inclusive discussions. These findings resonate with academic and practitioner literature that emphasises the significance of physical space for interaction quality, as previously described in section 4.3.3 (Hall, 1990; Löw, 2016; Parker, 2018). Figure 5.1 illustrates power imbalances in the room, evident in elements like platforms, floor-anchored chairs and microphones. This situation posed minimal issues for institutional or inspirational seminars, but it proved less conducive to connection and co-creation sessions.

To address this challenge, the support team creatively redesigned conversation spaces by experimenting with diverse furniture layouts and lighting schemes,

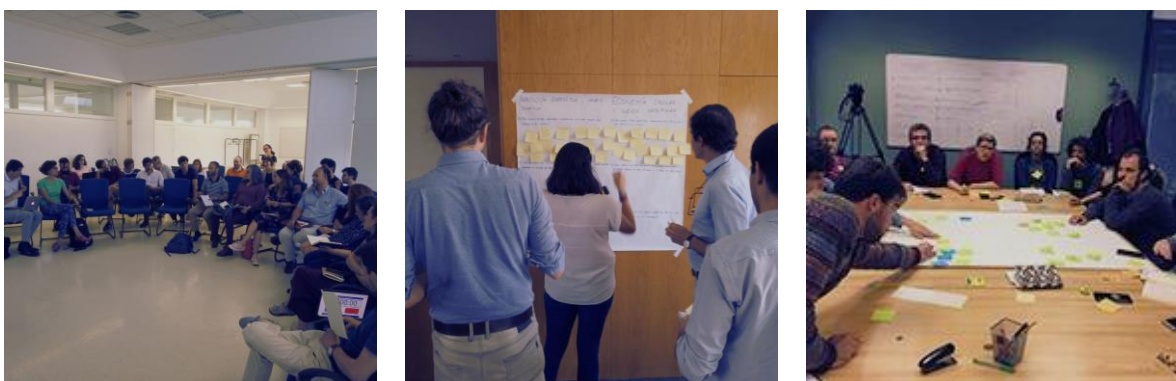
while also encouraging participants to freely move around the room (see examples in Figure 5.2).

Since prevailing academic spatial configurations often promote behaviours that does not encourage collaboration (Figure 5.1) and drawing on insights from section 4.3.3, this research advocates for HEIs to reconceptualise their architecture as relational spaces. Introducing sociopetal patterns in design, as proposed by Edward T. Hall (1990), could increase community interaction, trust, cohesion and thereby individual and organisational collaboration capability.



**Figure 5.1.** Photographs showcasing hierarchical patterns of gathering venues at UPM

Note. From left to right, Seminar 1: “R&I and the 2030 Agenda” (initiative conversation); Seminar 2: “Introducing the SDGs” (conversation for understanding); Seminar 6: “Research as a Key to Accelerate Energy Transition” (inspirational conversation). Source: SDG Seminars support team.



**Figure 5.2.** Photographs capturing the team's efforts towards horizontal space design

Note. From left to right, Seminar 10: “Towards a Circular UPM in 2030”; Seminar 15: “Decarbonizing UPM through nature and food systems” workshop space 1 and 2 (conversations for action). Source: SDG Seminars support team.

Finally, it is important to underscore the challenges faced when social distancing measures shifted seminars to a virtual format on Zoom. These challenges resonate with those emphasised by the interviewees in section 4.1.5, encompassing digital fatigue, reduced active participation, and the absence of spontaneous interactions

typically found in face-to-face gatherings. This lack of informal engagement affected relationship-building and the free exchange of ideas, impacting collaboration capability. To mitigate these challenges, the team paid close attention to contextual details, adjusting backgrounds and lighting, actively engaging participants through chat, polls, interactive tools and breakout room, and setting ground rules for camera usage (see examples in Figure 5.3). Additionally, to prevent technological issues, audio, video, and internet connections were thoroughly tested with all speakers in advance, who were convened at least 15 minutes before the start of the seminar.



**Figure 5.3.** Layout of the virtual sessions

*Note.* Images from the seminar “Healthy Cities: Exploring Urban Models that improve human health and mitigate climate change. Source: SDG Seminars support team.

#### d. The Intermediary Role

During the SDG Seminars, a team of two young researchers, one of whom was the author of this thesis, assumed the intermediary role. They were employed through UPM funds allocated from the internal call for proposals. Their responsibilities included:

- Strategically designing and managing the programme, maintaining focus and ensuring broad and diverse participation;
- Listening to the community and integrating diverse perspectives into the programme design and the proposals for institutional policies, mediating and translating between stakeholders and interests;
- Ensuring inclusivity by facilitating participation from a variety of voices;
- Care for the context design, including space, time, format, interaction methods, and overall atmosphere to foster meaningful engagement and collaboration;
- Building trust by creating safe and open dialogue spaces and being receptive to questions and suggestions;
- Collecting, analysing and integrating knowledge emerging from the process and communicating it in a transdisciplinary manner;

- Assessing and systematising the process and extraction of lessons learned for utility in other similar contexts.

Hence, their role was pivotal in facilitating learning to collaborate, ranging from improving programme practices (single-loop learning) to proposing changes in norms and structures (double-loop learning), and even influencing decision-making processes (triple-loop learning).

The main challenge faced by the intermediaries was earning the trust of the academic community and legitimising their roles, given their status as young researchers without doctoral degrees. However, their dedication, commitment and relational approach to the process quickly led to recognition of their essential contribution by the steering group. Over time, they gained further acknowledgement from the wider academic community and transitioned into a pivotal yet informal support hub, assisting researchers with various tasks such as identifying experts in specific fields.

Therefore, building on the need to redefine leadership roles outlined in section 4.2.1, this research aims to encourage the academic sector to reassess the roles necessary for adapting the university for the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and aligning with societal challenges. The facilitation role, currently absent in the academic career path, presents an opportunity to enhance both the educational and research experiences, fostering the development of more cohesive knowledge communities. The absence of this role has led to significant community fragmentation, while also burdening professors and researchers—who lack adequate incentives—with the responsibility of leading change towards interdisciplinarity.

### **5.1.5. Evidence of Impact on Collaboration Capability in Case A**

This case study highlights the potential for implementing large-scale and institutionalised processes to build collaboration capabilities within higher education institutions. Although precise and quantitative measurement of the extent of this enhancement was not the objective of the research due to time, institutional, and resource constraints, there are indications of improved collaboration capability within UPM and its communities. The assessment of readiness for collaboration and tangible evidence suggest positive changes, especially in organisational culture, procedures, and structures.

### *Readiness for collaboration*

The seminars provided a space for participants to listen and to deal with their own as well as others' thoughts and emotions arising from the transition to an interdisciplinary model. The programme introduced a self-awareness routine aimed at acknowledging and addressing both positive and negative emotions that could arise during the change process, serving as a tangible demonstration of the findings presented in section 4.1.2.

Specifically, attention to detail was crucial to creating a trusting and relaxed atmosphere, encouraging self-reflection and constructive discussion. Three sessions, held across different campuses, incorporated a number of self-reflection activities, including live surveys and focus groups to discuss participant feedback in real time.

These activities allowed the support team to assess perceptions of the collaborative model transition, understanding both individual and collective narratives. Drawing on the “readiness for change” framework by Armenakis et al. (1993), the evaluation considered cognitive, affective and behavioural components (Rafferty et al., 2013), focusing on five message<sup>35</sup> domains (Armenakis & Harris, 2002):

- Discrepancy: Perception of the need for change;
- Efficacy: Confidence in one's or the organisation's ability to succeed;
- Appropriateness: Agreement with the specific change proposed;
- Principal support: Institutional support in the form of resources and commitment;
- Personal valence: Individual self-interest.

Although the research does not aim to construct an assessment model for collaboration capability, the application of the “readiness for change” framework in this case study offers valuable insights that complement the literature reviewed in section 3.3.3.

Results revealed a positive attitude towards change, although some blocking narratives were identified that served as constructive feedback for refining the

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<sup>35</sup> When developing on this concept, Armenakis and Harris (2002) acknowledged the importance of communicating a consistent change message in the three phases of the change process (readiness, adoption and institutionalisation), providing the organisation with a framework for creating readiness and the motivation (positive or negative, support or resistance) to adopt and institutionalise the specific change.

change message. This section describes the results of this listening process to the research community.

During sessions 2 and 3, a life survey (see Appendix D, Table D4 for the survey results and reports) was conducted to gather insights from professors and researchers regarding their perceptions on interdisciplinary and multi-stakeholder collaboration, as well as the prevailing contextual factors affecting such collaboration. A total of 112 researchers participated in the survey, with 57.9% identifying as women. Participation was diverse in terms of age, discipline and professional position. Key findings indicated a perceived need for change (discrepancy) in the academic environment, with most respondents expressing a lack of encouragement for interdisciplinary and multi-stakeholder collaboration (78%). Additionally, among the narratives that emerged (refer to Table D12 in Appendix D for the figures):

- Knowledge dissemination in non-peer-reviewed formats is perceived as wasteful by 58%;
- Research groups exhibit a moderate level of diversity and hierarchy, as perceived by 68%;
- While interdisciplinary collaboration is increasing (according to 61%), it predominantly takes place among peers (in the opinion of the 64%)
- A significant majority of respondents (83%) do not assess the social and economic impact of their investigations.

During group discussions, participants were asked about the “appropriateness” of employing the SDGs as a beacon for change. Despite varying levels of familiarity with these goals and some uncertainty regarding their attainability, the majority of participants perceived the SDGs as highly relevant for their research endeavours, citing their ability to provide a common framework and language for interdisciplinary collaboration, to align individual incentives with organisational and global objectives and to enhance international visibility. Many agreed that leveraging the SDGs for collaboration within HEIs was appropriate, with some viewing them as a unique opportunity for this change to happen.

However, concerns were raised regarding the potential overuse of the term “sustainable development.” Confidence in UPM's capacity to collaborate and contribute to the SDGs (efficacy) varied, with some participants highlighting institutional challenges such as bureaucratic obstacles and limited support for collaboration. Despite scepticism and concerns about compromise in research



quality (some viewing collaboration as inefficient and superficial), participants generally embraced change towards interdisciplinary collaboration for sustainability with hope and enthusiasm.

Finally, significant organisational changes were deemed necessary to transform UPM into a truly collaborative university, including:

- Restructuring relationships within departments and research groups to reduce hierarchy and involve young researchers in decision-making processes.
- Enhancing communication between academic structures through changes in physical and virtual spaces to facilitate sharing knowledge, experiences, resources, capacities, contacts...
- Revising the incentive system to prioritise collaboration, quality and social impact in researchers' curricula, alongside increasing internal funding to encourage interdisciplinary collaboration.

In terms of behaviour, observation revealed a lack of participation culture, echoing the research of Escario-Chust et al. (2023) regarding southern Europe, as previously discussed in Chapter 3. Initially, participants felt confused, since they were not familiar with being consulted on institutional policies. In addition, some hesitated to engage, fearing judgement or making mistakes due to a perceived lack of information, while others found it difficult to imagine future scenarios without responding to a call to action or a funding opportunity. However, confidence and engagement increased over time, as participants recognised the safe space created by the programme.

It is important to acknowledge the limited evidence in the literature regarding the reliability and validity of readiness assessment tools. Therefore, these findings should be interpreted cautiously, especially considering that participation in the seminars was voluntary, introducing potential bias. In other words, it is plausible that participants were already inclined to collaboration for sustainability, which could have motivated their involvement in the programme, particularly during the initial sessions when readiness was evaluated. It is worth noting that there was an “attraction effect” that led to the progressive incorporation of a more diverse audience in terms of knowledge and affinity for collaboration for sustainability. Nevertheless, this initial readiness analysis provided valuable insights into incentives and barriers to change, informing the refinement of the change message and subsequent stages of the process.

*Adoption and institutionalisation*

The institutional impact of the seminar process was initially evident in the shift in internal funding calls towards a collaborative approach, favouring interdisciplinary teams over individual merit (see Appendix D, Table D3). This change was reflected in both the funding criteria, with higher scores for interdisciplinary proposals, and the content, which now directly supported the establishment of interdisciplinary research and teaching communities.

The model of interdisciplinary communities emerged directly from the seminar process, resulting in the formation of three communities focused on SDG-related topics: Circular Campus, Transition towards a net-zero university and Collaboratory for decarbonisation (refer to Table D3 for links to the homepages of these initiatives). Subsequent internal funding calls allowed these communities, along with nine others, to attract funding for their establishment and consolidation. Over four years, nearly one million euros from UPM budget were allocated to strengthen collaborative research infrastructure, including funding for a new role, the community facilitator, responsible for fostering relationships and facilitating collaborative efforts. This investment evidences the university's strong commitment, a factor of organisational collaboration capability highlighted by Weber et al. (2007) and discussed in the literature review.

The experience, documented in a handbook authored by the researcher (see Appendix E), holds considerable value from an organisational innovation perspective. This collaborative model inspired academic structures beyond research, such as interdisciplinary teaching and learning communities within EELISA, a European partnership of engineering universities. Additionally, the Decarbonization Committee (further details in Appendix D, Table D3), inspired from seminar workshops, aimed to develop a campus decarbonization strategy involving researchers, professors, students from diverse disciplines, staff and UPM decision-makers.

Professors and researchers embraced the interdisciplinary community model for its ability to formalise relationships, enhance creativity and efficiency through the collaborative sharing of knowledge, resources, equipment and infrastructure. They provide a mechanism for accessing specialised knowledge and leverage substantial funding, thereby enabling smaller research groups to scale up their endeavours. Moreover, these collaborative environments amplify the visibility of research efforts, serving as a platform for showcasing the activities and results of

individuals or other academic entities within them. By organising research offerings based on non-disciplinary criteria, these communities aligned research lines with real-world demand, be it from public bodies, business or European programmes. As a result, they can play a pivotal role in influencing the strategic direction of institutional research policies.

However, barriers to institutionalisation persist. These include concerns about duplicating existing structures, insufficient recognition of community facilitation roles, rigid administrative procedures and the perception of governing bodies of a potential loss of power and control. The institutional decision against formalising communities, as is the case with other research structures such as centres or groups, limited their capacity to receive or manage funds collaboratively, posing challenges to sustainability over time. The absence of clear collaboration incentives results in varying commitment levels among researchers, causing challenges in establishing continuous efforts and strategies. The limited recognition and value assigned to community facilitation in academic careers, especially when compared to teaching or publications, reduces the motivation for assuming such roles. The decline in seminar frequency and participation, especially in the absence of support from a facilitation team funded by the Vice-rector's office, exemplifies the difficulty in sustaining such initiatives over time. This emphasises the dependence on internal funding and support, as research projects typically do not cover such activities. Despite these challenges, the partial institutionalisation of the seminar program demonstrates progress in fostering collaboration within this university.

#### **5.1.6. Conclusions for Case Study A**

SDGs act as powerful drivers for collaboration within higher education, urging universities to adopt interdisciplinary approaches and forge new partnerships across government, industry and communities to address complex societal challenges. Case A exemplifies the initial steps to catalyse change towards collaboration within a higher education institution through a seminar programme, which evolved into a gathering ritual for the academic community. Insights from this case offer valuable lessons for other HEIs seeking to cultivate collaboration capability among their communities.

The case sheds light on the assessment collaboration capability in the early stages of change, adapting the “readiness for change” framework developed by Armenakis et al. (1993).

Furthermore, the case underscores the critical role of dialogue methods in creating the experiential conditions necessary for fostering a collaborative culture, enabling the institution to move closer to the ideal of “learning organisation.” The involvement of participants in the seminar design, the topic selection, assisting the speakers to accurately focus the sessions and the accurate use of time were deemed crucial for fostering ownership and gaining legitimacy.

A key finding was the effective use of a familiar device in universities—a seminar programme—to mitigate resistance to change. Notably, the design of the programme, approached as a relational challenge rather than a merely logistical endeavour, proved instrumental in facilitating engagement, building relationships and cultivating a sense of community focused on sustainability challenges. Institutional commitment and internal funding played a crucial role in formalising these informal networks into enduring communities characterised by horizontal collaboration.

However, scaling and sustaining collaborative efforts face obstacles such as rigid governance structures, limited academic incentives and dependency on internal support and funding. The intermediary’s role has emerged as indispensable for cultivating collaboration capability, fostering connections among researchers, shaping seminar design, and sustaining momentum toward collaboration. Consequently, there is a risk of seminars deviating from their main objective of cultivating collaboration capability without adequate support and facilitation.



## **5.2. Case Study B: Summer Course for Climate-Neutral Cities**

### **5.2.1. Overview of Case Study B**

This single case study offers valuable insights into an immersive experience to enhance collaboration capability in the context of a multi-level public policy engaging local, national and European institutions. Specifically, the case describes the first two editions of the annual summer course focused on climate change mitigation policies in Spanish cities. The sessions were held in Santander in July 2022 and July 2023, and organised within the framework of citiES2030. This platform actively promotes the decarbonization of Spanish cities, in harmony with the European Mission for Climate Neutral Cities, and enjoys backing from the Spanish Ministry for Energy Transition. Additionally, citiES2030 is facilitated by EIT Climate-KIC, the European agency responsible for enhancing the innovation capabilities for climate change in member states, and a Spanish university, the Universidad Politécnica de Madrid. The summer course encompassed theoretical sessions, interdisciplinary and multi-stakeholder dialogues, as well as workshops.

With over 300 individuals across both editions, the program aimed to enhance collaboration among cities and stakeholders to accelerate progress towards decarbonization goals. Although this case study focuses solely on the first two editions, it is worth noting that the programme has been institutionalised as an annual milestone in the Mission process in Spain.

The author served as an external observer throughout both editions of the summer course, actively participating in the preparatory and evaluation stages. However, her observation extended beyond the course itself, encompassing the organisational landscape of citiES2030 from March 2022 to October 2023. This broader scope facilitated a comprehensive understanding of how the course integrated into the organisational context and its impact over an extended period.

### **5.2.2. Methods and Sources for Primary Data Collection in Case B**

Various data sources were employed to analyse Case B, encompassing document analysis, direct and participant observation through informal conversations, and semi-structured interviews. The data collection spanned from March 2022 to October 2023, extending beyond the summer course itself to capture a comprehensive understanding of the organisational and contextual factors at play.

Initial steps involved active participation in the summer course design and assessment meetings, analysing internal documentation provided by citiES2030 (design documents, presentations, systematisation and evaluation reports, and the website, as detailed in Appendix D, Table D13) and serving as an observer during both editions of the course in Santander, from 18th to 21st July 2022 and 17th to 19th July 2023, respectively. During her stays, direct observation was applied to assess contexts, practices, participants behaviours, attitudes and conversations, supplemented by informal conversations with participants to observe and understand their perceptions of the programme's design and efficacy in cultivating collaboration capability. Additionally, semi-structured interviews (see Appendix D, Table D17 for the interview guideline) with program designers and managers in January 2024 provided further insight and triangulated the collected data with the case's lived experience.

### 5.2.3. Case B Context

#### a. Collaboration in the European Mission for Climate-Neutral Cities by 2030

The European Commission (EC) has explicitly demonstrated its commitment to climate change mitigation through the European Green Deal (2019), outlining its ambition to achieve climate neutrality in the region by 2050. To achieve this objective, the EC has introduced various instruments, including the Mission “100 climate-neutral and smart cities by 2030.” This initiative seeks to accelerate progress towards the goals of the Paris Agreement (United Nations, 2015b) and other global agendas such as the 2030 Agenda (United Nations. General Assembly, 2015) and the New Urban Agenda (United Nations, 2017). Specifically, the Mission endeavours to support, promote and transform at least a hundred European cities exceeding 50,000 inhabitants into hubs of innovation, serving as models and inspiration for all cities on the path to climate neutrality. Metropolitan areas, which account for over 80% of the European population and more than 70% of carbon emissions, play a pivotal role in the sustainability transition.

The Mission is a key component of Horizon Europe, the framework programme steering research and innovation in the European Union from 2021 to 2027. However, the initiative transcends the conventional bounds of a research and innovation programme. Instead, it embodies an ambitious effort wherein cities pledge to actively engage in a transformative journey, contributing to the enhancement of Europe’s quality of life and sustainability (European Commission., 2021). Inspired by economist Mariana Mazzucato’s reports (2018, 2019), the mission-oriented innovation approach serves to catalyse the activation of the SDGs in the region. It introduces an innovative approach to shaping public policies, underpinned by three fundamental elements: a renewed focus on social relevance and commitment to systemic transformation in research and innovation policies, a holistic approach fostering collaboration among public, social and private organisations, and a novel relationship with citizens, encouraging their active engagement in defining, implementing and monitoring policies that profoundly affect their lives (Mazzucato, 2018, 2019).

After a Call for Expression of Interest, 112 cities from EU member states and associated countries were selected for the Cities Mission out of 377 submissions. These cities are developing Climate City Contracts, which outline strategic and financial plans for climate neutrality across sectors with citizen, research and private sector involvement. While Climate City Contracts signify an evident and

prominently visible political commitment, they lack legal binding. Additionally, the EC is offering technical, regulatory and financial support to the cities through the EU Mission Platform, Net Zero Cities. The implementation of this Mission is being supported through several funding calls<sup>36</sup> aimed at assisting cities, covering diverse topics, including zero-emissions mobility, clean energy districts and urban greening.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy to emphasise the emergence of national cities mission platforms, which bring added advantages compared to existing city networks such as C40, ICLEI, or Eurocities, due to their heightened contextual specificity. National platforms cultivate a community of practice among officials from diverse cities, promoting the exchange of knowledge, collaborative efforts, and legitimacy to exert pressure on national governments. In particular, two national support structures were established prior to the Mission's launch in September 2021: Viable Cities in Sweden and citiES2030 in Spain (see a detailed description in 5.2.3.b). Both initiatives emerged from a strong academic leadership, initiated by the Royal Institute for Technology (KTH) and the Universidad Politécnica de Madrid (UPM), respectively. They were developed in collaboration with various entities, and later received support and resources from their respective central governments. This model is gaining traction in other European countries, with emerging initiatives in Portugal, Italy, the Netherlands and Ukraine, and Latin America closely observing.

Network governance, involving a diverse array of stakeholders horizontally and facilitating collaboration across different government tiers vertically, has been recognized as beneficial in urban sustainability transitions (Beck et al., 2023; Eckersley, 2018; Fenton et al., 2016; Guarnieri et al., 2023; Haarstad, 2016). This perspective aligns with the EU Mission acknowledgment, stating: "This Mission represents a major opportunity for the Commission, Member States, regional and local authorities, the private sector and citizens to forge a new and innovative partnership with Europe's cities to help deliver the response to the defining challenge of this era" (European Commission, 2021, p. 46). In the realm of mission-oriented innovation, markets and institutions are co-created by the public, private and third sectors, with governments playing a crucial role in ensuring that markets align with public purposes (Mazzucato, 2019). Furthermore, local

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<sup>36</sup> Horizon Europe invested €360 million in actions related to this Mission between 2021 and 2023.



governments are encouraged to engage citizens in the mission design, implementation and assessment (Mazzucato, 2019).

However, municipalities continue to face challenges when integrating collaborative approaches into their management practices (Klijn & Koppenjan, 2015; Provan & Kenis, 2008), as outlined in the broader case of public administrations in Chapter 3. Scholars have identified several key challenges, including legal and operational barriers (McGuire & Agranoff, 2011), the perpetuation of existing power imbalances (Gugerell et al., 2023), and difficulties in knowledge integration (Desouza, 2009; E. P. Weber & Khademian, 2008). Additionally, struggles are observed in managing horizontal, vertical, and infrastructure-related processes (Haarstad, 2016). Several studies underscore that non-public stakeholders, including companies, civil society and NGOs, are frequently inadequately represented in transition processes, despite their significant roles in design and implementation (Baccarne et al., 2014; Fenton et al., 2016; S. Gustafsson et al., 2015; Nishida & Hua, 2011; Perry & Atherton, 2017).

Therefore, the establishment of adaptable governance structures that facilitate cross-sectoral and cross-institutional coordination requires the development of new capabilities within the public sector (Dzhengiz, 2020; Fenton et al., 2016; Soberón et al., 2023). This process entails breaking down silos and reducing hierarchical structures, cultivating a culture of risk-taking, fostering adaptive and explorative leadership, embracing agile working methods and encouraging relationship-based collaboration practices (Agranoff, 2006, 2012; Læg Reid & Verhoest, 2010; O'Leary & Bingham, 2009; Ryan & Walsh, 2004; Soberón et al., 2020). Furthermore, it involves the flexibility of regulations to stimulate innovation and the adoption of evaluation frameworks that prioritise learning (Mazzucato, 2019). Concerning public servants, the importance of incorporating relational skills is widely recognised in both academic (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015; Needham et al., 2014) and grey literature (Horne et al., 2013; Randle & Kippin, 2014), especially in the context of public services and interactions with citizens.

#### **b. Organisational Context: The Platform citiES2030**

In April 2020, a community of practice was formed within El Día Después ecosystem (refer to Case C) to establish consistent connections among Spanish municipalities and stakeholders engaged in urban transition. The catalyst behind this endeavour was a Spanish representative from the board designated by the

European Commission to design the Mission for Climate Neutral Cities. The initiative gained momentum during the COVID-19 pandemic, prompting collaboration among cities to address challenges, notably in densely populated urban areas. An inaugural public event held online on 29th April 2020 evidenced this traction, with the participation of 14 Spanish mayors<sup>37</sup> and more than 2000 attendees. This session facilitated the exchange of insights and strategies amid the urban, economic and social impacts of the pandemic.

By 2021, the community evolved into citiES2030, a platform dedicated to fostering innovative collaboration among municipalities, key actors, and sectors, focusing on initiatives for urban transformation. Facilitated by the Innovation and Technology for Development Centre at the Universidad Politécnica de Madrid (itdUPM), citiES2030 gathered around 80 participants, including civil servants, representatives from universities, companies, and nonprofit organisations. The platform, later joined by EIT Climate-KIC<sup>38</sup> in 2022, received political and financial support from the Spanish Ministry for Ecology Transition through the Fundación Biodiversidad. With this backing, citiES2030 actively guided Spanish cities' decarbonization efforts, aligning with the European Mission and offering a suite of services to accelerate the transition towards climate neutrality, structured within three distinct spaces:

- Encounter, which emphasises learning, communication and the exchange of knowledge and experiences among all platform members, incorporating events like the summer course discussed in this case study.
- Training, which equips the ecosystem with the necessary tools to address the organisational, technical and financial challenges associated with the implementation of the European Mission, with a focus on supporting cities in drafting EU Climate City Contracts<sup>39</sup>.

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<sup>37</sup> The cities involved in the inaugural public event were: Arnedo, Barcelona, Bilbao, Cáceres, Gavà, Gijón, Lugo, Madrid, Murcia, Palma de Mallorca, Riba-roja de Túria, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Sevilla and Valencia.

<sup>38</sup> EIT Climate-KIC and UPM previously collaborated on the Madrid Deep Demonstration for Healthy and Clean Cities program from 2019 to 2021. This program aimed to help Madrid and 14 other European cities develop interconnected decarbonization portfolios, accelerating learning and scaling up successful solutions across cities in line with EIT Climate KIC's strategy outlined in *Transformation in time* (2018).

<sup>39</sup> The Climate City Contract is an innovative European governance instrument to facilitate collaborative action at all levels as cities progress on their journey towards climate neutrality.

- Implementation, which concentrates on developing a portfolio of interconnected projects and fostering multi-city collaboration programmes to facilitate both cross-city learning and scalability.

By December 2023, when this case study was written, the ecosystem included 15 Spanish cities, including the seven EU Mission Cities (Barcelona, Madrid, Sevilla, Valencia, Valladolid, Vitoria-Gasteiz and Zaragoza), as well as five universities, four research centres, 17 companies including very important energy corporations, six nonprofit organisations and four networks, such as the Spanish branch of the UN's Sustainable Development Solutions Network (refer to Appendix D, Table D14 for the comprehensive list of members). The platform continues to expand, aiming to incorporate more Spanish cities committed to decarbonization and engage additional private and third-sector actors in collaborative innovation and learning. In essence, citiES2030 serves as a hub for collaborative innovation and learning, converging municipal, national, and European policies and non-public decarbonization strategies.

### **c. CitiES2030 Summer Course: Origin and Inception**

The concept of the summer course stemmed from the proposal of the Rector of the Universidad Internacional Menéndez Pelayo, situated in northern Spain, who envisioned showcasing the Mission and Spanish cities' collective efforts during the university's renowned annual Summer School.

Recognising the invaluable in-person platform provided by this university, the citiES2030 team strategically aimed to accomplish three overarching objectives: strengthen relationships among city representatives after a year of virtual interaction, inaugurate the Mission process in Spain, and delineate collaborative mechanisms through which cities would engage in the development of the Climate City Contracts. Specifically, the summer course aimed to create a conducive environment for city officials and other key actors to exchange insights and build community, to introduce a systemic vision for transforming and scaling future city actions, to develop new working models and a shared vision to overcome transformation barriers, and facilitate strategic thinking.

The summer course has since become an annual formal gathering, aiming at reviewing previous achievements and establishing next steps. This case study focuses on observations from the first two editions held in July 2022 and 2023.

## 5.2.4. Case B Results

This section outlines the key factors of the summer course that contributed significantly to fostering collaboration capability within the citiES2030 platform, covering insights into the collaborative governance and design process, spatial and temporal factors, interaction methods and intermediary roles.

### a. Collaborative Governance and Design

The summer course was collaboratively designed by both cities and the platform orchestration team (comprising EIT Climate-KIC and itdUPM), aiming to instil a sense of ownership and shared responsibility. This approach reflects the platform's ethos of empowering cities to take the lead in initiatives, aligning with the call for a redefined leadership outlined in section 4.2.1.

Initial input from participating cities guided the programme's structure, leading to a carefully curated schedule. To ensure a diverse learning experience, contents and methodologies were delegated to participating cities (first edition) and stakeholders (second edition), with each organisation leading sessions based on their expertise, knowledge and resources. Additionally, external experts were invited to supplement technical knowledge.

However, the collaborative process faced numerous challenges. Co-design efforts typically progress more slowly due to the need for consensus among participants. Municipal teams faced time constraints and lacked the necessary skills for creating engaging learning environments. Facilitators also had to navigate the complexities of orchestration, balancing intentionality and flexibility. The facilitation team members acknowledged that saying "no" within a collaborative framework proved difficult, often leading to compromises to preserve collaboration and avoid conflict. Nonetheless, it was crucial to prevent the instrumentalisation of such spaces for political or commercial ends, requiring careful navigation.

Despite the complexity of this collaboration context, significant conflicts have not been observed. This can be explained by the deliberate design and facilitation of an environment characterised by a sense of achievement, pride and shared purpose, and where individuals feel valued and respected. This approach aligns with the principles of nonviolent communication and findings described in section 4.2.4. Moreover, the orchestration team carefully anticipates the potential emergence of conflicts, especially those stemming from misunderstandings or assumptions. However, techniques for transparently documenting conflicts or

leveraging them as learning opportunities, as recommended in section 4.2.4, are not currently employed. This indicates a potential area for organizational improvement.

Despite the challenges, the co-creation and co-implementation of the summer course were deemed pivotal in cultivating collaboration capability within the platform. These activities fostered positive social interdependence and promotive interactions, crucial design elements in collaborative learning, as discussed in section 3.4.2.

#### **b. Spatial and Temporal Context**

The citiES2030 summer course took place in Santander, a picturesque medium-size city nestled along the Cantabrian Sea in northern Spain. Its mild climate and scenic beauty offered participants a refreshing escape from their routines. Held on the Magdalena Peninsula, an emblematic location symbolising the focused space envisioned for cities, the venue provided not only a picturesque backdrop but also a serene atmosphere conducive to learning. This strategy resonates with the findings on nurturing attention outlined in section 4.1.3.

Moreover, since Santander is not designated as a mission city, it provided a neutral space for the gathering, helping to balance power dynamics among the participating cities, as proposed in section 4.2.3.

The orchestration team noted initial challenges with the venue lacking conducive conditions for dialogue. This observation parallels the findings from Case A, which also involved a university setting. Despite these challenges, adjustments were made in the second edition, with inspiring dialogues in the mornings in the auditorium and workshops in separate rooms in the afternoons. However, logistical issues arose due to the physical distance between spaces, necessitating transportation arrangements. Additionally, participants were invited to informal dinners in iconic places in the city (Figure 5.4), seeking to provide space for networking in a relaxed atmosphere. In the upcoming third edition, organisers plan to utilise outdoor spaces to optimise the learning environment and enhance participants' experiences further. This evolution reflects a commitment to continuous improvement and the pursuit of an even more effective and engaging learning setting.



**Figure 5.4.** Examples of dinner venues in the second edition of the summer course

Source: citiES2030

In terms of time, the citiES2030 summer course lasted four days in the first edition and three in the second, both scheduled in July, offering a timely moment for reflection amid favourable weather conditions. Although municipal employees face challenges in allocating time, they perceive this annual gathering as a valuable opportunity for collective exchange and contributing to building shared knowledge. This added value encourages municipalities to allocate time for collaboration, a strategy deemed crucial for change in section 4.1.4

In short, spatial and temporal strategies were employed to create an immersive annual experience aimed at cultivating collaboration capability, as proposed in section 4.3.1 and consistent with experiential learning methodologies. Both participants and orchestrators recognise this course as a “therapeutic space” and a “spiritual retreat.” The course’s momentum is sustained between editions through additional virtual encounters throughout the year, facilitating continuous idea exchange and trust-building.

### **c. Interaction Methods**

During the summer course, participants engage in four interaction spaces (see Appendix D, Table D15) designed to facilitate learning, collaboration and networking: theoretical sessions, practical sessions, narrative capsules and informal networking spaces. In addition, two asynchronous interaction methods were designed to reinforce a sense of identity and continuity with the citiES2030 process: the boarding pass and the travel log.

Firstly, the theoretical sessions, focusing on inspirational and “whats” aspects, were typically scheduled for mornings. These sessions, structured as roundtable

discussions involving three to six participants, delved into key aspects crucial for advancing the mission's implementation while fostering a shared narrative and vision among cities and stakeholders. The role of shared visions and narratives in shaping the collaboration, innovation and transformation capabilities of systems in transitions was described briefly in Chapter 3. Enriched with both successful and unsuccessful experiences, these dialogues prioritised traditional methods such as Q&A sessions and microphones over digital tools, although both were used. Meticulously prepared with moderators and speakers, these sessions outlined clear objectives and overarching ideas to emerge from the interactions. Additionally, careful time management ensured ample space for audience participation.

Secondly, practical sessions centred on the “hows” and were structured as multi-actor workshops, typically scheduled for afternoons. These sessions offered cities and other stakeholders the chance to collectively build knowledge by integrating insights gained from the theoretical sessions and their own experiences. Participants were divided into small groups, intentionally mixing individuals from various cities, organisations and sectors, to encourage diverse and comfortable interactions. The design of practical sessions resonates with Bohm's conceptualisation of dialogue as process of co-creation of meaning, as explained in section 3.4.3.

Thirdly, narrative capsules provided effective arts and communication tools for the mission context. Aligned with the quintuple helix innovation model, art and media are pivotal in raising awareness, educating, fostering empathy, promoting citizen participation, envisioning potential futures, conveying complex data and shaping policy and decision-making. These capsules, characterised by brevity and a relaxed and playful tone, incorporated videos and inspiring images to provide a break between sessions. They facilitated emotional connection and empathy, alleviating pressure on participants.

Fourthly, informal networking spaces, including coffee breaks and dinners, fostered a welcoming environment for casual conversations and relationship-building, emphasising a sense of hospitality and enjoyment. It is worth noting that, in the second edition, half of the budget was allocated specifically for these dinners. These elements are complemented by a cohesive narrative thread and the distribution of a boarding pass (exclusively in the second edition), designed as a metaphor for the mission. This approach cultivated a distinct story and identity for the course, appealing to both rational and emotional aspects. This strategy

might be seen as an initial playful experiment, echoing the insights from section 4.3.2, although there is greater room for innovation in future editions. As noted by the interviewees in Chapter 4, the inclusion of playful elements carries risks and can be received positively or negatively depending on the context and culture. Therefore, it is understandable that the design team has been cautious in the first editions of the programme.

Following the course, a travel log containing session videos, summaries, and presentations—all unified under a consistent visual identity—was distributed, ensuring continuity in the conversations initiated during the event.

Overall, meticulous event planning and diverse formats tailored to specific objectives guarantee a seamless and enriching experience for participants.

#### **d. The Intermediary Role**

In Case B, the intermediary role was fulfilled by a multi-organisation team, the citiES2030 orchestration team, comprising three individuals in the first edition and five individuals in the second edition. Their responsibilities were similar to those identified in Case A and included:

- Strategically designing and managing the programme, while ensuring focus and promoting broad and diverse participation;
- Listening to the needs of the cities and integrate them into the programme, while mediating and translating between stakeholders and their interests;
- Innovating and curating the context design, which includes space, time, format, interaction methods, and overall atmosphere to foster meaningful engagement and collaboration;
- Navigating the political context, with care for protocols and institutional matters
- Collecting, analysing and integrating knowledge emerging from the experience and communicating it in a transdisciplinary, practical and creative manner;
- Incorporating new knowledge into the platform's strategy and future actions.

In Case B, the intermediary role played a pivotal role in facilitating reflection and learning across various levels: from current practices (single-loop learning) to norms and structures (double-loop learning), and even decision-making processes (triple-loop learning). Despite the challenges of institutionalising changes in municipalities, city officials and other stakeholders assumed an intermediary role



in leading session design, underscoring the platform intermediaries' role in educating others in this capacity.

The intermediaries faced a significant challenge due to the coordinators underestimating the time required to design and implement a summer course of such scale. It involved extensive efforts in design, coordination, and ensuring that all participants felt heard and represented. Despite its invisibility, cities acknowledge the intermediary role as the cohesive force holding everything together, crucial for the course's success and for the sustainability of the platform.

### **5.2.5. Evidence of Impact on Collaboration Capability in Case B**

Although formal evaluations did not systematically assess collaboration capability, observation revealed that the programme has indeed strengthened it.

#### *Individual collaboration capability*

With 150 individuals participating in each summer course edition, participant feedback in satisfaction surveys and informal conversations revealed positive perceptions of collaboration within the EU Mission and citiES2030 framework. Participants recognised common goals and risks, demonstrating high motivation to explore new ideas and learn collectively. Key incentives identified included critical reflection opportunities, connections to diverse municipal teams, and the consolidation of community bonds. Moreover, the summer course was perceived as a “therapeutic space” characterised by energy, trust and camaraderie. Formal and informal interactions during the summer course have deepened participants' insights into the work of others, fostering empathy, trust and understanding. The case underscores the emotional dimension of building collaboration capability.

#### *Institutionalisation*

In Case B, several variables identified by Weber et al. (2007) as defining the collaboration capability of a system (refer to section 3.3.3) are apparent. These include the observed trust among participants, their willingness to collaborate, and a robust institutional commitment from the participating municipalities. This commitment is evidenced in the significant investment of time and resources required for course participation, with each municipality consistently sending between 3 and 10 technicians annually. Moreover, despite the political changes in the majority of participating cities between the first and second editions, there was

no decline in the level of engagement of these cities. This proves the resilience that has been cultivated within citiES2030.

While the citiES2030 project has facilitated new and strengthened personal and professional relationships, leading to collaborative ventures beyond the platform, these connections remain fragile, with the platform serving as a vital intermediary. Moreover, there is limited evidence of institutionalised changes towards collaboration capability within participating organisations as a result of the course or the platform's efforts. Stakeholders acknowledge the intermediary's role in creating a safe and horizontal context and maintaining cohesion. Despite a growing need for face-to-face meetings among platform members, logistical challenges arise due to potential travel restrictions imposed by municipalities. However, the European Mission label adds legitimacy to collaboration among cities, facilitating continuous engagement despite organisational barriers.

### **5.2.6. Case Study B Conclusions**

The European Mission for Climate-Neutral Cities by 2030, part of the Green Deal, aims to accelerate climate action in urban areas. This Mission provides cities with a shared purpose and vision, driving them to strengthen relationships and learn together. National platforms like Spain's citiES2030 foster collaboration among cities and stakeholders while receiving political and financial backing.

The citiES2030 Summer Course, hosted by the Universidad Internacional Menéndez Pelayo and designed with itdUPM and EIT Climate-KIC, serves as a crucial annual gathering for the EU Mission in Spain. This programme contributes to strengthen relationships among Spanish municipalities and stakeholders committed to decarbonisation. The formats and contents of the course are decided and designed by the cities participating in the platform. Participants perceive the course as a "therapeutic space" where they can build a "sense of community," valuing the opportunity for critical reflection and networking.

Insights from the course highlight diverse participant engagement, European policy guiding collaboration, and careful venue selection for informal interaction. Moreover, playful formats and emotional engagement are innovatively used to enhance collaboration capabilities, fostering a sense of belonging and care. Outcomes include improved relationships, new projects, and a demand for face-to-face interactions. However, reliance on the platform as a vital intermediary persists, signalling fragile connections.



## 5.3. Case Study C: Annual Gathering for Ecosystem Dialogue

### 5.3.1. Overview of Case Study C

Case study C, a single case study, is justified by the significant participant diversity across sectors and political backgrounds, the complex organisational context, the broad focus and the intentional use of dialogue as the means for collaboration and transformation. Moreover, the strategic use of outdoor spaces and playful elements offers interesting insights aligned with the research goals.

The case focuses on the annual in-person gathering orchestrated by a multi-stakeholder platform dedicated to fostering reflection and action for economic, social and environmental transformation in the pursuit of sustainable development. The case is an integral component of a long-term strategy designed to bring together diverse actors in collaborative efforts to address specific issues related to sustainability transition, such as urban transformation or the establishment of green job opportunities, with special focus on the most vulnerable individuals. The event, along with the platform, is a collaborative effort of diverse individuals and organisations that pool their resources and capacities under a

distributed leadership model, rooted in generosity and mutual trust. The relevance of this platform has been evident since its early stages, playing a pivotal role in shaping public policies in Spain during COVID-19 recovery.

Specifically, the case examines two in-person gatherings held in Soria, Spain, in July 2021 and October 2022, with 160 and 282 individuals attending each event in person, and 213 and 160 individuals attending online, respectively. The author, acting as an external observer, actively engaged in the preparation and evaluation stages, extending observation beyond events to encompass organisational dynamics, providing a nuanced understanding of the programme's integration into a broader process.

### **5.3.2. Methods and Sources for Primary Data Collection**

The study of Case C utilised diverse data sources, including document analysis, participant observation, as well as formal and informal conversations with participants and promoters. The researcher was actively involved in the early stages of El Día Después (EDD) multi-stakeholder platform (from March 2020 to December 2021), which facilitated access to internal documents and granted trust from both promoters and participants, but not in the decision-making and design processes of the annual meetings. This balanced involvement allowed for critical assessment of the program's impact on collaboration.

The researcher served as an observer during the Soria Dialogues, from 5th to 7th July 2021 and from 21st to 22nd October 2022. Throughout these visits, direct observation techniques were employed to analyse interactions, practices, attitudes and behaviour. The aim was to understand the participant perceptions and assess the initiative's success in enhancing collaboration capability. Observations extended beyond the events to encompass the period from March 2020 to October 2022, providing insight into the complex organisational context and the event's role within this broader framework.

To ensure data reliability, diverse documents were analysed, including design, systematisation and evaluation documents, video recordings and websites (see Appendix D, Table D16 for a comprehensive list of data sources). Moreover, in January 2024, in-depth interviews were conducted with a promoter and a programme designer (please refer to Appendix D, Table D17 for the interview guideline).

### 5.3.3. Case C Context

#### a. Collaboration in the Coronavirus Pandemic

The global impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has brought unprecedented challenges, affecting health, economies and societies worldwide. Collaboration has emerged as crucial in managing this crisis (Kantamaneni et al., 2021), with efforts spanning countries, administrative levels, sectors and citizens to implement measures such as lockdowns and ensure the continuity of essential services and the provision of food during this challenging period. At the same time, the shift to remote work and online communication has transformed traditional collaboration methods, leading to increased international research collaboration (Brown & Finn, 2020). This shift is notably reflected in the increased levels of international research collaboration, as highlighted by Kim and Cho (2021), among other aspects.

Nevertheless, the pandemic has also exacerbated social discontent and polarisation (Modgil et al., 2021), with the rise of extreme ideologies threatening democracy. Addressing these challenges requires fostering inclusive collaborative governance structures that exemplify shared values and unity for the common good. Emphasising Putnam's (2000) concept of social capital, the cultivation of a sense of community, reciprocity, and shared identity becomes imperative for societal well-being.

The pandemic crisis provided an opportunity to understand the collaborative dynamics necessary for achieving the SDGs, highlighting the intricate interconnections of global issues and the complex interplay of social, economic and environmental issues. The promotion of effective collaboration among public entities, private companies and civil society, as emphasised in SDG Target 17.1, holds the potential to establish institutional and organisational frameworks essential for facilitating the systemic and transformative approaches required in the sustainability transition (Sachs et al., 2019; United Nations, 2014; United Nations. General Assembly, 2015). Effectively coordinating these simultaneous transformations requires robust governance structures (Bowen et al., 2017; Horan, 2019). In this context, Moreno-Serna et al. (2020) underscore the imperative of intentionally forging multi-stakeholder partnerships, carefully selecting key "ingredients" to enhance effectiveness and impact.

## **b. Organisational Context: The Multi-Stakeholder Initiative El Día Después**

Launched on 17th March 2020, the partnership El Día Después (EDD), which means The Day After, emerged amid COVID-19 pandemic to reevaluate existing frameworks and actions, aiming to accelerate progress towards the SDGs. The collaboration involved four organisations that had already collaborated in organising impactful events around the 2030 Agenda: a global energy company (Iberdrola), a public university innovation centre (itdUPM), a global health research centre (ISGlobal) and the Spanish branch of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (REDS-SDSN Spain).

Since inception, EDD has evolved through various stages. The initial phase involved intensive interactions to define partnership objectives. A public call on 25th March kick-started collaboration, leading to the establishment of four communities on 6th April:

- The Community of Inequality and New Economic Model, focused on constructing a new social deal;
- The Community for the Transformation of Cities, dedicated to transforming urban contexts towards climate neutrality, that will give rise to the aforementioned platform *citiES2030*;
- The Community of Environment and Health, aimed at enhancing an interconnected improvement of both environmental and health issues.
- The Community of International Cooperation and Global Governance, with the goal of catalysing a new multilateralism and renewing international cooperation mechanisms.

Each community, comprising at least 10 members from diverse sectors, held weekly meetings and fostered cross-community collaboration through virtual formats facilitating discussions and collective intelligence:

- *Agora*: A forum that facilitates discussion and interpretations among individuals with diverse perspectives.
- *Workshop*: A participatory design room for crafting a collective stance on a specific subject within a particular community
- *CoLab*: A massive online interaction tool fostering collective intelligence through the co-design of prototypes.

To ensure the operation of these communities, a team of 25 professionals, provided by the leading organisations, facilitated the interactions and fostered a balance in disciplines and perspectives.

By 25th May 2020, with around 20 members per community, EDD transitioned to a stage emphasising the consolidation of trust and shared purpose while taking transformative action. Communities designed demonstrative projects, engaging diverse stakeholders and fostering cross-learning, while contributing to key aspects of the transition. For instance, EDD communities played a pivotal role in shaping the Spanish Circular Economy Strategy, influencing the Joint Response Strategy of the Spanish Cooperation to the COVID-19 Crisis and contributing to the Law on Climate Change and Energy Transition. Additionally, two key multi-stakeholder initiatives emerged organically from community efforts. The first initiative, *citiES2030*, as previously discussed in Case B, was the result of the collaborative efforts of the Community for the Transformation of Cities to bring Spanish municipalities together in the progress towards the European Mission of Climate Neutrality. The second initiative, the Platform for Green Employment was incubated by the Community of Inequality and New Economic Model as a strategic partnership with the purpose of bridging the gap between emerging job opportunities in the sustainability transition and individuals facing vulnerability. Both initiatives underwent an institutionalisation process followed by the recognition and legitimacy gained from public institutions such as the Ministry for Energy Transition and the State Public Employment Service (SEPE), respectively. The institutionalisation of these initiatives in 2022 marked EDD's consolidation phase. During this stage, the initiatives incubated by EDD gained independence. Ultimately the concluding phase marked a transformation in the institutional structure of the model, transitioning from an informal network to a legal entity, becoming an association.

These stages illustrate EDD's evolution from a multi-stakeholder partnership into an "ecology of intermediation." Initially, EDD was conceptualised as a transformational partnership using the Collaborative Value Creation framework by Austin and Seitanidi (2012) as a foundation (Moreno-Serna, Purcell, et al., 2020). Three key arguments supported its classification at this high level in the collaboration continuum (Moreno-Serna, Purcell, et al., 2020):

- EDD has successfully fostered trustful relationships among over 80 public, private and social organisations through continuous interaction.
- EDD's focus on systemic impact is evident in its efforts to address challenges such as the cities' transition to climate-neutral models (SDG 7, 11, 13) and the improvement of labour market integration for vulnerable individuals through the creation of green decent jobs and training opportunities (SDG 1 and 8).

- EDD's goals align with the strategic objectives of the driving organisations, fostering value co-creation by sharing core competencies.

In the partnership incubator stage, EDD served as a catalyst for organisations' transition agendas by harmonising incentives and interests within a common roadmap. EDD's purpose crystallised into the deliberate cultivation of a more effective ecology of intermediation for sustainability transitions (Soberón et al., 2022). In essence, this involved supporting various systemic transitions simultaneously (e.g., energy, mobility, environment and economy) by fostering collaboration between intermediaries and actors, facilitating the integration of existing transition initiatives and designing new ones.

As a result of its efforts in fostering collaborations to develop systemic and impactful solutions aligned with the SDGs during the COVID crisis, EDD has been acknowledged as a good practice by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA, 2021). Additionally, highly significant national and international organisations, including the Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB) and the United Nations for Development Program (UNDP) have expressed interest in tailoring the model to their respective contexts.

### **c. The Soria Dialogues: Origin and Inception**

The Soria Dialogues were the first in-person activity after a year and a half of online interactions. The event aimed to bring together all the communities in the same time and space, fostering one-on-one and spontaneous interactions among individuals who had previously engaged in group discussions. The event aimed to provide diverse space for listening to different voices, including new participants who had not been part of the communities before. Additionally, the gathering sought to facilitate cross-pollination among communities and identify opportunities for collaborative work on shared interests.

The choice of Soria as the venue blended rational and emotional factors. On the one hand, the city offered an attractive alternative to the centrality of cities like Barcelona or Madrid, with its appealing natural and cultural richness that promised a serene break from daily life routine. On the other hand, the personal connections of several key members of EDD to Soria, along with their close relationships with local authorities, played a significant role in the decision-making process. Thanks to these connections, the Soria Dialogues received backing from four local organisations, Soria City Council and regional government, the Centro Internacional Antonio Machado (CIAM) and the Fundación Duques de



Soria. Furthermore, the design and funding of the initiative received contributions from several organisations, with notable involvement from five Spanish companies: Iberdrola (sustainable energy), Ferrovial (sustainable infrastructure operator), Ingeus (providing assistance to individuals facing vulnerability in the realms of work and housing), Daleph (public sector consulting) and Roca Junyent (legal services).

Following the success of the inaugural edition in 2021, a second gathering in 2022 established an annual tradition. The second edition aimed at enhancing collaboration capability by identifying the foundations for a new social contract to accelerate the 2030 Agenda. Economist Antón Costas proposed this focus, emphasising the need for a new social contract amid present challenges. In his perspective, the post-war social contract that gave rise to the European welfare state is displaying signs of weakening in the current context of climate crisis, social polarisation, misinformation, pandemics, war and growing inequalities. As acknowledged by the 2030 Agenda, the construction of a new social contract is only achievable through a democratic, open, and inclusive process that necessitates new spaces and methods of collaboration, such as those fostered by EDD, facilitating dialogue, listening and collective action among diverse stakeholders and perspectives. Therefore, the second edition also sought to generate an ecosystem, based on collaboration and dialogue, to promote this new social contract.

Plans for a third edition in 2023 were delayed due to organisational changes, since the informal arrangement transitioned into an association as a way to consolidate the initiative. However, preparations are underway for the 2024 edition.

### **5.3.4. Case C Results**

#### **a. Collaborative Governance and Design**

Distinct governance models were employed in each edition of the Soria Dialogues. The first edition embraced a top-down model with a negotiated timeline, where three core EDD members were responsible for designing sessions, with the support of the facilitation team. Each member was dedicated to one programme day. This approach ensured efficiency and programme coherence.

In contrast, the second edition followed a bottom-up approach, aiming for increased diversity and inclusion of new voices. Diversity was highlighted as a fundamental

design element in collaborative learning, as discussed in 3.4.2. Specifically, the governance structure included:

- A decision-making group, represented by diverse participating organisations, consisting of ten individuals;
- A driving group, comprising 30 participants engaged in proposing a framework, selecting speakers and topics of interest and designing dialogue principles;
- A facilitating group, responsible for managing programme implementation, with a focus on logistical aspects.

While this second model fostered a sense of shared responsibility, it introduced complexities into the design process that particularly affected the facilitation team.

One significant challenge emerged in attempting to accommodate diverse demands and ensure understanding and satisfaction among all participants in the design process. The struggle to set boundaries and maintain consensus posed inherent difficulties due to the number of suggestions to integrate, some of which were incompatible with each other. Moreover, this model did not avoid power imbalances, with individuals and organisations having varying capacities to influence the agenda based on their expertise, the legitimacy that the group gave to them or their dedication to the programme design. Similar to case B, although conflicts have been minimal, conflict is avoided and its causes, content or resolution are not documented. In general, conflicts are anticipated and resolved before they escalate. Conflict avoidance strategies involved mediation by a neutral party recognised by both sides and revisiting the foundations of the programme. Additionally, creating a respectful environment where participants feel free to express their opinions in a nonviolent manner helps resolve potential conflicts at an early stage.

However, efficiency in an open and participatory process required clear process guidelines and strategies for addressing proposals that deviate from the general framework. The assessment criteria were collaboratively developed by members of the initiating group and the facilitation team to facilitate decision making and particularly to guide the selection of topics, ensuring their relevance and appeal to a diverse range of stakeholders. These criteria encompassed addressing themes that:

- Act as significant barriers to collective progress towards achieving the SDGs, or as accelerators if approached appropriately;

- Require public-private-social collaboration to achieve broad agreements;
- Offer added value compared to existing initiatives in the same theme;
- Possess important related relational assets within the ecosystem;
- Have been previously addressed by EDD or one of its organisations, establishing them as relevant and legitimate actors;
- Align with the interests of one or more promoters of the Soria Dialogues;
- Have available resources, whether financial or human, to drive the theme;
- Exemplify the need and potential for a social contract;
- Spark interest and are appealing to citizens, with potential for consensus-building;
- Promote collaboration among different generations, socioeconomic strata, and territories.

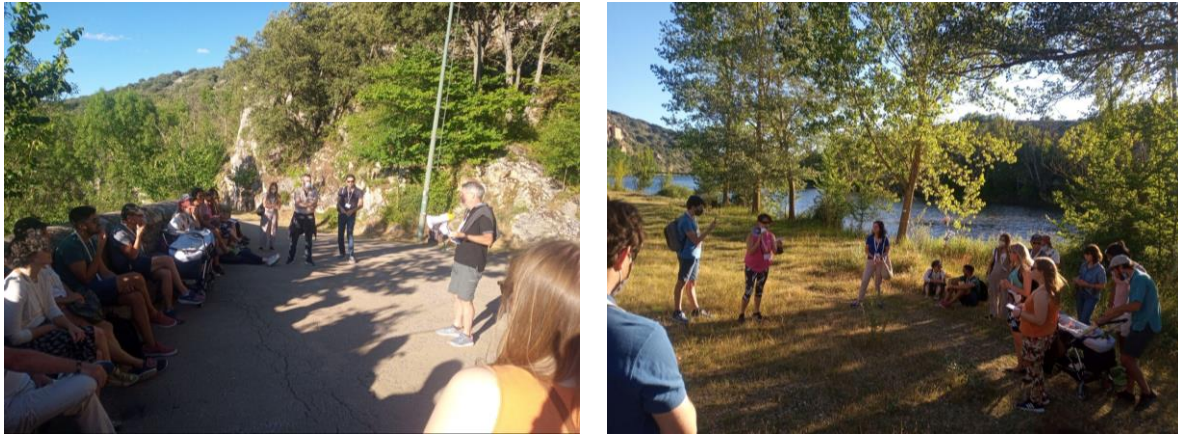
This set of co-created rules represents a valuable strategy for reducing tensions and conflicts while building collaboration capability, complementing the findings of section 4.2.4.

#### **b. Spatial and Temporal Context**

As the name suggests, the Soria Dialogues took place in Soria city, a municipality of 40.000 inhabitants in the north of Spain. Situated away from the bustling centralities of cities like Madrid and Barcelona, it offers a unique alternative for gatherings, providing participants with an opportunity to pause and step out of their daily routines both professionally and personally. The aim was to create an immersive experience, aligning with the suggestion in section 4.3.1, where participants spend three full days together, a rare occurrence for many of them

Moreover, Soria showcases a vibrant cultural and natural landscape, which were put at the service of the gathering objectives (Figure 5.5), which include strengthening personal relationships and fostering creative thinking. Outdoor activities were recommended in Chapter 4 as a good practice for nurturing attention, enhancing creativity and mitigating existing power imbalances.

Additionally, its small size fosters informal conversations among participants as they walk from their hotels to the auditorium where the event was held. However, its size also poses logistical challenges for organisers, including limited accommodation options, transportation difficulties and a lack of flexible meeting spaces.



**Figure 5.5.** *Workshop* during the first edition of the Soria Dialogues

Source: itdUPM

Almost all the programme was held at the Teatro Palacio de la Audiencia in the Plaza Mayor, a historical 18th-century building that has served various purposes over time, such as a city council, a prison and a courthouse. Its configuration as a traditional auditorium maintains a degree of formality in its setup where hierarchical distinctions between speakers and the audience are preserved. Aiming for producing a relaxed atmosphere, the design team meticulously considered the spatial layout, especially focusing on the furniture arrangement on the stage. As depicted in the images in Figure 5.6, the intention was to evoke a sense of homeliness and comfort, ensuring participants felt at ease during the conversation.



**Figure 5.6.** Spatial configuration of the Soria Dialogues

Note: First edition (left) and second edition (right) / Source: Twitter (left) and itdUPM flickr (right)

Regarding timing, the Soria Dialogues were strategically scheduled during periods of relative calm. The first edition took place from Monday to Wednesday in July while the second edition was held from Friday to Saturday in October. These

durations, spanning 2.5 and 1.5 days, respectively, provided ample time for conversations. However, organisers faced the challenge of maintaining audience engagement during successive 1.5-hour sessions, prompting the implementation of various strategies to capture and retain attention, which will be discussed in the following subsection.

Moreover, organisers deemed hosting the event more than once a year impractical due to resource constraints and the risk of diminishing its appeal. Nonetheless, annual repetition was seen as essential for fostering continuity and evolution. To address the need for interim milestones in sustaining an active ecosystem, the second edition introduced “The Road to Soria” —inspired by a song<sup>40</sup> by a renowned Spanish pop band from the 1980s (see Appendix D, Table D16 for the details of this roadmap). This initiative aimed to establish a cohesive narrative thread across various gathering occasions led by different organisations within EDD, culminating in the Soria Dialogues in October. However, aligning these events faced constraints due to pre-existing commitments of the organisations in the design and focus of these activities.

### **c. Interaction Methods**

In the framework of EDD, dialogue emerges as opposed to “debate,” as a vehicle that facilitates identifying novel pathways of understanding and action. As seen in Chapter 3, dialectical conversations typically involve the exchange of conflicting viewpoints with the aim of attaining consensus or synthesis (discussion system). Conversely, dialogical conversations, as is the case in the Soria Dialogues, focus on fostering understanding, exploring different perspectives and uncovering new insights. They prioritise active listening, empathy and the acknowledgement of multiple viewpoints, without the necessity of reaching unanimous consensus. The culture of dialogical conversation was actively cultivated and supported by the following collaboratively developed principles:

- The Soria Dialogues are envisioned as forums for collaboration, emphasising respect, humility and harmony among all participants rather than competition.

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<sup>40</sup> Listen to the song by clicking the following link: [https://youtu.be/Q\\_j6iSwXCD4?si=-3nUZIIJ55hhPQEt](https://youtu.be/Q_j6iSwXCD4?si=-3nUZIIJ55hhPQEt)

- Active listening is embraced, with a commitment to setting aside preconceptions from the outset to foster a culture of learning, recognising that everyone has something valuable to say and learn.
- They serve as a demonstration of a method that focuses on common challenges, emphasising the willingness to understand and/or agree, to reduce polarisation, irrespective of the topic under discussion.
- They strive to establish enduring spaces of collaboration across public, private and social sectors to accelerate progress toward achieving the SDGs and supporting the necessary transitions in areas such as energy, economy, territory and society.
- They seek to cultivate consensus, highlighting common ground and uniting factors, while integrating a diversity of perspectives and respecting pluralism.
- They prioritise envisioning long-term possible utopias while concurrently addressing the short-term preservation of common goods.
- Participants in these dialogues must remain open to welcoming new voices and perspectives that may not have been anticipated initially.

These principles establish a foundation for horizontal, balanced and sustainable dialogues over time, influencing not only design but also the preparation and moderation of conversations, maintaining focus and coherence. The case illustrates how a collaborative arrangement can cultivate a culture of dialogue by committing to this form of communication and encouraging self-reflection on shared principles and epistemologies. This practice contributes to the findings in section 4.1.5.

In addition, the centrepiece of interaction was the 90-minute conversations involving two to six individuals with complementary perspectives. These were prepared in advance in collaboration with the moderator and the speakers to set a clear objective and familiarise with the speakers' argumentative frameworks. These dialogues serve as contexts for constructing shared knowledge, describing a particular issue from its different facets, and building relationships among participants. It was acknowledged that cultivating empathy and positive relationships is instrumental in cultivating collaboration capability, as highlighted in the literature review.

Furthermore, there was an emphasis on avoiding programme saturation and allowing for informal and relaxed spaces, embracing spontaneity and serendipity. In Chapter 4, these latter were highlighted as fundamental factors for fostering creativity and building relationships. In particular, play was suggested as a valuable instrument to reduce concerns about failure and judgement (refer to

section 4.3.2). In Case C, a notable method employed was the incorporation of humour: a famous comedian was invited to present the Dialogues, fostering symmetry among guest speakers through humorous introductions.

Despite these effective methodologies, organisers acknowledge the potential for further innovation in the design of formal and informal conversational spaces, often anchored to conventional formats and networking practices. In particular, they propose a shift towards fostering genuine dialogue by addressing points of disagreement and avoiding overly rigid argumentative structures. These innovations would shed light on the findings gathered in section 4.2.4, providing practical experiences for transforming conflict into learning opportunities in the cultivation of collaboration capability.

#### **d. The Intermediary Role**

In Case C, the intermediary role was undertaken by a multi-organisation team, comprising representatives of the core promoting organisations. Particularly important was the role of the facilitators from itdUPM in coordinating the intermediation activities and team. Their responsibilities were similar to those identified in Case A and B, including single, double and triple-loop learning:

- Designing the design and decision-making process;
- Listening to EDD members, fostering trust and creating a safe dialogue environment;
- Facilitating strategic programme design and consensus over dialogue principles and selection criteria by mediating divergent interest and integrating perspectives among decision-making and driving groups;
- Managing the programme to ensure focus and promote broad and diverse participation;
- Innovating and curating the context design, which includes space, time, format, interaction methods, and overall atmosphere to foster meaningful engagement and collaboration;
- Preparing conversations in detail with speakers and moderators;
- Collecting, analysing and integrating knowledge emerging from the gathering and communicating it in a transdisciplinary, practical and creative manner;
- Assessing interaction methods and systematising them into practical guidelines for their utility in similar contexts.

Participants acknowledged the crucial role played by the intermediaries in fostering collaboration capability within the EDD ecosystem, highlighting a certain dependence on them for efficiency and operation. The intermediary acts as the lubricant that keeps the engine running smoothly, raising questions about whether this role is indispensable throughout the entire lifespan of the ecosystem or if a point can be identified for its withdrawal. Future research should investigate the conditions necessary for intermediaries to diminish their prominence in the collaboration capability of a system. At the same time, despite efforts to address power dynamics, individuals in intermediary roles felt excluded from decision-making processes. This highlights the often-overlooked significance of these roles, which are essential for the success of learning and collaboration initiatives. This emphasises the need to prioritise the well-being of those in caregiving roles and calls for further research in this area.

### **5.3.5. Evidence of Impact on Collaboration Capability in Case C**

A total of 442 individuals participated in person in the Soria Dialogues, yet there was a lack of systematic assessment regarding perceptions of collaboration in this setting. Informal conversations revealed various incentives for participation, including a shared commitment to the common good, opportunities for critical reflection in a diverse ecosystem, a creative and trustworthy atmosphere, and strengthened personal relationships. These incentives are crucial for sustaining momentum and nurturing collaboration capability.

The interest in collaboration is what motivated individuals to participate in EDD and the Soria Dialogues, suggesting a certain readiness for collaboration. Moreover, the institutional commitment of the organisations involved, evidenced through trust, willingness to work together and investment of time and financial resources, reflects the system's collaboration capability, as indicated by the variables identified by Weber et al. (2007) and explained in section 3.3.3.

The dialogues have played a pivotal role in expanding the ecosystem and enriching its diversity, leading to the establishment of a shared identity and the formalisation of the initiative as an association in 2023.

However, establishing a cause-and-effect relationship between the dialogues and collaboration capability remains challenging, as does discerning the specific impact of the dialogues within the broader scope of EDD initiative. Nevertheless, tangible evidence suggests strengthened relationships and the emergence of new ones,



although these are difficult to trace in such a dynamic context. Partnerships like the Green Employment Platform have grown from the dialogues, testing trust levels, especially when collaboration affects business models and poses risks.

Moreover, the collaborative approach fostered during the dialogues has spread to other contexts, promoting a more horizontal, relational, and empathetic approach to relationship-building. Some organisations have embraced transparency by involving individuals and entities from EDD in their strategic decision-making processes.

### **5.3.6. Case Study C Conclusions**

The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the interconnectedness of global sustainability challenges, emphasising the need for systemic and coordinated responses. However, it also exacerbated social discontent and polarisation, necessitating the establishment of safe, diverse, and inclusive collaborative governance structures (or transition arenas) for democratic conversations. EDD exemplifies such a structure, comprising individuals and organisations from public, private and third sectors with significant influence in Spain.

Case study C focuses on the Soria Dialogues, an annual in-person gathering for EDD ecology, serving as an immersive experience to strengthen relational bonds, trust and commitment to accelerate SDGs implementation. Different collaborative governance models have been tested, with the top-down approach ensuring efficiency and coherence, while the bottom-up approach promotes diversity and shared responsibility, essential for collaborative learning. Leveraging the city's cultural and natural landscape, these dialogues foster a playful and horizontal environment to strengthen collaboration capability. The dialogue model prioritised “dialogic” conversations, emphasising understanding and exploration of perspectives rather than seeking consensus. The case offers interesting insights into how a collaborative arrangement can establish common rules for using dialogue as a means for cultivating collaboration capability.

Ultimately, the intermediary role in co-design and collaborative governance within complex learning environments is both indispensable and often unseen, highlighting the necessity for additional research. This research should focus on enhancing the well-being of those in intermediary positions and identifying the conditions required to reduce the significance of intermediaries once an ecosystem has developed sufficient collaboration capability.

## 5.4. Cross-case Analysis

This subsection explores the relationship between the empirical evidence derived from the multiple exploratory case study outlined in the previous sections of this Chapter and the theoretical foundations elaborated in Chapter 3, integrating insights from the exploratory interview study in Chapter 4.

Utilising the cross-case technique (Yin, 2003) in this subsequent phase of analysis, the objective was to develop a preliminary framework, delineating the design elements necessary for learning environments conducive to fostering collaboration capability.

At this stage, it is important to recall that a key hypothesis of the literature review highlighted the requisite blend of conditions facilitating experiential, collaborative, social and organisational learning to effectively cultivate collaboration capability in transitions (refer to section 3.4).

Drawing on the insights garnered from the literature review, the following discussion focuses on identifying the specific design elements necessary for experiential learning (subsection 5.4.1), collaborative learning (subsection 5.4.2), social learning (subsection 5.4.3), and organisational learning (subsection 5.4.4).

### 5.4.1. Design Elements for Experiential Learning

As indicated in the literature review, adults acquire knowledge and skills most effectively through hands-on experiences, where overcoming challenges leads to reflection and seamlessly integrates learning into their personal understanding (Laal, 2013; McDermott, 1983; Stein, 1998). This practical skill development is often referred to as “learning by doing.”

Empirical evidence from the case studies not only corroborates existing literature but also suggests three elements for designing experiential learning environments that foster collaboration capability:

- Situating the learning context within a collaborative environment and within a transition context, echoing various scholars (Goyal & Howlett, 2020; Loorbach et al., 2015; Pahl-Wostl et al., 2008; Senge, 2006; Senge et al., 2007);
- Using familiar learning and interaction instruments, such as seminars, summer courses or conferences as a starting point to reduce resistances;
- Effectively managing time and space to establish a ritual of gathering and enhance attention and overall wellbeing.

These insights are further elaborated in the following pages.

**a. Embedding Learning in Organisational and Transition contexts**

The cases provide valuable insights into how a learning experience can be integrated within both a transition and an organisational context, whether it involves an individual organisation (case A), a collaborative arrangement (case B) or an ecosystem (case C).

Case A is embedded into the transformation of HEIs within the sustainability transition. The SDGs are compelling HEIs to adopt a collaborative model, both internally and externally, to amplify their impact in addressing global challenges. Specifically, the learning experience is centred around a particular institution, the Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, and targets its research community. Moreover, the case originated from a top-down initiative by the Vice-Rector for Research and Innovation and garnered significant acceptance among researchers, evolving into a movement that engaged over 2000 participants, with approximately 100 actively involved.

Case B is integrated within the Spanish cities transition towards climate neutrality. This transition is gaining momentum in the EU, notably through the Mission 100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities by 2030. Specifically, the learning experience is an integral component of the services offered by citiES2030, the Spanish platform that provides support to the municipalities, backed by the Ministry for Energy Transition. Thus, this case is firmly rooted in a climate mitigation policy, spanning municipal, national and European levels. Collaboration play a pivotal role in accelerating cities' progress by facilitating the sharing of best practices, co-constructing knowledge with other stakeholders, and exerting policy influence on both the Spanish government and the European Commission. The learning community comprises approximately 150 individuals.

Case C is intricately connected to a transition arena, which has evolved into an association, consolidated during the COVID-19 pandemic to exemplify the collaborative and democratic dialogue necessary for advancing towards the SDGs. Various specific transition contexts are interwoven within the operations of this ecosystem, including sustainable energy and mobility, green economy (green jobs), migrations, and more. The EDD learning community comprises approximately 200 individuals.

It is important to highlight that the three cases largely embody the characteristics of “transformational collaboration” outlined in section 3.2, drawing from research by scholars like Austin and Seitanidi (2012), Hamann and April (2013) and Loorbach et al. (2020). These include a systemic shared purpose, high levels of trust and commitment, sustained and innovative interaction, a collaborative leadership model, and the enhancement of partners’ capabilities.

Underpinning learning within the context guarantees that collaboration skills are put into practical use in real-time scenarios and capitalises on existing collaboration dynamics, presenting a clear advantage. Within this framework, there already exists a receptive audience characterised by a certain level of trust and a shared, well-defined objective (or at least the intention to collectively establish one). Cases B and C also exemplify transition arenas with larger groups than those proposed by Rotmans and Loorbach (2009), consistently bringing together approximately 100-150 individuals. Emphasising the transition context within the learning experience is essential to ensure participants recognise the necessity of collaboration in navigating complexity.

However, it is worth noting that the cases are not representative of conflict contexts. A pre-existing wound would require other tools for repair. Instead, the cases stem from shared objectives (a sustainable university, climate-neutral cities, SDGs...) and values, such as generosity, patience, and anticipation. This does not imply the absence of conflict within the cases, particularly when they scale up or when financial considerations come into play. Proof of this is the time took in Case C to establish EDD as an association.

#### **b. Using Familiar Learning and Interaction Instruments**

In the three cases, familiar learning and interaction instruments serve as a framework for cultivating collaboration capability.

In Case A, a seminar programme served as a structured platform for gathering, engaging in dialogue, reflecting on organisational practices and strategies and learning. Together, participants collectively designed the path towards a more cohesive and collaborative model. As a traditional academic forum fostering interdisciplinary dialogue, critical thinking, horizontal participation and collective knowledge construction (Herrán, 2011; Wang et al., 2017), it served as a tool that did not inherently provoke resistance from researchers or governing bodies. In other words, the seminars served as a Trojan horse for change within the university.

Case B employs the “summer course” format as an appealing method to gather the citiES2030 community. Indeed, summer courses are renowned as stimulating environments fostering intellectual growth and personal development within relaxed atmospheres. These intensive learning experiences often cultivate a sense of camaraderie among participants, leading to lasting connections beyond the course duration. This philosophy guided the design of the citiES2030 summer courses in Santander, incorporating leisurely activities in the evening in the city’s beautiful scenarios, encouraging informal interaction and relationship-building among attendees.

Case C leverages the “congress” format to attract a highly broad and diverse audience. Congresses are commonly viewed as intensive gatherings that facilitate the exchange of knowledge, ideas and expertise among professionals. They provide a platform for attendees to stay informed about the latest trends while offering valuable networking opportunities (Neugebauer et al., 2020). This approach informed the design of the Soria Dialogues, providing opportunities for both intellectual exchange and community building.

However, all cases aimed to reframe the traditional instruments to make them more effective in strengthening collaboration. Innovation involves reinterpreting the use of existing concepts (Manzini, 2019). A particular design effort was undertaken in terms of interaction methods and spatial configurations, as will be discussed in sections 5.4.1.c and 5.4.3.

It is important to note that none of the cases explicitly articulated the intention to “teach” collaboration to attendees. While there was a clear desire to foster relationships (networking), there was not a specific emphasis on the necessity of strengthening transformational collaboration. This omission is understandable, as attempting to teach collaboration directly may encounter resistance, with many individuals assuming they already possess such skills. Additionally, collaboration is often seen as too abstract to effectively communicate.

Therefore, the cultivation of collaboration skills should be approached indirectly through the practice of collaborative relationships, reinforced through familiar instruments such as seminars, summer courses or congresses. These tools tend to mitigate resistance, although they inherently embody collaborative values. They serve to take the first steps and establish the foundation for collaboration. When initial learning experiences are successful, the boundaries between the learning experience (e.g., summer course) and the collaborative context (e.g., citiES2030)

become blurred in terms of cultivating collaboration capability. In other words, the collaborative context itself becomes the learning experience.

In other instances, these initial learning experiences can highlight the necessity of acquiring collaboration capability. This was exemplified by the Diputación Foral de Gipuzkoa (regional government) in the Etorkizuna Eraikiz<sup>41</sup> case, which was not included in this research: after seven years of collaboration with several local stakeholders under a collaborative governance model, the regional government sought specific training from the university to develop collaboration capability. In response to this demand, the Universidad del País Vasco, in collaboration with the Basque governance innovation centre Arantzazulab and itdUPM, is in the process of designing a specialised programme.

### **c. Fostering Presence and Ritual**

Especially in cases B and C, iconic venues were selected to create a sense of retreat and motivation. However, it should not be assumed that this is enough to cultivate collaboration capability. It is imperative for learning to be intricately linked with an ongoing and sustained process of collaboration. In all the three cases, careful attention was given to time to foster a state of presence and establish a recurring ritual. Both presence and rituals are recognised for their role in promoting meaningful collaboration and sense of belonging across professional and community spheres (Jordan, 2021; Sennett, 2012).

Case A, for example, implemented a monthly gathering ritual held on Tuesday during lunchtime, profiting of the break between classes. Although the venue varied for each session, design elements such as a consistent session structure, plants, an SDG wheel, and casual furniture were employed to create a cohesive identity and atmosphere.

Case B took place in July, in a coastal city known for beach holidays, specifically on the Magdalena Peninsula, symbolising an escape from daily routine. The condensed nature of the experience, spanning 3 or 4 intensive days, evokes a retreat and fosters a strong sense of time efficiency. The repetition of several locations and design elements in the second edition, such as the structured schedule with theoretical sessions in the morning and workshops in the afternoon, played a pivotal role in establishing a sense of ritual.

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<sup>41</sup> Further information at: <https://www.etorkizunaeraikiz.eus/es/inicio>

Case C occurred in a rural city, offering cultural and natural beauty and pedestrian-friendly surroundings conducive to informal bonding among participants. The chosen setting provides an intensive learning retreat away from the bustling cities of Madrid or Barcelona. The central venue's design aimed for a cosy atmosphere, reducing the theatre's imposing scale. Similarly to case B, various locations and design elements were fundamental in fostering a sense of ritual.

Although not originally designed as annual events, Cases B and C have established a ritual, with plans for future iterations.

Moreover, the design demonstrates a profound intention to care for the participants' wellbeing, echoing the principles of "affective architectures" discussed in section 4.1.2. In all cases, dedicated time was allocated to celebrate collective achievements through various means such as closure conversations (in case A), sharing reflections on accomplishments from the past year (in case B) and nurturing informal interaction spaces (in cases B and C).

In conclusion, prioritising face-to-face interaction and selecting venues that evoke a sense of retreat and celebration contribute to fostering presence, well-being and cohesion. The repetition of design elements and time schedules, such as consistent days, months, times and activity structures, serves to reinforce the ritual.

#### **5.4.2. Design Elements for Collaborative Learning**

Collaborative learning is the second methodology proven to be effective in cultivating collaboration capability, as seen in the literature review (D. W. Johnson & Johnson, 2014). The cases illustrate various learning strategies that align with collaborative learning principles, and shed light on the potential role of intermediaries in the learning process.

##### **a. Collaborative Design Methods and Governance**

The three cases demonstrate a deliberate effort to involve participants in both the programmes' design and decision-making processes. This provides a preliminary opportunity for collaborative interaction towards a specific, short-term and common goal. This approach cultivates commitment and shared responsibility for success, while also building relationships and trust among participants. Indeed, it facilitates the development of *positive social interdependence* and *promotive interaction*, core concepts of collaborative learning as outlined in section 3.4.2 (D.

W. Johnson & Johnson, 2009). Both principles aim to cultivate motivation, commitment, trust and mutual support among peers as they work towards shared objectives. An implicit goal is to develop collaborative skills in participants, including those identified in the literature review: collaborative leadership, dialogue and emotional intelligence.

Specifically, Case A actively engaged the research community, the programme's target audience, in its design and governance. Researchers participated in decision-making bodies, including the steering group, responsible for designing the programme's strategy, the enabling node which provided legitimacy and fostered a safe and trustworthy atmosphere, and the technical team tasked with coordinating activities. Moreover, participants were invited to select relevant topics for inclusion in the program, with the most voted topics incorporated into the design. Feedback and suggestions were collected from participants after each session through short evaluation surveys, with efforts made to incorporate these suggestions into the program design whenever possible. This approach aimed to foster a sense of ownership and involvement among participants.

Case B involved cities and stakeholders in the course design and decision-making with the aim of creating a sense of ownership and shared responsibility, as well as empowering cities as fundamental intermediaries in the pursuit of urban climate neutrality.

Case C promoted a bottom-up approach in its second edition, involving EDD members in decision-making (10 individuals) and driving groups (30 individuals), responsible of proposing a framework, topics of interest, speakers and dialogue principles. This case specifically emphasizes the importance of diversity within the governance and design groups, which is considered essential for the success of collaborative learning (Laal, 2013).

However, cases B and C acknowledged challenges in adopting this collaborative approach, including slower decision-making, loss of focus, an difficulty accommodating divergent stakeholder demands. Facilitators also faced challenges in reducing power imbalances but recognised the value of this approach in cultivating collaboration capability. Case C highlights the utility of predefined criteria for selecting programme aspects to ensure focus, relevance and representativeness across the diverse community involved. The three cases serve as examples of creating an environment where participants feel comfortable expressing their viewpoints without fear of judgement, as discussed in section 4.2.



Some recommendations include: emphasising shared elements and values, and celebrating achievements to recognise complexity and alleviate tension. It is important to clarify that these recommendations may not be adequate in a conflict-ridden context.

### **b. Intermediation: Leading from Behind**

Educational literature acknowledges the pivotal role of a skilled facilitator in ensuring focused and equitable interaction with minimal pedagogical intervention (Dillenbourg, 1999). This role is also considered fundamental in the literature on organisational change, partnership and transitions, where facilitators are often referred to as change agents or intermediaries (Hamann & April, 2013; Hyysalo et al., 2018; Kanda et al., 2020; Kivimaa et al., 2019; Moreno-Serna et al., 2021; Vakola, 2013).

However, the literature review uncovered a gap regarding the role of intermediaries at the intersection of learning and collaboration. In this regard, the studied cases provide valuable insights into the specific activities undertaken by intermediaries in designing, governing and implementing learning experiences aimed at cultivating collaboration capability. Examples of activities include:

- Listening to the (learning) community and integrating their perspectives into the programme design, as proposed in section 4.1.6.
- Facilitating the design and decision-making processes following collaborative learning principles, ensuring adherence to predefined criteria, mediating and translating between stakeholders and interests
- Strategically managing the programme, maintaining focus and ensuring broad and diverse participation.
- Carefully designing the context and interaction methods to foster innovation, continuous improvement, trust, safe dialogue environments, power balance and equitable participation.
- Collecting, analysing, integrating and communicating emerging knowledge, facilitating its transfer to participant organisations.
- Assessing and systematising the process and collaborative methodologies employed for their replication.
- Navigating the political and institutional contexts to anchor the learning process to the transition and contribute to institutionalisations and changes at both in the regime and the system.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that, in Case A, the intermediary role was carried out by two researchers, specifically hired for that purpose using internal university funds, whereas in Cases B and C, a hybrid team consisting of individuals provided by the collaborating organisations assumed this role.

Finally, the cases underscore the paradox of this role being deemed fundamental by the learning community but still undervalued in practice, as observed by the intermediaries interviewed within the case studies. This highlights the importance of further research and practice to address the well-being of those in caregiving roles.

### **5.4.3. Design Elements for Social Learning**

According to scholars, social learning involves individual and collective changes occurring through diverse forms of social interaction (Reed et al., 2010). Across different fields of study, social interaction is widely recognised as a fundamental tool for building cohesion and fostering learning and change (Argyris & Schön, 1999; Bohm, 2004; Dóci et al., 2022; Freire, 2000; D. Grant & Marshak, 2011; Senge, 2006; van Mierlo & Beers, 2020). The studied cases offer valuable insights into the dynamics of interaction conducive to collaboration capability, addressing a gap identified in the literature review.

In particular, the cases adopt a relational, dialogical and creative approach to interaction, aligning with scholars such as Freire (2000), Bohm (2004) or Parker (2018). Furthermore, dialogue in the studied cases is characterised by a delicate balance between reflection and action, allowing for knowledge exchange (discursive interaction) and commitment to action (reflective action), an idea of van Mierlo and Beers (2020) already discussed in section 3.4.

Case A meticulously tailored its interaction design based on the Ford and Ford (1995) model of conversations for change. This involved defining a typology of five conversation formats (opening, inspirational, connection, action and closure), each ranging from low to high levels of interaction. These interactions were both in-person and mediated by digital tools (Q&A and survey apps, visual representation of connections and relationships). In particular, conversations for action provided space for reflective action, allowing participants to contribute to the design of sustainability institutional policies. The case also demonstrated notable efforts to transform hierarchical spaces into *sociopetal* configurations and to apply relational principles to online formats when the pandemic necessitated social distancing.

Just as crucial as designing each interaction was constructing a cohesive narrative that gave meaning to the entire process. Furthermore, the case highlighted the importance of informal conversations in the surrounding of the venue in cultivating collaboration capability

Case B also exemplified a strong dedication to designing interaction spaces, showcasing six instruments employed both synchronously (theoretical and practical sessions, narrative capsules and informal networking spaces) and asynchronously (the boarding pass and the travel log). Theoretical and practical sessions seek to strike a balance between discursive interaction and reflective action, providing a platform for cities and stakeholders to challenge assumptions while exchanging knowledge acquired in their respective professional activities. Challenges particularly arouse in terms of space for the workshops, as the university facilities lacked sufficient room for horizontal interaction within the building designated for the summer course.

Case C focuses on fostering understanding, rather than seeking consensus, among different perspectives on a same issue through dialogical conversations. This approach is viewed as essential for sustainability transition, as it promotes a plural democratic conversation. The ultimate goal was to function as an incubation space for future action-oriented collaborative initiatives centred on sustainability issues, as exemplified the Green Employment Platform. In the Soria Dialogues, the ecosystem designed a set of dialogue principles as a foundation for the design, preparation and moderation of formal conversations. These dialogue principles emphasised their focus on collaboration, empathy and action in addressing transition challenges. Moreover, outdoor interaction methods, such as the “walkshop” methodology, were successfully explored. However, the case still presents challenges regarding audience participation extending beyond walkshops and informal spaces.

Therefore, establishing conditions for social learning requires a meticulous design of interaction, framing it as a relational challenge rather than merely logistical. This approach is crucial for enhancing the impact of dialogues on collaboration capability. The examples illustrate various interaction models, each presenting its own set of challenges and virtues, with interesting experiences with the use of the natural environment in case C and dinner venues in case B.

Finally, the use of *sociopetal* configurations still presents challenges as traditional interaction venues are often characterised by *sociofugal* and highly hierarchical

patterns that hinder diverse and horizontal conversations as those outlined by Bohm (2004; 1991).

#### **5.4.4. Design Elements for Organisational Learning**

As discussed in Chapter 3, organisations face numerous challenges when collaborating in a transformational manner. Thus, the question arises: how can learning experiences move beyond individual learning and integrate design elements that facilitate organisational learning?

The studied cases offer valuable insights into how feedback loops (refer to section 3.4.4 for a definition of single-, double- and triple-loop learning) manifest in practice within a learning experience aimed at fostering collaboration capability.

Case A provided a unique illustration of the initial phases of organisational change, particularly in fostering readiness for change towards a collaborative model. Employing tools like the Thermometer of Interdisciplinarity and facilitated discussions, this initiative provided researchers a space for reflection and suggestions, aiming to catalyse changes in organisational practices, structures and culture. Nevertheless, it also underscored the inherent vulnerability of such endeavours, heavily reliant on institutional commitment and policies, with governing bodies perceiving a loss of control.

Case B gave the opportunity for defining the collaborative framework for the members of citiES2030 platform, outlining how they would work together and assist each other in drafting the EU Climate City Contracts. Both editions also allowed for participants to assess and celebrate previous collaborative efforts and establish new goals for the upcoming year.

Case C introduced feedback loops into the design process. The collaborative drafting of the dialogue principles and selection criteria served as an opportunity to reflect on EDD practices, norms and culture.

However, it would be premature to assume organisational changes. Scholars acknowledge the difficulty of influencing individuals in a manner that significantly impacts organisational behaviour (Huxham & Vangen, 2000). Further research is needed to document long-term institutional changes resulting from this initiatives and to explore new methods for facilitating the transfer of collaboration capability from individuals to their respective organisations.

Finally, it is important to highlight a common trend towards institutionalisation across all cases. In case A, the research communities that emerged from the seminars sought to establish a legal framework within the university to collectively manage funds. In case B, citiES2030 is currently undergoing internal reflection, supporting by an external consulting, to determine the most suitable legal structure for their collaborative context. Meanwhile, in case C, efforts over the past year have been focused on formalising an association. These experiences suggest the significance of institutionalisation for fostering collaboration capability, a necessity that could also be accompanied by learning processes.

## 5.5. Proposal for a Learning Framework

The aim of the multiple-case study was to shed light on the design elements that facilitate the development of collaboration capability. In dialogue with the interview study outlined in Chapter 4 and the literature review synthesised in Chapter 2, the cross-case analysis offered valuable insights into the topic and culminated in the proposal for a learning framework summarised in Table 5.1 and depicted in Figure 5.7. This framework holds prescriptive value for both the cases under study, the itdUPM as an intermediary, and other organisations seeking to cultivate collaboration capability.

Firstly, experiential learning conditions enable individuals to engage in hands-on experiences, providing opportunities to question assumptions and overcome challenges directly applying learning in real-world situations. In practice, conditions emerged from the exploratory study include:

- Embedding the learning experience in organisational and transition contexts, fostering learner awareness.
- Using familiar learning and interaction instruments, such as seminars, summer courses or conferences, which tend to encounter fewer resistances.
- Prioritising face-to-face interaction.
- Establishing a ritual through the repetition of consistent elements such as timeframes, venues, session structure, decoration, graphic design, etc.
- Creating an atmosphere of retreat (away from routine and daily life) and celebration (highlighting achievements, reflecting on progress providing informal and playful interaction spaces).

Secondly, conditions for collaborative learning entail employing methods that provide individuals the chance to learn by doing. Specifically, design elements emerges from the exploration of the case studies are as follows:

- Fostering shared responsibility through collaborative governance, involving a diverse group of participants in decision-making regarding the content, format, structure, etc., of the learning experience.
- Adopting a learning-by-doing approach by engaging participants in the co-design of the learning experience.
- Ensuring the presence of an intermediary (which may be an individual, team or a hybrid team with members from multiple organisations) to lead from behind, in charge of tasks such as facilitating collaborative governance and design, managing and systematising the learning experience, and anchoring it to the political and social context.
- Establishing shared criteria for decision-making in both governance and design at the beginning of the process.
- Ensure diversity in governance and design teams.

Thirdly, conditions for social learning involve interaction methods, which are pivotal for collective learning:

- Embracing a relational, dialogic and creative approach to interaction (further elaborated on this concepts throughout the chapter).
- Designing a typology of formats, each serving distinct purposes, including informal and outdoor interaction.
- Finding a balance between reflection and action, while ensuring the collective meaning construction.
- Attending to spatial configurations, prioritising sociopetal patterns to foster a horizontal atmosphere and mitigate power imbalances.
- Establishing shared rules for dialogue.

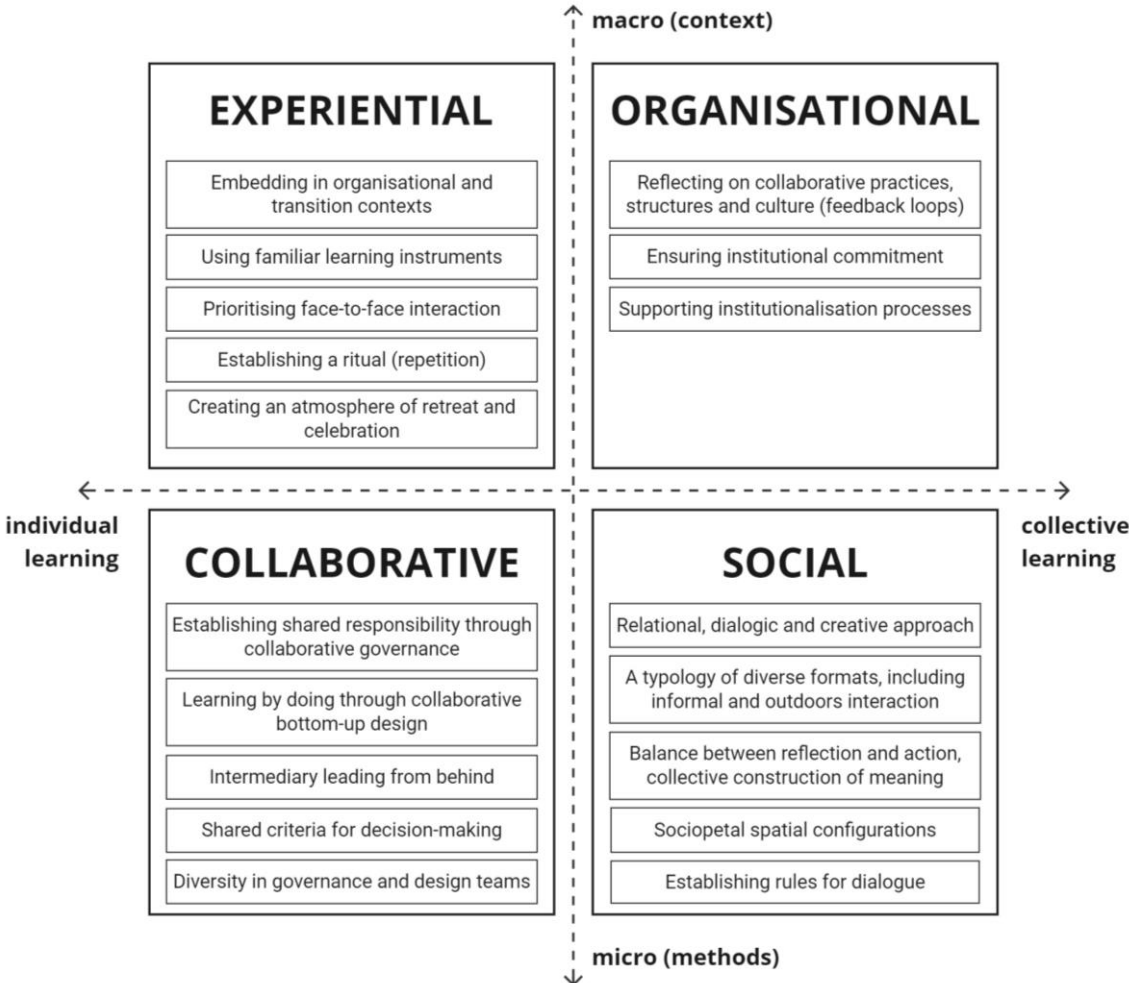
Finally, regarding organizational learning, the cases have uncovered fewer insights, indicating a need for further research. Two key elements merit attention:

- Ensuring institutional commitment to facilitate knowledge transfer and initiate organisational changes.
- Implementing reflective practices on collaborative practices, structures, and culture (feedback loops).
- Supporting the institutionalisation of the collaborative arrangements behind the learning experience.

Table 5.1. Framework for the design of learning experiences

Type of learning	Definition	Design elements
Experiential	Hands-on experiences in real-life collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Embedding learning experience in organisational and transition contexts.</li> <li>Using familiar learning and interaction instruments to reduce resistances.</li> <li>Prioritising face-to-face interaction.</li> <li>Establishing a ritual.</li> <li>Creating an atmosphere of retreat and celebration.</li> </ul>
Collaborative	Collectively problem-solving knowledge and meaning construction in small but heterogeneous groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fostering shared responsibility through collaborative governance.</li> <li>Adopting a collaborative approach to design.</li> <li>Ensuring the presence of an intermediary</li> <li>Establishing shared criteria for decision-making in both governance and design at the beginning of the process.</li> <li>Ensure diversity in governance and design teams.</li> </ul>
Social	Change in understanding through diverse interactions in larger social units or communities of practice within society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Embracing a relational, dialogic and creative approach to interaction.</li> <li>Designing diverse formats for interaction.</li> <li>Balancing reflection and action.</li> <li>Attending to spatial configurations and dialogue rules</li> </ul>
Organisational	Continual collective learning on how to collaborate (feedback loops) conducive to organisational change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensuring institutional commitment to facilitate knowledge transfer and initiate organisational changes.</li> <li>Implementing reflective practices on collaborative practices, structures, and culture, including supporting the institutionalisation of the collaborative arrangements behind the learning experience.</li> </ul>

Source: Own work



**Figure 5.7.** Framework 2: Design elements for learning environments conducive to cultivating collaboration capability

Source: Own work



## 6. Conclusions

### 6.1. Original Contributions of this Research

We live in a context marked by numerous and interrelated crises and heightened uncertainty, involving various yet interconnected transitions. This complexity underscores the need for collective action, a notion supported across scientific and political domains. Scholars advocate for a transformational collaboration to produce systemic changes effectively. However, literature recognises the deficiency in individual and organisational collaboration capabilities at this level. It is imperative to understand how to cultivate this capability, since the development of collaboration capability in individuals and organisations remains largely unexplored.

This thesis has sought to shed light on the strategies organisations can employ to cultivate collaboration capability in the context of sustainability transition. This was achieved by examining the life experiences of individuals with extensive collaboration backgrounds and by analysing how organisations and collaborative arrangements in the Spanish context design and facilitate learning experiences to cultivate collaboration capability. By doing so, this research offers both theoretical and empirical contributions.

Concerning the theoretical contributions, Chapters 2, 4 and 5 offer numerous insights, particularly regarding the pivotal role organisations can assume in cultivating collaboration capability in sustainability transitions.

Firstly, Chapter 2 introduces the initial theoretical contributions, which stem from the novel integration of three distinct fields of study —Transition Management, Organisational Change and Education. In section 3.3 (page 52), the study develops a conceptualisation of collaboration capability as a multidimensional and relational phenomenon. This endeavour involved a comprehensive exploration of its multiple levels, drawing from both classical and contemporary literature in organisational and educational realms. This included an assessment of how collaboration capability is addressed in recent competency frameworks. Furthermore, section 3.4 (page 67) presents a conceptualisation of “cultivating collaboration capability,” exploring the dynamic interplay between individual

learning, organisational change and systemic transformation. It concludes that this process is characterised by its experiential, situated, collaborative, social, iterative and reflexive nature.

Additionally, Chapters 4 and 5 provide theoretical and pragmatic insights that complement existing literature and resonate with the research's commitment to theory-building. Firstly, Chapter 4 concludes with a framework (Figure 4.11, page 129) outlining organisational strategies aimed at fostering changes in practices, structures and culture conducive to collaboration capability. Secondly, Chapter 5 presents a framework (Figure 5.7, page 198) for designing learning experiences aimed at cultivating collaboration capability, encompassing experiential, collaborative, social and organisational design elements. Additionally, findings contribute to addressing a gap in existing literature concerning the role of intermediaries at the intersection of learning and collaboration (section 5.4.2b, page 191) and the specific dynamics of interaction conducive to collaboration capability (discussed in section 4.1.5, page 89; section 4.1.6, page 95; section 5.4.3, page 192).

The empirical findings are also diverse and contribute to extend the understanding of the phenomenon under study. On one hand, eleven semi-structured interviews (see Appendix C for transcriptions) provide in-depth insights into individuals' life experiences in developing collaboration capability. These interviews delve into participants' perspectives and emotions regarding the learning process, the roles they assumed and the challenges they encountered. On the other hand, three case studies conducted in different organisational contexts offer additional empirical insights. These case studies illustrate how organisations design and implement learning experiences to cultivate collaboration capability, validating the relevance of strategies and factors identified in the interview study. Furthermore, each case study provides unique empirical insights, due to the diversity in terms of organisational nature and transition context. Additionally, by including Spanish cases, this research contributes to a literature that has historically been dominated by scholars from northern Europe.

Case A (section 5.1, page 131) depicts an organisational change process within a Spanish medium-size public higher education institution aimed at enhancing its research contribution to address interdisciplinary challenges associated with sustainability. The learning experience was structured as a seminar programme designed for professors and researchers. Notably, it enriches the literature on assessing collaboration capability by applying the “readiness for change”

framework to the development of collaboration capability within organisations during the early stages of a change process.

Case B (section 5.2, page 155) describes a multi-stakeholder learning experience, a summer course attended by Spanish city officials and representatives from private, social and academic sectors, in the context of the urban transition towards climate neutrality. The case provides particularly interesting insights into aligning such learning experiences with European policy objectives.

Case C (section 5.3, page 169) outlines the design and implementation process of an annual conference that brings together a diverse Spanish ecosystem aiming to foster plural and democratic dialogue during times of polarisation. Specifically, this case offers valuable insights into utilising natural settings and playful elements for interaction.

Furthermore, the cases exemplify innovative approaches to governing, designing and managing learning processes. These include actively engaging learners as both designers and decision-makers, establishing a gathering ritual, ensuring a careful consideration in designing interaction methods, and acknowledging the crucial role of intermediaries in the learning process.

Finally, the research contributes to bridge the gap in the Theory of Change illustrated in Figure 3.1 of Chapter 3, specifically by incorporating the prerequisites for collaborative innovation and governance in transitions (refer to Figure 6.1).

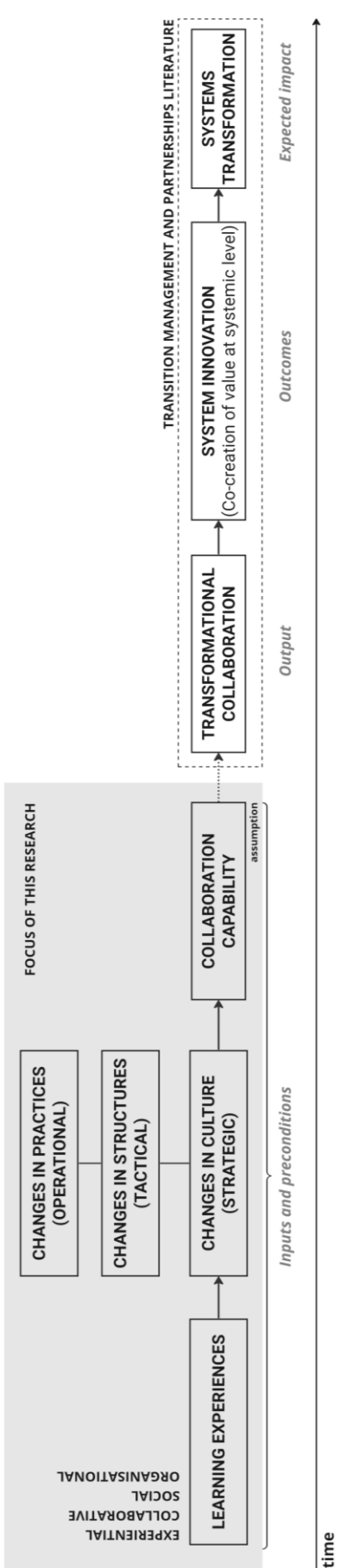


Figure 6.1. Updated theory of change for collaboration in transitions.

## 6.2. Addressing the Research Goals and Questions

The primary inquiry guiding this thesis was: How can organisations strategically cultivate collaboration capability within the context of sustainability transitions?

The research relied on five objectives that have been successfully achieved:

- The collaboration capabilities essential for driving transformative change in sustainability transitions have been described in section 3.3.2 (page 54), involving seven organisational dimensions (environment, culture, strategy, leadership, structure and governance, operations and people) and individual skills such as integrative leadership, dialogue and emotional intelligence.
- Organisational and pedagogical approaches conducive to collaboration capability were identified through the integrative literature review in section 3.4 (page 67), highlighting the experiential, social, collaborative and reflexive nature of the process of learning to collaborate.
- The specific strategies organisations can employ to initiate and sustain changes in their practices, structures and culture, with the aim of enhancing collaboration capability have been explored through the interview-based grounded theory study in Chapter 4 and are summarised in the framework proposed in section 4.4 (page 125).
- The specific design elements for learning experiences aimed at cultivating collaboration capability emerged from the multiple case study in Chapter 5 and are summarised in the framework proposed in section 5.5 (page 195).
- The framework to strategically cultivate collaboration capability within organisational settings in the context of collaboration capability is developed across Chapters 4 and 5, and is further discussed in this section.

The overarching question was subdivided into two specific ones: firstly, examining the specific strategies that organisations can employ to initiate and sustain changes in their practices, structures and culture conducive to collaboration capability (RQ1); and, secondly, exploring the design and implementation of learning experiences to cultivate collaboration capability in the context of sustainability transitions (RQ2). The response to RQ1 is provided in section 4.4 (page 125), while the discussion of RQ2 is presented in section 5.5 (page 195). Additionally, a brief summary of the response to each question is provided below.

*RQ1: What specific strategies can organisations adopt to initiate and sustain changes in their practices, structures and culture conducive to collaboration capability?*

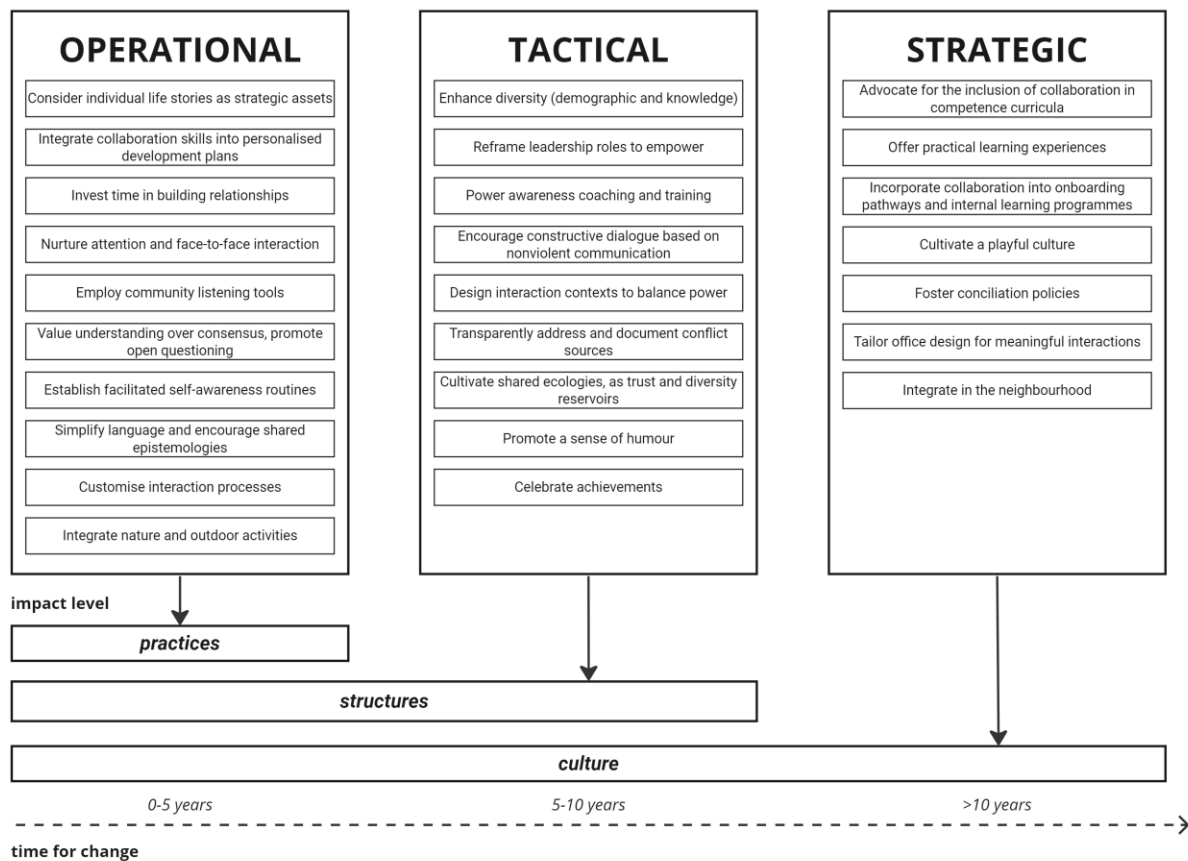
Strategies aimed at initiating changes in practices, structures and culture to foster collaboration capability must be implemented simultaneously, even though their impacts may be realised over short, medium and long terms, respectively.

Key operational strategies for effective changes in practices include valuing individual life stories in recruitment, integrating collaboration skills into personal development plans, prioritising face-to-face meetings to foster meaningful relationships, encouraging open questioning, implementing community listening tools, and customising interaction processes.

At the tactical level (structural changes), organisations should focus on enhancing diversity, reframing leadership roles, transparently addressing conflicts, and developing an understanding of power dynamics, among other tactics.

Meanwhile, at the strategic level (cultural changes), organisations should advocate for collaboration competence in formal education, offer internships, cultivate a playful culture, and design workplaces to facilitate meaningful interactions, among other initiatives.

All findings are summarised in Figure 6.2.



**Figure 6.2.** Framework 1: Strategic changes to cultivate collaboration capability at the organisational level

Source: Own work

*RQ2: How can organisations design and implement learning experiences that effectively cultivate collaboration capability in the context of sustainability transitions?*

The research underscores the importance of integrating experiential, collaborative, social and organisational learning conditions.

Design elements facilitating experiential learning involve embedding learning in organisational and transition contexts, using familiar learning instruments (seminars, summer courses, conferences) to avoid resistances, prioritising face-to-face interaction, establishing gathering rituals and fostering environments for both retreat and celebration.

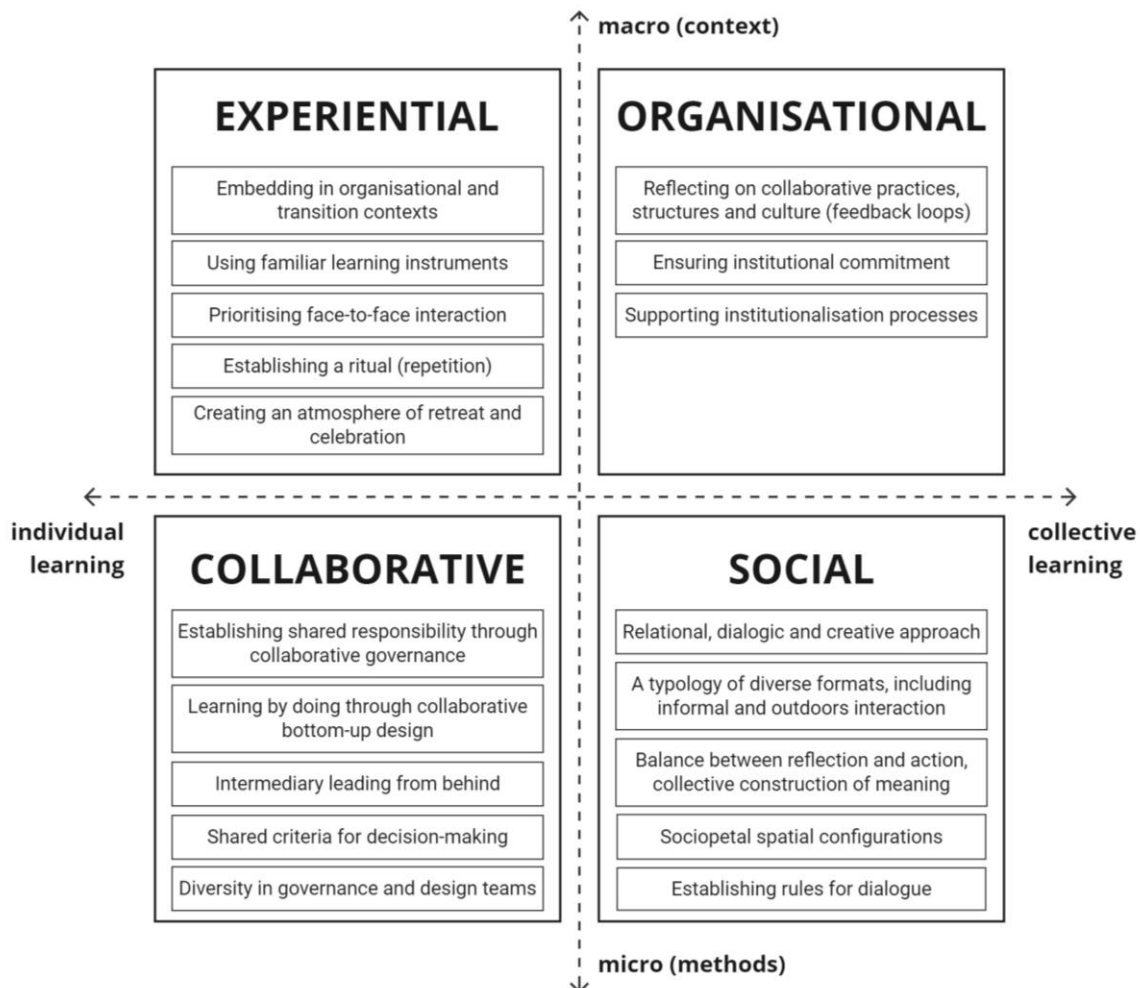
For collaborative learning, organisations should encourage shared responsibility and learning-by-doing through collaborative governance and design, setting

shared decision-making criteria, ensuring team diversity and engaging intermediaries to facilitate learning from a supportive role.

Social learning conditions emphasise relational, dialogic and creative interactions with diverse formats and rules, balancing reflection with action. Particularly noteworthy is the spatial design, which enables the reinvention and reconfiguration of relational dynamics, contributing to blur power imbalances and facilitate more horizontal and spontaneous dialogue.

Finally, achieving organisational learning requires institutional commitment to knowledge transfer and reflective practices concerning collaborative processes, structures and culture (feedback loops).

A synthesis of the findings is depicted in Figure 6.3.



**Figure 6.3.** Framework 2: Design elements for learning environments conducive to cultivating collaboration capability

Source: Own work



*RQ: How can organisations strategically cultivate collaboration capability within the context of sustainability transitions?*

Organisations play an important role in cultivating collaboration capability through the creation of supportive learning environments and the simultaneous implementation of operational, tactical and strategic changes. Developing this capability, both at the individual and organisational levels, involves a process of self-awareness and unlearning, especially in managing emotions and power dynamics, two topics often disregarded both in academic and practitioner literature.

The findings highlight the importance of interaction design, taking a relational approach that considers temporal and spatial aspects. Furthermore they stress the necessity of institutional commitment to drive organisational change and institutionalisation, extending beyond individual learning efforts, an issue deserving further research.

### **6.3. Practical Implications**

This research builds upon the notion, recognised by anthropologists, that collaboration capability is inherent within our species. In addition to addressing the educational needs of children, adolescents and university students, the researcher believes in the role of organisations in creating conducive learning environments to cultivate collaboration capability.

In the current context, there is growing appetite for collaboration across all sectors, motivated by the recognition of the necessity to tackle highly complex challenges that cannot be addressed single-handedly. Moreover, public, private, social and academic organisations face numerous barriers when collaborating, including hierarchical and fragmented structures, complicated bureaucratic procedures, and a lack of shared epistemologies and languages, among other obstacles.

This thesis could prove valuable for organisations and collaborative arrangements just beginning to recognise the importance of cultivating collaboration capability and seeking to initiate effort in this direction. It might also serve as inspiration for organisations that are still hesitant to engage in collaboration.

The commitment of the researcher to the practical application of this knowledge is showcased through her ongoing efforts to translate the proposed frameworks into open-access guides and formal education settings. In particular, she is applying

the knowledge acquired during her PhD to an innovative learning experience co-designed by the Etorikizuna Eraikiz and the itdUPM ecosystems at the Universidad del País Vasco / Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea. This training course aims at building individual and organisational capabilities for collaborative and anticipatory governance.

## 6.4. Limitations

The primary limitation of this research is its scope. Firstly, it is essential to recognise the constraint of the theoretical framework, predominantly grounded in Western philosophical traditions, as previously discussed in section 3.3.2. This limitation restricts the breadth and diversity of worldviews and perspectives on collaboration. Furthermore, both the interview-based study and the case studies are confined to the Spanish context. Recognising the cultural specificity of collaborative experiences and learning processes prompts the need for further empirical research in diverse contexts and the review of non-Western frameworks. These strategies could yield to more generalisable conclusions and help identify context-specific and cultural factors.

Additionally, the author opted not to concentrate on a particular sector. However, delving into specific strategies tailored for public, private, third and academic sectors could offer valuable practical insights to accelerate change.

Furthermore, the matter of conflict and its resolution strategies within the learning contexts were not directly addressed. This was not a deliberate omission by the researcher, but rather the result of case selection. None of the chosen cases commenced with conflict as an environment characteristic. Moreover, in each case, there was a perceived absence of conflict due to established practices that either anticipated or addressed it in the early stages. Consequently, the empirical data did not sufficiently illuminate this issue.

A second limitation concerns the methods employed. The exploratory nature of this research limited the depth of exploration into the identified strategies and design elements, although it remains a valuable groundwork for further investigation by uncovering initial insights. Moreover, grounded theory has encountered criticism from quantitative researchers due to its inherent subjectivity, raising concerns about potential research bias as data interpretation heavily relies on the researcher. Ensuring the validity and credibility of results necessitates prolonged and iterative data collection and analysis, making it time-consuming and resource-

intensive. Consequently, incorporating this method into a thesis presents challenges due to time constraints and resource scarcity. In light of these considerations, the researcher acknowledges the imperative for additional research to enhance both data collection and analysis. Specifically, there is a desire for increased access to interviews with public sector representatives and young professionals, as they are uniquely positioned to drive organisational and societal change. Additionally, there is a keen interest in testing the findings within the contexts already explored as well as in new ones, and providing feedback to the proposed frameworks.

A third limitation lies in the difficulty of assessing collaboration capability, as highlighted by several authors. The absence of adequate frameworks to evaluate the development of collaboration capability over time, influenced by actions undertaken in the studied cases, has led to identifying impacts based on verifiable facts related to various literature references. However, while informative, this approach lacks systematicity, potentially compromising the validity of the research. The researcher thus encourages both qualitative and quantitative researchers to delve deeper into assessing collaboration capability as a multilevel and multidimensional construct, investigating the interactions among different levels and dimensions.

Finally, it is crucial to acknowledge that this research adopts a positive perspective on collaboration, transformation, and their interrelation. However, it is worth noting that collaboration can also be utilised to drive negative transformations, such as infringing upon human rights, fostering oligopolies, contributing to deforestation or inciting conflict. There exists a risk of misusing these findings to pursue objectives that undermine the common good. Therefore, it is encouraged to engage in further discussion regarding the potential misuse of these frameworks and explore strategies and design elements aimed at orienting collaborative attitudes towards societal benefit. Moreover, the approach to building collaboration capability through experiential methodologies also carries the risk of potentially creating negative experiences that may influence participants' future willingness to collaborate. Potential resistance arising from the application of the proposed frameworks also necessitates further investigation.

## 6.5. Further Research Avenues

Future research avenues bound, paving the way for the establishment of an action research line at the itdUPM. This initiative has been waiting to collect a set of real-life cases to study. It will draw upon this research and other theses from colleagues like Jaime Moreno Serna and Miguel Soberón. Some examples of future research directions are described below.

The main contribution of this research lies in the development of a dual-component framework aimed at cultivating collaboration capability within organisational contexts. Consequently, an avenue for future research entails refining and enhancing the robustness of this framework. This may encompass:

- Incorporating a broad spectrum of cultural and philosophical paradigms and worldviews, such as Ubuntu, Sumak Kawsay or Buddhist philosophy, both theoretically and empirically. These perspectives could enrich the diversity of human experiences and viewpoints on collaboration and enhance understanding on the influence of cultural factors in collaboration capability.
- Documenting long-term institutional changes resulting from the initiatives examined in the case study.
- Testing the framework in novel contexts to incorporate additional factors and refine existing ones.
- Conducting more in-depth analyses of each finding gathered in the framework.
- Exploring potential resistances that may arise during the application of the strategies and design elements outlined in the framework.

Furthermore, additional investigation is needed regarding the factors enabling the “transfer” of collaboration capability from individuals to their respective organisations. This entails examining how individual learning catalyses organisational change and identifying methodologies that can facilitate this process. In addition, future research should delve into the conditions necessary for intermediaries to diminish their prominence in the collaboration capability of a system, as discussed in section 5.3.4 (page 175)

Other research avenues pertinent to this investigation involve further exploring the concept of the “workplace as an educator,” in other words, how the configuration of space influences behaviour and shapes the conditions for collaboration capability.

There remains a challenge in assessing collaboration capability, necessitating additional qualitative and quantitative research. Future research on assessment methodologies should address the complexity of the phenomenon, considering its multilayered and multidimensional nature, and explore the interactions between different layers and dimensions.

Moreover, it is encouraged to conduct systematic reviews of both academic and practitioner literature to gain a comprehensive understanding of how collaboration capability is addressed in onboarding and internal training programmes in specific sectors. These reviews should encompass various aspects, including identifying benefits, risks, resistances and challenges, as well as examining governance and design processes, cost investments, decision-making procedures, educational methodologies, incentives and perceptions for both employees and managers. Additionally, assessing outcomes is crucial in these reviews.

It is also imperative to undertake international research on the demand for capacity building specifically focused on collaboration. This will provide a deeper understanding of the specific needs organisations face, offering valuable insights for the developed framework and enhancing its utility and practical application.

Finally, the researcher is interested in exploring the correlation between collaboration capability and democracy, by integrating frameworks from political science.

## **6.6. Concluding thoughts**

Organisations play a crucial role in cultivating collaboration capability. This thesis explored how collaboration capability is integrated into organisational practices, structures and culture through different strategies, with particular focus on learning experiences.

Collaboration is essential for organisations across all sectors to actively contribute to sustainability transitions and effectively address global challenges in a way that benefits society as a whole. However, both individuals and organisations often lack the necessary preparation to collaborate in a transformational manner. Learning to collaborate presents challenges, as collaboration capability cannot be acquired solely through theoretical means, and traditional training methods commonly used in organisational settings are ineffective.

Therefore, the cultivation of collaboration capability in organisational settings emerges as a topic deserving attention, both academically and practically.

This thesis embraced an interdisciplinary approach, merging concepts from Transition Management, Organisational Theory and Educational frameworks. It also adopted an exploratory stance due to the limited understanding of this phenomenon in existing literature, aiming to develop theory with practical application, which is a common goal in management research.

The literature review (Chapter 2, page 7) facilitated the conceptualisation of the phenomenon under study. Collaboration is a multidimensional, multilevel and dynamic capability, whose levels and dimensions are intricately linked, and necessitating continuous learning and adaptation. At the individual level, it entails diverse skills and attitudes such as integrative leadership, problem-solving dialogue and emotional intelligence. For organisations, collaboration permeates dimensions including personnel, leadership and culture. Moreover, the review underscores the significance of a supportive environment for developing collaboration capability, emphasising the experiential, collaborative, social and reflexive nature of learning within this context.

Through an interview-based grounded theory study, this thesis identified a set of strategies that organisations can employ to initiate changes towards collaboration in their practices (short-term impact), structures (medium-term impact) and culture (long-term impact). Among the 14 strategies identified and consolidated in a framework (section 4.4, page 125), notable examples include investing time in relationship building, nurturing attention and face-to-face interaction and establishing facilitated self-awareness routines at the operational level; at the tactical level, strategies include enhancing diversity, reframing leadership roles to share power and celebrating achievements; and at the strategic level, change initiatives involve cultivating a playful culture, designing office spaces for meaningful interactions and implementing conciliation policies.

Through a multiple-case study, the research proposes a framework for designing learning experiences within organisational contexts that cultivate collaboration capability (section 5.5, page 195). This framework delineates numerous design elements that facilitate the creation of experiential, collaborative, social and organisational learning environments, in dialogue with the factors identified in the emerging framework from the precedent stage of the research.

These findings particularly aim to provide valuable insights and inspiration for organisations and collaborative arrangements embarking on collaborative efforts, as they recognise the significance of cultivating collaboration capability to enhance their impact in sustainability transitions.

As it is typical in exploratory research, this thesis presents numerous opportunities for future research, which will contribute to the development of a research line on collaboration in sustainability transitions at the itdUPM.

Finally, it must be acknowledged that the researcher has put her heart and soul into crafting this thesis, echoing the sentiment expressed by the 17<sup>th</sup>-century Spanish writer Baltasar Gracián in *El héroe*<sup>42</sup>:

*“What does it matter if the understanding advances if the heart remains behind?”*

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<sup>42</sup> Translation by the researcher. Original quote: “¿Qué importa que el entendimiento se adelante si el corazón se queda?” (Gracián, B. (1637). *El héroe* (8.<sup>a</sup> ed.). Espasa-Calpe. [https://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra-visor/el-heroe-el-discreto--0/html/000545ae-82b2-11df-acc7-002185ce6064\\_2.html](https://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra-visor/el-heroe-el-discreto--0/html/000545ae-82b2-11df-acc7-002185ce6064_2.html))





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# Appendix

## Appendix A. Theoretical Framework Complementary Tables

Appendix A presents concise summaries of the competency frameworks discussed in the literature review (Section 3.3.2).

**Table A1.** Collaboration skills in the key competencies of the OECD's DeSeCo project

Key competencies	Components
Ability to cooperate	Present ideas and listen to those of others Understand the dynamics of debate Follow an agenda Construct tactical or sustainable alliances Negotiate Make decisions that allow for different shades of opinion
Ability to manage and resolve conflict	Identify areas of agreement and disagreement Reframe problems Prioritise needs and goals

Source: OECD (2005)

**Table A2.** Transformative competencies in the Learning Framework 2030

Transformative competency	Knowledge, skills, attitudes and values	Connection to collaboration
Creating new value	Creative and critical thinking Cooperation and collaboration Curiosity Open-mindedness Adaptability	Collaborative innovation
Reconciling tensions and dilemmas	System thinking Deep understanding of opposing ideas Understanding interconnections Anticipating short and long-term consequences of one's actions Finding practical solutions to dilemmas or conflicts	Conflict management and resolution
Taking responsibility	Responsibility Self-regulation, self-control, self-efficacy Adaptability Problem-solving	Ego management

Source: Based on OECD (2008)

**Table A3.** UNESCO's sustainability competency framework

<b>Key competencies</b>	<b>Components</b>
Systems thinking	Ability to recognise and understand relationships, to analyse complex systems, to perceive the ways in which systems are embedded within different domains and different scales, and to deal with uncertainty.
Anticipatory	Ability to understand and evaluate multiple futures – possible, probable and desirable – and to create one's own visions for the future, to apply the precautionary principle, to assess the consequences of actions, and to deal with risks and changes.
Normative	Ability to understand and reflect on the norms and values that underlie one's actions and to negotiate sustainability values, principles, goals and targets, in a context of conflicts of interests and trade-offs, uncertain knowledge and contradictions.
Strategic	Ability to collectively develop and implement innovative actions that further sustainability at the local level and further afield.
Collaboration	Ability to learn from others; understand and respect the needs, perspectives and actions of others (empathy); understand, relate to and be sensitive to others (empathic leadership), deal with conflicts in a group; and facilitate collaborative and participatory problem-solving.
Critical thinking	Ability to question norms, practices and opinions; reflect on own one's values, perceptions and actions; and take a position in the sustainability discourse
Self-awareness	Ability to reflect on one's own role in the local community and (global) society, continually evaluate and further motivate one's actions, and deal with one's feelings and desires.
Integrated problem-solving	Overarching ability to apply different problem-solving frameworks to complex sustainability problems and develop viable, inclusive and equitable solution that promote sustainable development – integrating the above-mentioned competencies.

Source: UNESCO (2018)



**Table A4.** Knowledge, skills and attitudes for collective action in European GreenComp

<b>Knowledge, skills and attitudes</b>	<b>Statements</b>
Knowledge	1 Knows the main sustainability stakeholders in one's own community and how to contact them
	2 Knows that working with others to promote nature and support fairness requires respect for democracy
	3 Knows how to work with diverse participants to create inclusive visions for a more sustainable future.
	4 Knows the importance of empowering individuals and organisations to work collaboratively.
Skills	1 Can build diverse coalitions to address wicked problems related to sustainability.
	2 Can create transparent inclusive and community-driven processes.
	3 Can create opportunities for joint action across communities, sectors and regions.
	4 Can work collectively in sustainability change processes.
	5 Can identify stakeholders' strengths.
	6 Can act in line with shared narratives on sustainable futures.
Attitudes	1 Is willing to engage with others to challenge the status quo.
	2 Is motivated to collaborate in order to shape inclusive sustainable futures
	3 Prioritises sustainability values and interests when taking collective action.
	4 Wants to give back to the community and nature.
	5 Is committed to change for a more inclusive and fair future.

Source: European Commission. Joint Research Centre (2022). Note: Collective action is defined as acting in collaboration with others.

**Table A5.** Learning objectives related to collaboration in higher education.

<b>Type of skill</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Learning outcomes</b>
Theoretical	Basic	<p>Understand general concepts critical to interpersonal interactions and their basic benefits (i.e. listening, communication, negotiation, conflict resolution, teamwork, stakeholder engagement...).</p> <p>Describe the basic types, phases and techniques of teamwork and stakeholder engagement in sustainability projects.</p>
Practical	Basic	<p>Work effectively and respectfully in teams on specific projects.</p> <p>Identify different groups of stakeholders relevant to a particular project.</p> <p>Conduct stakeholder interviews to build understanding of different perspectives and values.</p>
	Intermediate	<p>Participate in or lead team work with stakeholder engagement.</p> <p>Consistently foster team success by peer-mentoring, building upon strengths and overcoming weaknesses.</p> <p>Resolve internal team conflicts with and without external mediation.</p> <p>Initiate and maintain stakeholder contacts.</p> <p>Incorporate diverse and/or conflicting stakeholder input to sustainability problem-solving activities.</p> <p>Serve a diversity of roles in stakeholder engagement activities (presentation, facilitation, note-taking...).</p> <p>Fully assess the need for and gaps associated with teamwork and stakeholder engagement for one's job activities and profession.</p>
	Advanced	<p>Seek out and experiment with novel approaches of working in teams and engaging stakeholders</p> <p>Foster and facilitate team and individual growth through advanced goal setting activities, evaluation and reflexive practices</p> <p>Coordinate work across multiple teams working in concert on complex sustainability problem-solving activities</p> <p>Conduct stakeholder engagement in complex/high risk settings that require negotiation and conflict resolution activities</p> <p>Communicate to diverse audiences, in written and oral formats, the result of sustainability-problem solving efforts</p>

Source: Based on Wiek et al. (2015, p.251)

Table A6. Inner Development Goals competency framework. Dimensions 1 and 2.

Dimension	Description	Skills, values and attitudes
<b>Being – Relation to Self</b>	Cultivating our inner life and developing and deepening our relationship to our thoughts, feelings and body help us be present, intentional and non-reactive when we face complexity.	<p>Inner compass: Having a deeply felt sense of responsibility and commitment to values and purposes relating to the good of the whole.</p> <p>Integrity and authenticity: A commitment and ability to act with sincerity, honesty and integrity.</p> <p>Openness and learning mindset: Having a basic mindset of curiosity and a willingness to be vulnerable and embrace change and grow.</p>
<b>Thinking – Cognitive Skills</b>	Developing our cognitive skills by talking different perspectives, evaluating information and making sense of the world as an interconnected whole is essential for wise decision-making.	<p>Self-awareness: Ability to be in reflective contact with own thoughts, feelings and desires; having a realistic self-image and ability to regulate oneself.</p> <p>Presence: Ability to be in the here and now, without judgement and in a state of open-ended presence.</p> <p>Critical thinking: Skills in critically reviewing the validity of views, evidence and plans.</p> <p>Complexity awareness: Understanding of and skills in working with complex and systemic conditions and casualties.</p> <p>Perspective skills: Skills in seeking, understanding and actively making use of insights from contrasting perspectives.</p> <p>Sense-making: Skills in seeing patterns, structuring the unknown and being able to consciously create stories</p> <p>Long-term orientation and visioning: Long-term orientation and ability to formulate and sustain commitment to visions relating to the larger context</p>

Source: Based on Jordan (2021)

**Table A7.** Inner Development Goals competency framework Dimensions 3 and 4.

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Skills, values and attitudes</b>
<b>Relating</b> – Caring for others and the world	Appreciating caring for and feeling connected to others, such as neighbours, future generations or the biosphere, helps us create more just and sustainable systems and societies for everyone.	<p>Appreciation: Relating to others and to the world with a basic sense of appreciation, gratitude and joy.</p> <p>Connectedness: Having a keen sense of being connected with and/or being a part of a larger whole, such as a community, humanity or global ecosystem.</p> <p>Humility: Being able to act in accordance with the needs of the situation, without concern for one's own importance.</p> <p>Empathy and Compassion: Ability to relate to others, oneself and nature with kindness, empathy and compassion and the intention to address related suffering</p>
<b>Collaborating</b> – Social Skills	To make progress on shared concerns, we need to develop our abilities to include, hold space and communicate with stakeholders with different values, skills and competencies.	<p>Communication skills: Ability to really listen to others, to foster genuine dialogue, to advocate own views skilfully, to manage conflicts constructively and to adapt communication to diverse groups.</p> <p>Co-creation skills: Skills and motivation to build, develop and facilitate collaborative relationships with diverse stake-holders, characterised by psychological safety and genuine co-creation.</p> <p>Inclusive mindset and intercultural competence: Willingness and competence to embrace diversity and include people and collectives with different views and backgrounds.</p> <p>Trust: Ability to show trust and to create and maintain trusting relationships</p> <p>Mobilisation skills: Skills in inspiring and mobilising others to engage in shared purposes.</p>

Source: Jordan (2021)

Table A8. Inner Development Goals competency framework. Dimension 5.

Dimension	Description	Skills, values and attitudes
<b>Acting</b> – Driving change	Qualities such as courage and optimism help us acquire true agency, break old patterns, generate original ideas and act with persistence in uncertain times.	<p>Courage: Ability to stand up for values, make decisions, take decisive action and, if need be, challenge and disrupt existing structures and views.</p> <p>Creativity: Ability to generate and develop original ideas, innovate and be willing to disrupt conventional patterns.</p>
		<p>Optimism: Ability to sustain and communicate a sense of hope, positive attitude and confidence in the possibility of meaningful change.</p>
		<p>Perseverance: Ability to sustain engagement and remain determined and patient even when efforts take a long time to bear fruit.</p>

Source: Jordan (2021)

## Appendix B. Detailed Descriptions of Research Methods

### a. Model of Informed Consent

#### **Informed Consent For Participation as an Interviewee in the Research “Cultivating Collaboration Capability in Sustainability Transitions”**

The purpose of this document is to inform you of your participation as an interviewee in the doctoral research “Cultivating Collaboration Capability in Sustainability Transitions.” The aim is to identify the necessary conditions for enhancing collaboration capability within organisational contexts.

The interviews will be recorded, transcribed, and stored in the researcher’s personal cloud under password protection. Subsequently, the anonymised interviews will undergo coding and analysis, potentially leading to publication in peer reviewed papers and inclusion in the thesis report.

The contact researcher IRENE EZQUERRA LÁZARO expresses willingness to clarify any questions that may arise regarding participation in the interview.

Ms./Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, with ID \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby express my consent to participate in the interview related to the doctoral research “Cultivating Collaboration Capability in Sustainability Transitions.”

I declare that I have read the document, understand its contents and the need to provide my consent, being able to withdraw from participation at any time.

In case of participation of a minor:

Ms./Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, with ID \_\_\_\_\_

and/or Ms./Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, with ID \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ as the mother/father or legal guardian the minor

\_\_\_\_\_, authorise his/her participation in the interview related to the doctoral research “Cultivating Collaboration Capability in Sustainability Transitions.”

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## b. Code Descriptions

Table B1. Code definition within “Operational” family

Label	Element	Description
LIFE STORIES	Short definition	Unveiling the value of life stories
	Code description	Narrative aspects contributing to understanding individuals' life stories and how these shape their perspectives and behaviours in terms of collaboration.
	Use	When discussing personal biographies, childhood experiences, hobbies and significant life events.
	Avoid	Anecdotes unrelated to the study topic.
	Example	“In a football match, decisions must be made collaboratively. I believe it's a secure environment because you feel comfortable with your team. You can propose ideas, and everyone deliberates on them because, after all, it's a team” (Man, 17, student)
SELF- AWARENESS	Short definition	Embracing emotions and self-awareness in collaboration
	Code description	Narrative aspects defining the process of self-reflection and emotional awareness during collaboration.
	Use	When discussing emotions experienced during collaboration and acknowledging strengths and weaknesses in managing them
	Avoid	When closely related to “presence” (see label PRESENCE)
	Example	“You need to be open to ask yourself: What is going on? What kind of relationships are being established?” (Man, 61, private sector)
PRESENCE	Short definition	Nurturing presence and attention
	Code description	Narratives on the learning process of being physically and mentally present during collaborative efforts.
	Use	When describing strategies for developing presence, moments of profound connection, and collaboration failures due to lack of presence.
	Avoid	When referring only face-to-face interaction without conveying attentiveness and consciousness.
	Example	“To arrive calmly, serenely, without stress, without rush... With the feeling that you have thought about this conversation, that you have worked on it... So that you create a quality space in which you can be centred and prepared” (Woman, 53, nonprofit).
TIME	Short definition	Strategic time investment in collaboration
	Code description	Perspectives on the use of time to foster collaborative relationships and capabilities.
	Use	Considering life rhythms, time efficiency, work-life balance, quality time...
	Avoid	When discussing life stages (see label LIFELONG LEARNING)
	Example	“As the sessions progressed, a growing sense of comfort emerged. We got to know each other. We gained a clear understanding of each person's strengths and abilities” (Woman, 42, participant in the Spanish Citizen Assembly)
DIALOGUE	Short definition	Facilitating meaningful dialogue for collaboration
	Code description	Insights into significant discussions, whether formal or informal, influencing the development of collaboration capability.
	Use	Reflecting on dialogue skills, tools and emotions in organisational and learning contexts.
	Avoid	When dialogue does not involve organisational or learning contexts.

	Example	“A part of the dialogue, I think, is to focus on what you want to say, to be clear, to be concise, to try to use polite formulas that sometimes we overlook, but that simply serve to empathize more with the person you are speaking to.” (Woman, 47, private sector).
LISTENING	Short definition	Tailoring interaction through active listening
	Code description	Considerations on listening strategies and tools for empathy and understanding in collaborative efforts.
	Use	Exploring the learning process of developing listening skills and the significance of listening.
	Avoid	When used in very general terms.
	Example	“To understand at a deeper level before making any kind of proposal, even before bringing people together. To have a deeper knowledge of what perceptions your agents have about what is happening. And not only on a superficial level, but a deeper level of what they are saying and what they are not saying, for example about the possibility of change” (Man, 50, nonprofit and academia)

Source: Own work

**Table B2.** Code descriptions within "Tactical" family

Label	Element	Description
LEADERSHIP	Short definition	Reframing leadership: from sustaining power to empowering
	Code description	Description of leadership characteristics and styles conducive to successful collaboration, as well as shifts in organisational roles and strategies aimed at changing practices and mindsets regarding power.
	Use	When these perceptions are primarily informed from their personal experiences in leadership roles. They may also draw from broader professional insights and observations.
	Avoid	References to theoretical concepts on leadership not grounded in personal experiences or discussions on power imbalances (see label “POWER”)
	Example	“You need to approach the process with the mindset that you have the capacity to create a space where, through collaborative efforts, the outcome is enhanced. It's about cultivating an environment where empowerment, power-sharing, delegation, and authority distribution prevail over exerting power over others” (Woman, 53, nonprofit).
DIVERSITY	Short definition	Enhancing diversity
	Code description	Reflections on personal or organizational experiences with diversity, covering opportunities and challenges.
	Use	Including evaluations within their own organisations and strategies employed for diversity enhancement.
	Avoid	Do not confuse with label IDENTITY.
	Example	“Although we have accumulated specific experiences, there’s still a pressing need to systematically and comprehensively integrate them into our organisation, considering that they logically won’t be within the organisation forever, as we aim to help them overcome their vulnerability” (Man, 51, nonprofit network)
POWER	Short definition	Addressing power dynamics
	Code description	Discussion on situations characterised by power imbalances.
	Use	When reflecting on behaviours and emotions regarding power.
	Avoid	When power refers to leadership (see LEADERSHIP label).



	Example	“Everyone’s gotta feel comfortable, you know? There have been times where I joined in on discussions, and I could tell that some people really knew their stuff about the topic. When it was my turn to participate, I was like, ‘Maybe I’ll say something dumb’. So, it is all about feeling that you are in the right place.” (Man, 17, student)
CONFLICT	Short definition	Transforming conflict into a learning opportunity
	Code description	Personal experiences involving conflict.
	Use	When discussing conflict sources, resolution strategies, emotions and associated learning processes.
	Avoid	Experiences involving conflict where collaboration or understanding is not sought.
	Example	“In our interactions with various entities, we frequently assumed a defensive posture, expecting potential rejection of our proposals. Over time, I’ve cultivated an approach that is free from preconception.” (Man, 51, nonprofit network)

Source: Own work

**Table B3.** Code descriptions within "Strategic" family

Label	Element	Description
LEARNING EXPERIENCE	Short definition	Understanding collaborative projects as immersive experiences
	Code description	Characteristics of learning environments where collaboration skills are/should be addressed.
	Use	When discussing formal, non-formal or informal learning environments and their impact collaboration capability
	Avoid	When not explicitly described as a “learning experience”.
	Example	“Service learning encourages students to cultivate non-transactional relationships in a professional environment. It’s a way of learning to collaborate.” (Man, 51, nonprofit network)
PLAY	Short definition	Cultivating a culture of playfulness to enhance collaboration
	Code description	Relationship between play and collaboration
	Use	When describing playful activities or moments in their lives, ranging from childhood street play to leisure activities, sports or any form of play, and discuss how this environment contributes to collaboration or competition.
	Avoid	When not explicitly described as a playful experience.
	Example	“Collaborative play wasn’t just an option, it was an imperative. We were literally kicked out of the house at a certain hour and our parents would say ‘Come back for lunch.’ After lunch they would send us out again until the afternoon.” (Man, 50, nonprofit and academia)
WORKPLACE	Short definition	Harnessing the workspace as an educational tool for collaboration
	Code description	Experiences and perceptions on how the workplace influences collaboration.
	Use	Includes symbolic aspects, spatial configuration, use of nature, etc, impacting collaboration.
	Avoid	When the workplace is mentioned neutrally, without exploring organizational dynamics or culture and their effect on collaboration.
	Example	“Setting up meetings in a circle, when possible, serves as a means to open up the conversation and avoid the usual hierarchical structure.” (Man, 61, private sector)

Source: Own work

**Table B4.** Cross-family code descriptions

<b>Label</b>	<b>Element</b>	<b>Description</b>
IDENTITY	Short definition	Personal characteristics impacting collaboration capability
	Code description	Aspects of identity perceived to influence collaboration capability
	Use	When discussing cultural background, gender, age, profession, origin, childhood experiences, and their impact on collaboration
	Avoid	Do not confuse with labels DIVERSITY and LIFE STORIES
	Example	“When refugees come out of a context of war, conflict, social tension or discrimination, they often carry a heavy burden of anxiety, fear, frustration, and, at times, an embedded inclination toward violence. This doesn’t necessarily signify an unwillingness to collaborate with others, but rather stems from their prior exposure to violence.” (Woman, 47, multilateral agency)
FACILITATOR	Short definition	Role of facilitating collaboration
	Code description	Descriptions of professionals facilitating collaboration capability
	Use	When interviewees refer to facilitators, brokers, mediators, coaches, professors, etc.
	Avoid	-
	Example	“I’m receiving a lot of help because we have many supports in the organization, such as coaching and mentoring” (Woman, 53, nonprofit)
LIFELONG LEARNING	Short definition	Continuous process of building collaboration capability
	Code description	Learning experiences throughout an individual’s lifetime
	Use	When describing the need for ongoing learning in professional experiences.
	Avoid	Do not use when discussing hobbies.
	Example	“I was thinking about recent processes in which I want collaboration to emerge and I am not succeeding. This challenges me a lot. What do I have to change? What do I have to do differently to make it happen?” (Woman, 53, nonprofit)
DIGITAL	Short definition	Collaboration mediated by digital technology
	Code description	Perceptions on the influence of digital tools and experiences of digital collaboration.
	Use	When discussing remote work, video calls, social media, and collaborative experiences during the pandemic lockdown.
	Avoid	-
	Example	“The screen wears you down. When you’re on a video call, you are at the same time sending emails or looking at WhatsApp. Therefore both professional and relational involvement is very different and it is affected” (Man, 51, nonprofit network).
NONVIOLENT COMMUNICATION	Short definition	Promoting nonviolent communication
	Code description	Interviewees’ learning process in using effective, respectful, and peaceful communication techniques
	Use	When describing specific tools and learning processes to improve respectful communication
	Avoid	Do not confuse with label DIALOGUE
	Example	“I am also learning a lot about nonviolent communication, where the other person feels completely valued, recognised, feels that they are contributing

<b>Label</b>	<b>Element</b>	<b>Description</b>
		value to that relationship, and you are able to express it” (Woman, 53, nonprofit).
CREATIVITY	Short definition	Fostering creativity in collaboration
	Code description	Reference to co-creation processes and tools
	Use	When discussing processes, methods, tools, and challenges in collective creativity.
	Avoid	When creativity is mentioned without a connection to collaboration.
	Example	“What doesn't work for us in the network? Bringing people together to work on a topic on which no one is an expert. It doesn't work.” (Man, 51, nonprofit network)

Source: Own work

## Appendix C. Interview Study Guide and Transcriptions

### a. Interview Study guide

**Table C1.** Semi-structured interview guideline for grounded theory

Section	Questions
Introduction	<p>Greeting and gratitude for participating in the interview.</p> <p>Presentation of the interview objective: exploring the organisational factors that foster individual learning of collaboration capability, particularly those related to dialogue.</p>
Icebreaker	<p>Can you remember your favourite childhood game and what made it special for you? How do you see this game as related to the concept of collaboration?</p>
Individual level	<p>In your experience, can you recall a specific instance where dialogue played a crucial role in collaboration?</p> <p>What aspects of the dialogue do you believe were pivotal for success in collaboration? This could include factors like tone, involvement of specific individuals, environment, the use of a particular language, and any aspect the interviewee bring to the conversation.</p> <p>Personally, how did you experience this situation? What challenges did you encounter? Are there any aspects that did not work out as planned, and if so, how would you approach them differently now?</p> <p>What did you learn from this experience? How has it influenced how you approach collaboration?</p>
Organisational level	<p>How would you define your organisational culture regarding collaboration and dialogue?</p> <p>Does this culture extend to internal operations? Are there formal practices, structures or spaces within your organisation that promote pluralistic dialogue, collaboration, and the collective construction of meaning internally?</p> <p>How does your organisation establish collaborations with others? Do you believe this mechanisms are effective to achieve a transformation?</p>
Closing	<p>Is there anything else you would like to add or elaborate on?</p> <p>I would like to extend my sincere thanks for your participation and insights.</p>

Source: Own work

## b. Interview original transcriptions

Subsequently, the original Spanish transcripts of the interviews are provided as a primary source of evidence. The introduction provided by the interviewer and the closing section have been omitted, retaining only the core portion of the interviews that has been coded and analysed. Additionally, any references to specific individuals, locations or organisations have been excluded to preserve the anonymity of the interviewees.

### *Interview 1: Woman, 47, private sector*

Date: 4<sup>th</sup> July 2022 | Location: online | Duration: 28 min 47 s

Question (Q): ¿Podrías describir, lo más detalladamente posible, una experiencia personal de colaboración en la que consideres que el diálogo ha tenido un papel clave a la hora de establecer un ambiente de confianza, construir compromiso y llevar a consensos?

Answer (A): Bueno, sobre todo en la interlocución con las administraciones públicas, es cómo hacerles llegar los mensajes para hacer entrar en la agenda pública alguno de los temas más relevantes que tienen que ver con la economía, la sociedad y el mundo de la empresa. Cuando pensaba en esta entrevista, pensaba en cuáles son los factores clave cuando quieres entablar un diálogo, qué autorreflexión te haces para llegar a los temas que quieres transmitir. Primero te preparas para definir qué quieres decir porque es muy importante marcarte los límites para no irte por los derroteros. Una parte del diálogo yo creo que es focalizar en lo que quieres decir, ser claro, ser breve, intentar utilizar fórmulas de cortesía que a veces se nos pasan pero que simplemente lo que hacen es desempatizar más con quien tienes delante. En mi experiencia personal, es también mostrarte cercano. La discusión de las ideas no está para nada reñida con una careta o con una parte de frialdad; creo que la cercanía es un punto clave para llegar al otro y para que el otro llegue a ti. En el momento de preparar tu intervención, tener diferentes registros, poder poner el acento en algunas de las cosas claves. Aunque nos parezca un poco raro, a veces intentar también repetir tu mensaje de distintas formas, pero hacer llegar al otro aquello que a ti te interesa (siempre desde el exponer de una forma clara, sencilla)... Estos elementos creo que son muy importantes en el momento de interlocutar. Y de aspectos más gestuales. La mirada: tener la interlocución con quién estás hablando, mirarle a los ojos, ver cómo reacciona a lo que tú le dices; tu postura: cómo te sientas, esto que dicen tan clásico los psicólogos de no cruzar los brazos, cosas de este estilo que te hacen parecer que estás más atento; y la gestualidad: el hecho de poder utilizar las manos, de moverte con tranquilidad, de enfatizar algún gesto, que creo que esto también te hace más humano, te hace más próximo, te hace acercarte a quién estás hablando. Una cosa muy importante que nos dicen y no practicamos es la escucha activa: cuando tienes a alguien delante estar abierto a todo

aquello que dice para poder reaccionar, dejarle acabar e incorporar aquello que te están diciendo de manera que tú puedas modificar parte de tus argumentos para seguir adelante con aquello que estás intentando transmitir y compartir. Estos son algunos aspectos de entrada que creo que pueden ser útiles en el momento de intentar dialogar, de organizar un diálogo que sea fructífero.

Q: Ya me has respondido la siguiente pregunta, que era qué condiciones propiciaban ese diálogo, cuáles eran tus recomendaciones o qué es lo que a ti te funciona, con lo que tú te sientes cómoda. ¿En qué situaciones te ha costado más entablar ese diálogo? ¿Qué condiciones se dieron para que a ti te costará más esfuerzo o cómo viviste tú situaciones en las que no se han dado estas condiciones y cómo saliste de ellas?

A: Igual es muy manido, pero yo creo que la confrontación de ideas más políticas son los momentos más difíciles. Cuando la parte ideológica juega un papel o cuando se confrontan temas claves para mí, como pueden ser derechos humanos. Todo lo que tiene que ver con no respetar los derechos humanos... ahí sí que hay una línea que quizás me cuesta más. Partir de premisas que aunque yo quiera me son muy difíciles de cambiar, hablar con gente que no respeta la diferencia de color ni de orientación sexual... Estos temas son los que más me cuestan. Cuando es un diálogo que sabemos que no va a llevar a un punto común porque la distancia es muy grande, mi aproximación es la de no sucumbir a decir aquello que yo pienso, pero intentar decirlo con la máxima educación posible, con la máxima tecnicidad (es decir, utilizando los argumentos científicos que en aquel momento puedas tener a mano) porque esto es lo que te va a distanciar más de la parte más emocional, que al final te llevará a un conflicto sí o sí. Ahí es donde he visto más dificultades en el ámbito del diálogo, y sobre todo de, al final, llegar a un consenso que te haga llegar a una solución conjunta. Yo lo que intento es ser el máximo respetuosa, saber que en esta vida hay que confrontar muchas ideas distintas y que tú no vas a convencer al otro respecto a algunos temas básicos como son los derechos humanos. Él o ella tampoco te va a convencer a ti. Respeto máximo y utilización en la medida de lo que puedas de los argumentos científico-técnicos que te avalen y que te den apoyo a aquella argumentación que estás utilizando.

Q: ¿Tú dirías que en tu organización todo el mundo trabaja como tú, que este enfoque es común?

A: Yo creo que esto también va mucho con el carácter de la persona, pero en el ámbito empresarial puro la gente está muy orientada a objetivos y los objetivos a veces tienen poco que ver con la metodología que llevas o con qué caminos optas para llegar a eso. Pero en el ámbito más fundacional, si quieres, yo creo que hay gente que tiene muy claro que si no es a través de una aproximación sobre todo de respeto al otro y de escucha activa, no tiras para adelante. Hay gente que es más invasiva o que utiliza un tono de voz alto, o la increpación, o cosas que no funcionan. Creo que va un poco “por barrios”, pero cada vez más en los ámbitos no públicos o el tercer sector, donde ya de entrada se ha tenido una

predisposición mucho más grande a llegar a acuerdos, a compartir con el otro para un bien mayor o un bien común, aquí es más fácil encontrar este tipo de dirección al diálogo.

Q: En cierto sentido nosotros cuando trabajamos desde la investigación en temas de desarrollo sostenible trabajamos mucho los modelos organizativos y las culturas organizativas, y también vemos que hace falta que cambien y que haya una evolución. Con respecto a esto te queríamos preguntar qué consideras que has ido aprendiendo a lo largo de tus experiencias, de estas conversaciones, que ha sido muy importante para fortalecer tu capacidad de colaboración y de conversación con otros, incluso en esas conversaciones difíciles que nos comentabas antes.

A: Creo que un punto esencial es empezar un diálogo. Cualquier reunión que quieras llevar a un punto común es donde está el otro y dónde estás tú reconociendo los puntos fuertes de la postura de la otra persona y tus puntos fuertes. Y para hacerlo fácil, para sentir que estás avanzando, empezar con un mínimo común denominador. Es decir, con aquello que tienes claro que es una cosa compartida que quizás no es difícil y que hace que sientas que avanzas en aquello que estás construyendo. Porque cuando avanzas, el refuerzo es positivo y puedes ir a un segundo peldaño. Quizás es más complicado, pero como el primero ya lo tienes aprendido puedes llegar con más facilidad. Nunca empezar por los extremos, siempre empezar por aquello que te une más y por hacerlo explícito empezando una reunión. Haciendo explícito el “sé cuál es tu postura, esta es mi postura, tenemos la suerte de que en todo esto coincidimos”, y resaltar aquello en lo que estás de acuerdo. Sea metodológicamente, sea en cuestiones de fondo, aquello a lo que te puedas aferrar para construir desde el acuerdo. Esto en mi experiencia funciona.

Q: Como estamos hablando un poco en abstracto y también resumiendo las experiencias generales que has tenido como parte de la empresa en la que estás trabajando, ¿podrías aterrizar alguna experiencia reciente, característica, o que fuera un ejemplo de una buena práctica con otra empresa?

A: Ya os lo decía antes. El mundo de la empresa es un poquito distinto, pero por ejemplo, con uno de los proyectos que estoy llevando ahora sin poner nombre ni apellidos. Una estructura empresarial grande, con 3400 personas que trabajan en distintos ámbitos, en un *backoffice* de unas 300 personas donde todo el mundo tiene sus responsabilidades, muy lleno de trabajo. De repente llega un proyecto nuevo, un proyecto transversal que afecta a casi todos los departamentos pero que se suma a lo que los demás ya tienen como trabajo, por lo tanto es un poquito más difícil porque es añadirles tareas a aquellas que ya tienen. ¿Cómo hacer llegar el mensaje de aquello que tú estás promoviendo cuando sabes que sin ellos es imposible avanzar? Aparte de una primera reunión donde tienes que ser muy concreta en la expresión de sobre qué va el proyecto, qué se espera de este proyecto, qué partes forman este proyecto y cuál es la involucración de cada uno de los departamentos, parece tonto pero es tan fácil como facilitar las tareas: hacerles una ficha que ellos solo

tengan que cumplimentar, facilitar la tarea, explicarlo muy bien, hacer entregables que sean más fáciles para que ellos vayan directamente a un Excel o a lo que sea para que puedan cumplimentar toda su información sin tener que andar pensando en el contexto. Ir directamente a la tarea concreta y luego parametrizar reuniones para hacer seguimiento, estar siempre dispuesta a responder las preguntas que tengan porque simplemente hay un hecho concreto que no acaban de comprender o un presupuesto que tienen que llenar y no y no entienden... Es decir, es un acompañamiento en un gran proyecto. Para llegar a un acuerdo final todo eso es un acompañamiento a todo aquel que, a través de la escucha activa, tienes que ver cómo están, qué necesitan y qué herramientas les puedes facilitar para que su proyecto y el tuyo conjunto avancen. Esto es lo que creo que es más fácil compartir desde el ámbito empresarial cuando tienes un gran proyecto que es transversal, que no es de nadie en concreto, pero que es de todos y que al final es lo mismo. Una necesidad de un bien común liderado por alguien que no está en uno de los departamentos, sino que está de manera transversal y que necesita absorber de los demás.

Q: La última pregunta que teníamos tiene que ver con qué aspectos de tu organización han ido transformándose también para adaptarse a contextos de colaboración o conversaciones cada vez más complicadas. Comentabas estas ideas de facilitarles las tareas, pero a la hora de llegar a acuerdos con otras organizaciones, ¿siempre son acuerdos formales? ¿Cómo suele ser el proceso de empezar una relación con otros? ¿Ha habido herramientas o procedimientos que han ido evolucionando a lo largo de tus experiencias?

A: Yo creo que al final es como todo. Todo empieza por una relación personal-profesional, pero profesional de intentar empezar una reunión para visualizar qué oportunidades se abren de colaboración cuando tienes un proyecto que es muy retador, que es muy innovador, que tiene una parte de innovación tecnológica, que tiene una parte de innovación social... Lo primero es conocerse, conocerse es fundamental para establecer los parámetros de cada uno y ver en una primera reunión sin agobios, con calma, las posibles vías de colaboración exponiendo las facilidades o las dificultades que vas a tener en poder desarrollar tu proyecto. Y luego en colaboraciones externas lo que siempre funciona mejor es empezar por algo pequeño, sensato, acotado en el tiempo y con un presupuesto definido. Eso es lo que hace que después de una experiencia buena en un proyecto pequeño puedas pasar al siguiente peldaño. Perdonad que me repita un poco porque antes he utilizado lo mismo, pero creo que es una metodología, que no inventamos nada. Creo que esta es una de las experiencias más buenas que he tenido y es lo que funciona. No empezar por cosas que nos cuestan mucho porque seamos conscientes de las restricciones, sino empezar por lo más sencillo, sobre todo cuando coinciden los objetivos de las dos organizaciones y lo que seguro sabes que vas a llegar a un entendimiento y a una organización final.

Tenía una reflexión que no sé si será útil para vosotras o no. Creo que a veces cuando hablamos de diálogo (y si vamos a hablar de contrato social es un tema que en realidad deberíamos haber hablado mucho antes porque ya hace demasiado tiempo que las



condiciones han cambiado como para seguir manteniendo lo mismo que teníamos), pero hay algunas actitudes que yo creo que ayudan al diálogo, ya sea en la parte del contrato social como con otras. Cuando estás dialogando se trata de conocerte mejor a ti mismo, porque a veces no hemos reflexionado lo suficiente sobre lo que pensamos nosotros o si nosotros estamos reproduciendo lo que otro ha dicho. Conocerse a uno mismo y conocer al otro creo que es muy importante. Luego, una de las cosas que la vida me ha enseñado es que no hay mejor herramienta que la autorregulación. Es decir, no necesitas tanto que el otro te diga “no te pases”, “aquí estás yendo demasiado lejos”, sino saber que tú tienes la capacidad de decir “aquello que estoy proponiendo tiene sentido, está dimensionado, el otro lo va a recibir bien”. Es decir, la autorregulación es aquello que nos hace más humanos, que nos hace más personas, que nos hace más entender al otro. Por supuesto también la honestidad y todas estas cosas, pero la capacidad de mover un poco tu pensamiento, de decir “yo estoy aquí, pero en realidad hay otras opciones y voy a intentar abrirme, avanzar en un pensamiento quizá más común”. Y valorar siempre estos ejercicios como un ejercicio de aprendizaje. Es decir, tú vas con tus ideas, pero al final a lo que vas es a comprender las ideas del otro, y por tanto a enriquecerte. Creo que esto es también muy básico.

### ***Interview 2: Woman, 62, lawyer and professor***

Date: 7<sup>th</sup> July 2022 | Location: online | Duration: 29 min 58 s

Question (Q): Cuéntanos una experiencia concreta en la que el diálogo haya tenido un papel clave para la construcción de condiciones para la colaboración.

Answer (A): Sí, yo os diría que, digamos, en el fondo mi propia profesión pivota sobre un acuerdo, y esto en varias dimensiones. El propio derecho laboral, como sabéis, pues se proyecta no sólo en lo que es la parte pública a lo que se le denomina "el diálogo social", que como sabéis, pues últimamente ha dado como fruto a varias reformas laborales, de las cuales se destaca siempre como una nota muy positiva el hecho de ser fruto del diálogo social durante toda la pandemia. Acordaros también que cada viernes salía un real decreto ley y que muchos de ellos eran negociados después. Evidentemente, la propia realidad apretaba más que el propio diálogo permitía, pero siempre era fruto del diálogo social. Para mí esto da garantías de que las partes han intercambiado ideas y un ejemplo muy gráfico, y yo creo más que los propios reales decretos leyes que van saliendo en materia laboral durante toda la pandemia, te diría la última reforma laboral. La última reforma laboral, como recordaréis, fue una reforma discutida con mucha gente porque pretendía acabar con muchos actores en el mercado, porque pretendía acabar con la contratación temporal. Bruselas decía teníamos unos índices muy elevados de temporalidad y había que poner coto a esa temporalidad. Bueno, pues yo os diría que el primer día que empezó el diálogo social por la parte sindical, las peticiones eran, para ponerlo gráficamente, diez puntos, quince. Al final, en lo que se transaccionó y quedó materializada la reforma laboral

de diciembre, fueron básicamente seis puntos. Porque eso es diálogo social, es decirle a la otra parte "mira, en este momento esto es prioritario sobre lo otro". En este momento tenemos que atajar la temporalidad y la subcontratación, que es un tema de mucha batalla, pues ahora no es el momento. Que ya llegará, llegará porque eso ahora con los ODS, la cadena de valor... Es decir, todo el nuevo lenguaje que se está incorporando en las relaciones laborales, pues eso va a salir, pero yo creo que ese es un ejemplo bueno de lo que es el diálogo. Por otra parte, y ya en el plano privado, como sabéis, las relaciones laborales tienen también mucho de negociación colectiva. La negociación en el fondo pasa por el diálogo y luego, en su dimensión individual, cuando yo quiero modificar condiciones, cuando me veo en la necesidad de rescindir las relaciones laborales, yo tengo que abrir un proceso de negociación con los representantes de los trabajadores. La negociación quizá implica más las notas de cesión por ambas partes, pero en el fondo lo que hay es diálogo. Ese diálogo acaba en acuerdos y los acuerdos evitan conflictos.

Q: Muy interesante que además hayas contextualizado con el COVID, que lo acabamos de "superar", ¿no?

A: Exacto.

Q: Y que no sabemos cómo lo hemos hecho. Igual si tuviéramos que volver a hacerlo, no podríamos, porque todos nos hemos puesto de acuerdo. No sabemos muy bien cómo, pero precisamente por ahí va la siguiente pregunta. ¿Qué condiciones (en tu trabajo en el contexto de COVID, herramientas de tono o conversación, lugares de reunión, simetría en la participación...) propiciaron esos diálogos en los que estás basando todo esto que estás diciendo?

A: Bueno, pues yo te diría en la propia necesidad, eso es obvio, y en una voluntad de llegar a acuerdos. Fijaros, yo soy parte de un despacho de derecho de los negocios en todas sus fórmulas: mercantil, laboral, administrativo... En fin, todo. Y ciertamente el Departamento de Laboral fue el departamento que más trabajo tuvo durante la pandemia. Básicamente ese trabajo era estar al tanto de los reales decretos y básicamente colocar a la gente en los ERTES. Los ERTES, en casos de empresas de un determinado volumen, se tenían que negociar. El contacto físico no existía. Fue la primera vez que negociamos ante una pantalla. Fue la primera vez que te sientas a negociar yo te diría en casi igualdad de condiciones. ¿Por qué? Porque en aquel momento no había una decisión que la parte social me pudiese discutir de si yo quería hacer más dinero, o me quería ir a producir a un sitio más barato, o quería buscar un objetivo que la parte social no pudiese entender, ¿no? Ahí todos íbamos a salvar relaciones laborales, a que la gente pudiese acceder al desempleo y a intentar poder lidiar con la incertidumbre que teníamos mes sí y otro también. Entonces, ahí, de no haber habido este diálogo, esa gran capacidad de alcanzar acuerdos, pues yo creo que, en fin, no hubiese ido como fue. Y francamente, teniendo en cuenta que de un día para otro nos colocamos en un estado de alarma, yo sinceramente creo que nos deberíamos

felicitar. Otra cosa es el coste que tiene todo esto, el coste que tendrá (económico, me refiero) el desarrollo del teletrabajo. Sorprende que, y en mi propia organización así fue, que de un día para otro podamos colocar a todos los trabajadores en su casa trabajando, menos los que naturalmente, por razón del servicio, tienen que estar en su puesto de trabajo. Pero todo lo que es el campo de los servicios, que todo funcionase como un reloj, que el país pudiese funcionar desde casa, eso es un fenómeno. Que vaya, a mí me lo hacen poner en un papel imaginándomelo y no soy capaz de diseñarlo tan bien como fue, ¿no?

Esto ha creado también unas relaciones muy, muy distintas. Por ejemplo, yo tuve la suerte de trabajar en un despacho muy grande en el que somos 150 profesionales que nos dedicamos al derecho laboral en toda España. Nosotros montábamos reuniones y compartíamos información y criterios. Día sí, día también. Yo, en fin, sabiendo que además todos nos teníamos que beneficiar de todo, que cuando alguien encontraba algo pasaba un correo y decía "oye, ¿que han dicho qué?" Y eso pues realmente fue un lujo. Yo lo comparo con profesionales de otros despachos que no tenían esa red y francamente, ahí ese diálogo, esa visión de conjunto y finalista, de que nuestros clientes nos necesitaban las 24 horas del día... Eso funcionó muy bien.

Q: ¿Qué dirías que te costó más esfuerzo en todo este proceso y qué dirías que aprendiste de esas cosas que te costaron más esfuerzo en estos diálogos?

A: Yo diría. Como partes negativas, pues fue el cansancio físico y las pocas horas de sueño, pero bueno, es decir, la situación lo requería y ya está. Para mí que soy también docente en escuelas universitarias y en universidades, yo creo que la educación sí que se ha resentido mucho esto. ¿Por qué? Pues porque para un alumno asistir a clase es muy importante, pero ya no sólo por el componente social, sino por la relación entre la persona que te da un mensaje y la persona que lo escucha. El simbolismo que hay en un aula, ¿no? Entonces esto no se daba. Luego se dudó durante un tiempo si podíamos obligar a los alumnos a que pusiesen la cámara o no la pusiesen. Mientras esto se resolvió a favor de que no les podíamos obligar, pues imaginaros la sensación de como profesor estar hablando en una cámara donde ves que hay supuestamente conectadas 60 o 100 personas y que no ves la cara de nadie. Y creo que eso no solo era ingrato para mí, sino que lo era para el que estaba en su casa. Vale. Y creo que si realmente en relaciones laborales podemos haber ganado en conciliación en determinadas materias con el tema del teletrabajo, creo que lo que es el componente académico en general, ya sea el escolar y después el universitario, esto tengo claro que ahí el grado de cumplimiento con éxito no fue tan bueno.

Q: ¿Tú dirías que en otras ramas de tu organización, no sólo en derecho laboral, trabajan con este mismo enfoque de asertividad y de aproximación durante la pandemia, por ejemplo?

A: Sinceramente, los que se dedican a lo que nosotros le llamamos el M&A, las operaciones de compra y venta de compañías y en general operaciones corporativas y de M&A, pues

las operaciones se cayeron. Nadie compraba a nadie. (...) Ahí los abogados que llevan este tipo de contratos públicos también tuvieron trabajo porque se tuvieron que adaptar medidas para saber que se hacía con estos contratos. Es decir, en otras prácticas también caló el nivel de intensidad y el nivel de comunicación. No lo sé, pero puedo intuir que más o menos fue igual. ¿Por qué? Porque todos teníamos los mismos medios. Lo que quizás no teníamos eran las mismas presiones. Porque lo nuestro era muy inmediato.

Q: Y ahora que quizá el nivel de actividad ha bajado un poco con respecto a esos primeros momentos de la pandemia, ¿se ha mantenido esa cultura de compartir los aprendizajes, de compartir la información entre vuestro equipo de Laboral o se ha perdido un poco?

A: A ver, yo te diría que sí sigue. Nosotros ya teníamos un programa formativo, digamos, muy desarrollado. Somos un despacho en la que la información se comparte y mucho. Y yo te diría que quizá la intensidad con la que nos reuníamos en esos días no se da por razones obvias, porque no sale afortunadamente un real decreto ley cada semana, pero sí compartimos mucha información. Yo te diría que sí. En general, otras prácticas me consta que no tanto. O sea, yo puedo decir con orgullo que nuestra práctica, digamos, en este sentido, es modélica en el propio despacho.

Q: Como abogados, ¿cómo podríais inspirar a otros en vuestra forma de comunicar, colaborar y llegar a acuerdos?

A: A ver, yo te diría, quizás aquí Paula sabe más que yo por el tema de la comunicación, pero yo sinceramente, quizá por los años que llevo de profesión, creo que un porcentaje muy elevado de conflictos que hay (no bajemos al detalle) son por temas de comunicación. Por temas en las que las partes, ya sean dos, ya sean cuatro, no se entienden. Y a veces tú estás mirando una discusión, un debate, y dices "es que este no ha entendido a este" o se ha dejado esta palabra que al otro hubiese ayudado a entender lo que le estaba diciendo. Entonces, claro, (...) que siga habiendo tanto problema de comunicación cuando hoy en día la comunicación es lo más, ¿no? Tenemos dos móviles, un ordenador, una tablet, y podemos hacer tres cosas a la vez, y al mismo tiempo te das cuenta que la comunicación verbal falla mucho. Entonces yo creo que deberíamos volver al diálogo entendido en la forma de Platón, en el sentido de coger un tema y dialogar sobre este tema, no pasar mensajes rápidos, escuetos, de impacto. Fijaros (...) estos programas en la tele donde ponen a gente hablando. Hay una tendencia a elevar el tono de voz y a insultar al de delante y a decir que no estás de acuerdo con una intensidad que sorprende. ¿Por qué tengo que decirle al otro que es tonto cuando no estoy de acuerdo con él?

Q: Totalmente. Si partimos de lo que nos separa en vez de en lo que podemos llegar a converger. E incluso la posición corporal, el tono de voz... Como bien dices, ya se busca más el enfrentamiento y el separarse de los otros, ¿no?

A: Que si no hay, digamos, mucho enfrentamiento, la cosa no vende, supongo, y la gente se levanta o cambia de canal. Es como el periodismo, que disfrutan de poder dar malas noticias, yo digo "jolín, alguna buena deberían poder dar algún día, ¿no?".

### ***Interview 3: Woman, 47, multilateral agency***

Date: 28<sup>th</sup> July 2022 | Location: in person | Duration: 50 min 06 s

Question (Q): Nosotras siempre empezamos por preguntaros a qué os gustaba jugar cuando erais pequeños. ¿Qué juego te viene a la mente cuando piensas en tu infancia?

Answer (A): Claro. Pues me gustaba mucho jugar con muñecas. Yo tenía varias muñecas y bebés, yo siempre tenía una cosa de maternidad.

Q: Pues ahora con lo que queremos empezar es con esa experiencia personal. Una o pueden ser dos o tres, pero que trates de basarte en algo lo más concreto posible donde consideres que el diálogo ha sido muy importante para generar confianza, para llegar a consensos, para generar una atmósfera cálida y también de cuidado de unos y de otros, y que permita, sobre todo, llevar también a acciones. No solamente a palabras o acuerdos en una capa muy política, sino también a acciones y cambios.

A: De diálogos humanitarios, que es el ámbito en el que he trabajado siempre, quizás un ejemplo de diálogos con refugiados directamente. Ahí puedo pensar en dos situaciones concretas, situaciones de emergencia. Yo he trabajado en varias situaciones de emergencia. Una, en 2005 en la frontera entre Togo y Benín. Estaba en una trabajando en un campo de refugiados y cuando abrimos el campo había que poner todo en marcha, entonces la confianza que había que crear para personas que estaban huyendo de una situación de guerra civil era una situación de elecciones. La situación post elecciones es de mucha incertidumbre, de mucho miedo y, en esa ocasión, de muchas huidas, muchas llegadas a Benín y la creación de un campo de refugiados. Y ahí, hablando con los refugiados poco a poco, para que entendieran las normas que había que seguir juntos para poder convivir en un lugar determinado, las autoridades querían que se mantuvieran en campos (esas son políticas nacionales que se aplican y que nosotros tenemos también que seguir) y todo ese trabajo de autogestión dentro del campo de refugiados. Era un trabajo muy lento, muy de crear conciencia, pero sí resultó en una situación de paz y de tranquilidad, lo que es muy importante para nosotros y es un éxito que no es muy visible, pero no es tan sencillo. Las personas refugiadas cuando salen de una situación de guerra, de conflictos, de tensión sociales o de discriminación, tienen mucha ansiedad, mucho miedo, mucha frustración y muchas veces una cierta violencia integrada en sí misma, que no es necesariamente que no quieran estar bien con nosotros o con los demás, pero han sufrido violencia y entonces están con una cierta agresividad. Y eso requiere mucha calma,

muchas palabras, una comunicación sencilla y en esa ocasión resultó en la creación de un pequeño campos, eran como 300. No eran muchos, pero bien, bien, funcionó bien.

Q: ¿Y qué condiciones específicas (algunas las estuviste mencionando) consideras que fueron muy importantes para generar esa atmósfera de diálogo y colaboración? Estábamos hablando del lenguaje que se utilizaba... ¿Cómo generáis una situación de simetría? ¿Qué condiciones consideras que fueron muy importantes?

A: Pues primero es el idioma, naturalmente, pero la actitud. Es decir, es simétrica, estamos al mismo nivel, somos humanos. Nosotros ahí con un mandato de protección para ayudar a personas que la necesitan. Pero el hecho de que uno esté en necesidad y el otro está ahí para aportar algo, no debería crear diferentes niveles de interlocución o de poder, aunque podría parecer así. Entonces, meterse al nivel de la persona físicamente, si la persona está sentada, pues sentarse y si esa persona está de pie, estar de pie. Solo el ambiente físico, logístico, el espacio para que se pueda tener una interlocución que hace sentir a la persona en conciencia y empoderada. "Tu voz cuenta y la escucho como una persona humana, como soy yo, y vamos a intentar integrarnos, entendernos, sentar juntos la base de nuestra colaboración", lo que era el objeto de estas conversaciones. También, como cuando trabajamos con colectivos refugiados que pueden ser muy numerosos, pues la primera conversación es un poco para asegurar que tenemos un buen interlocutor. Entonces, una cierta representación y con una diversidad que refleje la del perfil del grupo: no hablar solo con los hombres, hablar con las mujeres también, los jóvenes... Tener allí como un grupo más reducido, pero que represente la diversidad de la población refugiada con la que queremos hablar. Eso también da mucha conciencia de que vamos a llegar a todas las necesidades y en situación de un campo de refugiados puede ser una conversación tan básica como "bueno, tenemos que poner baños en un lugar, ¿cómo lo veis vosotros? Las señoras, ¿os sentís cómodas si los baños de las mujeres están al lado de los baños de los hombres, aunque sean distintos? ¿La luz es suficiente?" El tema de la luz da sentimiento de seguridad y protección. Son conversaciones muy básicas, muy concretas y tenemos que sentar las bases físicas, logísticas, el espacio, el idioma, la actitud, saber que lo que queremos es poder darles para que las decisiones que seguirán sean las suyas también. Que ellos entonces están de acuerdo con que los baños están ahí y no se van a quejar porque eso genera mucha tensión, no sólo con nosotros, sino también con las autoridades que les acogen. Y eso puede crear entonces dificultad de convivencia con las comunidades de acogida, y eso nos limita después ese espacio de protección. Entonces todo eso es para generar una situación que sea la más fácil y la más protectora para todos, tanto para los refugiados, pero también para los que los acogen. Porque si no se sienten cómodos, pues será mucho más difícil de convencer que tienen que acoger. Y el espacio de diálogo, de negociación y de llegar a conclusiones y limitar "lo grande" nunca funciona. Lo grande se puede trocear en lo pequeño y ahí, afinando la respuesta, "no les vale", pues vamos a ver lo que les podría valer hasta llegar a un cierto punto de consenso. [*Fragment omitted due*

*to references that could reveal the identity of the interviewee*. Es que el consenso funciona mucho, mucho mejor que la brutalidad, por supuesto.

Q: Desde el punto de vista de la organización nos has ido comentado qué mecanismos o procesos son comunes a la hora de llegar a acuerdos con otras organizaciones, consideras que estos mecanismos funcionan y tras las experiencias que comentaste anteriormente, si ha cambiado algo en la forma en que tu organización colabora.

A: Pues además de lo que os he contado a nivel técnico y de micro a nivel macro, *[name of organisation]* ha empezado un “engage” con varios actores más amplios, lo que nos hemos dado cuenta es que los actores tradicionales no somos suficientes para dar una respuesta a situaciones tan complejas como las situaciones de desplazamiento forzoso en el mundo de hoy. Entonces *[name of organisation]*, después de mucho tiempo, es verdad que eso tiene su fundación en la Convención de 1951 sobre los refugiados. Esta colaboración, el hecho de que no sólo se puede trabajar con muchos actores para llevar a cabo respuestas solidarias en países, a situaciones que reciben muchos refugiados. Y de eso nació la idea de tener un pacto mundial para los refugiados. Se decidió en la Asamblea General de las Naciones Unidas en 2018 y para darle un diálogo más concreto el propio pacto incluye la posibilidad de tener diálogos, de hacer el “reach out” a varios actores. Y eso se formalizó después de mucha petición a Estados miembros de hacer un Foro Mundial para los Refugiados. El primero tuvo lugar en diciembre de 2019 en el Hall of Society. Estados, Universidades, sociedad civil, empresas, fundaciones, colectivos varios se unieron para hacer compromisos oficiales fijos con cumplimiento hasta el diciembre de 2023, el año próximo, con una visión de dar solidaridad, de apoyar la respuesta para situaciones de refugiados. Entonces la idea era marcar una solidaridad internacional, apoyar países receptores, pero también generar un movimiento de solidaridad para los refugiados. La causa nos ha venido a nosotros en España. La idea de hacer lo mismo a escala nacional es eso, una iniciativa que vamos a trabajar ese año. Espero que tengamos un foro español para los refugiados en diciembre de 2022. Estamos en ello, no puedo confirmar la fecha porque ya estamos mirando todos los elementos logísticos también para hacer un llamamiento a la sociedad civil española, que siempre es muy dinámica y muy protagonista de esta solidaridad muy española, la verdad. Intentar estructurarla, darle otro giro e impulsar otra vez, pero con soltura. Lo que se necesita son cinco bloques de actividades, cinco tipos de actividades en las que vamos a pedir a la sociedad civil española movilizarse y hacer compromisos formales. En esa ocasión, la razón de hacer esta iniciativa en España es porque nos hemos sentido un poco incapaz de dar una respuesta buena a la solidaridad que nos ha venido al hilo de la crisis de Ucrania. Había muchos llamamientos, muchas llamadas también a nosotros para preguntar qué hacer. Y nosotros estábamos también en dar la respuesta de emergencia y era difícil. Ahora sí lo podemos hacer, y no sólo para los refugiados de Ucrania, sino para los refugiados que están en España. Pero volver a los mismos y más y a todos los que quieren movilizarse y concretar acciones para los

refugiados. Que sea dar un empleo, que sea dar una beca, que sea dar una acogida familiar, que sea dar cursos de español en una universidad de manera gratuita o en otros lugares y fomentar un espacio de protección mejor para los refugiados que están aquí.

Q: Entiendo que en esos procesos el diálogo también es un proceso en sí mismo y hay que generar como esa cultura de conversación, de participación... ¿Cómo generáis esa continuidad de la conversación?

A: En *[name of organisation]* lo tenemos integrado en todo. Entonces, para nosotros es la parte central de cómo construimos una operación. Es verdad que es una organización muy grande; puede parecer tan grande que podríamos perder el aspecto humano, pero nuestras políticas de protección, nuestras guías internas de cómo trabajar, lo ponen siempre en el centro de todo. Entonces, cuando tenemos que trabajar los presupuestos, en ese momento yo no estaba trabajando en presupuestos, estaba trabajando por protección de la manera más cerca de la población que hay. Pero después, en 20 años de carrera, me ha tocado trabajar, por supuesto también y ahora mucho, como representante. Y es verdad que aun así, a ese nivel nos piden, nos obligan (pero es una obligación totalmente aceptada y normal) que empecemos la reflexión de presupuesto y de planificación de actividades a partir de consultas. Y de consultas con las personas refugiadas, con las personas bajo nuestro mandato, que pueden ser refugiadas o apátridas, o de personas desplazadas internamente. En estas consultas tenemos muchas, tenemos muchas guías para hacerlo. Es siempre con un enfoque de edad, género y diversidad. Y por eso hay una metodología *[name of organisation]* en ese sentido. Son grupos de congregaciones con todas las dinámicas, con toda la diversidad del grupo, la edad, el género... Eso es la parte fundamental y lo que siempre nosotros nos sentimos con mucho orgullo, porque lo tenemos tan integrado que tenemos un valor añadido o complementario a lo que muchos otros actores hacen, porque ponemos siempre en el frente la voz de los refugiados, tanto para nuestros procesos internos como para el diseño de una actividad (no tiene sentido si no tenemos una pequeña consulta con quien la va a recibir). Podemos pensar una política contra la violencia de género. Hay mucha filosofía, muchas tesis, mucha teoría del tema, pero cada país, cada cultura, cada población, cada persona va a tener un sentimiento diferente de una cosa tan íntima como este tipo de violencia. Entonces tenemos que comprobar estas políticas, estas vías y al momento de implementar, de diseñar un programa de implementación, empezar con consultas. Lo estamos haciendo aquí en España. Hemos ofrecido, por ejemplo, al Ministerio de Inclusión una colaboración, una consultora que está dentro del Ministerio para trabajar la implementación de los protocolos de prevención y de respuesta a la violencia de género en centros de protección internacional. Esa consultora ha hecho un trabajo primero de sentarse con los beneficiarios para trabajar el tema, para sentir cuál es la casuística, cuál es el tipo de situación que puede ocurrir, qué les ha pasado antes de llegar a España, qué les suele pasar durante la trayectoria o al llegar a España... Que estar en un centro puede generar siempre muchas



tensiones y puede tener una composición también de violencia de género. Entonces es muy necesario y es fundamental para nosotros en todo lo que hacemos, empezar con esa conversación.

Q: ¿Cómo ha afectado la pandemia a los protocolos y vuestra forma de hacer los cambios? ¿Crees que son permanentes?

A: No, hemos aprendido. Nos hemos quedado con ese corazón, con ese valor fundamental que nos anima y nos moviliza. Y hemos encontrado las diferentes formas de hacerlo: utilizar las redes sociales más, utilizar las herramientas digitales, organizar grupos de WhatsApp. En todos los países, *[name of organisation]* hemos venido los mismos días todos, cuando estábamos comprobando "¿tú cómo lo haces?", los demás hacíamos lo mismo: una plataforma digital, redes sociales, grupos más reducidos. Estas teleconferencias a las que hemos ido todos, estás más dispuesto a recibir de la forma que sea información, sabiendo que no se podía hacer de manera presencial. Un correo, una llamada... Hemos abierto todas líneas telefónicas de emergencia para estar siempre dispuesto a esta conversación, a recibir información, a darle respuesta. Ya nuestros compañeros (por una cosa muy sencilla, pero que no teníamos antes de la pandemia y que vamos a mantener porque nos permite mucho más flexibilidad) es que los compañeros que normalmente atienden al público en la oficina tienen ahora un teléfono móvil de la organización y con horarios determinados, porque también tenemos que pensar en su salud mental también y en su bienestar. Pero poder atender también de manera telefónica como una "helpline" es verdad que en Europa no se hacía porque no había la necesidad, pero sí durante la pandemia ha sido muy necesario, muy útil. Había situaciones críticas, lo sabemos para nosotros. Muchos de nosotros nos hemos encontrado en una situación menos fácil y personas que están con precariedad en muchas ocasiones se genera más precariedad y el hecho de poder contactar con nosotros, sólo tener a alguien para hablar y comentar su situación, ha sido una buena práctica que vamos a mantener.

Q: Y la experiencia que contabas, ¿desde un punto de vista personal cómo lo viviste? ¿Qué situaciones te resultaban más complicadas o qué capacidades crees que tenías que poner en marcha para sacar adelante eso? Y al mismo tiempo, ¿qué aprendiste de esos procesos?

A: ¿Tenemos tiempo?

Q: Si tú tienes, ¡sí!

A: Bueno, pues yo voy a tener, porque hay una cosa que yo pensé contar, que es una experiencia muy, muy personal, que me ha cambiado como persona y como mi carrera también. Que no veo el tiempo de trabajo con *[name of organisation]*, 20 años, como una carrera, pero es la palabra que se usa, pero para mí es más algo muy, muy personal, muy humanitario. Tenía el deseo de cuidar los bebés de pequeña, entonces no tengo otra forma de ser. Pues es una experiencia muy, muy difícil que me cambió, que la conté a una compañera hace poco tiempo en España para darle esta realidad del terreno. Cuando yo

trabajé en *[name of location]* entre 2009 y 2012, mi primer puesto (y lo que pasó hizo que yo tuviera que cambiar de puesto) era ser jefe de una oficina de terreno en la frontera con *[name of location]*. Inicialmente esa oficina se creó para recibir refugiados *[name of location]* que habían tenido que buscar protección en *[name of location]* y volvieron. Entonces era una oficina más bien para dar soluciones, lo que es lo más fácil y lo más agradable. Pero cuando yo fui jefa de esta pequeña oficina, era el momento más complicado que volvemos a conocer en la historia contemporánea del día a día de hoy: la situación en el *[name of location]*. En ese conflicto cuesta mucho encontrar soluciones, entonces muchos congolesees estaban huyendo de una situación de conflicto muy, muy duro. Y ahí hay una etnia (se llaman etnia entonces yo por respeto, la llamo así) que se llaman los banyamulenge. Son hombres muy, muy altos y cuidan vacas. (...) Eso tiene una importancia porque había un campo de refugiados en la frontera entre *[name of locations]*. *[Fragment omitted due to references that could reveal the identity of the interviewee.]* yo estaba en la oficina al otro lado de la frontera y el campo de refugiados inicial de esta población era a menos de 50 kilómetros con *[name of location]*. Desde el *[name of organisation]* y con las autoridades burundesas concluimos que no era un sitio seguro para ellos, demasiado cerca de la frontera que ellos podrían atacar y crear una cierta tensión entre los dos países. Entonces no es una situación sana. Acordamos con las autoridades burundesas que hay que desplazar esta población de ese centro y abrir un nuevo centro en *[name of location]* donde yo estaba. Y la población refugiada querían cuidar sus vacas, su riqueza, y les interesaba este movimiento pendular de ir ida y vuelta a ver las vacas, cuidar su territorio, dejar su familia en un campo de refugiados, las mujeres, los niños, pero los hombres altos con estos sombreros enormes quería poder ir ida y vuelta, no querían moverse. Pero el refugiado tiene derecho a la protección, a un lugar, pero no tiene derecho a decir "pues yo quiero vivir en ese lugar y no en ese", eso es la soberanía del país que le va a recibir y que le da protección. Entonces, hay un cierto equilibrio entre el derecho del refugiado y sus obligaciones de "pues mira, te vamos a proteger, pero te vamos a proteger ahí porque lo vamos a hacer mejor para ti y para todos". Pues había un momento crítico de trasladar a esta población que no quería a donde yo estaba y nosotros habíamos abierto ese pequeño campo de refugiados al lado de *[name of location]*. Era un campo muy feliz. (...) Como jefa de oficina a mí me encantaba ir cada día a saludar a los refugiados, a tener esta relación. Con el campo ya un poco más grande era como mil personas, yo tenía muy buena relación, les conocía, sus nombres, nos saludaban... Yo tenía la rutina de ir a verles cada día aunque sea solo media hora y hacer mi trabajo. Y entonces era un campo totalmente en paz. Entonces el momento de traslado de esta población, ahí en la negociación el diálogo era fundamental y yo tenía solo una parte, la parte receptora, pero la parte de hacerlos llegar era muy, muy complicada. No querían, no querían, y pues... Un poco de caos de que se suben a los buses y yo iba a recibir 1500 refugiados a lo largo de tres días. Entonces fue muy intenso, una semana muy intensa, con muchísima frustración y algo que puede pasar cuando no hacemos bien nuestro trabajo, que no es solo la culpa de

los refugiados, los refugiados intentan aprovechar lo máximo de cualquier situación. Ya han sufrido en su país de origen, llegan, hay servicios, hay material, asistencia... El juego es tener lo máximo posible, porque eso genera también una cierta riqueza. Se entiende. Entonces lo que ocurrió es que llegaron muy frustrados, pero pensamos “bueno, vamos a aprovechar la situación” y al momento de registrarlos hubo un fallo nuestro es que no se hizo manifiestos a la hora de subirlos a los buses para llegar a destino. Mis compañeros me llamaron pues “un bus de *[name of location]*”, pero más o menos, porque caos, porque falta de voluntad, porque frustración, porque podía ser uno más, uno menos... Y esos buses llegaron y llegaron y yo tenía todo mi equipo movilizado y lo que ocurrió en el momento de registrarles (no nos dimos cuenta inmediatamente, pero bastante rápidamente) que los niños iban a registrarse varias veces con varias familias. Entonces se triplicó el tamaño de la población refugiada, de 1500 me encontré con 3000. Mis jefes me dijeron “eso no cabe, no funciona, perdemos credibilidad frente a los donantes, frente a las autoridades locales”... Tú antes de empezar a distribuir cualquier asistencia (ese fue el error) tienes que hablar con ellos y asegurarte que las cifras son más o menos iguales que lo que había anteriormente. Lo lógico sería que fuera menos porque no querían venir y entonces podía ocurrir que uno se podía ir a otro sitio. (...) La situación de doblar no estaba prevista. Y yo escribí que no estaba de acuerdo, que yo iba a confirmar, a hacer un trabajo de verificación. Lo que en *[name of organisation]*, es muy técnico y tenemos bases de datos, hacemos reseñas, comprobamos el ojo para identificar a las personas... Y eso para también tener que ser profesionales y tener la credibilidad frente a donantes, frente a los que nos financian. Para poder dar a estas poblaciones es muy importante que seamos creíbles en las cifras. Entonces tenemos todo este sistema sofisticado. Yo escribí y respondí a mis supervisores que yo no iba a hacerlo así, de manera tan brutal, iba a poco a poco cada vez que yo podía comprobar, verificar una familia, le iba a dar el doble de comer para que se lo pudieran distribuir entre ellos. Entonces, manteniendo una exacta credibilidad del ejercicio, ir gastando un poco más, pero de una manera que es la forma más sencilla de comer. Era el doble, lo compartirán, eso les va a tranquilizar. Y además eso era aceptable para mis jefes, pero no para los refugiados y yo no me di cuenta. Y había que darles algo de comer inmediatamente. Entonces no es que voy a decir pero vamos a esperar un mes antes de comer, es que la propia instrucción no tenía mucha lógica humana ni siquiera, pero esta ansiedad de la situación de críticas y de mucha presión. Entonces empecé con ese ejercicio, poco a poco se quejaban todos. Estaban muy frustrados. Esas negociaciones interminables y con todos los mismos principios que te conté antes, que nosotros no estamos ahí para frustrarles, sino para encontrar una fórmula de darle lo que necesitan, pero de una manera buena. En una semana muy, muy dura, en largas, larguísimas horas de trabajo y el fin de semana dije a mi equipo “todos a casa, este fin de semana no vamos a trabajar el fin de semana anterior, hemos tenido que trabajar en horas muy intensas”. Había buses que llegaban de noche, cosas muy complicadas para todos, incluso de seguridad. Entonces yo digo pues es momento de descansar, (...) Me quedo aquí (en el

campo) con el señor de seguridad y haremos una visita el sábado y ya veremos cómo va, vamos a intentar que se tranquilice y el lunes retomamos el trabajo de verificación. Pues el sábado por la mañana vamos con *[name of person]*. mi compañero de seguridad, teníamos una sensación fantástica y pues ya hay representantes de refugiados. Bueno, pues ese momento es un poco como profesional y como responsable. Es un momento de valoración. Ahora quizás lo haría de otra forma porque ahora tengo las herramientas de análisis de riesgos. En ese tiempo era 2009, 2010. No trabajaríamos así de manera sistematizada en análisis de riesgos. Entonces yo era más el sentimiento de "voy a intentar hacer posible comunicarme con esta gente". Es tenso, pero no es inmanejable. Y no me imaginaba el riesgo de seguridad para mí como persona. No me había dado cuenta de que podía ir hasta el nivel de toma de riesgo de seguridad. Bueno, pues empezó. Hago mi ronda en el campo y sí, hay movimientos un poco extraños. Y de repente empezaron a tirarme piedras. ¡Pero por todos lugares! Me van a subir las emociones, pero era un momento... Pues sí, ya me atacan, y me atacan y me atacan. Tiran piedras y dicen que quieren matarme. Dicen "on va tuer *[name of the interviewee]*", ". ¿Lo decían en serio? ¿No lo decían en serio? Daba un poco igual, porque a lo mejor no lo decían en serio, no lo sé, pero esta cosa de tirar piedras y esas cosas... Mi compañero de seguridad me lleva a un almacén. Había un almacén de chapas. Entonces estaba ese almacén muy de construcción en campos de refugiados. No son cosas muy estables, pero el ruido de la piedra sobre este metálico es un horror. Yo me acuerdo de que estaba entre las botellas de aceite donadas por Estados Unidos. Me acuerdo que veía la pegatina "USAID" entre estas botellas de aceite y los cartones, las cajas donde metíamos la comida y escuchando eso pensé en mi madre: yo ahora voy a morir ahí, voy a morir en un campo de refugiados. "Eso era mi sueño de toda la vida de niña, de ayudar a los demás". Yo a los 17 años decidí que yo no conseguiría ser pediatra, que era el sueño original, porque no quería hacerlo mal y me preocupaba el dolor físico de los niños, que yo no sabía si podía aguantar, pero quería hacerlo de manera internacional y humanitaria a otro nivel. Y como tengo dos nacionalidades siempre pensé que tenía una cosa internacional en mí por tener dos nacionalidades. A los 17 años tenía ese sueño de trabajar con *[name of organisation]*, eso estaba claro en mi mente. Con mucha suerte lo conseguí. Todo eso para ya morir en un campo de refugiados con un ataque de refugiados. ¡Qué horror! ¿Qué le voy a decir a mi madre? Bueno, resultados (para acabar y después lecciones aprendidas, que eso es lo que buscamos). Llamaron a las fuerzas, no la policía, el ejército en sí, porque también como que *[name of organisation]* es una organización internacional *[fragment omitted to avoid revealing the identity of the interviewee]*. No sólo soy yo como persona que comete un error, eso es lo que represento. Es también de un momento muy fuerte, de repente cuando la puerta se abre y la luz, que yo estaba ahí encerrada, no sé, pues sería una hora, no era tanto tiempo, pero parecían una eternidad, la puerta abre con una fuerza enorme y hay dos señores militares armados. Entran y dicen "vamos a salir y vamos a salir corriendo uno al lado de cada uno". Una de mis pasiones en la vida es correr. Bueno, pues no se puede correr con miedo, aunque se

corran maratones. El correr con miedo el cuerpo no lo aguanta. No sé cómo lo hacen. La verdad que los que huyen de estas situaciones y huyen corriendo, deben tener una adrenalina aún más fuerte que la que yo tenía en ese momento, que yo pensé que tenía un nivel muy alto de adrenalina. Y ver las armas eso también me dio muchísima pena. De “mira, yo que estoy aquí para hacer un trabajo humanitario, para ayudar a los demás”, que necesito armas para defenderme de quién estoy aquí para ayudar, eso no cuadra. Necesité mucho tiempo de reflexión después para darle sentido, pero pasando estas reflexiones inmediatas, pues era de salir corriendo y eso era un jogging pero muy lento y mirando dónde estaban los refugiados. Salimos de un paseo donde no podía llegar un coche y llegó un coche y ya salimos del campo de refugiados así hasta la oficina. Y llamé a mis jefes, ese buen sábado por la tarde. *[name of person]* estaba conmigo y le dije “tú vas a tener que explicar la cosa, yo no lo voy a conseguir. Y mejor que tú lo digas porque tendrás la distancia (poca, pero más que yo) de explicarlo”. Mi jefa se puso a llorar, era de película. Ella era mi supervisora, era la jefa de operaciones y era una representante como yo. Una persona muy dura. Y es verdad que la representante se sorprendió muchísimo de esta decisión de no darle de comer, decía “¿pero qué es eso? Claro que había que comer, ¿qué es esa decisión?” Y bueno, me fui a *[name of place]*, me fui a *[name of place]*, tuve unos meses de descanso, de trabajar, trabajé con la sede en temas de África, en el muro de África, en las situaciones de otros refugiados. A nivel más teórico, por no sé si era dos meses, pero seis semanas suena así y ya pusieron una persona distinta. Nos dieron de comer el doble a todos de manera inmediata. Me enfadé un poquito, decía “¿había que llegar hasta ese punto para hacerlo?”. Para mí de las lecciones aprendidas era la profesionalidad de la ayuda. Cuando hay varios principios que son principios humanitarios básicos, uno es el “do no harm”, “cuidar sin dañar”. Eso es muy fundamental y es difícil darle un sentido sin vivirlo muy de cerca. (...) Hay que tener mucho profesionalismo, muchas guías, mucha cabeza. Que se hace con todo el corazón, pero el corazón no es suficiente y eso es muy importante. La otra lección aprendida para mí ha sido que son personas que tienen integrado tanto sufrimiento que no tienen nada que perder. Y eso también hay que aceptarlo. Pensar que por ser *[name of organisation]*, por ser ONG y, les vamos a caer bien solo por el chaleco azul, pues no. Desafortunadamente no, y nos gustaría. ¿Y por qué tenemos que trabajar bien siempre para que cuando ven el chaleco azul recuerden que a lo mejor lo han visto en otros lugares o en otra época y que era bueno entonces y que será bueno otra vez? Porque *[name of organisation]* trabaja de manera sistematizada y profesional y hay una cualidad que se espera de una relación con *[name of organisation]*. Aun así son personas que no tienen nada que perder y lo van a intentar a aprovechar de la situación para para lo que les corresponde y tiene un filtro personal muy personal, muy individualizado. Entonces, por eso la importancia de estas conversaciones iniciales, por eso la importancia del filtro del de la edad, del género, de la diversidad, para como mínimo intentar hacer categorías, las más pequeñas posibles, para poder asegurar que lo que aportamos a esas personas corresponde a lo que van a buscar. Entonces, sabiendo que son

personas que están dejando un cierto negocio, que están pensando, perdiendo el contacto con sus vacas, a lo mejor integrarlo más. Es verdad que era un momento que había que acabar muy rápidamente porque no se podía negociar mucho tiempo y había un cierto riesgo para su propia seguridad donde estaban antes. Entonces no podían ir negociando modalidades de trabajo muchos días porque el riesgo era inminente y era un riesgo internacional. Porque si de repente las milicias del Kivu iban a atacar un campo de refugiados en Burundi, pues eso era una dificultad muy grande para los dos países.

Q: Y me pregunto cómo se reconstituye la relación entre esos refugiados y la organización, ¿no? ¿Cómo se recompone el tejido y la confianza con la situación de violencia tan grande? Es una premisa muy difícil para generar de nuevo una situación más enérgica.

A: Lo que ocurrió fue que pusieron a otro compañero mayor diferente e hicieron una asamblea con los refugiados para decir que la violencia no era aceptable y que había medidas tomadas a quienes fueron violentos porque esa nunca es la manera de comunicarse sin tener nada que perder, pues nunca se utiliza la violencia. Eso por una parte. Por la otra parte la organización hizo el gesto de darle de comer a todos, explicar por qué se hacía así y empezó un diálogo. Decir “vamos a necesitar hacerlo así, os vamos a dar de comer para un mes entero a todos y mientras tanto, para poder seguir dándoos de comer, vamos a necesitar confirmar el tamaño de cada familia, porque si no, no tendremos los recursos para dar a comer a nadie”. Entonces, volver a empezar a explicar todo desde cero, pero con una premisa más fuerte, más estructurada, más organizada, porque ya estaban todos aquí. Nosotros lo que hacíamos anteriormente era que cada bus lo teníamos que registrar enseguida. Entonces, dentro del caos de las llegadas, pues no teníamos el espacio, el idioma, el entorno adecuado para esta negociación. No la podíamos tener tampoco porque había que dar cosas inmediatamente, o hubiéramos podido decidir de dar, de mandar, como lo hicieron de manera inmediata, a todos. Pero sí, era establecer las normas de colaboración, el respeto mutuo y después, a partir de estas normas establecidas, confirmadas, entendidas por todos, pues retomar el diálogo.

Q: ¿Y nos puedes decir cuánto tiempo más o menos se tardó en recomponer esa situación?

A: Pues pienso que tardó mucho. El evento en sí era un buen sábado y a la semana siguiente había que tener otra persona. Creo que el martes o el miércoles llegó la siguiente persona, dieron de comer en esa misma semana y la retoma poco a poco eso duró yo diría un mes hasta que se estabilizó todo.

Q: Y una última pregunta. ¿Cómo manejáis el equilibrio entre la información que podéis compartir y la que no se puede compartir, pero llegando a una especie de transparencia para que la relación sea de confianza? Porque en ese momento vosotros no podíais decir “nos habéis engañado, sois 3000 personas y veníais 1500”, no podíais ser tan explícitos en el problema que originaba lo que ocurrió. ¿Cómo se puede manejar cuando trabajáis en una organización internacional que maneja a veces temas que pueden ser muy sensibles?

A: Eso es una cuestión muy de estilo de cada uno también. No tenemos ahí normas y depende también de la organización y con quién. Yo elegí hablar de conversaciones con los refugiados. Tendría muchos ejemplos de negociaciones humanitarias con autoridades, con ONG, porque son ahí muchas veces las más complejas, ganar ese espacio de protección a través de dar conciencia de la institución de asilo. Es verdad que ahí tampoco se puede decir de todo. Yo no voy a negociar un espacio de protección con autoridades diciendo (...) Entonces, claro, esconder que hay un riesgo potencial no me da credibilidad. Entonces, yo soy (y sé que a mis compañeros de vez en cuando les sorprende) muy de la transparencia. Yo pienso que se pueden decir muchísimas cosas, pero hay formas de decirlo. Por ejemplo, si iba a negociar que mantengamos este campo de refugiados abiertos, aunque había población civil alrededor, autoridades que podían decir "mira, te atacaron a ti, lo cerramos ya porque es inaceptable y que se busquen la vida y se acabó la cosa". Entonces, para nosotros era también reconocer a las autoridades que eso puede ocurrir. Es normal, tendríamos una cierta responsabilidad nosotros y que lo vamos a manejar nosotros, para asegurar que eso no podía ocurrir otra vez, y ahí encontrar la forma de reconocer una cierta situación. Pienso que reconocer situaciones es importante. Decirlo, pero de una manera más diplomática o buscar más el punto de vista de los riesgos y ahí poner una cierta diferencia entre una situación y la persona que lo cuenta y que van a tomar una decisión. Hablar de potencial, de futuro, de lo de mañana y haciendo análisis de riesgos, estrategias y ahí se pueden incluir muchas cosas, y hacerlo con antelación mucho mejor. En respuesta, es mucho más difícil. Uno: no se puede esconder. Dos: jugamos con muchísimas emociones. Jugamos o trabajamos con muchísimas emociones. Entonces hacerlo con antelación, con estrategia, con negociaciones continuas, con un diálogo continuo, es fundamental para que justamente evitemos decisiones que no son concertadas, que son sólo emocionales y que rompen la confianza.

#### ***Interview 4: Man, 17, student***

Date: 21<sup>st</sup> September 2022 | Location: online | Duration: 30 min 00 s

Question (Q): Siempre comenzamos estas entrevistas preguntándoos a qué os gustaba jugar cuando erais pequeños. Porque a veces los juegos nos llevan más al trabajo colaborativo o más a un juego más individualizado. Entonces queríamos saber cuando eras pequeño qué es lo que te gustaba.

Answer (A): Es una respuesta muy común, pero yo siempre he jugado al fútbol desde muy pequeño. Siempre era lo que me llamaba, aunque no sé... Igual sí he hecho otras cosas, pero generalmente los deportes que más me llamaban sí eran deportes en grupo. Todos los que contemplé no era mío solo y guardo así como recuerdo que mi hermana hacía gimnasia rítmica y quiso hacer una cosa ella sola, (bueno, quiso hacer no, le tocó hacer un solo) y yo

cuando lo veía decía a mis padres "en la que se ha metido". Yo siempre quería estar respaldado por el grupo.

Q: Muy bien, muchas gracias. Ahora queríamos que te bases en experiencias personales. Puede ser una experiencia concreta, si es que tienes una que consideres que puede ser relevante, o puede ser más el conjunto de tus experiencias del día a día. Como te decía en el correo: en la familia, o en el instituto, o en las asociaciones en las que participas... Entonces que nos cuentes un poco qué es lo que tú crees que funciona para colaborar y llegar a acuerdos. Estoy pensando en cosas del tipo: el tono de la conversación, cómo se prepara la conversación, el entorno, el espacio que se elige para la conversación... Lo que a ti te sugiera que creas que ayuda mucho. ¿En qué ves tú que esté ayudando a que ese diálogo funcione y que consiga llevar a un acuerdo entre los participantes?

A: No sé, yo creo que una cosa que a mí siempre me parece es que todo el mundo tiene que sentirse cómodo. Alguna vez he asistido a algún diálogo en el que me juntaba con gente que yo me daba cuenta de que dominaba el tema bastante mejor que yo. Y a la hora de aportar algo decía "jo, es que los veo y digo es que igual digo algo que no debería decir". Entonces, es sentir que donde estás es donde tienes que estar. Y que no haya un gran salto, no soy yo hablando con un catedrático, sino que vamos a decir que me siento cómodo. No sé, que al final pues que es un poco más complicado, pero que no sea el único representante, vamos a decir, de un colectivo. Que haya más gente, aparte de que obviamente hay mayor riqueza a la hora de aportar lo que sea, que también te sientes más cómodo cuando ves eso.

Q: ¿Y cómo resuelves o cómo intentas resolver las situaciones en las que no te sientes tan cómodo? Por ejemplo, puede ser esta situación que has dicho de cuando hablas con un catedrático o cuando eres consciente (porque todos somos conscientes) cuando estamos en un grupo que no comparte a lo mejor nuestros mismos ideales políticos o incluso nuestras aficiones. ¿Cómo sales de esas situaciones? ¿O cómo intentas tú también sentirte cómodo? ¿Qué herramientas utilizas para tratar de estar más a gusto tú en ese contexto?

A: Yo tengo que reconocer que soy bastante abierto, entonces siempre a cualquier reunión o a lo que sea que vaya, voy abierto, también porque soy muy joven y entonces sé que no sé mucho sobre muchas cosas. Entonces todo lo que me pueda decir aparte de enriquecer mi visión, pues perfectamente puedo cambiar de idea, porque lo que me han dicho, bueno, me ha convencido. Entonces voy abierto porque pueden tener más razón que yo. Y luego, por la parte de sentirme más cómodo, creo que ahí si hay un moderador tiene mucha importancia. Porque al final si haces alguna aportación, depende de cómo te mire (que igual no tiene nada que ver), pero a ti ya te sugestionan. Entonces pues que también al ver que hay gente que no domina tanto el tema, que les apoye más a ellos y también les incentive. Porque al final yo creo que una persona que domina el tema, pues no tiene ningún problema para decir "bueno, me toca participar y digo algo". Mientras que alguien



a quien le dé más cosa decir algo basta que diga algo y no haya una buena aceptación para que no vuelva a participar.

Q: Y en contraste con todo eso, ¿qué es lo que crees que no funciona? ¿Qué cosas son las que en una situación de conversación o bien te hacen sentir mal, no a gusto para poder participar (mencionabas ahora algunas cosas) o también qué cosas en tus interlocutores hacen que se rompa la posibilidad de diálogo? ¿Hay alguna línea roja en la que te cueste mucho pasar, que digas “uy, yo no puedo debatir con esta persona”?

A: Creo que influye mucho la gente que esté. En *[name of organisation]*, por ejemplo, creo que todos los que estamos, simplemente por estar, sí tenemos cierta apertura. Es eso, que todo el mundo que asista esté dispuesto a aceptar otras opiniones porque, aunque haya mucha gente que diga “no, yo tolero otras opiniones”, hay gente que es “o piensas como yo o bueno, vale, acepto tu opinión, pero es errónea”. Y el contemplar que haya otras opiniones que no es la tuya, pero aun así la aceptas como válida, la aceptas como idea y piensas que también puede ser correcta. No es simplemente que digas “bueno, es una opinión”, es que también puede ser cierta y la tuya puede ser la que está equivocada. Y luego también... Estoy pensando, um... No sé, que no sea un entorno desconocido para ti, por ejemplo. Vamos a decir, si es la décima reunión que tenemos con el *[name of organisation]*, eso te va a dar más apertura. Pero si, por ejemplo, vas a un entorno en el que nunca has estado, por ejemplo a una institución, a un edificio público, pues dices “yo aquí nunca he estado”. Igual eso te echa más para atrás a la hora de participar en eventos (...) Para aquellos para los que sea más complicado, que sí sea una zona a la que estén acostumbrados.

Q: ¿Y tú consideras que en el instituto hasta ahora has aprendido herramientas para dialogar, para llegar a acuerdos? ¿Tus compañeros y compañeras en general crees que tienen las mismas herramientas que tú? ¿Crees que es una tendencia ahora en tu clase, por ejemplo, o en tu grupo de amigos, pues esto de vamos a llamarlo “tolerancia”, vamos a llamarlo “asertividad”, en el diálogo? ¿O es una cosa en la que tú a lo mejor te sientes un poco alejado del resto de gente que conoces en tu clase, por ejemplo, o en tu familia, incluso si quieres?

A: Bueno, por la parte de mi familia me considero afortunado porque siempre suelen salir temas y debatimos entre la familia. Yo creo que ahí sí, por ejemplo, me siento cómodo. Pero en el ámbito de las clases es algo que alguna vez he hablado con la parte directiva del colegio, porque creo que se debería incentivar más. Y bueno, de momento lo estamos consiguiendo, que es que se incentive el hablar en público porque la gente normalmente no lo hace. Y claro, llegan las presentaciones orales y joe, la gente nerviosísima, no sabe qué decir... Y claro, si no sabes simplemente dar un monólogo públicamente ya luego como para ponerte a debatir que lo tienes que pensar sobre la marcha. Bueno, me refiero, que tienes que improvisar respecto a lo que otra persona diga. Entonces, bueno, yo soy de *[name of place]*, y en la tutoría sí de vez en cuando, si la clase lo permite, se saca algún

tema a debatir, para que cada uno dé su opinión. Es que creo que falta mucha educación en cuanto a eso, porque primero está la gente que por vergüenza no dice nada. Luego están los que no saben nada y no dicen. Y luego está la gente que sí sabe y se come a todo el mundo, claro. Y luego están los que, aun sabiendo, no saben hablar en un entorno, porque a la que ven que vas en contra de su argumento, se ponen a elevar el tono y se lo toma muy personalmente. Eso por una parte, y luego en el entorno de mis amigos, yo esto también lo suelo comentar y por eso agradezco principalmente el consejo crítico, que no veo que sea algo a tomar en cuenta. Es decir, si yo por ejemplo digo "oye, ¿qué opináis de este tema?", pues la mayoría de la gente pasa, no les interesa. En cambio, en el consejo crítico sí me parece muy interesante. A mí personalmente siempre me ha gustado debatir, porque al final te enriquece tu visión, pero creo que generalmente es algo que dice la gente "¿por qué voy a pensar en ello?". Por ejemplo, la pobreza infantil "¿y a mí que me afecta?". Un poco igual, pues eso. Entonces sí creo que se deberían proporcionar herramientas y se debería dar más apertura a grupos de debate y demás para que la gente tratase algunos temas. Aquí en *[name of place]*, sí tenemos una cosa que es el *[name of initiative]*, que te mandan encuestas y luego de vez en cuando se organizan grupos de debate sobre distintas cosas. Intentan incentivar la participación con diversos premios y tal, pero tienes que estar inscrito para participar en ello. No sé, creo que se debería motivar más a la gente, porque al final básicamente accedemos a esto por incentivo propio. Más que nada.

Q: En línea con lo que comentabas de *[name of initiative]*, aparte de en la escuela y en la familia que ya comentabas, ¿en qué otros espacios se puede experimentar o se puede aprender a colaborar en un entorno tranquilo, diverso y con una cultura de acuerdo? Estoy pensando en los ayuntamientos, a lo mejor puede haber un espacio para que la juventud pueda participar más en las políticas públicas. ¿Conoces algunos casos o tienes algunas ideas de cómo se podría aprender en otros espacios? Y quizá no solamente la gente joven, también las personas mayores, que quizá no han adquirido eso porque no han tenido la suerte de participar en ese tipo de experiencias. Pero quizá hay otro momento en la vida en el que también pueden ejercitarse y participar así.

A: Bueno, que yo conozca no hay, pero bueno. De los 16 a 18 años en el colegio lo que nos dan la opción es de los presupuestos participativos. Sacan un dinero que está asignado a nuestra edad y se vota qué es lo que quiere cada uno. Eso lo trasladan a todos los colegios, y en cada colegio cada uno hace sus propuestas, por qué propone que se haga esa cosa y luego eso se somete a votación. Digamos que eso es lo más cerca que hemos estado. Eso a la proposición de algo y luego debatirlo entre todos. Y luego, aunque eso no esté accesible a todo el mundo, creo que los deportes grupales sí que dan mucho de aprender. Por ejemplo, en un partido de fútbol es "¿qué vamos a hacer?" Y creo que es un entorno seguro porque estás cómodo con tu equipo, puedes hacer propuestas y se debaten todos porque al final es un equipo. Entonces sí creo que, por ejemplo, los deportes en equipo son una buena oportunidad para trabajarlo. No es el entorno más formal, pero sí creo que ayuda a ello.

Q: ¿Y podrías profundizar un poco más en tu experiencia personal en esto que hablabas de los presupuestos participativos? Volviendo un poco a las herramientas que funcionan, lo que no funciona, ¿nos puedes contar un poquito más de tu experiencia personal en ese caso concreto?

A: Pues más o menos... no sé qué decir. ¿A qué te refieres?

Q: Ah, pues antes nos hablabas de lo importante que era que hubiera un entorno de confianza, que el moderador o la moderadora generara ese espacio simétrico donde todos participen y tenga valor la aportación de todo el mundo. ¿Qué tono o qué tipo de lenguaje utilizaste en el caso de tener que defender una propuesta para que fuera consensuada por una serie de compañeros? ¿Cuáles eran las herramientas tanto tuyas como externas para generar todo eso que a ti te hacía sentir a gusto y que fuera exitoso, pero apoyado en el ejemplo concreto que nos dabas, por ejemplo, del de los presupuestos?

A: Yo creo que bueno, primero estamos en un terreno conocido, que es nuestra aula de clase, porque es ahí donde hablaba luego el moderador. Alguien que nos conocía a todos, porque al final el profesor nos iba incluyendo a cada uno, nos conoce y sabe lo que le cuesta cada uno. Y luego que a la hora de proponer yo las cosas, por ejemplo, lo que yo propuse me beneficiaba a mí, pero trataba de mostrar la parte que sea el beneficio colectivo para que fuese la propuesta votada. Y claro, la cosa es que todo el mundo intentaba eso y al final, como cada uno quería su propuesta que saliese, más que un debate acabas en un gallinero. Porque al final sí, está bien que sea un entorno de confianza, porque al estar todos los que nos conocemos claro, cogía uno y se ponía "¡pues no!", en lugar de levantar la mano y tratar de hacerlo como en un debate reglado. Entonces no sé más que como encontrar la mejor idea, veo por ejemplo... En el colegio tenemos un apartado que ahora ya no es agenda 21, es la Agenda 2030, y ahí, por ejemplo, sí que había cuatro representantes por cada curso, sí se sometía a votación y decidíamos qué es lo que hacía. Teníamos dos representantes de cada parte. La gente que estaba ahí, como al final es un delegado y tienes que presentarte a ello, sí había gente con una apertura y un interés personal por ello. Usando este ejemplo, sí creo que lo más importante sería eso. Si hiciésemos una reunión con 100 personas que estén interesadas en el tema, pero que son 100 personas que se pueden meter aleatoriamente a una llamada, por ejemplo, sí que habría más complicación. Pero si por ejemplo, se eligen cuatro personas de cada colectivo para presentarlo, o dos, lo que sea, el moderador que estaba, el profesor que era el que se encargaba de todo ello, era un entorno seguro porque era dentro del colegio, pero a su vez no era en el aula, sino una sala especial de reuniones a la que no estamos acostumbrados. Aunque siga estando dentro de tu entorno, pues no te sientes más cómodo que si estás ahí en tu clase. Y no sé, luego que al final si llevas tiempo metido en una iniciativa de estas pierdes el miedo a dar tu opinión y te sientes mucho más cómodo.

Q: Y la idea un poco de que el proceso sea continuo en el tiempo, que haya distintas ocasiones de verse. Eso también lo estás diciendo de manera implícita, pero que no sea una sola vez que se dialoga, sino que haya varias ocasiones para conocerse más, tener más confianza. ¿Y en alguna ocasión intentasteis fusionar varias ideas, como unir varias ideas para tener como mayor complejidad, abarcar varias propuestas, crear un movimiento más amplio...?

A: Básicamente lo que hacíamos era lanzar propuestas para llevar a cabo. Y bueno, tristemente desde el Ayuntamiento nos dijeron que las propuestas eran demasiado ambiciosas, es decir, lo que proponíamos no era posible de hacer. Pero bueno, pasados los años lo han ido haciendo. Tampoco había gran variedad con respecto a cosas opuestas, porque al final como era Agenda 2030, todo lo que estaba pasado más o menos seguía una misma línea. Pero en cambio, pasándome al otro lado en lo de los presupuestos participativos, cada uno tiraba por su lado. Ahí sí había más problema y aunque cada uno intentaba que todos nos beneficiáramos de lo que proponía cada uno, aunque obviamente estaba orientado al beneficio personal.

Q: Yo estaba pensando en si la confianza había sido alguna vez el inconveniente. ¿Sabes eso que dicen de "la confianza da asco"? ¿En algún momento has tenido más problema en llegar, así que se te ocurra, a un acuerdo con un compañero de tu clase con el que no te conocieras, que con un compañero de clase que fuera un amigo cercano a ti? ¿Crees que la confianza puede llegar a ser un inconveniente?

A: Creo que la confianza en estos casos facilita mucho las cosas, pero claro. No sería lo mismo que le propusiera hablar sobre este tema a un profesor, a alguien, a un amigo mío, a que fuese yo a hablar de ello con él. Porque obviamente al estar en un entorno de más confianza no va a haber la misma seriedad. Y luego, cuando es alguien externo no involucras parte sentimental ni nada, es decir, simplemente te ciñes a opinar sobre ello. Pero cuando es alguien que sí conoces, al final sí creo que puede tomar la parte emocional y que no sea tan racional lo que digamos. Creo que no me estoy explicando muy bien, pero bueno.

Q: ¿Consideras importante entonces establecer una base emocional para llegar a un acuerdo o tratas directamente lo que sería una parte racional o más transaccional de "pues a ti esto te beneficiaría"? ¿O primero crees que es importante también tener valores en común?

A: Primero, que nos conociéramos todos, porque así es mucho más sencillo porque le puede ayudar al otro. Y entonces, viéndolo desde el punto de vista de un hipotético caso de unos presupuestos. Pues primero, si no nos conociésemos, pues primero unas reuniones en las que nos presentásemos cada uno y dijésemos lo que nos interesaba hacer. Y luego ya una vez con los presupuestos, empezar a debatirlo, porque si no sabes qué es lo que le interesa a la otra parte... Obviamente va a haber una parte que va a tener las ideas más

predefinidas, entonces si esa va directamente ya con su argumento sin saber lo que el otro quiere, al final el otro se queda como un poco fuera de la narrativa. Entonces, que primero nos conozcamos, sepamos cuáles son las necesidades de cada uno y luego ya ponernos a hablar sobre ello.

### ***Interview 5: Man, 50, nonprofit and academia***

Date: 21<sup>st</sup> September 2022 | Location: online | Duration: 34 min 42 s

Question (Q): Para romper el hielo lo primero que os preguntamos es a qué os gustaba jugar cuando erais pequeños. Porque también esto tiene mucho que ver con la colaboración o la competición, ¿no?

Answer (A): Pues buena pregunta. Tiene que ver un poco con a qué franja de edad te remontas. Pero bueno, en la época nuestra los juegos eran siempre muy de calle. Es muy diferente, cuando veo a mis hijos como juegan ellos. El tiempo que pasan ellos en casa con el que pasábamos nosotros no tiene nada que ver. A nosotros literalmente nos echaban de casa a una hora y decían “bueno, volved a comer”, y después de comer nos volvían a echar de casa hasta la tarde. Entonces digamos que los juegos colaborativos en nuestro caso no eran una opción, sino que era una obligación. Que pueden ser evidentemente de deporte, pero también otros más clásicos. Pero sí es verdad que es una perspectiva de colaboración en el deporte o en la calle que para nosotros era lo habitual.

Q: Muy bien. Y pensando en tus experiencias personales y en tus propias vivencias, ¿qué condiciones o qué características de las conversaciones para llegar a acuerdos en las que tú has participado consideras que han facilitado la colaboración? Desde el tono de la conversación, el espacio que se eligió, el lenguaje... Lo que tú quieras.

A: Bueno, lo que sabemos de este arte es que evidentemente cada contexto es diferente y cada proceso es diferente. Es decir, que no hay una regla estándar de cómo conducir este tipo de procesos. Por eso es tan importante esta fase de escucha previa, de análisis, para que ese arte, digamos, se pueda adaptar a cada contexto. Pero lo que sí sabemos, digamos, como yo creo que el aprendizaje más interesante que yo personalmente he tenido en este campo, es que cuanto más se intenta informar o educar a la otra parte de la bondad de nuestros argumentos, más se aleja el acuerdo. Y por el contrario, cuanto más uno es capaz de intentar expresar su propia realidad sin la intención de conseguir el acuerdo, digamos, la persona busca naturalmente elementos de conexión. Por eso los espacios de diálogo o de colaboración que tienen como objetivo el acuerdo, tienen muchísimas más dificultades que los espacios que se construyan, simplemente para intentar conocer la verdad que hay en la otra persona o en la otra posición. Cuando se generan esos espacios sin necesidad o voluntad directa de acuerdo, es mucho más fácil que naturalmente se produzcan las conexiones, en lo personal y en lo y en lo operativo. Pero desgraciadamente la mayoría de

los espacios de diálogo y de acuerdo se estructuran sobre la premisa contraria. Entonces, para mí ese es uno de los grandes aprendizajes.

Q: Y si sabes que quieres llegar a un acuerdo con la otra parte, a la hora de comenzar esa conversación primero, ¿qué estrategia utilizas? ¿Dirías que te guías más o que tratas de asentar una base de confianza previa en base a lo racional, al motivo del acuerdo, a algo más transaccional o tratas tal vez de establecer un punto común previo a partir del cual comenzar una conversación basada en la confianza?

A: También depende mucho de si la cuestión o el problema o el reto que tenemos es un reto sobre el que conocemos la solución o no conocemos la solución. Esto condiciona totalmente el proceso de diálogo. Cuando se trata de una cuestión en la que sabemos la solución o queremos saber la solución y hay diferentes formas de entender esa solución, eso es un tipo de diálogo; cuando no se sabe, es otro. Es, digamos, la segunda opción, que no se sabe. Eso es un proceso de innovación y, por lo tanto, tiene una lógica y tiene unos procesos diferentes. Cuando estamos en el escenario 1, que es un escenario de alguna manera de conflicto clásico, en el que hay una diferencia de intereses, sobre todo respecto a las consecuencias que tiene aplicar una solución u otra, ahí digamos que la parte racional o transaccional que planteabas juega un papel y la parte emocional o racional juega otro. Lo que sabemos es que lo difícil es encontrar el equilibrio. Es decir, no hay solución puramente transaccional y no hay solución puramente relacional. Entonces, una persona o una organización puede empezar por cualquiera de las dos vías, pero al final va a tener que conseguir un equilibrio. ¿Por cuál se empieza? Si es relacional o es transaccional depende del contexto. Hay contextos y culturas en el que lo transaccional es mejor para comenzar el diálogo y hay otras en que es mejor lo relacional. Por ejemplo, no es lo mismo un diálogo en *[location]* que un diálogo en *[location]*, por ejemplo. Entonces, en el caso del *[location]*, si no comienzas con un diálogo sobre lo racional, sobre los contenidos, es muy difícil pasar a lo relacional, mientras que igual en otras culturas la prioridad es que haya una discusión sobre lo relacional para poder entrar a la parte racional. Depende mucho del contexto.

Q: ¿Nos podrías ejemplificar un poco más esto que podríamos llamar "la cultura de diálogo"? Las diferencias o algunos ejemplos concretos.

A: Pues por ejemplo, en el caso de *[location]*, cuando tú tenías un problema, una facilitación sobre en una situación de conflicto que venía de una persona por ejemplo de *[location]*, empezaba el diálogo con un juego para que la gente se abriese más en lo personal. Eso en el caso del *[location]* genera el efecto contrario porque es una cultura muy hacia adentro en la que sacar, digamos, la parte más personal, genera desconfianza e inquietud. Entonces es mejor empezar a hablar de una forma más formal, más racional, y a través de ese diálogo luego poder ir incorporando elementos de la parte más personal, mientras que seguramente cuando generas un proceso de diálogo en *[location]* si directamente pasas a hablar de cuáles son los contenidos puros del conflicto sin haber hecho un abordaje a otros

elementos de contexto, pues puede sonar muy frío. En España esa diferencia de contexto es muy notable en función de dónde estés y sobre qué temas y con qué agentes estés trabajando.

Q: Y una pregunta sobre esto. ¿Entonces cómo se prepara un proceso de diálogo para conocer esas condiciones culturales previamente? ¿Cómo lo hacéis en vuestra organización? ¿O tú personalmente?

A: Sí, bueno, todo nuestro trabajo en el ámbito de la innovación social está estructurado en base a un análisis de lo que ha sido nuestra propia experiencia de transformación socioeconómica del *[location]* en un contexto de violencia. Entonces, por eso hablamos siempre de cinco componentes fundamentales en todo proceso de transformación sistémica, que no digamos no son secuenciales (es decir, no es primero uno y el otro) y que están interactuando todo el rato. Entonces los elementos de análisis previo, siempre tienen que ser un análisis del sistema, es decir, el que estás operando. Es decir, si es una situación de conflicto antes de entrar a diálogos o conflictos necesitamos hacer un análisis previo de cuáles son los agentes que están interactuando en ese conflicto, qué acciones están desarrollando, dónde están los puntos de conexión y dónde están las carencias. Entonces ahí vas a poder visualizar muy claramente que hay unos determinados agentes que están interactuando entre ellos de una manera, pero están desconectados de otros agentes. Esa visualización de quiénes son los agentes y de sus interacciones es fundamental, porque si no estás hablando con organizaciones, con personas, y no sabes la importancia que tienen en el sistema y cuáles son los flujos de interacción. Entonces vas a poder ver, por ejemplo, que igual hay personas, organizaciones que jerárquicamente igual no tienen importancia, pero que en el flujo del sistema resulta que hay un montón de cosas que pasan por ellos. Un ejemplo clásico suele ser la Iglesia, ¿no? Igual en un análisis de las diferentes iglesias o religiones que estén operando. En un análisis más de poder, pues salen los gobiernos, salen las empresas e igual no sale tanto el papel que está jugando una Iglesia, por ejemplo. En cambio, si lo analizas como sistema, en seguida ves que hay que ver el papel que puede desempeñar una iglesia. En el caso de *[location]* fue muy claro, pero el caso de *[location]* también, pues ves que son agentes que tienen muchísima importancia. Esa es la parte primera. Y la segunda es lo que siempre hablamos de los procesos de escucha, de entender con un nivel de profundidad mayor antes de hacer ningún tipo de planteamiento, incluso antes de juntar a la gente: tener un conocimiento más profundo de cuáles son las percepciones que tienen sus agentes sobre lo que está pasando. Y no sólo en un nivel superficial, sino un nivel más profundo de qué es lo que están diciendo y qué es lo que no están diciendo. Y cuáles son los elementos, profundidad, sobre, por ejemplo, la posibilidad de cambio. Nosotros siempre miramos o cuando estamos escuchando, no sólo estamos escuchando lo que nos están diciendo sobre esa problemática en concreto, pues imagínate que hay un problema o el caso de trabajo que estamos haciendo en Iberdrola con el tema de las zonas de transición justa. Una cosa es lo que están diciendo respecto a la

problemática del cierre de la central térmica en este momento; otra cosa es lo que no están diciendo, pero que está implícito en ese discurso, y a nosotros nos interesa saber más a nivel de fondo si creen que el cambio es posible o no en esa zona. Porque muchas veces te puedes encontrar con una percepción de "bueno, tenemos que hacer esto para cambiar las cosas", pero en el fondo hay una percepción de que el cambio no es posible. Da igual lo que hagas, que en esa zona las cosas no van a cambiar. Y lo mismo pasa por ejemplo en *[location]* o *[location]*. Ahora estamos trabajando en *[location]* o en *[location]*. Entonces, esta capacidad de escucha profunda es clave en todos los procesos de resolución de conflictos y es verdad que normalmente no contamos con los recursos ni con el tiempo necesario para hacer esto antes de empezar un diálogo, digamos, formal. Este diálogo formal suele ser el "punto cero", juntar a la gente, y claro... Si tú juntas a la gente sin haber hecho previamente un buen análisis del sistema y sin haber entendido cuáles son esas percepciones, pues realmente puedes generar incluso el efecto contrario, es decir, que la gente se junte y que se profundice más en las diferencias que en los posibles puntos de conexión. Entonces, este sería el tercer elemento, los espacios de diálogo, pero sobre todo de interpretación colectiva de la realidad. Y ahí es donde decía que si ese espacio está diseñado para que las partes de alguna manera se pongan de acuerdo, normalmente tiene muchísimas dificultades. Cuando está diseñado para que conozcan otras realidades y las interpretan conjuntamente, eso genera una tendencia al acuerdo mucho mayor y después estarían los espacios de qué se hace con eso. Una vez que se ha generado ese diálogo, si ese diálogo se queda ahí, puede ser muy frustrante porque puedes haber generado unos espacios de acuerdo, pero tienes que actuar sobre ellos. Ahí es donde operan las fases de cocreación, es decir, qué vamos a hacer conjuntamente para abordar los temas que hemos hablado y después, cómo esas actuaciones están interconectadas, que es lo que llamamos ahora la perspectiva de portafolio o experimentación. Ya no hay una solución única a un problema complejo, sino que lo que hacemos es aprender a interconectar múltiples niveles de experimentación al mismo tiempo. Esos serían los ámbitos básicos que, en nuestra opinión, los llamemos de una manera o de otra, todas las personas e instituciones que trabajan en este ámbito están incorporando a sus procesos.

Q: Y ahora te queríamos hacer una pregunta también que tiene que ver con el proceso de aprendizaje. En tu caso en particular, a lo largo de las distintas experiencias de proceso de escucha que habéis ido haciendo, ¿qué consideras que a lo mejor al principio no hicisteis tan bien? ¿Y cómo lo habéis ido mejorando proceso a proceso?

A: Bueno, casi todo. Casi todo lo que hemos hecho, lo hemos hecho mal. Y estamos permanentemente intentando ver cómo se pueden hacer las cosas de otra manera. Yo creo que lo fundamental es que la parte de aprendizaje que comentábamos, todo lo que es elaboración de materiales, procesos de formación, etcétera, sabemos que tiene un impacto súper limitado. Dónde está el aprendizaje es en la experimentación, en el hacer cosas conjuntamente y evidentemente hacer cosas conjuntamente con ideas nuevas, porque uno



puede estar experimentando conjuntamente pero sobre las mismas cosas todo el rato. ¿Entonces, cómo aprendemos? A través de hacer cosas conjuntamente íbamos incorporando diferentes niveles de experimentación o de cosas nuevas. Entonces bueno, antes nosotros empezábamos con la parte de análisis de mapeo del sistema, de escucha, creación y luego llegábamos a la parte de co-creación y todo era como bastante secuencial. Y nos hemos dado cuenta de que empezar por la co-creación y por el prototipado, es decir, empezar por el final, a veces incluso es más fácil, ¿no? Es decir, en todos los lugares en los que estamos trabajando normalmente ya hay un portafolio, ya hay unas iniciativas que están operando, aunque ellas mismas no se reconozcan como parte de un mismo portafolio. Entonces, actuar sobre lo que ya está sucediendo e ir incorporando procesos de escucha en lugar de empezar por los procesos de escucha es uno de los nuestros nuevos grandes aprendizajes. Y ahora digamos que estamos cada vez invirtiendo más en eso, en empezar sobre la acción, sobre lo que ya está pasando y no tanto sobre procesos de análisis de la situación que llevan más tiempo y tardan en conectar con los agentes locales.

Q: Y hablemos un poco más también de vuestro papel facilitador de esos procesos. ¿Cómo os situáis en la conversación? ¿Sois un agente que acompaña, más o menos neutral o intervenís de alguna manera? ¿Cómo es ese papel y cómo influye también en las condiciones de la conversación?

A: Pues aquí también hemos cambiado un poco. Han sido unos diez años trabajando. Veíamos nuestro rol como un rol de apoyo a la intervención, ¿no? Y en el que estábamos en la implementación y en el apoyo, y cada vez más vemos nuestro rol como un rol de dinamización del espacio de aprendizaje. Evidentemente no hay aprendizaje sin intervención, entonces evidentemente estamos en la intervención, pero nuestro rol fundamental no es el del apoyo a la intervención, sino que es el del aprendizaje, el de generar un aprendizaje conjunto. Es un pequeño matiz, pero creemos que es un matiz muy importante porque durante un tiempo digamos que cargábamos sobre nosotros el peso de que la intervención tuviera un éxito en el terreno. Y cuanto más haces eso, menos liderazgos locales se generan. Es decir, tú vas ocupando el espacio que deberían ocupar los agentes locales. Entonces, cada vez más nuestro rol es un rol de dinamización de esa comunidad aprendizaje. Y de esa manera se espera un poco más a que los liderazgos desde el principio se generen localmente, como puede ser el caso, por ejemplo, en *[location]*, donde estamos trabajando ahora, en el que lo que está sucediendo muchas veces es la forma en la que los agentes locales está interpretando la realidad, es completamente diferente a la nuestra. Nosotros lo haríamos de una manera totalmente diferente, pero entendemos que tiene que ser así porque si no lo hacemos así, si nosotros vamos a ocupar un lugar que no nos corresponde. Pero bueno, eso sí que sí, que está cambiando con fuerza.

Q: Estás hablando mucho desde tu organización y te quería preguntar más a nivel personal cómo afrontas aquellas situaciones, puede ser en tu trabajo, pero no tanto hablando por el equipo, sino hablando también por ti mismo en conversaciones 1 a 1, incluso, ¿cómo

afrontas y mediante qué herramientas afrontas situaciones en las que crees que el diálogo no está funcionando o no vas a acabar consiguiendo lo que tu querías en un principio, que podría ser, por ejemplo, llegar a un acuerdo o tener una conversación fructífera, organizada en vistas a una segunda reunión, en el marco de un proyecto... ¿Cómo afrontas tú esas situaciones de tensión?

A: Bueno, por un lado yo creo que cuando operas en este, en este campo, o sea, hay una parte, digamos, de gestión de esa frustración que tiene que ver con la aceptación de, primero, que no sabemos realmente. En ningún caso tenemos una solución a ese problema, sino que la solución es siempre una solución compartida y por lo tanto nuestro rol es un rol súper limitado. O sea, la aceptación de la limitación es muy importante, primero porque es la realidad y segundo porque descarga también de peso. Decir “bueno, nosotros podemos hacer hasta donde podamos hacer”. Y ahí sí que hay que ser riguroso en hacer las cosas bien, pero es evidente que estás operando sobre un sistema complejo en el que aunque tú hagas todo perfecto (que es imposible que lo hagas perfecto porque no hay perfección), tú dependes de otros muchos agentes. Entonces eso yo creo que te libera de responsabilidad en algunos casos y permite gestionar. Y la otra actitud es una actitud que bueno, en la época, digamos, de la parte más de conflicto, utilizamos en plan de broma que nosotros en nuestro trabajo era un trabajo de “insistencialismo”. O sea que significa insistir, insistir, insistir. O sea, la capacidad de repetir conceptos y procesos es clave porque en situaciones de complejidad y conflicto, como hay tantos factores que están operando, tú puedes desarrollar una acción que en ese momento no está teniendo ningún impacto, pero la misma acción en otro momento, porque ha habido otros cambios en el contexto, sí puede tener impacto. Entonces, si uno está convencido de que determinados elementos (uno me refiero al conjunto de actores que están haciendo la acción), que esos son elementos es importante insistir en eso. No te va a garantizar que tengas un impacto positivo, pero hay una correlación clarísima en la capacidad de mantener procesos de esta naturaleza a lo largo del tiempo. Es que el tiempo es un factor fundamental, que por mucho que uno diseñe una intervención de una forma muy completa, la repetición de ese tipo de procesos es fundamental. Entonces, por un lado, la aceptación de que, de que nuestra labor es una labor limitada y que depende de otros y por otro lado, que es necesario repetir genera una forma de trabajar que permite gestionar esa frustración de otra manera. Pero bueno, volviendo al caso, por ejemplo, en el caso concreto de *[name of organisation]*, nosotros llevamos el análisis interno que hemos hecho yo personalmente, pero también con el resto de organizaciones y compañeros. Y es que el trabajo se ha hecho bastante bien, o sea, perfecto nunca, porque es posible. Pero si uno analiza lo que se ha hecho está, en líneas generales, bien construido. Lo que pasa es que se construye sobre un sistema de una complejidad que te desborda, ¿no? En este caso, ¿quién iba a predecir que esa intervención, que ya era súper difícil, sería deseable en el contexto de la guerra en Ucrania, de la crisis energética, del papel que tiene *[name of organisation]* en todo eso? Los elementos de contexto con los que empiezas de repente cambian, cambian totalmente. Entonces tú

puedes responder de lo que has hecho hasta cierto punto, pero el impacto que eso tiene se te escapa totalmente. Entonces ahí es donde yo creo que bueno, en lo personal y en lo colectivo hay que realmente creerse profundamente que lo hablamos mucho, que todos decimos que no sabemos y que desde la inteligencia colectiva, pero realmente muchas veces pensamos que sí tenemos una solución o que nosotros sí tenemos capacidad, o que sabemos más que lo que saben otros agentes. Y aceptar con mayor profundidad lo que realmente no sabemos tiene unas implicaciones mucho más allá que lo que es un mero discurso. Trabajar eso yo creo que permite gestionar estas situaciones de una manera mejor, más sana, igual.

Q: Ya una última pregunta y luego te retenemos unos minutos muy, muy cortos para coger algunos recursos que nos permiten homogeneizar todos los vídeos. ¿En qué aspectos o en qué medida esta metodología de trabajo que tenéis tan trabajada, valga la redundancia, en distintos contextos, os influye en vuestras prácticas, rutinas o cultura como organización? O sea, ¿qué parte de la escucha o de la co-creación trasladáis a vuestra organización y de qué forma?

A: Sí, a ver, nuestro objetivo cuando creamos el laboratorio es, por un lado, entender mejor nuestra propia experiencia, compartirla con el mundo a nivel internacional, pero sobre todo aprender de esos procesos para volver a continuar con el proceso de transformación de la sociedad [location]. No es un proceso de ida solo, sino que es un proceso de ida y vuelta. Entonces, sin duda que las colaboraciones que tenemos con los agentes y el trabajo en otros contextos nos están influyendo de forma determinante. Yo creo que nos está sirviendo mucho para detectar, en el caso de la sociedad [location] y en el contexto que nosotros trabajamos, en cuestionar muchos de los planteamientos que damos por válidos, de lo que estamos haciendo. Tener sobre todo una mirada mucho más crítica de lo que está sucediendo en la sociedad [location], cómo estamos respondiendo y la forma también en la que opera nuestra propia organización. Por ejemplo, nosotros hemos replanteado alguna manera, rompiendo un poco los contextos en los que trabajamos, la propia política de contratación de [name of organisation] y de sus relaciones contractuales, y de la política de relación con nuestros socios. Es decir, nos dimos cuenta de que no puede ser que tú estés trabajando en determinadas partes del mundo en las que las condiciones de vida son muy diferentes y reproducir modelos elitistas que estás criticando a otras organizaciones que están trabajando en otros contextos. Entonces internamente tenemos un sistema de salarios que impide esa gran diferencia pero, al mismo tiempo, de alguna manera condicionamos a nuestros colaboradores internacionales que si quieren trabajar con nosotros, tienen que también adaptarse a un sistema salarial para que sea coherente lo que hacemos y lo que decimos con los espacios en los que estamos trabajando. Bueno, hay cuestiones de ese tipo que sin duda que nos influyen muchísimo. Estamos trabajando las zonas norte de [location], que es una de las zonas con mayores dificultades. Trabajar ahí requiere un ejercicio de contextualización y que de alguna manera también nos influye a nosotros.

***Interview 6: Woman, 56, public sector***

Date: 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2022 | Location: online | Duration: 27 min 04 s

Question (Q): En la medida de lo posible, nos gustaría que te apoyaras en experiencias concretas, en ejemplos concretos y en tu propia experiencia personal. No buscamos grandes sentencias filosóficas, sino respuestas muy prácticas desde tus propias vivencias.

Answer (A) :¿Pero solo asociado con *[name of initiative]* o con cualquiera?

Q: Con cualquiera, con tu trabajo o con tu vida personal, como tú quieras. Entonces, basándote en una experiencia que nos puedas detallar lo máximo posible (o en algunas) nos gustaría saber en un contexto en el que tú hayas trabajado, por ejemplo, en el que haya habido que dialogar entre agentes muy diversos y que se haya logrado llegar a algún tipo de acuerdo o de consenso, ¿qué condiciones crees tú de esas conversaciones ayudaron a que hubiera ese entendimiento? Pues por ponerte algunos ejemplos, pues el tono de la conversación, el lenguaje que se utilizaba, el espacio que se escogió para hacerlo o cómo se colocaban las personas en ese espacio, pues cosas de ese tipo que a ti te vengan a la cabeza y que creas que funcionaban muy bien para generar la confianza, el compromiso por un objetivo común, aunque hubiera diferencias luego de maneras de enfocarlos, pero que ayudaran a trabajar conjuntamente.

A: Vale. Vale, lo comentamos primero, así un poco por organizarlo, si os parece. Por ejemplo, se me ha ocurrido una experiencia que tuvimos, hace ya años, en la zona de la *[location]*. Una zona industrial donde hubo una crisis, llamémosle de comunicación y social, porque la gente entendía que, debido a las actividades industriales que allí había, que tenían, que tenía unos problemas sanitarios muy importantes dentro. Pero bueno, digamos que no se correspondía a la realidad, pero que era la sensación que ellos percibían y eso generó muchísima alarma social. Entonces, en ese momento estaba yo en *[name of organisation]*, y generamos un gabinete de crisis ¿no? Es cierto que cuando llegamos todo estaba muy crispado, había falta de respeto, porque además, cuando se juega con la salud o la gente considera que se juega con la salud y cuando afecta a los niños, pues la gente está mucho más nerviosa. ¿Cómo conseguimos apaciguar esa situación? Bueno, pues la verdad es que se utilizaron muchísimas herramientas. Muchas veces no eras consciente cuando la estabas utilizando, pero conforme las ejercías sí.

Lo primero: muchísimo respeto. Muchísimo respeto entre, para empezar por lo menos de los que queríamos romper esa situación. Y es cierto que si tú mantenías una actitud respetuosa, confidente y demás, al cabo de las reuniones ellos también lo fueron manteniendo y se fueron apaciguando por de pronto el tono.

Otro fue la asiduidad no consiste en ir una vez, decir buenas palabras y olvidarte. Nosotros hicimos un planteamiento de una vez semanal, nos acercábamos y hablábamos con todo y con todos.

Otra era lo de todos y todas. O sea, no dejar a nadie atrás. Intentar que entraran todos aquellos... Las reuniones eran muy grandes, que son muchas veces inmanejables. Pero sí intentamos que estuviera todo el mundo representado, no solamente los responsables en este caso vecinales, sino muchas veces personas individuales que a lo mejor éramos conscientes o que estaban más preocupadas o que eran quizás algunos de los más activos en la transmisión de la información.

El sitio también era importante. El sitio tenía que ser en su terreno. No te lo puedes llevar al tuyo. Tampoco consiste en irte a lo mejor al salón de la asociación, pero sí nos fuimos a un sitio neutral. En este caso eran unos salones del ayuntamiento, del sitio donde estábamos en la zona de la Bahía de Gibraltar.

Y bueno, cuando ya se ha generado el clima, yo creo que lo más importante fue la información, es decir, trajimos información veraz, de calidad. Y por parte de muchos actores. En este caso estaban preocupados por un tema industrial asociado a la salud. Entonces trajimos expertos sanitarios, no solamente de la administración, sino de fuera de la administración, porque muchas veces a la administración es a quien menos confianza se le tiene ¿no? Desde luego trajimos a diferentes empresas para que les contaran con muchísimo detalle todas las actuaciones que se hacían, qué es lo que se proponía hacer de futuro y demás. Es cierto que esta fue la parte más dura, porque si ya con la administración se portaban mal, hubo veces de verdadera falta de respeto, ya rayando en casi la agresividad, no solamente física sino verbal, contra estas personas de la empresa, que a lo mejor un responsable simplemente de medio ambiente ¿no? Porque ellos consideraban que era el culpable de sus males. Pero estamos hablando de que llegaron a decir que había nacido un niño con dos cabezas. Es decir, ya cuando se dispara la alarma, lo primero que hay que hacer es intentar apaciguar, porque todos éramos conscientes de que no había nacido un niño con dos cabezas. Sin embargo, ya era un bulo que se estaba corriendo ¿no?

Entonces es cierto que mucho trabajo, mucha dedicación, mucha empatía. Y sobre todo una información certera y luego, lógicamente, cumplir los compromisos. Solamente se desactivó la alarma conforme ellos fueron dándose cuenta que los compromisos que se hacían se cumplían. Ahora yo soy de la opinión que los elefantes, como decía un amigo mío, se comen a rodajitas. Es decir, tú no puedes llegar el primer día y contar todo lo que vas a hacer. Consiste en ir poniendo pequeñas metas, pequeños compromisos que ellos vean de una semana a otra. Que esos compromisos se cumplen y ahí vas poco a poco ganando la confianza.

Y luego otra cosa muy importante es que no puede ser una relación unidireccional, tiene que ser una relación bidireccional. No consiste en que ellos ponen su problema y nosotros

cuestionamos si su problema es real o no, y nosotros le damos la solución. No. Ellos tienen que exponer sus preocupaciones muchas veces más que los problemas. Entre todos tendremos que ver vía toda esta información, todos estos expertos que vamos trayendo, si de verdad esa información, esos sentimientos y sensaciones verdaderamente son problemas, se acotan los problemas y se ven soluciones reales. Es decir, la solución no puede ser, como a lo mejor decía alguno: “Quítenme la empresa, pero manténganme los puestos de trabajo”. No. Eso a lo mejor no es posible, o no es posible de hoy para mañana. Entonces, cuando ya se trabaja conjuntamente, yo creo que se gana muchísimo. Y sobre todo eso es conseguir la confianza de la persona que tienes enfrente. Y todo, vuelvo a repetirme, a base de respeto y de escucha. Porque claro, cuando no, ¿qué nos pasó? Una de las veces para mí más difíciles es que llega un responsable de medio ambiente de la empresa y de repente se levanta uno, un señor que estaba muy nervioso, que tenía un hijo con un cáncer, con una leucemia, y empieza a gritarle “Asesino, asesino, están matando...” El señor de la empresa llorando. Era responsable de medio ambiente de una empresa. No tenía más. Entonces, claro, eso es lo que hay que cortar. Y hay que intentar llevar a todo el mundo a la ecuanimidad, ¿no? Y a que podamos razonar, podamos dialogar y podamos encontrar ese punto de encuentro.

Q: Y.. A nivel personal, ¿cómo gestionas esas situaciones? por ejemplo, de estrés en las que el diálogo no está llegando a un acuerdo. Incluso esas situaciones en terreno o desde el despacho. ¿Cómo gestionas la frustración?

A: Lo primero, cuando te encuentras en una situación de estas tan desagradable, lo primero es bueno. Pues yo creo que esta es una reacción... Lo primero es intentar apaciguar la situación y si no puedes, yo lo corto, cierro la sesión. Y entonces, en función de cómo tú veas... O dices “Mira, nos damos media hora” o “Cortamos y volvemos mañana”. Porque, si no cortas, todo el mundo vamos a salir de esa zona y decir.. Yo soy buena negociando, pero yo soy muy mala en una situación de estrés, porque no sé gestionarlo. No me lleves a esa situación. Vamos a quedarnos donde cada uno sabe que se mueve mejor, en su terreno. Entonces, lo que yo no voy a permitir son faltas de respeto hacia uno y otro. No podemos, porque eso es lo que... Lo primero por educación y luego porque es lo que rompe toda la negociación. Entonces lo mejor es: o intentas, si tienes capacidad, lo bajas de nivel. Si tienes los medios, o sea si no has bajado de nivel y tienes los medios, sacas a la persona. A mí me ha pasado en otras negociaciones que ha llegado una persona ya con un tono ya demasiado agresivo y que ya te hace dudar que no, no era en este caso que no se va a llegar a algo peor. Incluso a lo mejor era un colectivo complicado. Y he tenido posibilidad, he llamado a seguridad y digo “Por favor, llévense a esa persona”. Pero creo que hay que hacerlo antes que se rompa la comunicación, porque si no yo esa persona no voy a querer volver a verla nunca. Y no consiste en eso. Consiste en bajar el tono y dentro de media hora “Venga, vamos a tomar un café. ¿Eres capaz? No eres capaz, si no, dentro de dos días nos vemos y si no, dentro de una semana. Y si no ven acompañado por otro, si

es que es imposible que venga esta persona, o sea que no venga esta persona no?" Entonces si es posible o si tú ves que esta persona no puede dialogar con un interlocutor. Que no puede, pues que esta persona venga acompañado. Lo que hay que intentar buscar es que nunca se pierda el respeto, porque eso es lo que hace que todos saquemos lo peor de nosotros. Y ya entonces se ha roto la negociación.

Q: Gracias. ¿Y nos puedes contar algo que en alguna de tus experiencias no haya funcionado y cómo de una vez para otra habéis aprendido y habéis incorporado alguna herramienta nueva o alguna estrategia nueva?

A: Pues mira, por ejemplo, recuerdo una... Otra vez... También estaba en *[name of organisation]*. Estábamos en una... No era, bueno, era negociación, era... Pero no era negociación en sí, sino que era la aplicación de una normativa, ¿no? Una normativa, en este caso de gestión de residuos de construcción y demolición. Y los actores que hasta ahora habían hecho ese tipo de gestión en este caso eran los cuberos, los que te recogen los residuos cuando tú haces una obra en tu casa. Y en teoría estábamos ya.. Había una legislación que obligaba a tratarlo de manera correcta... Esos residuos. Bueno, pero estas personas estaban acostumbradas a hacerlo de otra forma: lo llevaban a un agujero y lo tiraban. Entonces teníamos un diálogo. No era una negociación. Yo no podía negociar que lo tiraran en otro sitio, pero sí podía negociar los tiempos, las formas. ¿Vale? Pero es cierto que... que éramos...

Yo creo que aquí el problema era que hablábamos dos idiomas diferentes, ¿no? Es decir, quizá el problema era mío, que yo no sabía ponerme en el pensamiento y en la forma de hablar y de procesar la información de estas personas. Estaba yo con algunos compañeros. Ahí se rompe la negociación. Ellos no lo admiten. Fue muy gracioso. Yo siempre digo que me han hecho la... La mayor expresión de amor que me podían haber hecho, porque me montaron una manifestación que es que pusieron a todas las cubas, que son muchas las que hay en este caso en *[location]*, y se pusieron a hacer... a colapsar toda la S-40 e incluso llegaron para el centro. Era un 25 de noviembre, día de mi cumpleaños, y llevaba unos rótulos muy grandes. La verdad es que fueron respetuosos, porque ponía: "*[name of person]*, te queremos". Claro, en teoría era un tema muy irónico, pero la verdad es que como fueron buenos y no se metieron conmigo, digo que fue el día de mi cumpleaños una de las representaciones de amor tener una manifestación decir "*[name of person]*, te queremos" ¿no? Pero es cierto que la única forma de llegar a esto fue buscando esos otros aliados. En este caso no pedí que ellos vinieran con otro, sino que me busqué yo otros aliados que supieran hablar en su idioma, que contactaran con ellos, que... Que... Que ellos no me vieran a mí tan ajena a su mundo. Porque ellos veían que yo lo que estaba era quitándole el pan de sus hijos. Porque claro, los 30 € que ellos tenían que pagar por la gestión era casi lo que se iban a llevar de beneficio. Y era.. Todo esto era el problema, ¿no? Entonces, pues bueno, encontré unos intermediarios que entendían a la administración y les entendían a ellos y fuimos capaces de encontrar ese punto de encuentro, no? Y entonces

pues bueno, ya se desactivó. Y luego, como todo en la vida, habrá unos que lo harán al 100% y otros que lo harán al 40%. Pero ya se entró dentro de la normalidad. Pero es cierto que ahí fui yo la que tuve que buscar a alguien, porque yo me di cuenta de que yo era incapaz. No llegaba a ellos. No sabía conectar con ellos.

Q: En el Ayuntamiento se trabaja, o sea, no eres tú la única que lleva esta metodología y este enfoque de empatía y respeto del que hablas. Tienes compañeros en los que apoyarte, un equipo que trabaja con esos valores...

A: Verás, yo creo que eso está... Nadie te lo enseña. Cuando tú entras en cualquier sitio, en cualquier administración, dentro de los capítulos o de los temas del temario no está la negociación, que debiera estar. Y además, si lo estuviera, estaría solamente a nivel teórico. Con lo cual, si tú a nivel teórico lo sabes, el problema es llevarlo a la práctica. Y llevarlo a la práctica... en todos los aspectos de tu vida. Quien negocia, negocia en lo profesional, es consciente. Es cierto que yo creo que en todos los colectivos siempre existen esos perfiles. Es decir, en el ayuntamiento, lógicamente, para nada, absolutamente para nada. Hay muchos perfiles... Es cierto que todo el mundo suele tener como un marco de trabajo en el que le resulta más fácil realizar esa... Esa labor ¿no? Porque es en el que se encuentra más cómodo. Que unas veces viene dado por tu trayectoria y otras veces viene por tus empatías personales, ¿no? Pero lógicamente entonces yo creo que ahí está la inteligencia en saber buscar quiénes son aquellos que mejor... Olvidarte de tu protagonismo e intentar buscar los que son más buenos en ese sector. Entonces yo a lo mejor estoy muy acostumbrada a moverme en los entornos industriales, en el entorno de sostenibilidad y demás, pero a lo mejor en los temas de igualdad pues no soy buena, no por nada, sino.. No sé si seré buena o no... Es que nunca lo he trabajado. Pues lógicamente, cuando tengo que hacer un área de éstas, me busco a un compañero o compañera que sepa quiénes son los actores y... Que conozca más qué es lo que le puede herir para no hacerlo, ¿no? Es decir, que intente encontrar ese punto en el que todo el mundo se encuentre acogido. Porque yo creo que el primer paso es el respeto, pero el segundo paso es la felicidad. Es decir, que todo el mundo salga de la negociación sabiendo que ha servido para algo, que es positivo, que va a poder llegar con orgullo a sus compañeros, no con una cara de tristeza y “Bueno, mira, lo menos malo”, sino que puedes llegar con orgullo diciendo “Oye, mira que es que hemos encontrado esto que llevaba mucho tiempo, que lo perseguíamos y no podíamos”. Entonces lo primero es no hacernos daño y lo segundo salir victoriosos, pero todos. Y muchas veces consiste en escuchar. Es que no escuchamos.

Q: Me gusta mucho que traigas esta idea de la felicidad o de salir con una sensación positiva de estos procesos. Porque al final también a veces yo creo que es la clave para generar esa cultura de participación, de escucha, de diálogo en todas las personas. No llevar esa polarización que vemos tanto en los medios de comunicación, no asumirla como la única, la única vía de relacionarnos, ¿no? Y yo te iba a preguntar si en el *[name of organisation]* ya que decías que son.. una serie de valores, de capacidades que son muy



personales y que no se enseñan formalmente, pero ¿tenéis algún espacio formal o alguna práctica.. entre... en tu equipo de trabajo en la que de alguna manera asumáis también esa cultura de negociación, de escucha? ¿Hay alguna práctica concreta que tengáis o existe alguna formación en la que sí que se incorpore algún tipo de contenido sobre esto? ¿O es algo que surge de forma tácita y sin más?

A: Sí. De manera reglada no lo tenemos. Y es más, me estás haciendo reflexionar. Es decir, tú vas buscando a las personas por estos valores muchas veces, pero no son los valores que va buscando cuando a lo mejor los incorpora a un equipo o cuando te llega. Daros cuenta de que en las administraciones la gente llega a los equipos. Y tú a lo mejor lo que haces es: conociendo las capacidades de cada uno, pues dices, “Mira, mejor si hay que hablar con vecinos hablas tú. Si hay que hablar con empresas hablas tú..” Porque cada uno tiene esos valores. Luego formación no existe. O sea, sí existe un plan de formación permanente, en general, en todas las administraciones normalmente. Y cada vez existen más este tipo de cursos, pero ni son obligatorios... Por un lado, no son obligatorios hacerlos, y por otro, a lo mejor tú quieres hacerlo y no tienen la oportunidad de hacerlo. Es decir, que yo considero que eso es fundamental y debiéramos cada vez más, de alguna forma, tenerlo reglado dentro de una administración. Es cierto que luego existen, lógicamente, las administraciones, pues tienen todas en... todos los ayuntamientos, pues tienen una participación reglada con vecinos, con los distritos... Existen todos los temas de gobernanza asociados a cualquier proyecto o plan o lo que sea en lo que se genera el diálogo. Pero yo creo que aquí estamos bajando al nivel más de cuando tenemos un problema, cuando tenemos un proyecto a sacar, el cómo establecemos ese diálogo. Y eso es lo que no tenemos en ningún sitio establecido. Y no tenemos muchas veces... Es que no las tenemos y no tenemos por qué tenerlas ¿verdad? Ojalá todo el mundo las tuviera, pero que cuando contratan a un abogado por lo mucho que sabe de las leyes del derecho, nadie le ha preguntado su capacidad de dialogar. Y ese es un gran problema.

### ***Interview 7: Man, 61, private sector***

Date: 26<sup>th</sup> September 2022 | Location: in person | Duration: 24 min 16 s

Question (Q): Pues para romper el hielo en las entrevistas estamos empezando por preguntaros a qué os gustaba jugar cuando erais niños. Son más colaborativos, más competitivos. No es un concurso, pero simplemente por curiosidad. ¿Cuál es el juego al que te gustaba jugar?

Answer (A): Bueno, así como de juego deportivo al baloncesto. Luego hice mucho tiempo yudo que me gustó mucho, por lo que el arte marcial y luego la música. Toco la guitarra desde hace muchos años e hice grupos y en su momento grabé discos y todo y fue muy divertido.

Q: Ahora queremos que pienses si puede ser en una experiencia o como dos experiencias más o menos concretas que puedas describir con cierto detalle, en las que consideres que el diálogo ha sido una pieza clave para la colaboración, para lograr acuerdos, un consenso que lleve a una colaboración siempre orientada a la acción. Y en ese sentido que nos cuentas qué características consideras que tenía ese diálogo, que lo hicieron exitoso en esos términos. Si quieres algún ejemplo, hablamos a veces del tono o el lenguaje de la conversación, el espacio que se eligió para tener esa conversación. ¿Alguna persona en particular que ejerce un rol de mediador o moderador? ¿Cómo era ese rol con ese tipo de cosas?

A: Pues sí. Normalmente las experiencias que yo he tenido en temas colaborativos son más organizacionales, sobre todo en organizaciones. Y yo creo que, o sea que parte de la clave tiene que ver con tener tiempo para ello, que me parece que es un recurso que muchas veces se hace, se echa en falta a la hora de intentar generar colaboración. Muchas veces la colaboración parece como que es un fenómeno espontáneo y realmente yo creo que la clave de un proceso colaborativo es el diseño de ese proceso y el generar tiempo para que pasen determinadas situaciones y se pase por determinadas fases. Porque normalmente cuando generas un encuentro entre diferentes personas que probablemente además vienen con su propia mochila o su propio marco de pensamiento, las primeras conversaciones tienden simplemente, aunque, aunque haya buena voluntad, que ya es un requisito, que a veces no está presente, que también hay formas de cómo bajar esos niveles de conflictividad previos. Pero, aunque haya buena voluntad, yo creo que el diálogo parte por una falta de percepción de campo, de campos semánticos comunes o de campos de significados comunes. Entonces, yo creo que hay una parte que tiene que ver con generar el tiempo necesario para que se vayan produciendo situaciones que permitan a las personas ir pasando por determinadas fases y luego un adecuado diseño de ese proceso.

Es verdad que el espacio ayuda, es verdad que facilita el hecho de tener un facilitador como rol, ¿no? Pero yo creo que los dos elementos más críticos tienen que ver con tener tiempo y generar las condiciones para que se vaya produciendo una conversación que al final lo que va generando es un cierto nivel de confianza y un cierto nivel de de sí, de predictibilidad con con el comportamiento del otro. Y al final ese, ese conocimiento y esa confianza va bajando los niveles de tensión y haciendo aflorar otro tipo de interacciones. Y a mí me parece que es el elemento crítico. Luego es cuestión ya de entrar en el proceso de diseño, de dejar momentos de más, de construcción de relación y no entrar tanto en el contenido de en un momento determinado. Interrumpir para que se pueda producir una reflexión sobre el paso o dónde se ha llegado. Y yo creo que todo ese diseño del proceso es la clave.

Q: Entonces, si tiramos de ese hilo desde un punto de vista personal, ¿cómo has vivido tú este tipo de experiencias en este aspecto más emocional o relacional que consideras que es lo más difícil de lograr? Cuando no han funcionado las cosas, ¿qué has aprendido o qué

habéis aprendido como organización para hacerlas de otra manera y que funcionarán mejor?

A: Pues yo creo que en este punto de lo emocional, que me parece que es una clave importante, muchas veces también tiene que ver con el nivel de madurez de las personas que están en ese diálogo, porque a veces yo creo que ahí hay un punto de autoconocimiento y de también conocimiento del proceso relacional y de las emociones que muchas veces si tú no eres capaz de disociar y de darte cuenta de lo que está pasando y estás tan metido en el proceso reactivo o en el proceso de debate que no eres capaz de hacer un metaanálisis de lo que está sucediendo en esa conversación. Entonces es muy probable que tu nivel emocional esté tan implicado que pueda estar contaminando, para bien o para mal, pero que en el fondo esté contaminando. Entonces, yo creo que de nuevo tener ese tiempo para poder aislar o poder entrenar a las personas si no vienen con ese entrenamiento previo de ser capaces de estar participando en el proceso de diálogo o en el proceso de colaboración, pero a la vez ser capaces de vez en cuando de hacer una salida, de ver lo que está pasando en el escenario y interpretarlo personalmente como para poder volver a la acción. Pero con esa distancia emocional, con ese proceso de no sentirte tan atrapado en tu rol o tan atrapado en tu posición defendida, sino en un momento determinado. Tener esa apertura de decir qué es lo que está pasando aquí y qué tipo de relaciones se están estableciendo, cómo está pasando esto. Yo creo que ese salirse de para volver a entrar me parece que es un elemento importante y que no muchas veces se tiene el entrenamiento para ello o la práctica.

Q: ¿Y cómo se aprende eso? ¿Cómo se ejercita?

A: Yo creo que tiene que ver con procesos personales, de conocimiento y de desarrollo. Y bueno, yo creo que por un lado está el mundo más “mindfulness” o más budista si quieres, pero básicamente yo creo que tiene que ver con uno, un proceso de aprendizaje personal, de entrenamiento y de saber que porque por otro lado es muy, muy necesario y muy útil en clave de tu trabajo cotidiano. Hay ahora una tendencia. No sé si habéis oído hablar de los Inner Development Goals, que es toda una línea que cogen los objetivos de desarrollo y los conectan con qué competencias o qué proceso personal necesitas para mirar hacia la transformación, hacia los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible de una manera consciente. Entonces, trabajar ese proceso de consciencia organizativa, de ese proceso que tiene que ver también de cómo estás tú. Me parece que todo ese todo, ese ámbito de consciencia del proceso, me parece que es un elemento muy, muy positivo y muy interesante. Y de hecho yo creo que muchas veces y mucha gente lo dice cuando pasa por procesos de diálogo realmente importantes, se producen unos procesos de transformación personal muy fuertes, muy fuertes, porque de alguna manera ahí se está tocando, se está tocando el elemento, el elemento emocional, el elemento personal y te llega a transformar en tu mirada al mundo, en tu, en tu capacidad de relación con otros. Entonces, por eso es tan transformador el proceso colaborativo y por eso es un elemento que cuando sí vamos a

colaborar es un proceso mucho más profundo, por eso requiere de tiempo y por eso requiere de diseño y de cuidar un poco el proceso que cada uno vive en ese contexto.

Q: ¿Cómo y en qué medida estos principios de los que hablas son emocionales? ¿La toma de consciencia se ha trasladado a prácticas o a rutinas en la organización en la que tú trabajas con prácticas y rutinas más o menos formales o estables en el tiempo?

A: Bueno, en nuestro caso sí que hay como una reflexión y un razonamiento sobre algunas de estas prácticas. Luego en el día a día muchas veces las vas dejando y no terminas de consolidar las no, pero estos temas de los *check-in* y los *check-out* de las reuniones, como de llegar a una reunión y antes de ponerte a hablar de la agenda del día, hacer una primera ronda de manera que la gente se sienta implicada, se sienta interpelada y participe y que no sea simplemente la ejecución de tal. Me parece que son elementos importantes. Muchas veces la propia configuración en círculo de las reuniones cuando se puede, pues es algo que permite como abrir la conversación y no tenerla tan jerarquizada como solemos tenerla, ¿no? Sí, yo creo que estas pequeñas herramientas de generación de reuniones eficaces, por así decirlo, se pueden protocolizar y se pueden articular.

Q: Con el tema de la confianza nos surgía también la pregunta sobre hasta qué punto funciona mejor un proceso de diálogo y colaboración cuando se parte ya de una relación previa o cuando no existe desde el inicio ningún tipo de relación. Supongo que no es ni blanco ni negro, pero ¿puedes contarnos alguna experiencia de este tipo o una reflexión personal sobre la confianza, que es un elemento muy importante? Y como decías, si no existe una relación previa, ¿hace falta también un tiempo para que la gente esté a gusto y conozca cómo se posiciona cada uno? ¿Es determinante que exista una confianza previa o no?

A: Yo creo que no es determinante. Lo que pasa es que probablemente el proceso del proceso cambia ligeramente. Si son personas, organizaciones que se conocen muy bien y que tienen recorrido, pues obviamente ahí tienen mucho ganado para empezar a trabajar en el campo común. Y si son gente que no se conoce, ahí hay una oportunidad maravillosa, pero es verdad que requiere de un proceso de trabajo en donde hay que recorrer ese camino de generar esa confianza y lo que sí que me parece que es un error, eso es juntar a dos entidades o dos personas que no tienen recorrido común y pretender que en una reunión surja un plan de trabajo conjunto que realmente tenga calado y tenga un proceso de tal, entonces yo creo que no es determinante, pero lógicamente acelera el proceso.

Q: ¿Estás hablando más bien a título personal o más bien a título organizativo? ¿Es una metodología que se sigue de manera sistemática y que se está protocolizado en tu organización?

A: Bueno, yo creo que ahí yo creo que nosotros seguimos mucho unas metodologías que llaman de autogestión, que me parece que tienen muy bien estructurado, muy bien metodología, todo este tipo de rutinas, de formas de trabajo para generar conversaciones con sentido. Nosotros seguimos mucho a toda la disciplina de “Art of Hosting” y otros autores y otras disciplinas, un poco por ahí conectadas, que en el fondo tienen que ver con todo esto, tienen que ver con generar el tiempo, los espacios adecuados, diseñarlas los primero el proceso y luego cada una de las intervenciones. Y luego, por otro lado, generar un espacio no solo de confianza, sino de consciencia, para que la gente tenga consciencia de lo que está pasando y se pueda ver a sí mismo y pueda ver esas diferentes capas, la capa más puramente negociadora o la capa más objetiva de información y datos, o la capa más emocional o la capa más colectiva. Entonces, diferenciar esas capas y tener esa práctica es un elemento que requiere trabajo. Y desde el punto de vista metodológico, me parece que Art of Hosting compila una gran parte de este tipo de formas de trabajo y nosotros organización, organizaciones es como una referencia para nosotros.

### *Interview 8: Woman, 53, nonprofit*

Date: 27<sup>th</sup> September 2022 | Location: in person | Duration: 24 min 32 s

Question (Q): Para romper el hielo, empezamos la entrevista preguntándote a qué te gustaba jugar cuando eras niña.

Answer (A): Vaya, a ver que me acuerde... Pues mira, me gustaba mucho jugar a temas de indios. Y a Curro Jiménez, me acuerdo cuando era pequeña que jugábamos a las aventuras. Yo creo que como todos los niños, un poco las muñecas, pero más eso a las aventuras de Curro Jiménez. Es un bandolero.

Q: Nos gusta mucho preguntarlo porque nos permite conoceros un poquito más Y además hay juegos más colaborativos, más competitivos, más aventureros o más solitarios o individuales. Ahora ya pasamos a las preguntas más serias, pero queríamos que te bases en algunas experiencias concretas que hayas tenido en las cuales consideres que el diálogo ha sido una pieza clave para llegar a esa colaboración, a esos acuerdos entre agentes diversos o personas muy diversas, y que nos cuentes qué características consideras que dentro de ese diálogo facilitaron que fuera un éxito. Desde el lenguaje, el tono de la conversación, las personas que estaban facilitando que eso sucediera, el espacio que se había elegido para no puede ser cualquier cosa que a ti te sugiriese que eso fue muy importante para facilitar un acuerdo y un tono adecuado.

A: Fíjate, cuando me estaba preparando la entrevista pensaba más en casos en los que estoy trabajando actualmente, en procesos que quiero que surja una colaboración y que no lo estoy consiguiendo. Entonces me genera, me reta mucho de qué tengo que cambiar, qué toca hacer de otra forma para que pase. Y pensaba en algún caso como de éxito, pero me

fijaba más en aquello que más me estaba costando esa colaboración, porque creo que es un elemento, algunos elementos que me venían a la cabeza, uno que para mí es muy importante, que tiene que ver con la generación de confianza, o sea, la sensación de complicidad, de tener una relación, de trabajar una relación de confianza con la otra parte. Y eso requiere tener conversaciones desde la honestidad, tener conversaciones con mucha transparencia desde el principio, compartir los objetivos. Yo creo que es muy importante tener claramente identificado cuál es ese objetivo común que persigue la colaboración y acercarte, que es algo que a mí reconozco que me cuesta, me está costando aprenderlo. Acercarte desde el creer que realmente con esa colaboración el resultado va a ser mejor que si lo hiciera sola, que para mí es como a veces dices bueno, quiero colaborar, pero luego en tus conversaciones que tienes en el fondo estás pensando más: quiero convencer a la otra persona, quiero ganarle la batalla, por así decirlo. Estamos a veces en el plano de la competición y de convencer que no realmente. Es decir, creo que si nos juntamos las dos partes, el resultado va a ser mejor que si yo lo hiciera sola. Por lo tanto, esa generación de convencimiento de que realmente te lo crees, que las dos partes pueden aportar y sumar al resultado final y que la otra parte con la que quieres colaborar realmente te aporta algo. Creo que hay un elemento fundamental también, que es ir convencida de que te vas a dejar convencer, de que tú vas a mover un poco tu posición y no ir, como decía antes, con el objetivo de “yo quiero convencer a otra persona e imponer mi verdad a la otra persona”. Entonces esa idea de bueno, voy desde un sitio en el que realmente yo quiero abrir mi mente a alguien que me aporta algo diferente y desde ahí yo soy capaz también de mover mi posición para llegar a un objetivo o un objetivo compartido. Creo que es muy importante que en esa conversación la comunicación sea una comunicación no violenta. Creo que ahí también estamos. Yo estoy aprendiendo mucho también, que significa una comunicación no violenta en el que la otra persona se sienta totalmente valorada, se sienta reconocida, se sienta que está aportando valor a esa relación, a esa, esa colaboración que tú seas capaz de expresarlo y que no sea una negociación que es diferente, sino que sea una conversación y un diálogo que te lleve, que te lleve a otro sitio.

Y yo creo que ese es uno de los elementos que son, que son diferentes. Entonces, yo creo que iniciar un diálogo es diferente a debatir y que también es diferente a negociar. Tienes que ir colocada. Tienes que hacer una reflexión previa de dónde te tienes que colocar. Tenéis que colocar en otro sitio al que te colocas habitualmente. Y creo que es muy importante, o por lo menos para mí es muy importante. Es llegar con calma, o sea, llegar serena, no llegar sin estrés. Que los espacios que tengas de conversación con esa persona sean espacios que te los has pensado, que los has trabajado, que llegues tranquila, que no llegues con vorágine esto que voy corriendo, sino que realmente generes un espacio de calidad en esa conversación en el que puedas estar centrada, por así decirlo, y preparada. Y con esa presencia ¿no?

Q: ¿Te dices algo en tu cabeza, o haces meditación, o tienes alguna herramienta que quieras compartir de cómo te preparas?

A: Bueno, yo estoy trabajando mucho, me están ayudando mucho porque tenemos muchos acompañamientos a la organización, coaching, mentoring y de todo, pero estoy trabajando mucho en hacer preguntas a la otra persona que me permita entender cuáles son sus necesidades. Es decir, desde la comprensión de las necesidades de la otra persona. A mí me es más fácil entender por qué una persona se comporta de una forma determinada o por qué hace ciertas cosas, o por qué no hace, entendiendo cuáles son sus necesidades, ese acercamiento. Entonces intento pensar en qué preguntas puedo hacer a la otra persona para entender mejor sus necesidades. ¿Qué tipo de comunicación puedo hacer para siempre? Ser positiva en el reconocimiento de qué es lo que la otra persona me puede aportar. Y luego hay un elemento que hablaremos más tarde, pero que lo quiero introducir ahora, porque es muy importante en la reflexión que estamos teniendo, que es el tema del poder, o sea, el tema de poder en las colaboraciones con otras personas, con las entidades, las interacciones. Es un tema que es clave y que también te sitúa en cómo, cómo te sientes tú desde el aspecto del uso del poder respecto a la otra persona que tienes delante. Sí, para que tengas un diálogo yo creo que tienes que situarte desde un enfoque de que tienes un poder para facilitar un espacio en el que colaborando juntos, el resultado va a ser mejor. Es decir, cómo generas ese espacio en el que das poder, Repartes poder, delegas, distribuyes poder, que tú ejerces poder sobre la otra persona. ¿Entonces son cosas que están muy relacionadas, no? La comunicación no violenta con el poder, con diálogo, como te colocas al principio. Pero sí que son cosas que bueno, que yo reflexiono y que me ayudan a reflexionar en el acompañamiento de mi propio liderazgo en la organización.

Q: ¿Y decías antes bueno, estoy aprendiendo, entonces cómo se aprende? Entiendo que es a lo largo de toda la vida y cada experiencia te aporta cosas nuevas. ¿Pero cómo crees que se podría sistematizar un poco? ¿Cómo se aprende a trabajar en estos entornos tan complejos de diálogo?

A: Vale, yo creo que lo primero es tener una intencionalidad estratégica como organización, porque luego ya te cae a ti como persona, pero sí que primero tienes que tener como una toma de conciencia de que como organización, de que como entidad, como departamento o como equipo, quieres colocar el diálogo como modo de interacción, como medio para la colaboración. O sea, primero tienes que tener esa reflexión de decir oye, qué significa el diálogo con respecto al debate o con respecto a la negociación o con respecto a otras formas de interactuar que tenemos dentro de los equipos y con agentes externos. Es decir, que primero tienes que tener esa reflexión de que yo quiero hacer esto. A partir de ahí, yo creo que nosotros hemos reflexionado de qué significa el diálogo, para qué sirve el diálogo, qué componentes tiene, cuáles son las dimensiones que caracterizan un diálogo. Y a partir de ahí nos hemos mirado a nosotras mismas en un ejercicio de autoconocimiento, de qué nos falta, qué habilidades o qué competencias requiere tener una conversación en base a un

diálogo. Y a partir de esa toma de conciencia de las habilidades que tienes y de las que no tienes, es donde puedes hacer una especie de hoja de ruta, de acompañamiento, de decir oye, pues esto es lo que tengo que fortalecer, ¿no? Entonces, por ejemplo, en mi caso particular, pues estamos, estamos trabajando toda la parte de comunicación no violenta de cómo te comunicas, cómo te expresas, cómo te diriges a la otra persona, uso del poder también... No, porque yo ahora estoy en una posición dentro de la organización desde hace dos años en el consejo de dirección al que tengo más poder del que tenía antes.

¿Cómo reflexiono con gente externa que nos ayuda con facilitadores y mi propio equipo directivo? Tenemos espacios concretos de conversación para hablar del poder, qué significa el poder en las posiciones que tenemos ahora y qué significa todo eso desde un punto de vista de todo un cambio de cultura institucional que tiene que ver con la aplicación de principios feministas en el ámbito de la cooperación, con toda una intención de cómo vamos avanzando hacia una cooperación, de cómo descolonizar la cooperación. Porque claro, todo esto es por ahí andamos nosotras, ¿no? Y eso es un poco lo que no tenemos tan sistematizado como debiéramos, pero sí que tenemos conversaciones internas en el marco de nuestra estrategia de cambio de cultura institucional que nos van llevando ahí. Y por ponerte un ejemplo muy concreto, cuando hicimos hace dos años e hicimos una teoría de cambio para definir el programa en nuestra actuación en España, sí que estuvimos trabajando con un consultor externo que era experto en facilitación de conversaciones, de diálogos en gestión de conflictos, que nos ayudó mucho precisamente a cómo tener esas conversaciones en común en una manera más dialógica, como decía él, que nos permita también llegar a consensos en un proceso de reflexión estratégica como es el de una elaboración teórica. Entonces eso pasó hace dos años y en esos dos años hemos ido aprendiendo. Es verdad que no hemos hecho una sistematización de esos aprendizajes, que eso sería interesante. Mira, me lo voy a apuntar a hacerlo.

Q: Es muy interesante lo que cuentas, porque muchas de las personas a las que hemos entrevistado tienen muy claro cuándo actúan hacia fuera de su organización, cómo aplicar esos principios de diálogo, pero hacia dentro no existen prácticas o rutinas o espacios en los que reflexionen o apliquen esos mismos principios. Entonces, me parece muy interesante como cuentas que en *[organisation]* sí que reflexionéis sobre eso. Y sí que aunque digas que no lo tienes sistematizado, hay un montón de cosas que cuentas, que existen y están ya institucionalizadas y es lo que te aporta un montón a lo que estamos viendo. Entonces pues podemos seguir un poco volviendo también a lo que decías, que hay aspectos que crees que no funcionaron y que ahora harías de otra manera. ¿Cómo te das cuenta y cómo reaccionas cuando ves que en un proceso de diálogo y de conversación hay algo que no está funcionando, que se está rompiendo? A lo mejor la conversación o que se está utilizando un lenguaje más violento y que se va a perder como la confianza y la atmósfera de diálogo. ¿Entonces, cómo lo detectas y cómo reaccionas a eso para reconducirlo?



A: Pues lo detecto porque yo creo que se produce una especie de incomodidad entre las partes, que es bastante evidente y ves que no, que se atasca la conversación o por así decirlo, que tú estás esperando que pasen o tienes unas expectativas que pasan, una serie de cosas que no pasan y que entonces se produce una especie de silencio por las dos partes, no? Yo lo que suelo hacer ahí, porque yo soy una persona bastante introvertida y necesito mucha reflexión. Suelo tomar un poco de distancia, como alejarme del proceso e intentar mirarlo con una cierta, con una cierta distancia, y consultar o compartir con gente con la que tenga mucha confianza como para tener una mirada externa que me ayude también a interpretar lo que pasa, no solamente desde donde yo estoy que estoy dentro, sino alguien externo. Y a mí eso como que la verdad es que me ayuda, me ayuda bastante y a partir de ahí lo que intento es siempre pensar qué tengo que hacer de diferente, porque está claro que si no nos está funcionando, pues no me puedo dar contra un muro. ¿Está claro que tengo que cambiar la táctica y la estrategia y que tengo que hacer cosas de otra manera, no? Y ahí es estar continuamente repensando. Por poner un ejemplo que estoy viviendo ahora mismo, nosotros estamos en un proceso de colaboración interna que es muy complicada, que es una herencia casi estructural, por así decirlo, y llegó un punto en el que no avanzamos y estamos en un proceso de mediación.

Para que veáis un poco como hay un punto en el que incluso ya necesitas un apoyo externo que te ayude a dialogar, porque llega un punto en el que en el que se produce, no te digo casi una ruptura, pero porque no es la palabra ruptura, pero sí un encasillamiento en el que ya no sabes muy bien cómo seguir. Y yo creo que ahí no tenemos que dudar en pedir apoyo externo, porque esto de que los líderes sabemos hacerlo todo y sabemos resolver todo, no es cierto. Somos humanas como pasa en la vida. Hay veces, muchas veces que no sabes y yo creo que cuando tú sientes que no tienes herramientas y que no sabes qué camino seguir, pues yo creo que es el momento de decir “oye, necesito apoyo, que alguien me ayude porque realmente no se seguir” y entonces yo creo que ahí cuando no sabes seguir hay gente externa preparada, que te ayuda, que te acompaña y que te permite dar pasos. ¿Entonces eso es un poco como yo os lo cuento, porque una cosa que me está pasando ahora la tengo muy reciente, no?

Q: Si te quedas con ganas de decir algo de lo que habías preparado.

A: Uy, tenía muchas cosas. A ver, yo sí que creo que hay como dos o tres cosas que os quería compartir, porque la experiencia es un poco nuestra. Sobre el diálogo, sobre todo con otras organizaciones, porque yo creo que hemos hablado mucho de aspectos internos. Ahí yo creo que generamos bastantes espacios internos de diálogo, de llegar a consenso y yo creo que eso es un tema que estamos como poco a poco haciendo progresos interesantes como cultura institucional. Pero tenemos un reto enorme, un reto enorme que es la comunicación y la colaboración externa, por distintas razones. Primero, porque como [*organisation*] en el sector no somos una organización que cree que está posicionada en algunos espacios y nos sitúan como un espacio de bastante poder dentro del sector. ¿Incluso a veces nos han

llamado, nos dicen, y yo también lo considero a veces que somos una organización, a veces bastante arrogante, no? Y somos una organización, además, que en su ADN tiene como objetivo influir. ¿Influir significa que yo te convengo de mi verdad, no? Y esto es brutal, porque ese cambio de cultura institucional que estamos poniendo en marcha reta casi un aspecto que casi va en el ADN de la organización. Cuando tú quieres colaborar con otras organizaciones, porque si queremos hacer cambio social y transformación social no nos queda otra, lo primero es convencernos a nosotras mismas de que con otras sumamos y que desde luego vamos a ser mucho más eficaces en las transformaciones sociales, y que esa colaboración con otras nos implica uno que nuestra. Que lo que nosotros pensamos no es la verdad y que necesitamos tener humildad a la hora de juntarnos con otras personas. Y eso es un reto bestial para nosotras reconocer que somos una organización muy poco diversa y que cuando tú tienes muy poca diversidad interna (me refiero de diversidad de clase, diversidad de procedencias, orígenes, razas, orientación sexuales de todas las diversidades generacional), tu mirada y tu experiencia está totalmente sesgada y es muy limitada. Y entonces, cuando quieres sentarte con otros que son diversos, te cuesta mucho, te cuesta mucho. ¿Entonces, cómo trabajamos esa falta de diversidad que tenemos interna para acercarnos a gente diversa? Necesitamos tener, acercarnos a gente diversa que piense de otra forma. Y ahí hay un elemento importante que tiene que ver con cuál es el conocimiento que sirve, ¿no? Nosotros somos una organización que no solamente tiene el ADN, el querer influir y convencer a los demás, sino que además lo hace a base de una generación de conocimiento, que es un conocimiento muy experto, muy basado en datos, muy basado en evidencia empírica, pero muy poco basado en esa diversidad del conocimiento que viene de las experiencias vitales, que viene de las emociones, que viene de otra forma de expresiones y de saberes que hay por el mundo y que no les damos valor. Entonces ahí nos reta también muchísimo todo lo que tiene que ver con cómo nos colocamos en ese ecosistema de diversidad para poder realmente colaborar desde otro sitio. Y ahí estamos como muy retadas. Entonces sólo quería compartir con vosotras, porque es algo que estamos trabajando mucho internamente. Hay muchas más cosas, pero bueno, por no enrollarme.

Q: Es interesante también lo que cuentas del lenguaje experto frente al lenguaje de las emociones, que quizá es el que lleva más a otros, a otros públicos y que también es el que vemos que llega en las elecciones con el voto de los ciudadanos que votan ciertos mensajes que no son tan racionales pero sí que son muy emocionales. Entonces, ¿nos puedes contar algunas herramientas o algunos tips sobre cómo estáis haciendo esa evolución de pasar del lenguaje experto sin perder rigor, a un lenguaje más emocional o más conectado con la experiencia?

A: Bueno, yo creo que lo primero ahí la pregunta que nos tenemos que hacer es: ¿a quién nos queremos dirigir? Es decir, que cuando tenemos, cuando queremos identificar el otro, lo que hacemos nosotros es primero identificamos cuál es el cambio político social que

queremos contribuir y a partir de ahí lo que hacemos es que analizamos un poco cómo son. Hay una parte de mapa de poder, es decir, cuáles son los actores que de alguna forma u otra, por sus roles y por sus funciones y por sus mandatos, pueden de alguna manera contribuir a ese cambio. Y a partir de ahí tú dices bueno, aquí me dirijo, aquí me quiero dirigir, me quiero dirigir a un partido político o me quiero dirigir a un ministerio o me quiero. A una parte de la ciudadanía en función de a quién te dirijas, tienes que pensar cuál es el mensaje y cuál es el formato de ese mensaje. Entonces está claro que si tú te diriges o quieres influir en un técnico de un ministerio, pues le tienes que ir con una información bastante robusta, con evidencias, con datos. Si tú quieres dirigirte a un público más amplio, por así decirlo, hoy necesitas trabajar mucho más, lo que tiene que ver con la parte más emocional y con conocimiento, que tiene más que ver con experiencias vitales que la gente se pueda identificar con lo que está, con lo que está viendo. Por lo tanto, ahora estamos mucho todavía en el lenguaje técnico. Estamos transitando, estamos haciendo un ejercicio de tránsito y estamos haciendo, como todo un proceso de reflexión interna, lo mismo de qué nos falta como organización, es decir, cuáles son las habilidades, las competencias que no tenemos a la hora de conectarnos más con la parte más, más emocional, por así decirlo. Y ahí tenemos, por ejemplo, sesiones de trabajo con gente que trabaje más esa parte más emocional para aprender. Hemos hecho toda una reflexión, todo un curso el año pasado sobre narrativas, cómo aprendemos a generar narrativas sobre lo que hacemos en función de a quién te diriges. Bueno, ahí estamos un poco con algunas.

### ***Interview 9: Man, 57, nonprofit***

Date: 5<sup>th</sup> October 2022 | Location: online | Duration: 26 min 39 s

Question (Q): Muy bien, pues nada. Si quieres, apoyándote en un ejemplo concreto de una experiencia personal que hayas tenido, una o dos o lo que tú quieras, que nos cuentes qué condiciones del diálogo consideras que fueron muy relevantes para que fuera fructífero, que se pudiera llegar a un entendimiento entre agentes muy diversos. Como ejemplos puede ser el tono de la conversación, el espacio que se eligió para tener esa conversación, una persona en particular que participó y tuvo un determinado rol, lo que tú consideres que pudo afectar al desarrollo de la conversación.

Answer (A): Pues bien, yo creo que hay tres cosas que son indispensables. Hay otras cuantas más, pero hay tres que yo destacaría y que no son evidentes. Una es tener de verdad objetivos compartidos, es decir, que realmente se sienta que hay una posibilidad efectiva de que ese diálogo, esa relación entre diferentes actores para conseguir un cambio o un objetivo o un avance en lo que sea, incluyendo una meta concreta o cualquier terreno en los campos que nos importan realmente. Cuando se comparte y se ve ese valor añadido que combinado es sinérgico, que yo aprecio lo que van a aportar los otros actores que me interesan, que es diferencial y que por lo tanto permite el construir unos los objetivos que

se comparten en el reconocimiento del valor que los diferentes actores aportan en ese diálogo. El segundo es si esto avanza hacia una acción concreta, hacia hacer cosas juntos. Es tener en cuenta las sensibilidades y las prevenciones y ponerlas sobre la mesa pronto, sobre todo si son significativas. Es decir, cuántas veces nos hemos encontrado en una alianza pensando ahora en algunas alianzas para campañas entre organizaciones sociales. Es decir, que no hablamos actores de diferente tipología, sino organizaciones sociales de cuando yo estaba en mi época *[organisation]*, como *[organisation]*, o con *[organisation]* mismo, o con *[organisation]*, o con plataformas, o con organizaciones más amplias, en los cuales hay unos requisitos. De “es que tengo unas limitaciones por mi mandato internacional, que no puedo decir estas cosas, que no puedo hablar de cierta manera o que la marca tiene que usarse de una cierta, de una cierta forma, porque aunque a mí me gustaría, pero no, no lo puedo hacer”... Es muy conveniente saberlo cuanto antes y exponerlo de una forma transparente. Y eso forma parte de ese diálogo. Y el tercero, que en el fondo es una condición previa a que estos dos se puedan producir y otras muchas cosas. Es crear una relación de confianza y de transparencia. No necesariamente quiere decir amistad, aunque en algunos casos también puede llegar a serlo, pero sí de confianza que permite aceptar que se van a cometer errores y que va a haber momentos de sensibilidad, pero que permite hablar con sinceridad. Y sabes que puede haber dificultades, que las habrá en ese diálogo que tiende a una construcción de algo conjunto, pero al mismo tiempo también sabes que puedes contar con los socios fiables.

Q: Muchas gracias. Y siguiendo el hilo de lo que hablabas ahora de las dificultades, quería preguntarte qué es lo que tú consideras que es más difícil a la hora de establecer una conversación. Y también si hay algo en particular que consideres que en alguna experiencia previa habéis podido hacer mejor y que habéis luego integrado en vuestra forma de hacer en experiencias posteriores.

A: Sí, yo creo, digo, y ahora, pensando en alguna experiencia reciente con *[organisation]*. Precisamente no conocer o no tener en cuenta todas las circunstancias y requisitos que pueden afectar a un programa conjunto completo. Estamos en una alianza multi actor. Con dos empresas y organizaciones sociales la cadena de subcontratación de una de estas dos empresas. Y es absolutamente apasionante lo que se puede lograr en ella. Y sin embargo, estamos tardando en firmar los acuerdos mucho más tiempo de lo necesario, de lo esperable. Y más allá de que son organizaciones complejas y entonces de la idea, ese momento fundante de la idea pionera que es indispensable cuando se juntan, cuando es inspirador, cuando dices conecto con una necesidad real, con un cambio efectivo. Se trata de empleo para jóvenes en situación de vulnerabilidad y de riesgo, exclusión social, qué cosa más, más indispensable. Y reconocemos que hay un valor añadido en lo que aporta cada uno. Y entonces esas mentes rápidas que están pensando en esas alianzas que tienen sentido y que aportan valor añadido desde cada una, rápidamente se ponen ya a hablar, a visualizar lo que hay tras las dificultades, hay que levantar los temas legales, hay que

levantar las restricciones. Esto es lo feo, pero lo feo cuanto antes mejor. Las cosas que son, que van a ser, porque luego, cuanto más tarde los baches... Estoy hablando muy ejecutivo, pero es que es la realidad hasta el final. Tú no quieres dialogar para ver, para concluir. Claro que también quieres dialogar para compartir, para conocer, para escuchar y para aprender. Está bien, pero esto es más fácil cuando quieres dialogar para hacer, y ese hacer tiene un objetivo de cambio. Entonces estamos hablando de palabras mayores y ahí el levantar las restricciones y el conocerlas abiertamente pronto es absolutamente crítico, máxime si se mete en terrenos inexplorados como están siendo buena parte de las alianzas multiactor.

P: Y ahí desde un punto de vista práctico, cuando tú dices de poner sobre la mesa las dificultades y las sensibilidades, ¿a qué te estás refiriendo? ¿Nos puedes dar así algunas recomendaciones de cómo lo haces tú en la práctica cuando empiezas una relación con otros agentes, si hay una reunión específica para eso, si se prepara un documento...? No lo sé, cuestiones prácticas.

A: Hacen algunas alianzas aquí donde hay experiencia mayor, me voy más a mi tiempo [*organisation*], de experiencia de campañas conjuntas. Ahí se habla de lo que queremos conseguir, pero se habla expresamente de las restricciones, y se levantan y se escriben y se ve cómo se deben abordar. Hay dos clásicas restricciones: qué se puede decir y qué no. Queremos hablar sobre armas, sobre comercio de armas. Y sabemos que cuando nos juntamos una organización medioambientalista con una red de derechos humanos y con una de desarrollo y acción humanitaria, es tremendamente importante. Pero hay que levantar pronto qué cosas tú quieres decir y puedes decir y qué cosas yo no puedo decir por mi mandato. Y eso hay que decirlo pronto y hay que dejarlo escrito, ya que tiene que ser conocido y tiene que abordarse desde inicio. ¿Cómo se puede? ¿Cómo se pueden hacer temas de presencia institucional, de la presencia de las organizaciones? ¿Cómo van a aparecer las organizaciones o las personas, las organizaciones y las personas? Todas tenemos, eso no es malo, tenerlo es razonable siempre que sea razonable. ¿Es el perfil institucional o es el perfil personal? ¿Y si está medido? ¿Y si es algo maduro y está por encima de eso? Es lógico tenerlo, pero hay que manejar y hay que levantarlo pronto, al menos algunos principios básicos del manejo del ego, por decirlo de una forma simple. Llámese marca, perfil personal o lo que se quiera considerar, porque si no, pues acaba siendo complicado, especialmente cuanto más relevante y más presencia pública la posible alianza tiene. Si nos quedamos en un perfil bajo de compartir información o facilitar una plataforma para que luego ocurran cosas, esas alianzas que son *enabling platforms* para que luego pasen, bueno, entonces quizá sigue siendo importante, pero a lo mejor lo es algo menos, Pero en el momento en el que estamos hablando de traer dos empresas Ibex con sus cadenas de subcontratación, dos organizaciones de marca ultra conocida y con personas de referencia que tienen un peso público y un perfil público fuerte, abórdalo

pronto o como mínimo, aborda pronto algunos principios para cómo lo vas a aportar, al menos tener claro qué es lo que vas a hacer.

Q: Y en ese tipo de conversaciones, cuando surge un conflicto, ¿cómo se maneja, cómo se consigue superar la conversación o avanzar en la conversación?

A: Ahí es donde es clave la teoría de conflictos. ¿Sabéis qué? Que la mejor forma de resolverlo es prevenir. Entonces si se han hecho algunos deberes bien, en relación con lo que estábamos hablando antes, con objetivos compartidos y reconocimiento del valor añadido de los otros actores por parte de cada uno, de confianza y de levantar las restricciones. Entonces uno: la probabilidad de que emerja un conflicto se reduce. Y dos: siempre va a emerger, seguro, porque incluso aunque hagas fantásticamente bien todos los previos vas a tener baches en la carretera, los vas a poder abordar mejor. En ese caso, yo creo que vuelve a ser el cuanto antes las menores sorpresas y si las hay, lo más anticipadas posible y abordarlo de frente con toda la claridad de lo que se puede y de lo que no se puede hacer. En una alianza reciente a nosotros se nos planteó una restricción por parte de *[organisation]* que cambiaba una situación de flujo de fondos automáticamente con el interlocutor aquí. Esto tiene que hacerse de una forma distinta. Es una final, es un lío, va a retrasar, va a meter más coste transaccional, pero preferimos que se levante, que se aborde cuanto antes. Por lo tanto, levantas el conflicto tú antes de que se levante porque aparezca una mina que está escondida bajo el coche o bajo la mesa en una reunión donde estás hablando de flores y de pétalos y que de repente explota.

Q: Yo te quería preguntar si como una de tus herramientas, como parte de una de tus herramientas que utilizas para dialogar, sobre todo en las primeras etapas del diálogo, te acercas a las otras personas desde la parte emocional, por así decirlo. Si tú utilizas esa cercanía como manera de sentar una base para llegar a ese acuerdo, aunque luego paséis a hablar de la parte más transaccional o de objetivos compartidos, si tú utilizas esa parte personal tuya o esas habilidades. ¿Te involucras de esa manera?

A: Sí, creo que en general sí. Pero voy a decir un poco al hilo de este estilo más relacional, dos cosas que uso y que creo que sí son importantes y que he ido aprendiendo con el tiempo, especialmente la primera. La primera es la capacidad de escuchar, que no necesariamente es escuchar en una reunión. Es, es querer entender, es querer saber de aquellos socios aliados, gente con la que estás dialogando. Es decir, una estrategia de “quiero comprender desde dónde vienes, que hay atrás precisamente tus aspiraciones, cuáles son tus planes de vida...” Entonces tener esa información previa, incluso previo a esas reuniones o a esos diálogos, también aprendes. Saber preguntar. Creo que sí pregunto mucho el indagar para entender bien desde dónde crees que aportas, qué dificultades podrías tener. Por tanto, escucha, pregunta. Incluso pondría más énfasis en el preguntar, preguntar mucho y en preguntar bien a los partners con los que estás. Seguramente me implico emocionalmente y bastantes alianzas han salido, unos cuantos amigos, unas cuantas cenas bastante

interesantes algunas de ellas y sobre todo bastante divertidas. Uso el sentido del humor, creo que es cursi y creo que precisamente hace esa conexión emocional. Creo que también puede ayudar a facilitar. No exime que estés en un trabajo para una alianza fuerte del que puedas acudir a situaciones que pueden ser broma o que puede ser de pensar en algo que no necesariamente tiene que ser un camino de piedras, un camino de espinas que lo tiene muchas veces, sobre todo cuando te pones en el borde. Vuelvo a esa diferencia entre las plataformas y aquellas que ya tienen una voluntad de programática ejecutora, con una presencia pública fuerte y que es enorme. ¿Cambia entonces esa implicación emocional por la vía del sentido del humor, no?

Q: ¿Y crees que desde tu organización se mima esta parte más relacional? Aunque ya hayamos hablado un poco de esto antes, ¿crees que está, aunque sea de manera implícita, sistematizada?

A: Ni en mi organismo, ni en ninguna de mis organizaciones pasadas. No sé si *[organisation]*, o ahora *[organisation]* no es algo que esté impregnado, que impregne la cultura como tal. Si soy honesto, estoy pensando un poco... Creo que depende mucho de las personas, ¿no? Creo que también depende del propio liderazgo, de cómo te perciben, a quiénes lideras. Pero incluso en las organizaciones tienes perfiles muy diferentes en cuanto a gente más proclive a las alianzas, incluso si me apuras, a las más difusas, que son las grandes plataformas, las grandes coordinadoras en el sector nuestro, [inteligible] la Plataforma de Infancia, Futuro en común, el Día Después. Hay personas más proclives, incluso ideológicamente, por sus principios a la construcción de sector en un sentido muy amplio, de corrientes que van en una dirección, que influyen unos valores y unos principios y luego quizá en un hacer, que permiten el compartir, aunque se difumine y que tienen costes transaccionales que a veces puede que no encuentren su impacto efectivo en el corto plazo. Y también tienes gente que, caricaturizo, es una pérdida de tiempo. Versus lo mucho que tenemos que hacer como organización, máxime si es una organización de una dimensión y de una presencia pública fuerte.

Creo que esto está cambiando para mejor con el paso de los años, pero todavía no detecto que haya una cultura institucional asentada. En cómo abordar este tipo de relaciones multiactor, diálogos, presencias en plataformas. Yo diría que ninguna de las organizaciones en las que he estado, y yo en general sí apuesto por ello siendo consciente de los costes transaccionales. Pero sí me creo, me creo las plataformas de sector y por ejemplo, creo que hay cosas que son mucho más efectivas si vamos con un sector entero o si construimos con otros sectores que si lo hacemos a pelo. Me da igual como *[organisation]*, o como *[organisation]*, o la organización que sea. Pero hay otros momentos donde es muy importante el que las organizaciones, incluso desde el punto de vista más proactivo, se la jueguen, pongan su marca y en este caso su marca en el sentido de aquí estamos y aquí se figura. Y esto es algo que queremos impulsar como organización, con todo el peso institucional que la organización tiene.

Q: ¿Y desde tu punto de vista, cómo se puede aprender esa cultura organizativa desde el punto de vista individual o también del conjunto de la organización? ¿Cómo se puede aprender una cultura colaborativa?

A: Pues yo creo que es que tiene que ver con el liderazgo en muy buena medida. Con la ejemplificación. Y luego tiene que ver con las apuestas que la propia argumentación haga. Y hay veces que en las negociaciones, vuelvo a decir, muchas veces quieres estar, pero al mismo tiempo tener tu contribución y que se reconozca. Y a veces esto entra en contradicción, y es aprender a manejarlas. Estas contradicciones y esas tensiones que son naturales, que son, es que no hay una opción ni mala ni buena. No hay una respuesta buena siempre, sino que necesitas criterios y necesitas una orientación de la estrategia de la organización hacia dónde va. Pero luego, fundamentalmente lo que mencionas es gente madura en las posiciones clave que tienen clara la visión por el objetivo de cambio. O sea que al final miden la colaboración en función de su impacto. Y en función de su impacto son lo más honestas posible para decidir si ese coste transaccional que inevitablemente tiene sentido o no, y si esa dilución que inevitablemente tiene sentido o no por el impacto. Y cuando es muy importante para precisamente conseguir ese impacto el que pone plazo. Las grandes en las que yo he estado, de los que me muevo, mantienen una presencia de tiempo protagónica única. Puede ser el caso. Los hay y tienen sentido, o bien con una presencia institucional muy significativa que asegure que nadie le cabe la menor duda de que *[organisation]* está ahí. Y al igual que el actor que sea, incluso con los riesgos que en un momento puedes tener.

### ***Interview 10: Woman, 42, participant in Spanish Citizen Assembly***

Date: 13<sup>th</sup> October 2022 | Location: online | Duration: 34 min 41 s

Question (Q): Para empezar esta entrevista queremos preguntarte a qué te gustaba jugar cuando eras pequeña. Así, lo primero que se te viene a la cabeza.

Answer (A): A polis y cacos. Me encantaba.

Q:¿Qué te gustaba más, ser el poli o el caco?

A: [Gestualiza] ¿Te he contestado, no? Yo siempre de los malos. De los malos era más emocionante, te escondías... Claro que ser poli era un poco aburrido. era todo el rato "vamos a buscarles, ya se han escondido". Y de Caco es que llorabas [de la risa], o sea, porque me veía corriendo...

Q: Buenísimo. Genial. Pues nada, te contamos un poco de estas entrevistas que estamos haciendo a personas muy diversas que habéis participado de una manera o de otra en espacios de diálogo entre personas muy, muy distintas. Nos estamos preguntando qué era lo que funcionaba bien y lo que funcionaba mal de esos espacios para que realmente generaran la confianza para poder participar. Como el compromiso también de una vez



tras otra, asistir a una y otra reunión y que de alguna forma, aunque hubiera diferencias entre las posturas de distintas personas, se pudiera llegar a acuerdos o a puntos en común. Entonces nos pareció súper interesante cuando [name] nos estuvo hablando de la Asamblea Ciudadana por el Clima, hablar con alguna persona como tú, que hubiérais participado en eso y nos pudieras contar desde tu experiencia personal con total libertad, lo que funcionaba y lo que no, para lograr que realmente fuera productivo. Entonces nada te dejó así como un poco de tiempo para que nos cuentes. Pues desde “¿la herramienta que utilizábamos para conectarnos era muy complicada o era sencilla? El tono de la conversación, cómo el moderador me invitaba a participar... O todo lo que a ti se te ocurra que funcionaba bien y también lo que creíste que no servía y que no ayudaba. Si no entiendes algo, me preguntas también.

A: Sí, y yo no tengo filtro de todas maneras. O sea, todo se hizo a través de zoom. O sea que creo que es una herramienta bastante práctica. Éramos bastantes personas. Éramos 100, más los expertos, más los facilitadores. Se organizó todo de diez. O sea, fue bastante, porque para esa magnitud de personas yo creo que desde los facilitadores, que eran los que coordinaban un poco, se lo gestionaron súper bien. ¿Porque realmente cómo manipulas o cómo controlas a 100 personas y más los expertos, más los facilitadores? Es bastante complicado. Ellos lo que hacían era en las primeras sesiones nos lo dejaron claro que quienes iban a hablar eran los expertos, que nos iban a explicar realmente qué era aquello, porque tampoco entendíamos ninguno lo que era realmente. A ti te meten a 100 personas en un sitio para hablar del clima o llámalo X en ese momento, y es que tu no tienes ni idea. O sea, tuvo algún estudio, y entonces las primeras sesiones se basaban un poco en que cogieran a x personas que éramos 100 y nos contarán un poco cada día. Iba hablando un experto, varios expertos en sí te iban explicando un poco de qué iba el tema. Entonces, las primeras sesiones tú no hablabas, o sea, tú las dudas que tenías las ponías a través de un chat y entonces ellos te contestaban y te decían “vale, en la próxima sesión se mirará”. O sea que se organizó muy bien. Y yo creo que es una herramienta bastante útil, y hablar con 100 personas, yo creo que para 50, o para 20 o para 200, incluso perfectamente. Si todo se organiza bien, es bastante sencillo y la herramienta está bastante bien.

Q: Tengo dos preguntas con lo que nos estás contando. Por un lado, cuando tú hablas de que está muy bien organizado, ¿qué detalles son los que a ti te hacían sentir como ese nivel de organización? Y por otro lado te quería preguntar cómo se preparaban las cosas, los expertos, las presentaciones o lo que os contaban para que realmente fuera un lenguaje accesible y comprensible para todo el mundo. Porque nosotras trabajamos en la universidad y sabemos a veces como hablan los profesores que utilizan como un lenguaje muy lejano que cuesta aterrizar a ejemplos, a cosas concretas que tú sientas en tu día a día. Entonces, ¿qué detalles crees que influían en su forma de presentar y explicar qué era el clima o el cambio climático para que para vosotros fuera sencillo comprenderlo?

A: A ver, nosotros en el minuto uno, cuando nos conectamos, a nosotros nos ponían por el chat, el teléfono para ayuda. Cuando no te conectabas bien te separaban en una sala. Había bastantes personas detrás, o sea detrás del escenario, realmente facilitando todo. En el minuto uno nos dijeron que bueno, que si le hiciéramos los micros que iban a hablar cada cinco minutos, “pues hoy habla x persona, mañana habla y”. Que después a lo mejor salían cinco expertos a hablar durante diez minutos cada persona. Luego te dejaban tu tiempo de reflexión, que tú reflexionaras. Luego, al tiempo ya nos mandaron a cada uno a un área de vida distinta. Yo, por ejemplo, era de consumo, se hicieron 12 grupos, o sea, por ejemplo el uno y el seis eran de consumo. Entonces yo estaba por ejemplo en el seis, al estar yo en el seis era un grupo reducido de diez personas (...), entonces ya ahí ya era distinto. Pero ellos a lo primero te decían tú las primeras sesiones no hablabas, solo escuchabas. Y es lo que a la pregunta que cuando ellos te explicaban sí que es verdad que cuando un experto a lo mejor se dirige a cualquier persona o un profesor muchas veces o dirigís con muchos tecnicismos que las personas de a pie como yo, hay veces que te cuesta entender.

Entonces cuando a ti te costaba entender algo de eso, tú en tu propio en el chat ponías “eh, qué es esto”? O sea, como hace poco que estuvimos hablando del IPCC, hay pocas personas que saben que es. Entonces tú a lo mejor le dices una persona como yo hace ocho meses “el IPCC” y te digo “eso qué es, ¿el IVA de algo del pollo o...? Vamos a ser realistas. Entonces muchas veces cuando utilizan o utilizáis tanto tecnicismo, a la gente le crea cortocircuito porque realmente ya evaden el pensamiento de lo que estás hablando. Y me importa un bledo lo que me estés contando, porque realmente ni te estoy entendiendo ni me voy a enterar, ni ni sé de qué estás hablando. Entonces sí que muchas veces luego ellos empleaban, lo explicaban como para personas normales. O sea que no hay que ser más listo, menos listo, menos tonto, menos tonto para personas normales. Porque tú has estudiado una carrera y tú sabes de lo que estás hablando.

Pero si yo no he estudiado esa carrera, a mí me puedes estar contando que las flores son azules porque el sol causa un efecto invernadero y es que digo “vale, cuéntame lo que quieras” (...). Sobre todo no hablar con tanto tecnicismo que las personas de normal de a pie, que somos muchísimas, incluso tú, porque tú has podido estudiar una carrera de aeronáutica, pero te hablan de doctorado, de medicina de la espalda y no sabes de que te está hablando ese hombre. Entonces yo creo que habría que intentar, cuando se explican las cosas a las personas un poquito más... no rebuscar tanto las palabras, que tampoco hay que rebuscar tanto. O sea, que todo el mundo podemos hablar normal y corriente y nos estamos entendiendo perfectamente. Y esa ha sido muy la clave de cuando a lo mejor alguien decía una palabra que no sabías bien que te estaba contando. Siempre había alguien que te ponía en el grupo. Eso significa tal, tal y tal. Entonces tú lo entendías. O sea que ha sido como bastante normal.

Q: O sea, que esa es como la principal dificultad que tú has encontrado a la hora de cómo ponerte en contexto, dialogar. Porque al final como que si te están hablando en un idioma que no entiendes, que yo tampoco habría entendido que alguien que no está en ese círculo no hubiera entendido. ¿Y alguna otra dificultad que hubieras encontrado que te impidiera o que te dificultará el seguir el hilo de todo que te hiciera a lo mejor sentir incómoda de nuevo a nivel técnico, a nivel diálogo?

A: Yo no me he sentido incómoda en ningún momento. La primera sesión fue impactante porque aunque algunas veces hablaban con tecnicismos que luego te lo aclaraban porque tú lo ponías, si tenías alguna duda, lo ponías o ellos mismos te intentaban hablar normal. Vale, pero hay palabras que es evidente que es complicado explicarlo. O sea que hay determinadas cosas que bueno, que tienes que rebuscar un poco más. Pero por ejemplo, la primera sesión, el primer fin de semana, que fueron dos sesiones, fue impactante, porque es que yo por muy triste que suene, yo me quedé en 4.º de la ESO. O sea, soy una persona básicamente sin a lo mejor unas carreras, unos estudios que a lo mejor otras personas sí las tienen, pero... (...) Cuando ellos te explicaban las cosas, tú les preguntabas y ellos te contestaban normal. O sea, intentaban que tú los entendieras, ¿eh? Y ya te digo, las primeras sesiones fueron brutales porque a ti te están contando que esto tiene muy mala pinta y tú te quedaste hace 20 años o 25 años, o incluso más, 30 años.

Yo me acuerdo que cuando iba al colegio decían que había un agujero en la capa de ozono y que las lacas eran bueno, enemigo número uno, o sea que a quien se echaba laca le decía “hala, si eso se va a abrir el agujero de la capa de ozono más”. Entonces, como yo, el 50% de la población se quedó en lo mismo, sea en el mismo de que no entendíamos nada. Entonces, cuando a ti te sientan y te ponen así como estamos ahora y te empiezan pim pam, pim pam, pim, pam, pim, pam, así. Ya no sabes realmente qué pasa, entonces tú hasta que digieres eso ya no que te hablen con tecnicismos, porque yo cuando acabé esa sesión me metí en internet a ver qué era lo que estaban hablando porque no entendía nada. O sea, no entendía que de haberme quedado en el agujero de la capa de ozono me estaban diciendo que es que o espabilamos o esto se acaba. En resumidas cuentas, entonces sí que fue impactante. O sea, fue ley. Ellos no lo dijeron, pero tú sí lo percibes como “ostras, ¿qué está pasando?”. Pero por lo demás, yo creo que genial.

Q: ¿Y a la hora del trabajo en grupo, por ejemplo...? Porque como que estás hablando de la interacción de vosotros con los expertos. Y en esas primeras sesiones donde era más informativo, más recibir información, más poner en contexto para poder trabajar... ¿A la hora de trabajar en grupo, en esto, en estos grupos que se hicieron el tuyo, que has dicho que estabas en consumo, tuviste algún problema? ¿Cómo fueron las interacciones con el resto de gente? ¿Se hizo también de manera online? ¿Hubo algún problema de comunicación en tu grupo o la cosa fluyó sencillo?

A: [00:16:05] Sí, a nosotros nos metieron a diez personas, cada una de su padre y de su madre, no nos conocíamos de nada, sólo llevábamos una pegatina con nuestro nombre y un número. Nosotros entre nosotros no podíamos hablar, solo hablábamos o bien por el chat, o bien ahí éramos diez, entonces abríamos micro. Siempre con respeto, levantando la mano para hacer las propuestas, se llegaba a un acuerdo. “Pues ¿qué pensáis, si esto así o si esto así?” Uno se organizaba, “venga, pues yo lo hago en un PowerPoint; no, en un Excel”, “entonces voy escribiendo tal”, no sé qué, y luego vamos votando. La verdad es que para ser cada uno de su tía y de su primo, con respeto... Hombre, a lo mejor a veces. Pues “no, yo no estoy de acuerdo en esto, yo prefiero que esto vale”, pues se intentaba llegar a un acuerdo entre las dos personas, que a lo mejor habría conflicto, que no era. No era el caso, pero a lo mejor yo quiero poner “peces” y el otro quiere poner “pez”. Pues a lo mejor era el conflicto, que tampoco era más. Vale, pues vamos a intentar pues ni peces, ni pez: “pescao”. O sea, un ejemplo claro sería algo así, pero no, la verdad es que siempre ha habido mucho respeto entre todos, hasta la última sesión. Que la última sesión fue presencial, que fue cuando nos pusimos cara a todos y votamos, votamos las propuestas, terminamos de matizar un poco, cada uno con su cada cual con sus grupos y se acabaron de matizar y fue cuando se votaron presencial, pero ninguno, que yo sepa ningún mal rollo ni nada. Siempre ha sido muy democrático.

Q: ¿Y cómo sientes que fue cambiando la relación también entre vuestro grupo conforme iban pasando las sesiones? ¿Se iba generando más familiaridad, o sentíais también o te sentías en particular más cómoda para poder aportar, para decir lo que no te parecía bien? Por ejemplo, como lo que contabas ahora.

A: A medida que iban pasando las sesiones te sentías ya... Ya nos íbamos conociendo unos a otros. O sea, ya estaba por ejemplo [name], que la gusta mucho redactar y que es “pues yo cambiaría esto por esto”, que es un amor. Luego está por ejemplo [name], que entiende mogollón de estas cosas y nos iba explicando “esto es así, así, así”, pues cada uno teníamos nuestra cosita, ¿sabes? [name] entendía, hablaba muy bien, se explicaba muy bien que no implica que a lo mejor la otra persona no se explique igual de bien, pero yo desde el punto de que hablo un poco normal, o sea, normal y corriente, tú ves una persona que habla tan formal y yo “qué me dices, ¡hala, qué guay!”. O sea, porque es lo que hablamos, que hablar con tecnicismos o hablar normal. La gente probablemente me entienda más a mí que a lo mejor a alguien que está hablando de otra cosa que no hay manera de entenderlo, lo que pasa que yo me voy por las ramas muchas veces, pero bueno.

Q: Pero está bien que como que cada uno tenía su papel. Os iréis conociendo más si vais sabiendo que se le daba bien a cada uno y cómo os podíais complementar y trabajar juntos para hacer algo propositivo. Y yo te quería también preguntar, y luego dejo a Paula otra vez, que creo que tenía también otra pregunta. ¿Cómo crees que se generó también el compromiso de parte? O sea, tú tenías muchas ganas de participar desde que te convocaron, también fue como poco a poco generando más interés y por saber más que

decías “me metía en Google para saber un poco más de lo que me estaban contando”. ¿Cómo se generó ese compromiso, como esas ganas que ya eso no se te va a quitar nunca, de todo lo que has aprendido y ahora seguro que te cambia un montón como persona a participar en ese proceso?

A: Yo cuando me metí aquí yo no sabía ni dónde me estaba metiendo. Yo dije “yo me voy a apuntar”, y yo me apunté. Pues dije “va, yo me apunto a todo”. La realidad es que parece como que me sobra el tiempo, no sé, que a mí me lo dicen mis amigos, dicen “te sobra el tiempo de verdad, así es que no tienes tiempo para nada”, pero bueno. Yo me apunté y dije “bueno, a ver qué es esto”, pero luego sí que es verdad que te empieza a picar la curiosidad y el saber, porque el saber no ocupa lugar. Y a mí me encanta siempre rodearme de gente que sabe mucho y que me cuenten cosas para aprender, porque realmente es como se aprende, porque a ti te pueden dar un libro (lo que hablamos): “Toma un libro con mil tecnicismos”, pero a lo mejor tú en una noche tomándome dos vinos, o una cocacola, o un agua o lo que sea, me lo vas a explicar lo que pone en el libro mejor y me voy a enterar mejor. Y ya empiezas a picarte, ya es como “ostras, es que de verdad, o sea, es que estamos jodidos” (esto no sale en el vídeo). O sea, es que esto no es “que se me va la rueda de un coche, vamos a cambiarla en un momento que me voy a quedar sin coche un día”, es que nos estamos cargando el Planeta. O sea, es algo que es un poco ya no por ti, sino por ti, por tus hijos, por el ser humano. O sea, un poco de que vamos a confiar en nosotros, en el ser humano, que creo que si todos no estamos en el mismo barco y si todos remamos a la misma vez, vamos a poder no vivir a lo mejor como hace 20 o 30, o 40 años o 50, pero bueno, pues pasaremos un poquito más de calor en verano y un poquito más de frío en invierno, pero si nos mantenemos o si hacemos algo, pues.

Q: Una cosita más. Nos estás contando lo que aprendiste, un montón del contenido, de qué es el cambio climático, de cómo se puede actuar, que nos estamos cargando el Planeta. Pero, ¿nos puedes decir también qué sientes que has aprendido en cómo trabajar con otras personas, cómo diseñar juntos unas propuestas? ¿Si sientes que has aprendido una forma diferente de hacer las cosas y la estás utilizando para tu trabajo del día a día, o para cómo te relacionas con tu familia? O no lo sé, si te ha cambiado un poco la forma de enfocar las cosas y ahora sientes que las puedes hacer en grupo de una manera diferente a como las hacías antes.

A: Vamos a ver, siempre... Yo siempre he sido una persona muy respetuosa, pero yo creo que esto también me ha enseñado a serlo todavía más. Sea desde el punto de vista que sea, siempre hay que respetar la opinión de todo el mundo, porque es tan válida la opinión de una persona como la mía. O sea, yo a lo mejor ahora pienso que esto es negro y tú me dices que es gris. Entonces yo tengo que respetar tu opinión porque a lo mejor tú si lo ves gris, yo lo veo negro, pero tú lo ves gris. Entonces no creo ni que tenga que entrar a debatir contigo, ni a discutir, ni a entrar en polémicas. Lo que es, es y ya está. Y tú puedes ver la vida de una manera y otra persona de otra. Entonces yo creo que ante el respeto y el

escuchar y es lo que prima y es lo que he aprendido bastante. O sea, es que no me apetece a mí el estar en polémicas. Bueno, pues qué más da. O sea, qué más da... Lo que hablamos, que pone pez y pescado, qué más da. Comida, peces o lo que sea. Ser un poquito más lineal, no entrar tanto en discusiones cuando es por el bien de algo. Sí, hombre, es evidente que si es algo malo, pues ya saco los dientes, pero yo creo que esto es algo por el bien común de todos y que me ha enseñado eso. A trabajar en grupo y que yo creo que si todos vamos con el mismo fin y el mismo objetivo, se puede trabajar, independientemente que uno sea de 50, otro de 40, otro de 20, que uno sea de derechas, otro de izquierdas, otro de centro y otro que no tenga ni idea, como yo, de política. Es así.

Q: La importancia de tener como un objetivo común. Eso es lo que une, ¿no? Como el tener algo que compartes por lo que empezar y luego ya lo demás son matices o opiniones, puntos de vista.

A: Pero es que en eso no se debería de entrar. O sea, Irene, es que vamos a ver si nosotros tenemos un objetivo irnos a la playa. Nuestro objetivo es irnos a la playa ya. Si tú eres de derechas y de izquierdas, o viceversa, o yo de centro y tú animalista o llámalo X, es que eso no tiene nada que ver para el objetivo que tenemos marcado. Entonces tú cuando tienes un objetivo marcado, creo que tienes que ir hacia ese objetivo, no desviarte. Voy a juzgar a esta persona porque me está diciendo que ella es de derechas, ya está, porque es de izquierdas o porque es blanca y esta es negra, o esta es azul y esta es roja. No vamos a un objetivo. Me da igual. Independientemente de tus ideales, lo que tu pienses de la película que viste esa noche o de lo que tú quieras, vamos a hacer lo que tenemos que hacer, no irnos por las ramas.

Q: Ojalá ese fuera el mensaje. No vamos a hacer lo que tenemos que hacer y que todo el mundo se ponga a hacerlo porque es lo que es.

A: Así es que realmente es así. O sea, ¿por qué voy a entrar yo en una discusión inútil? Porque son discusiones inútiles de algo que no es el objetivo. ¿Mi objetivo cuál es? ¿Este? Pues vamos a por ese objetivo, ya está. El tuyo cuál es, ¿el mismo? Pues venga, vamos a remar las dos. ¿A ti te gusta el flamenco y a mí no? Pero es que a mí no me importa lo que te gusta a ti. Lo importante es que tú y yo ahora mismo vamos a ir en dirección a ese objetivo y las dos ayudándonos. Pues luego tú el flamenco lo escuchas con quien tú quieras, te pongo el ejemplo.

### ***Interview 11: Man, 51, nonprofit network***

Date: 17<sup>th</sup> October 2022 | Location: in person | Duration: 53 min 13 s

Question (Q): Queríamos que nos contaras cómo recuerdas que fue tu primer contacto con la plataforma de Madrid, con las primeras reuniones con Madrid Deep Demo o las primeras reuniones con nuestro equipo también. ¿Cómo la recuerdas? ¿Qué sensaciones

tenías? Como antes nos decías: Me abrumaba la cantidad de proyectos que manejaba y el lenguaje que utilizabais... Y ese tipo de cosas que.

Answer (A): Pues mira, mi primera, mi primer contacto con el itd de la universidad. Por una parte, primero era un poco desconocido porque aunque sí que conocía algunas iniciativas que estaba haciendo, no estaba muy metido en el trabajo del ITD. Cuando *[organisation]* nos invita a tener reuniones de contacto para involucrarnos en el proyecto de cambio, bueno, de transición y de agenda climática, pues la primera impresión era estar frente a unas profesionales donde su lenguaje era muy distinto al que manejamos en el tercer sector. Entonces era hacer un esfuerzo por intentar comprender de qué manera o cuáles eran los conceptos clave que utilizaban e intentar apropiarme de ellos porque estábamos acostumbrados desde, al menos desde mi ámbito profesional, a trabajar con otro lenguaje, con otros conceptos. Y eso era un elemento que costaba el hacerse con él. Y luego el segundo también, quizá cuando compartíamos las diferentes iniciativas que se estaban poniendo en marcha desde el ITD, era un poco abrumador el ver la cantidad de flechas que salían, de actividades, resultados, productos, etcétera. Y nos costaba. A mí me costaba ver de qué manera una organización como la nuestra, una red de entidades sociales que trabajan en Madrid con diferentes colectivos en situación de exclusión, en diferentes ámbitos (de educación, de vivienda, de salud, de empleo, etcétera) cómo podíamos incorporarnos en ese mapa tan complejo de actividades vinculadas con el cambio climático desde un ámbito totalmente distinto, que es el de la inclusión social. ¿Cómo incorporar a las personas en situación de vulnerabilidad social en esa agenda climática con una universidad? Era como esto. Necesito tiempo para para sentarme, para leer, para comprender los conceptos y para ver de qué manera se nos ocurre, cómo involucrarnos en eso y también cómo influir si o cómo incidir en el propio marco de la universidad, para nosotros, nos adaptamos, tendremos que adaptarnos para encajar aquí. A lo mejor la universidad también tiene que adaptarse para encajar con otros perfiles, tanto profesionales como de población.

Q: ¿Y cómo crees que podríamos mejorar ese proceso de inmersión para que fuera más amigable para personas de tu sector? Decías que habéis tenido que leer materiales que no te hemos proporcionado nosotros. ¿Podríamos tener algún tipo de material, o tendría que haber otro tipo de reuniones, o si echas algo en falta que podríamos mejorar en el proceso?

A: Sí, yo creo que por ambas partes. Yo entiendo que cuando trabajas en plataformas multi actor, cada actor entiendo que tiene desde su propio contexto, tanto político como conceptual, como ideológico y de posición ante, o en nuestro caso, ante la exclusión social o en otros casos, ante el cambio climático, por ejemplo, que es uno de los elementos donde las entidades sociales que nos dedicamos a pobreza y exclusión tenemos mayor debilidad. Nosotros trabajamos en la inclusión social, pero no trabajamos la agenda climática. Todavía no está suficientemente incorporada en nuestro trabajo, cuando sabemos que tiene que estar vinculada, relacionada y tenemos que incorporar a nuestro trabajo. Y creo

que desde esa perspectiva de multi actor, donde cada uno sabe de lo suyo, necesita o necesitamos traducir, interpretar y ser más didáctico a la hora de dirigirnos a los otros actores. Entonces, yo creo que tanto por nuestra parte como por parte del itd de o de otras o de otros actores, igual lo que necesitamos es traducirnos y y ser un poco más divulgadores, que también creo que lo hemos mencionado. El tema de de ¿Cómo le cuento a una audiencia que no es experta en lo mío para que me entienda? No, para que me entienda y además para que se apropie de los mensajes que queremos trasladar y que podamos, por una parte que como esto es un proceso de aprendizaje, aprender a trabajar juntos y juntas, pues también implica entender lo que lo que me está diciendo la otra parte. Y yo creo que el que, el que podamos no dar por hecho que los conceptos que manejamos, primero que los entendemos y segundo que los entendemos de la misma manera, porque igual para uno cuando hablamos de inclusión es una cosa y resulta que la persona que está al lado lo entiende de otra, con matices.

Yo creo que eso es importante. Yo creo que ahí el tener esas, esas no sé si llamarlo reuniones, pero cafés o intercambios informales, aunque estén pautados de aprendizaje y también de generar cohesión, yo creo que es un... Nosotros en [*organisation*] cuando trabajamos con otros, con el que es verdad que somos parecidos porque son todos asociaciones y fundaciones, cooperativas sin ánimo de lucro. Venimos más o menos del mismo sector, aunque ya nos conocemos y nos parecemos. Necesitamos generar dos cosas uno confianza y dos cohesión. Si tú generas confianza y generas cohesión, es mucho más fácil que cuando pones en el centro una iniciativa para involucrar a terceros. Es más fácil el incorporarte a esa iniciativa. Primero, porque te conozco, sé lo que haces, tus fortalezas, tus debilidades y confío en ti porque sé que contigo voy a poder trabajar juntos o juntas. Y yo sé cuál es la parte que yo pueda aportar que tú no sabes y yo sé cuál es la parte que yo no sé qué me falta, que tú puedes aportar a esta iniciativa, a esta iniciativa común. Pues yo creo que es esa parte de ser más didácticos a la hora de no dar por hecho que todos conocemos las ideas, los conceptos y lo que está detrás de lo que contamos y de lo que ponemos encima de la mesa y a partir de ahí ir generando esa confianza y esa cohesión entre los diferentes actores.

Q: Y luego de lo que comentas, ¿recuerdas algún momento crítico? ¿Desde que hemos empezado la relación entre las dos organizaciones? Puede haber sido organizado por [*organisation*], en el que tú digas eso funcionó bien. Esto nos sirvió para generar esa esa cuestión y empezar a generar la confianza entre las dos organizaciones.

A: Yo creo que lo primero es que lo que yo veo desde el principio, lo que siempre hemos percibido yo personalmente en las conversaciones con el ITD, es una gran predisposición a trabajar con otros, o sea, como que hay un punto de partida que ya es fundamental, o sea que no vas a un espacio multi actor o bilateral con reservas, sino que vas ya predispuesto a yo quiero hacer cosas con vosotros lo primero y lo segundo, porque además sé primero que yo solo no lo puedo hacer y lo sé y estoy convencido de ello. Y segundo, porque también



sé que hay un conocimiento que yo tampoco tengo, no solo que no puedo por tema de capacidad, también por un tema de o de conocimiento o de mi público es éste y yo quiero llegar a este otro público y ese otro público yo no lo tengo en mi espacio y por lo tanto si quiero llegar a ese otro público tengo que buscar a otros o a otras que me faciliten ese acceso a ese público. Y yo creo que ese punto de partida de yo sé que necesito, pero además quiero, porque muchas veces lo necesito, pero no quiero. Voy a ver si lo hago solo, entonces creo mis propias estructuras para llegar donde no puedo llegar o para generar el conocimiento que no puedo crear mismo no lo tengo.

Yo creo que la predisposición del itd de la universidad a la colaboración es fundamental porque abre y no hay esa percepción de "Yo lo sé todo. Y bueno, te dejo entrar, no? Que estás un poco al lado, pero en el fondo no eres importante, no eres importante. Y esa parte que facilita mucho la conversación e incluso el poder plantear las dudas, incluso el decirnos "oye, no estoy entendiendo lo que me estáis diciendo y como no lo entiendo, no sé cuál es mi parte, donde puedo contribuir ahí, porque no acabo de entender cuál es eso que falta en el itd de donde nosotros podemos, podemos contribuir, pero yo creo que es esa generación de esa confianza. Parece que vamos a hablar de igual a igual y vamos a poner nuestras dudas encima de la mesa. Nosotros te contamos lo que, lo que hacemos, lo que no entiendes, te lo explico para ver cómo podemos encajar y cuáles son esos elementos que os pido para. Para el tercer sector, para que nos ayudéis. Y además con esas palabras de ayúdanos a llegar a esta, a esta población. Y de esta manera y a partir de ahí el poder trabajar juntos.

Q: ¿Y qué consideras que has aprendido en estos meses juntos?

A: Pues yo creo que lo que he aprendido primero es a tener que mirar mucho las cosas desde la pausa, porque cuando trabajas con agentes distintos, con actores distintos que como he comentado antes, manejan idiomas distintos, necesitas parar, hablar con la gente y releer o leer cosas que necesitas para poder sentarte a dialogar con otros agentes. Y también creo que he aprendido a ir sin prejuicios, porque desde el tercer sector y cuando nos relacionamos con otros agentes, sobre todo con administración pública, muchas veces vamos a la defensiva. Ya sé que lo que te voy a plantear me vas a decir que no. Entonces, cuando trabajamos con otros actores, muchas veces nos lo planteamos desde los buenos y los malos. Hay unos que somos los buenos y otros que son los malos. Y yo creo que una de las cosas que se puede aprender en el planteamiento que hacéis desde la Universidad del trabajo multi actor, es que tenemos que venir a trabajar juntos, sabiendo las condiciones que tiene cada uno, los contextos de cada uno, intentando buscar los elementos en común y no las diferencias. Eso es un elemento fundamental que se va aprendiendo cuando trabajas desde un enfoque multi actor y donde la universidad puede hacer ese papel de mediador, de mediadora que a veces nos falta en otros contextos, donde juntas a empresas, donde juntas a sociedad civil, donde juntas universidad, donde juntas la administración pública. Bueno, pues ahí necesitamos a alguien que sea imparcial y que intente buscar las

coincidencias y los puntos de encuentro entre cada uno de los actores para sacar adelante una idea común.

Q: Y al hilo de esto, de la universidad como mediadora de espacios multi actor, ¿qué prácticas, qué rutinas, qué herramientas concretas crees que hemos estado utilizando o te han llamado la atención en las reuniones a las que has participado y que hemos facilitado nosotros?

A: Yo creo que todavía me falta. Me falta práctica. Me falta experiencia porque todavía he participado en pocas reuniones con la universidad y creo que ahí me falta todavía un poquito más de trayectoria, porque hasta ahora solo he podido participar como en las videoconferencias más informativas, donde se ponen en común como resultados o experiencias o actividades que se han ido poniendo en marcha por parte de no sé si dentro del portfolio de iniciativas de la Universidad y probablemente haya otras herramientas que yo todavía no conozco de trabajo colaborativo con la universidad. Yo creo que todavía no tengo la experiencia suficiente para poder aportar ahí bien.

Q: Te hacemos una pregunta un poco más informal: ¿A qué te gustaba jugar de niño?

A: De pequeño yo creo que una de las cosas que más me gustaba era jugar al rescate, que era un juego de policías y ladrones, de correr por el patio. Y a un juego también que ya está, ya no se conoce, es el churro, que era un juego donde había dos equipos, entonces un equipo se ponía como si fuera una, agachados unos detrás de otros y el otro equipo tenía que saltar encima e intentar tirar a ese, a ese otro equipo. Sí, sin caerse. Entonces si no se caían, tú perdías y cambiabas el rol.

Q: Nos gusta hacer esta pregunta, porque siempre los juegos también están muy relacionados con colaboración, competición y puedes ver un poco el trasfondo de cada uno.

A: Siempre. En nuestro caso, siempre la competición pura y dura en la cooperación no la ves hasta que no empiezas a trabajar de monitor de tiempo libre o cosas por el estilo, donde ya empiezas a trabajar en temas cooperativos o temas de juegos, juegos por la paz también una época determinada.

Q: En estas entrevistas, con colaboración transformadora, nos referimos a colaboración que se convierte en acciones concretas, porque ahora también han surgido muchas alianzas y muchos espacios que se quedan en las declaraciones, pero luego no llevan a veces a acciones prácticas. Entonces, nosotros queremos que la colaboración lleve a la acción y a cambios en los sistemas, en las ciudades, en la sostenibilidad, en términos medioambientales, sociales y económicos. ¿Entonces queríamos que pensaras en una experiencia concreta, bien sea cómo funcionáis dentro de *[organisation]*, por ejemplo, o lo que nos contabas antes de cómo? Como una de las organizaciones con. Con las que trabajáis. Generar espacios de diálogo entre personas muy diversas, desde personas sin hogar hasta directivos o personas de la universidad, médicos, etc. Entonces que pienses en

alguna experiencia concreta y nos cuentas cómo se generan las condiciones de la conversación, qué elementos son importantes en esas conversaciones. Puede ser desde el lenguaje, ya lo hemos hablado. Si quieres hablar de otras cosas, del tono, de la conversación, del espacio que se escoge para tener esas conversaciones, algún aspecto concreto que vosotros trabajéis para que realmente se produzca la cuestión, la confianza.

A: Pues mira, yo creo que lo primero que nosotros en *[organisation]* funcionamos con una parte importante de las organizaciones de dos formas: 1) con reuniones mensuales que creo hasta la pandemia eran presenciales para trabajar en común; identificábamos o dábamos la oportunidad de tener esas reuniones mensuales con 15 o 20, máximo 20 representantes de entidades y esa continuidad en el tiempo que va generando el conocimiento de lo que de las personas que entablan esa conversación y de sus organizaciones va generando esa, esa, esa confianza y esa cohesión entre personas y entidades, incorporando siempre una parte no formal. O sea nosotros siempre tenemos una parte de inicio o una parte final, donde o bien compartimos un desayuno o compartimos un café, compartimos algo que no está dentro de la agenda formal, donde te permite conocer a las interlocutoras en un contexto más o menos formal, más y en un contexto donde puedes más distendido, donde puedes conocer y puedes preguntar sin tener el acta donde voy a levantar acta, voy a ver lo que digo porque va a constar en acta. Entonces tengo que generar un espacio previo o un espacio posterior, pues se acabó la reunión y ahora tenemos lo mismo ese café o ese o ese zumo donde vas generando esas relaciones personales que van a ayudar o van a dificultar que luego los procesos de discusión formal sean más fáciles o más complicados.

A: Y luego también hay otro elemento que nos facilita el que el que eso vaya a salir adelante, y es que tú tienes que poner por delante oye, cuáles son mis recursos para que esto que yo os planteo tenga una cierta garantías de éxito. Nosotros organizamos una feria de inclusión social que lo hacemos todos los años (...) Os decimos, oye mira, nosotros queremos hacer esto, os lo proponemos, os involucras en la medida de vuestras capacidades y nosotros vamos a poner para que esto salga adelante, este presupuesto, este personal y este conocimiento. Y me faltarían ser proactivo a la hora de decir yo pongo cosa porque sí os lo pido, ¿qué pones tú? Entonces ahí sí que necesitamos que si tú quieres poner en marcha una iniciativa compartida con otros, tienes que poner encima de la mesa qué es lo que tú ofreces. Y aquí también hablamos de presupuesto, hablamos de personal y hablamos de conocimiento. Y que eso explicitar también con otros. Y necesito que tú puedas poner esto, que tú puedas poner esto. O vienen recursos económicos, o vienen espacios, o el conocimiento.

Q: ¿Y cómo se maneja que haya organizaciones más grandes y más pequeñas, como son las relaciones de poder, cómo generáis un equilibrio entre todas ellas a la hora de participar y que todas sientan que pueden participar de la misma manera?

A: Porque primero hay las entidades que son más... A ver, que seas más grande o más pequeño. A veces da la impresión de que los que son más grandes van a tener más facilidades, pero tampoco es así, porque al final también las entidades más grandes tienen muchos más frentes abiertos y no les sobran los recursos. Tienen más recursos porque hacen más cosas con más gente, con más personal. Y las pequeñas pues al final están mucho más focalizadas en su actividad, en su expertise. Entonces, lo que intentamos ahí es a ver, dentro de todo lo que podríamos hacer, vamos a ver cuáles son ese elemento en común, donde tanto tú como tú, que sois pequeño y grande, podéis por una parte aportar, pero por otra parte aprender. ¿Qué es lo que no nos funciona en la red? Juntar a gente para trabajar un tema sobre el que nadie es experto. No funciona. Necesitamos que... Nosotros tenemos tres patas en el trabajo que hacemos: uno, el personal de la red, el que dinamiza los grupos de trabajo. Dos. La Junta de Gobierno, que también son expertos, pero son voluntarios de *[organisation]* y que son los que los que deben liderar ideológicamente el trabajo y alinearlos con la estrategia de la organización. Porque a veces juntas a personas y empiezan a plantear cosas que se van alejando de la línea estratégica porque no tienen por qué conocerla y tenerla tan apropiada. Entonces, si no queremos alejarnos de la línea estratégica, el personal técnico de la red y el órgano de gobierno de la red tiene que hacer ese esfuerzo para alinear a la línea estratégica. Y la tercera pata son las profesionales de las organizaciones que juntamos para trabajar en común. Entonces, al menos una de las tres patas tiene que ser experta en el tema, que se vaya a trabajar para poder, para poder ir generando ese conocimiento y para poder ir encauzando el trabajo y mejorando la capacidad de esos equipos de trabajo. Entonces, o bien es el equipo técnico, o bien es la Junta de Gobierno, o bien hay algunos o todos, o parte de las personas de los grupos que son expertas en el tema y con esa sí no tenemos ninguna de las tres patas. Experto en el tema, tenemos que cerrar el proyecto porque nadie contribuye y cuando lo ponemos en común trabajos con diferentes actores, en nuestro caso, somos conscientes de que la gente se vincula a nuestro trabajo, uno porque solo no lo puede hacer y dos porque quiero aprender a hacerlo mejor o a involucrarme aquí. Por lo tanto, hay una expectativa y una necesidad de yo quiero aprender y me vincula a este grupo de trabajo para aprender. O yo soy experto en esto, pero me faltan algunas cosas y que me podéis aportar otros. Entonces, si consigues que los que más saben y los que más tienen compartan lo que saben y lo que tienen, y los que menos tienen y menos no que sepan, sino que tienen un sentido mucho más específico. Te lo aporte al que más sabe, entonces funciona.

Q: ¿Y cómo gestionas ese aprendizaje y ese intercambio de conocimiento?

A: Bueno, vamos como podemos porque tenemos unos recursos muy limitados. Aquí lo que intentamos sobre todo es sistematizarlo. O sea que todo lo que hacemos que lo vayamos registrando. Fundamentalmente al final con los informes, a todas las reuniones que tenemos, todo sistematizado con sus convocatorias, con la gente que asiste, con las contribuciones que se hacen y que lo vayamos registrando y compartiendo con todas las

entidades. Un proceso de sistematización de toda esa información y la puesta en común con ellos y con ellas, y luego también con los productos que se van realizando. Pues sí hacemos... Oye, queremos trabajar sobre la el compartir buenas prácticas sobre la mejora de la empleabilidad de colectivos en dificultad social. Pues hacemos una recogida sistemática de información a través de un formulario. Eso lo compartimos, lo ponemos un documento y a partir de ahí lo presentamos también con cada una de las entidades. En las reuniones lo presenta, hace una exposición de 20 o 30 minutos a al grupo, donde se hacen también preguntas, respuestas y no solo recopilar una experiencia y la he difundido a través de un documento o una página web, sino que también es generar un espacio de diálogo con el resto de compañeros y compañeras del grupo para conocer un poquito más qué es lo que os ha funcionado, qué es lo que no nos ha funcionado. Yo he hecho algo parecido, pero no me funciona por esto y a partir de ahí se genera un diálogo donde puedes, donde puedes aprender mejor los entresijos de las experiencias del resto de entidades.

Q: Y antes nos decías: Lo que no nos funciona es trabajar en algo en lo que no somos expertos nadie dentro de la red. ¿Hay algún otro elemento que consideres que como que habéis hecho mal en algún momento de vuestra experiencia y que ahora habéis aprendido, lo hacéis mejor? Algo en lo que penséis: "No lo haríamos así ahora".

A: No lo haríamos así ahora. Pues no lo sé. Yo creo que sí, que hemos ido aprendiendo de la experiencia. Pero como siempre, es verdad que siempre hemos intentado hacer las cosas con la participación de las entidades. Yo creo que lo que nos sigue faltando no es tanto el no lo haríamos así, como el ser conscientes de que nos sigue faltando un elemento en nuestra propia experiencia, que tiene que ver con la participación en la toma de decisiones de personas con las que trabajamos. Nosotros trabajamos con personas en situación de pobreza y exclusión social. En nuestra teoría, en nuestro plan estratégico y en nuestros papeles, dice que debemos de apostar por la participación social de esas personas, pero todavía es un elemento que nos cuesta. En la dinámica habitual de la organización. Ya lo tenemos en los papeles. Hacemos experiencias concretas, pero nos falta incorporarlo estratégica y transversalmente en la organización. El cómo poner los recursos tanto humanos, económicos como de la del resto de entidades de la red, para facilitar que también esa experiencia de personas que con las que estamos trabajando en las asociaciones para que puedan acceder a un empleo, a una vivienda digna, al sistema de salud o o que o que reduzca el fracaso escolar de sus hijos en el sistema educativo. ¿Cómo incorporarlos en el proceso de toma de decisiones? ¿No es tanto el preguntarte, que eso lo hacemos, sino decidir, que es lo más difícil. ¿Cómo hago para que para que decidan o se incorporen a la toma de decisiones esas personas a las que acompañamos? Y además, teniendo en cuenta que son personas que lógicamente no van a estar todo el tiempo en la organización porque se supone que si trabajamos con ellos es para que superen esa situación de vulnerabilidad, cuando la superan o cuando están en mejores condiciones, ya salen de la entidad. Entonces, los procesos de participación de esas personas sabemos que

es temporal y eso es algo complicado, que tenemos que mejorar. Entonces yo creo que más iría más por ahí. Tenemos que ser capaces de hacer esto que decimos en el papel, hacerlo realidad.

Q: Sería bonito también que alguna permaneciera en la organización, pero de otra manera, no diseñando un programa así. De esa forma siempre es difícil..

A: Eso pasa en algunas, en las organizaciones de primer nivel, las que intervienen con personas. Eso sí que a veces pasa que hay una persona que primero se acerca a la organización porque tiene una dificultad. Una vez que se trabaja con esa persona, le apetece vincularse o bien a su programa de voluntariado, o si es una organización un poco más de militancia como militante y en algunas ocasiones se convierten en miembros de las Juntas de Gobierno. Eso es verdad que sí que sucede, aunque no es la tónica, o algo generalizable o generalizado. Pero sí hay experiencias concretas donde personas que se han acercado a una organización desde esa perspectiva de necesito ayuda a ser la que ayuda o incluso la que decide en un órgano de gobierno formal. Y luego también es verdad que hay muchas o algunas organizaciones donde los promotores o las promotoras son las personas que provienen de ese colectivo y aquí las organizaciones de población migrante, pues hay muchas... Organizaciones de población rumana, venezolana, colombiana, donde se agrupan ellos para buscar sus propias soluciones.

Q: Estas personas que tal vez son las que se acercan a las estas organizaciones de la red con las que trabajáis para comentarle su situación, etcétera ¿Ese diálogo cómo empieza y cuál es la relación o la implicación emocional que hay entre esas personas que llegan a pedir ayuda de alguna forma o a pedir asesoramiento o a tratar de alcanzarlos? ¿Cuál es la relación que se genera entre las personas que van a pedir ayuda y las organizaciones que la reciben? Si depende del tipo de organización. ¿Se da una atención más individualizada, más cercana o cuál es ese proceso de diálogo que se genera?

A: Hombre, la verdad es que al final cada organización, cuando recibe a una persona que busca resolver su situación, cada organización tiene su idiosincrasia, tiene su propio estilo y entiendo que se pueden generar, casi diría una vinculación distinta con cada una de las organizaciones de forma, de forma distinta. Quizás sobre todo aquellas organizaciones a lo mejor que son, que son más pequeñas y que y que tienen un peso mayor de personas o bien voluntarias o bien militantes, pueden generar una vinculación quizá un poco más personal que aquellas organizaciones que a lo mejor son más grandes, con equipos más profesionalizados, que también tienen una mayor, tiene una mayor carga de trabajo y todas intentan hacer de esa conexión personal individualizada. Pero quizá la vinculación emocional sea distinta. Y luego que también al final, en la práctica profesional, no siempre, cuando trabajamos desde la psicología, desde el trabajo social, desde la educación social, también hay que mantener una cierta distancia para porque si no te llevas el trabajo a casa y la salud mental de las profesionales también. Si no eres capaz de desconectar de

esas, de ese trabajo que realizas en tu en tu día a día, puede hacer que te veas muy perjudicado a la hora de estar día tras día apoyando a gente que lo está pasando mal y tienes que saber desconectar de ese día a día para poder seguir ayudando y prestando y haciendo tu trabajo con personas que lo están pasando, que lo están pasando mal. Pero que todas sí que intentan hacer esa, esa vinculación porque si, y eso se trabaja mucho en trabajo social, en psicología, el tema de la vinculación con las personas tienen que confiar en ti para poder apoyarles en ese trabajo social, psicológico que haces con esas personas.

Q: Yo tengo una última pregunta y luego si queréis vosotras [se refiere a dos investigadoras junior que la acompañan] hacer alguna más también... Sobre cómo, ¿cómo se forma un profesional hoy en día para ejercer este tipo de roles? Nos decías antes que os está costando encontrar a alguien para la oferta que habéis sacado. Porque al final es tienes que saber de coordinación y gestión de proyectos, tienes que saber también algo, algo técnico, de evaluación o de energía y algo de facilitación, de mediación entre un montón de actores. Entonces esas profesiones nuevas y muy híbridas. Tú como que también se aprende mucho con la experiencia y con el paso del tiempo y la interacción en ámbitos muy complejos. ¿Tienes algunas ideas de cómo se aprende esa profesión, de hoy y del futuro también?

A: Hombre, es verdad que cada vez más yo creo que ha habido un momento en donde la formación y la experiencia profesional y va, se ha ido súper especializando y quizás ahora también con las nuevas profesiones y las nuevas competencias, hay alguna serie de habilidades que no, que no son, que no se estudian al final en el ámbito académico y que luego se buscan, sin embargo, en el ámbito profesional, no en el tema de la flexibilidad del trabajo en equipo, las habilidades de comunicación, la resolución de problemas, la gestión de la incertidumbre, ese tipo de cuestiones no vienen en el currículum o lo traes de un poco de casa o no se trabaja. Ya se está empezando a trabajar. Creo que ese tipo de habilidades y también las propias organizaciones sociales, son elementos... ¿No? Esas habilidades blandas que se están empezando a incorporar también en los currículos de formación y de acompañamiento a la formación y el empleo con población en situación de vulnerabilidad social. Porque al final no es tanto si no sé manejar una carretilla, que también es necesario, o sí sé o no sé manejar una caja registradora, sino también cómo, cómo me enfrento a un público determinado que me viene, que voy a tener que estar haciendo esa atención al público que tengo que manejar. Y eso no me viene siempre en el currículum. Yo creo que eso ya se va, se va incorporando. Y luego también creo que está habiendo muchas iniciativas, sobre todo muy vinculados con el aprendizaje servicio o con las clínicas, sobre todo las jurídicas, por ejemplo, donde tú formas a los futuros juristas, por ejemplo en las clínicas jurídicas, y cuando hacemos colaboraciones entre el Tercer sector y las universidades en clínicas jurídicas para que los alumnos y alumnas nos den un servicio a las organizaciones y las organizaciones les enseñemos a esto que te estoy pidiendo tienes que hacerlo de forma comprensible. Entonces, también hoy intentamos formar a esa formación, por ejemplo, de una jurista que diga mira, tienes que explicar la ley de... La

Renta Mínima de Inserción, los requisitos y los criterios de la renta mínima de inserción, hazme una formación o hazme un material divulgativo que lo pueda entender una persona rumana que tiene poco conocimiento del idioma y que no, no conoce nada de cómo funciona la administración española o de la Comunidad de Madrid. Yo creo que ahí hay elementos y hay algunas experiencias basadas en el aprendizaje servicio en las clínicas jurídicas que hacen que también intentemos incorporar elementos en la formación de las estudiantes. Por ejemplo, con esa mirada un poco más social. Oye, puede que luego acabes trabajando en un bufete de abogados muy prestigioso, trabajando para empresas del Ibex 35, pero a lo mejor también puedes acabar en otro gran despacho haciendo o incorporando el pro bono, por ejemplo, en tu práctica profesional, no con corporación o con gente que no puede permitirse una abogada, digamos, cara no? Entonces eso es muy interesante. Las experiencias que está habiendo en esa materia.

Q2: Perdonadme, No sé si me voy a escapar un poco del vídeo, pero más si hacemos una analogía con esto, el itd, y vemos la situación de las personas en pobreza y vulnerabilidad podemos ver una serie de desafíos. Pero como vosotros trabajáis en una plataforma, una plataforma multi-actor, yo creo que uno de los beneficios es que sumas todos los puntos de vista y podéis ver este sistema de una forma más amplia y entender mejor cómo funciona. Y hoy no sé si podrías compartir conmigo que a partir de este lugar podéis ver el sistema de una forma más ampliada, podéis identificar algunos patrones y estructuras del problema y cuáles serían y cuáles pensáis que podrían afrontar?

A: Es compleja. Sí, es muy compleja porque. Porque hay muchos elementos en nosotros. La ventaja que tenemos está relacionada con la cantidad de organizaciones que tenemos cerca y que cada una conoce una parte del problema, una parte de trabajar con una parte de la población. Y cuando nos juntamos, pues ponemos en común. Oye, yo veo esta pata, yo veo esta pata, yo veo esta pata o esa pieza del puzle. Y es verdad que a partir de ahí sí que podemos intentar al menos plantear propuestas que apunten a diferentes niveles y ya nos vamos encontrando con los patrones. Por ejemplo, uno de los patrones que hemos identificado claramente es que cualquier problema nunca es responsable del interlocutor al que te diriges. Es un patrón, o sea, un problema. Tú vas al ayuntamiento y te dice no, esto es competencia de la comunidad autónoma, vas a la comunidad autónoma. No, esto es competencia del Ministerio. Y cuando vas al ministerio dicen esto es competencia del Ayuntamiento, de la Comunidad Autónoma y ahí hay un patrón muy claro donde, donde al final dice no, no, yo no puedo abordar esto porque no es competencia mía. Es un patrón que se ve claramente. El otro, el de la colaboración entre las propias administraciones, tanto de diferente nivel municipal, autonómico y estatal como entre el propio Ayuntamiento, el propio entre la propia administración. No dices oye, vamos a abordar el tema de la vivienda, ya que el tema de la vivienda también está relacionado con el tema de los ingresos. ¿Entonces, cómo voy a adquirir yo una vivienda si no me coordino con el sistema, con servicios sociales? ¿Cómo? ¿Cómo hago para trabajar para el acceso al empleo



con la Consejería de Empleo, sin tener en cuenta la Consejería de Política Social? Porque al final una persona que está en situación de vulnerabilidad social y no tiene empleo y no tiene vivienda, necesita de diferentes patas de la misma administración de trabajar de forma coordinada, en este caso en la misma administración y no hacer cajones estancos. Y eso también lo tenemos. Es otro de los patrones que continuamente vamos diciéndole a la administración y por suerte va habiendo algunas iniciativas donde se supera un poco esa barrera de no, mi competencia llega hasta aquí. ¿Entonces, cómo hago para facilitar o trabajar en itinerarios de formación para el empleo con colectivo vulnerable? ¿O sea, quién me lo paga, por decirlo de alguna manera, me lo paga políticas sociales o me lo paga empleo? Aquí no tengo que pedir la... Porque al final estamos en esa mirada. Cuando yo veo un pliego de subvenciones públicas, pues si lo saca la Consejería de Empleo o la de Política social, pero es de empleo, entonces que es de política social o es de empleo? Y esos patrones también se repiten. Y nos pasa lo mismo en el tema de salud y vulnerabilidad, en temas de vivienda y vulnerabilidad, temas de educación y vulnerabilidad. Y ahí el otro mantra es la colaboración entre departamentos, no solamente en vertical, ayuntamiento, comunidad y ministerio, sino también, digamos transversal entre vivienda, empleo, servicios sociales, etcétera Son como dos patrones que se repiten muchísimo.

Q: Nosotros también porque trabajamos con medio ambiente, pero cómo vas a abordar medioambiente sin urbanismo, sin vivienda, sin servicios sociales, sin un montón de cosas. Y tienen muchas dificultades de trabajar juntos. Por ejemplo eso, cómo pueden compartir presupuestos.

A: No hay esa mirada comunitaria que sí que está en la base del trabajo social, luego la propia estructura de la administración no responde a esa, a esa idea de vamos a trabajar de forma comunitaria en el terreno. Y hay una dificultad muy, muy grande. Por responderte a dos cosas de ese iceberg que comentas que habría muchas más cosas probablemente.

Q: Es bonito lo que propone mi compañera, que al final vosotros tenéis también el papel de aglutinar el conocimiento de todos y generar... Tener esa visión del sistema completo a partir del conocimiento que aporta cada uno. Pues unos más de formación, otros más de vivienda. Vosotros tenéis también, además de facilitar la interacción dentro de la red como aglutinadores de conocimiento.

A: Sí. Y yo creo que aunque ya hay muchas cosas y cada vez se está trabajando más en la generación de evidencias. Y en política pública, yo creo que todavía hay... O hay poco, o lo que se ha sistematizado igual no está muy disponible. Cuando decimos, cuando afirmamos que los impuestos... Vamos a bajar impuestos, porque eso va el dinero que esté mejor en tu bolsillo, porque va a repercutir y va a generar más riqueza. Pues eso, ya hay evidencia desde hace años, al menos en Estados Unidos, que dice que eso no es así. Entonces vamos a seguir... Y yo creo que este proyecto de uno de los proyectos que vamos a poner en marcha

con el apoyo de *[organisation]*, va en esa línea. Vamos a generar evidencias. Y si decimos que los procesos de cambio climático se van a poder abordar mejor, de una forma más eficaz y más eficiente, contando con la participación, por ejemplo, de la población en situación de vulnerabilidad. Vamos a demostrarlo. No porque decir que... Decirlo porque sí, si no muestras evidencias no se sustenta. Y eso en política pública pues pasa mucho, que se hacen muchas afirmaciones que no están sustentadas en ninguna evidencia. No? Lo mismo, pues las ayudas públicas desincentiva la búsqueda de empleo. Las prestaciones sociales, las prestaciones no contributivas, la renta mínima de inserción, el ingreso mínimo vital desincentiva la búsqueda de empleo. Pues no hay evidencia que corrobore eso. Sí que hay procesos de cronificación con personas que probablemente no van a poder acceder a un empleo jamás. Pero hay personas que si no tienen esa ayuda inicial no van a poder salir de la ayuda para incorporarse al empleo desde... Desde... Desde esa ayuda que te prestan en un momento muy vulnerable y a partir de ahí ir saliendo del sistema de servicios sociales para entrar en el mundo de la empresa, o en la búsqueda o en el empleo privado, etc, etcétera.

Q: Se me ocurren una última cosa que antes se me ha olvidado preguntarte. Porque hablabas de que con la pandemia había cambiado la... Al pasar a videoconferencias o a herramientas digitales, no habíais perdido la rutina de encuentros dentro de la red, pero habíais cambiado las herramientas. Entonces te iba a preguntar cómo había afectado la pandemia y el uso de herramientas digitales a la cohesión, a la confianza dentro de la red, o si no ha afectado tanto porque hay un recorrido. Y luego también en el trabajo de las propias organizaciones.

A: Yo creo que la... Bueno, la pandemia que lógicamente ha perjudicado en general tanto a la sociedad como al funcionamiento de las organizaciones. Lo segundo es que creo que también esa situación ha hecho que durante al menos un par de años se haya se haya acelerado un proceso de transformación digital en las organizaciones sociales que tarde o temprano iba a llegar. Entonces, digamos que en este caso ha permitido, aunque sea de forma acelerada y poco organizada, una parte de esa transformación digital que era necesaria y que probablemente beneficie y haga más eficiente una parte del trabajo de las organizaciones. Con la incorporación de la tecnología, que hubiéramos tardado muchísimos años en hacerlo si no hubiera pasado esto. Yo creo que eso también es un efecto positivo en las organizaciones, que también les ha permitido mayor versatilidad y poder llegar también de otra forma a personas que de otra manera tampoco se podría llegar. Y además también para poder hacerlo en situaciones de crisis donde ahora nos hemos adaptado y tenemos una capacidad de llegada que si no, no hubiéramos podido tener. Pero también estamos detectando muy claramente un desgaste muy importante en el personal. Al final la pantalla desgasta. No sólo desgasta, sino que cuantas personas también del ámbito profesional, de las organizaciones sociales o de la universidad o de la... O de la empresa tienen viviendas donde puedes tener separado... Tengo a mi hijo o mi hija,

su ordenador para las clases, yo para el trabajo o mi pareja para el suyo. Y cuando son niños muy pequeños la conciliación, si no están en clase o están en el. En... En la casa, en la guardería o donde sea. ¿Al final, cuántos niños y niñas se nos han colado en reuniones por videoconferencia en nuestro trabajo cotidiano? Un montón.

Q: Esto ha demostrado que tenemos vida más allá del trabajo, por ver el lado positivo.

A: Sí. Y entonces hay una parte de conciliación que no es tan real, que no, no, porque al final quienes se quedan en casa con los niños siguen siendo mayoritariamente las mujeres. Entonces, las mujeres han trabajado muchos años para salir de casa y con la pandemia y las videoconferencias se han vuelto otra vez a la casa. Y eso también hay un sesgo importante y un riesgo de involución importante. Y también hemos notado que la cohesión interna se resiente cuando tú no conoces personalmente a... Ni tienes esos espacios, como decía antes, la parte informal de la reunión... Al final se encorseta y cuando sales de la reunión y conoces a las personas más personalmente, cuando conoces a la gente más personalmente y más directamente, es mucho más fácil trabajar con ellas y con ellos. Y la videoconferencia eso lo está mirando claramente.

Q: Se genera una parte afectiva también.

A: Claro. Sí. Y la pantalla, sobre todo. Se nota mucho con la gente nueva que se incorpora. Que la vinculación no es la misma porque tienes una pantalla y no conoces a la gente. Y de hecho, cuando estás con la pantalla estás al mismo tiempo mandando correos electrónicos, mirando el WhatsApp y que estás trabajando con tres focos al mismo tiempo. Por lo tanto, la implicación tanto profesional como relacional es muy distinta y se resiente.

## Appendix D. Case Study Analysis Sources

### a. Data Sources of Case Study A

The main sources of evidence used for the analysis of case A are detailed below.

**Table D1.** Sources for the description of the organisational context

Evidence	Date	Description	Available at
Historical review	2022	Overview of the history of the Universidad Politécnica de Madrid	<a href="https://short.upm.es/0buxd">https://short.upm.es/0buxd</a>
UPM Statutes	2018	Statutes of the Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, amended BOCM 09 April 2018, Pub. L. No. BOCM 15 November, 74/2010 Decree (21 October).	<a href="https://short.upm.es/7ygn4">https://short.upm.es/7ygn4</a>
The UPM in figures	2022	Key figures describing the Universidad Politécnica de Madrid (number of students, staff, lecturers and researchers, etc.)	<a href="https://short.upm.es/ymbkg">https://short.upm.es/ymbkg</a>
First Spanish University in patent application	2022	Article on the UPM website announcing that it is the first Spanish university in patent applications.	<a href="https://short.upm.es/8y6qt">https://short.upm.es/8y6qt</a>
Women in the UPM	2015	Report on the role and participation of women in the UPM academic community, updated to 2015 (accessed on 23th September 2023).	<a href="http://www.upm.es/sfs/Rectorado/Gerencia/Igualdad/Documentos/Dossier_Mujer_UPM_actualizado_2015.pdf">http://www.upm.es/sfs/Rectorado/Gerencia/Igualdad/Documentos/Dossier_Mujer_UPM_actualizado_2015.pdf</a>

Source: Own work

Table D2. Key documents related to the SDG Seminars.

Evidence	Date	Description	Available at
Call for Proposals	April 2018	Call for Proposals from the Vicerector's Office for Research and Innovation aimed at fostering collaboration between R&I structures through the design and deployment of a programme of seminars	<a href="https://short.upm.es/gyoqc">https://short.upm.es/gyoqc</a>
Proposal	May 2018	Submitted proposal to the call for internal funding	<a href="https://drive.upm.es/s/5KkJEihFp6QRMh/download">https://drive.upm.es/s/5KkJEihFp6QRMh/download</a>
Resolution	July 2018	Formal resolution of the call for proposals published by the Vice-Rector's Office	<a href="https://short.upm.es/idiqb">https://short.upm.es/idiqb</a>
Communication Plan	October 2018	Includes the main strategies and stakeholders for the deployment of the communication plan	<a href="https://drive.upm.es/s/KO1hHbfAN0IDbu1/download">https://drive.upm.es/s/KO1hHbfAN0IDbu1/download</a>
Monitoring and Evaluation Plan	October 2018	Includes the main strategies to assess the process following a developmental evaluation approach	<a href="https://drive.upm.es/s/KrqtWf4hedCXO7U/download">https://drive.upm.es/s/KrqtWf4hedCXO7U/download</a>
Homepage	since 2018	Homepage including the rationale, information on the coming events and results from previous sessions, relevant literature, etc.	<a href="https://short.upm.es/3eh1y">https://short.upm.es/3eh1y</a>
Playlist	since 2018	Includes all the recorded material related to the sessions	<a href="https://short.upm.es/gxcn7">https://short.upm.es/gxcn7</a>
Blogpost	Since 2018	Includes all the written material related to the sessions	<a href="https://short.upm.es/8xr6z">https://short.upm.es/8xr6z</a>
Summary Video 2018-2019	July 2019	Summary of the sessions organized between October 2018 and July 2019	<a href="https://short.upm.es/x55pk">https://short.upm.es/x55pk</a>
Flickr album	October 2018	Photographs of the opening session	<a href="https://short.upm.es/9cl3z">https://short.upm.es/9cl3z</a>
Report 2018	January 2019	Includes a summary of the main activities and results: 4 sessions, 273 participants, 4 surveys.	N/A
Report 2019	January 2020	Includes a summary of the main activities and results: 9 sessions, 610 participants.	N/A
Report 2020	January 2021	Includes a summary of the main activities and results: 2 sessions, 357 participants.	N/A
Report 2021	January 2022	Includes a summary of the main activities and results: 5 sessions, more than 600 participants	N/A

**Table D3.** Key documents of other associated initiatives

<b>Evidence</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Available at</b>
Report 2021 – Interdisciplinary communities	January 2022	Includes a summary of the main activities and results of the work between the interdisciplinary communities	N/A
Report 2022 – Interdisciplinary communities	January 2023	Includes a summary of the main activities and results of the work between the interdisciplinary communities	N/A
Report 2023 – Interdisciplinary communities	July 2023	Includes a summary of the main activities and results of the work between the interdisciplinary communities	N/A
Report from the Interviews to the Communities	July 2021	Summary of the analysis of the eight interview conducted with the coordinators and facilitators of the first interdisciplinary communities established at the UPM	N/A
Report of Focus Group 1	January 2022	Synthesis of the focus group conducted on 2 <sup>nd</sup> Dec. 2021 with coordinators, facilitators and representatives of the research communities, and from UPM governing bodies.	N/A
Report Focus group process	July 2023	Synthesis of the listening process to the interdisciplinary research communities	N/A
Interdisciplinary communities homepage	Since 2020	Homepage describing the purpose of the interdisciplinary communities and links to their specific websites (accessed on 26th September 2023)	<a href="https://short.upm.es/ig3or">https://short.upm.es/ig3or</a>
UPM Circular Campus	Since 2021	Website of the Interdisciplinary Community “Circular Campus” (accessed on 26th September 2023)	<a href="https://short.upm.es/loacg">https://short.upm.es/loacg</a>
UPM Transition towards a net-zero university	Since 2021	Website of the Interdisciplinary Community “Transition towards a net-zero university” (accessed on 26th September 2023)	<a href="https://short.upm.es/mlcaq">https://short.upm.es/mlcaq</a>
UPM Collaboratory for decarbonisation	Since 2021	Website of the Interdisciplinary Community “Collaboratory for decarbonisation” (accessed on 26th September 2023)	<a href="https://short.upm.es/ku59">https://short.upm.es/ku59</a>
Decarbonisation Committee	Since 2019	Homepage of UPM’s Decarbonisation Committee (accessed on 26th September 2023)	<a href="https://short.upm.es/5oj32">https://short.upm.es/5oj32</a>
EELISA communities	Since 2021	Homepage describing the purpose of the EELISA communities and links to their specific websites (accessed on 26th September 2023)	<a href="https://community.eelisa.eu/">https://community.eelisa.eu/</a>

**Table D4.** Results and reports from the surveys conducted during the seminars<sup>43</sup>

<b>Evidence</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Available at</b>
Survey results 00	23 Oct. 2018	<a href="https://short.upm.es/d2afr">https://short.upm.es/d2afr</a>
Survey report 00	23 Oct. 2018	<a href="https://short.upm.es/2ercp">https://short.upm.es/2ercp</a>
Survey results 01	6 Nov. 2018	<a href="https://short.upm.es/hstjr">https://short.upm.es/hstjr</a>
Survey report 01	6 Nov. 2018	<a href="https://short.upm.es/rfahr">https://short.upm.es/rfahr</a>
Survey results 02	11 Nov. 2018	<a href="https://short.upm.es/8yv2y">https://short.upm.es/8yv2y</a>
Survey report 02	11 Nov. 2018	<a href="https://short.upm.es/th9v6">https://short.upm.es/th9v6</a>
Survey results 03	11 Dec. 2018	<a href="https://short.upm.es/f73cp">https://short.upm.es/f73cp</a>
Survey report 03	11 Dec. 2018	<a href="https://short.upm.es/aejue">https://short.upm.es/aejue</a>

Source: SDG Seminars team

<sup>43</sup> Please, refer to Table D10. Survey "Introducing the SDGs" and Table D11. Survey "Thermometer of Interdisciplinarity" for detailed information regarding the survey questions.

Moreover, this appendix contains additional information of the sessions organised.

**Table D5.** Chronology of the seminars organised

Series	N	Session	Date	Participants
1 – Introduction to the SDGs	01	Research & Innovation and the 2030 Agenda	23 Oct. 2018	114
	02	Introducing the SDGs: Workshop 1	6 Nov. 2018	70
	03	Introducing the SDGs: Workshop 2	20 Nov. 2018	42
	04	Implications of the 2030 Agenda for Research and Funding	11 Dec. 2018	47
2 – Climate Change and Energy Transition	05	How to Increase UPM's Impact on Energy Transition?	5 Mar. 2019	72
	06	Research as a Key to Accelerate Energy Transition	19 Mar. 2019	202
	07	Towards a UPM Mission for 2030	2 Apr. 2019	25
3 – Circular Economy and New Materials	08	UPM's Contribution to Circular Economy and New Materials	21 May 2019	34
	09	Saving the Seas: Research for a Sustainable Production and Consumption Model	4 June 2019	65
	10	Towards a Circular UPM in 2030	18 June 2019	25
-	11	2018-2019 Closure Session	9 July 2019	35
-	12	2019-2020 Opening Session: UPM's Commitment to SDGs	4 Oct. 2019	102
4 – Natural Resource Management	13	How to Reduce the Impact of Diet on the Soil?	16 Nov. 2019	50
	14	Vegetal Biodiversity: A Tool against Climate Change	21 Jan 2020	89
	15	Extreme Climate Events Prevention and Management	4 Feb. 2020	61
	16	Decarbonising UPM through nature and food systems	18 Feb. 2020	48
5 – Healthy and Clean Cities	17	EU Mission: 100 Cities, 10 years. Towards climate neutrality	17 Nov. 2020	202
	18	University-City Collaboration Models for Climate Neutrality	1 Dec. 2020	155
	19	Madrid+UPM: Pathway to climate neutrality	26 Jan. 2021	90



(continued)

Series	N	Session	Date	Participants
6 – Interdisciplinary Research Communities	20	Madrid facing the challenges of water resources and adaptation to climate change	23 Feb. 2021	194
	21	Open Science at UPM: understanding needs for possible application in UPM communities	23 Mar. 2021	74
	22	Healthy cities: exploring urban models that improve human health and mitigate climate change	25 May 2021	194
	23	Building new energy models in cities	29 June 2021	61
	24	Towards a Community of Shared Health Infrastructures	22 Mar. 2022	N/D (<50)
	25	The UPM initiative in neuroscience and neurotechnology	26 Apr. 2022	N/D (<50)
	26	The AI and Robotics EDIHs. An open window for SMEs	3 May 2022	N/D (<50)
	27	Trends and scope in AI and Robotics under discussion	24 May 2022	N/D (<50)
28	The Digital Transformation of Healthcare	31 May 2022	N/D (<50)	

Next, various images of the seminar venues are provided to enhance comprehension of the spatial limitations and illustrate how these challenges have been addressed.



(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)



(e)



(f)



(g)



(h)



(i)



(j)



(k)



(l)



(m)



(n)

**Figure D1.** Photographs showcasing the evolution of the selected venues.

Note: (a) Seminar 1 (initiative conversation); (b) Seminar 2 (understanding conversation); (c) Seminar 4 (understanding-inspirational); (d) Seminar 5 (understanding-connection); (e) Seminar 6 (understanding-inspirational); (f) Seminar 7 (conversation for action); (g) Seminar 8 (understanding-connection); (h) Seminar 10 (action); (i) Seminar 11 (closure conversation); (j) Seminar 12 (initiative conversation); (k) Seminar 13 (understanding-connection); (l) Seminar 14 (understanding-inspirational); (m) Seminar 15 (action); (n) Seminar 16 (action).

**Table D6.** Types of SDG Seminars included in the proposal

<b>Name</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Description</b>
Designing SDG Seminars	Working sessions using participatory methodologies to gather input from different UPM units for the selection of topics and speakers.	
Keynote Speeches	Sharing with the university community cutting-edge research and projects	A Researcher of relevance in the area under study is selected.
Debates UPM-UPM	Discussing different disciplinary approaches on a specific issue.	External/internal actor, presents a complex problem in its area of action and raises a debate with UPM researchers from different areas.
UPM Investigates	Disseminating among the UPM community research carried out by its members, providing a space to identify opportunities for collaboration.	Presentation of research lines, reports, and results developed by UPM centres and groups.
Debates UPM-Society	Bringing scientific and technological research closer to the different actors in society, providing a space where different positions on current societal challenges can be expressed, in order to understand the needs and challenges and to design appropriate and effective solutions from the University.	Presentation by UPM researcher and subsequent debate with relevant actors.
Interdisciplinary challenges /working together	Generating interdisciplinary ideas and projects in complex challenges that require the participation of researchers from different areas.	Workshop focusing on a specific challenge that requires an interdisciplinary approach. Participation of various researchers from different areas.
Resources and services available to all	Publicising the services and infrastructure available (visits) and analysing the possibility of shared or alternative use.	

Source: "UPM Seminars" Proposal

**Table D7.** Types of conversations in the SDG Seminars

<b>Type of conversation</b>	<b>Description</b>
Opening conversation	Initiated at the start of each academic course, this conversation serves to showcase institutional support, establish a future vision for envisaged change, and persuade the academic community of the necessity for interdisciplinary and multi-stakeholder collaboration.
Conversation for connection	Functioning as a marketplace of initiatives, this conversation aims to stimulate mutual understanding and interaction. It seeks to promote a shared understanding across disciplines of the role of UPM research in specific cross-cutting themes related to the SDGs.
Inspirational conversation	Geared towards expanding researchers' perspectives —scientific, political, economic and social— this conversation fosters dialogue between scientists and practitioners across various sectors. It involves establishing a common language and raising new questions that could only be addressed through interdisciplinary and multi-stakeholder collaboration.
Conversation for Action	This conversation takes the form of a co-creation workshop, with the goal of listening to the academic community and concretising collective actions. It focuses on applying research results to transform UPM into a sustainable university.
Conversation for Closure	Conducted at the conclusion of a specific stage (e.g., end of the academic year, end of a series...), or when the process is deemed complete, these conversations aim to summarise, reinforce, acknowledge and celebrate the outcomes of the process. They may also encompass dialogues regarding continuity, ongoing efforts and potential opportunities.

Source: Own work

**Table D8.** Types of Seminars and Associated Levels of Interaction and Methods

<b>Type of seminar</b>	<b>Level of Interaction</b>	<b>Description of Methods</b>
Opening and closure	Low	Institutional speeches
Inspirational	Moderate to low	Bidirectional, at least 15 minutes
Connection	Moderate to high	3-minute pitches, connection dynamics and networking coffee break
Action	High	Workshop in small groups

Source: Own work

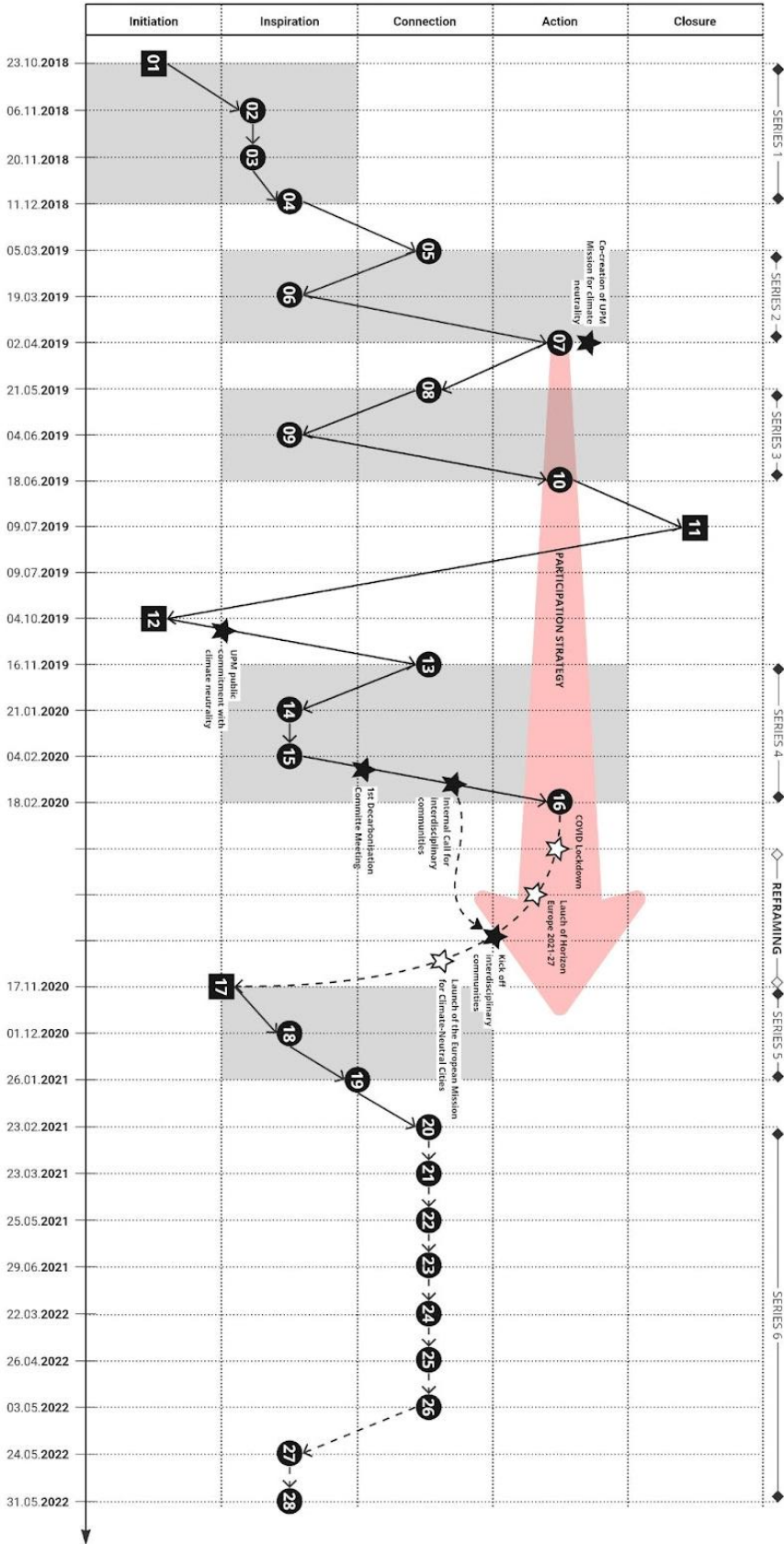


Figure D2. Diagram of the process of conversations for change.

Source: Own work

**Table D9.** Distribution of participants by community affiliation

<b>Community</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>% participants</b>
Faculty and researchers	Professor	7.7%
	Associate Professor	21.8%
	Assistant Professor	4.7%
	Adjunct Professor	2.2%
	Emeritus Professor	1.9%
	Research Associate	17.0%
	Research Fellow	2.2%
	Other positions	9.1%
Students	Bachelor	4.3%
	Master	3.8%
	PhD	8.2%
Staff	-	2.5%
Non UPM	-	14.6%

Source: SDG Seminar reports.

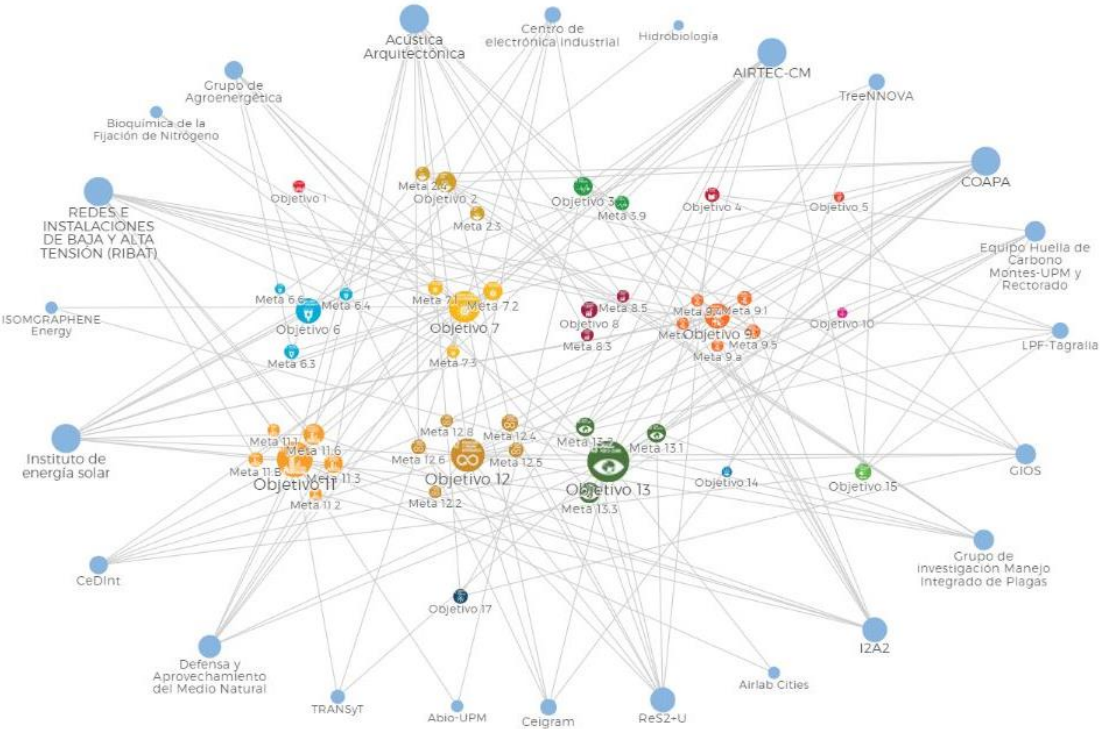


Figure D3. Visual tool for identifying interdisciplinary connections among research areas



Further details are offered regarding the surveys carried out during the workshops.

**Table D10.** Survey "Introducing the SDGs"

Questions	Answers
Demographic data: Gender, age, position, research group and centre, department, school/faculty	
1) How would you rate your knowledge of the SDGs before the session?	I did not know the SDGs. I had heard something about the SDGs. I had enough information. I had lots of information.
2) Which SDG does your research contribute the most?	SDG1...SDG17
3) Which SDG does your research group contribute the most?	SDG1...SDG17
4) How likely do you think achieving the SDGs by 2030 is?	Highly likely > Quite likely > Quite unlikely > Unlikely
5) How relevant do you consider the SDGs to your research line?	Very relevant > Quite relevant > Little relevant > Irrelevant
6) Do you think the SDGs can address the challenges faced by the UPM? Why?	Yes/No Open text

Source: SDG Seminar team

**Table D11.** Survey "Thermometer of Interdisciplinarity"

<b>Scale</b>	<b>Questions</b>	<b>Answers</b>
Demographic data	Gender, age, position, research group and centre, department, school/faculty data	
Individual	I usually work with colleagues from very different areas	
	I have published papers which include theoretical frameworks from different disciplines and/or in collaboration with researchers from different disciplines	
Research group	In my research group we usually work with non-academic experts, with whom we maintain stable collaborative relationships.	
	In my research group, relationships are not very hierarchical. I consider it a safe environment for discussion.	
	We usually contrast our ideas and progress with non-academic stakeholders (users, other social sectors, etc.).	Gradient
	In my group, the publication of policy papers and the appearance in the media is positively valued, despite their low curricular profitability.	1 (not agree) – 4 (very agree)
	My group is diverse in terms of academic education, gender, age, ethnic group, nationality...	
University context	In my research group we share a model to assess the socio-economic impact of our investigation.	
	In my opinion, the structure and processes in my university encourage interdisciplinarity	
	In my knowledge field, the training of young researchers with an interdisciplinary vocation is encouraged.	

Source: SDG Seminars team

**Table D12.** Answers to the Thermometer of Interdisciplinarity Survey

Questions	Answers			
	1 (not agree)	2	3	4 (very agree)
I usually work with colleagues from very different areas	17.8%	23.9%	25.4%	33.4%
I have published papers which include theoretical frameworks from different disciplines and/or in collaboration with researchers from different disciplines	32.4%	30.2%	18.1%	19.3%
In my research group we usually work with non-academic experts, with whom we maintain stable collaborative relationships.	17.0%	27.2%	39.7%	16.2%
In my research group, relationships are not very hierarchical. I consider it a safe environment for discussion.	11.7%	24.3%	25.6%	38.4%
We usually contrast our ideas and progress with non-academic stakeholders (users, other social sectors, etc.).	28.1%	26.2%	25.9%	9.8%
In my group, the publication of policy papers and the appearance in the media is positively valued, despite their low curricular profitability.	30.4%	28.6%	23.9%	17.1%
My group is diverse in terms of academic education, gender, age, ethnic group, nationality...	20.8%	31.9%	25.4%	21.9%
In my research group we share a model to assess the socio-economic impact of our investigation.	60.7%	22.3%	11.1%	5.8%
In my opinion, the structure and processes in my university encourage interdisciplinarity	37.8%	41.4%	17.0%	3.8%
In my knowledge field, the training of young researchers with an interdisciplinary vocation is encouraged.	26.1%	41.2%	24.5%	8.2%

Source: UPM Seminars archive

## b. Data Sources of Case Study B

Table D13. Sources for the analysis of case study B

Evidence	Date	Description
EU Mission website	Since 2021	Website of the European Mission 100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities: <a href="https://short.upm.es/ils9m">https://short.upm.es/ils9m</a>
Community for the Transformation of Cities – Website	March. 2020 – Nov. 2022	Website of the Community for the Transformation of Cities, within El Día Después. Includes the purpose, the list of participants and several key documents produced during the first stage: <a href="https://short.upm.es/j26v0">https://short.upm.es/j26v0</a>
Dossier CitiES2030	2021	Description of the context in which citiES2030 is born, its purpose, its governance model and the map of actors involved: <a href="https://short.upm.es/661hs">https://short.upm.es/661hs</a>
Institutional declaration of Spanish cities	8 Sept. and 13 Dec. 2021	Spanish cities commitment to climate neutrality, signed by the mayors of Barcelona, Madrid, Sevilla, Soria, Valencia, Valladolid, Vitoria-Gasteiz and Zaragoza and by the Minister for Energy Transition
Proposal for funding to the Ministry of Energy Transition	2022	The proposal outlines a strategic definition of the organizational model, services, and activities of the platform over a two-year period.
citiES2030 Website	Since 2023	Description of the goals and services of the platform, the participants and repository of relevant documents: <a href="https://cities2030.es/">https://cities2030.es/</a>
Website of the Summer Course 2022	July 2022	Contains programme, results, written and recorded material: <a href="https://diadespues.org/curso-de-verano-uimp-2022/">https://diadespues.org/curso-de-verano-uimp-2022/</a>
Programme of the Summer Course 2022	July 2022	Programme of the Summer Course 2022: <a href="https://drive.upm.es/s/bZag9J4vozmaxaA">https://drive.upm.es/s/bZag9J4vozmaxaA</a>
Website of the Summer Course 2023	July 2023	Contains programme, results, written and recorder materials... <a href="https://cities2030.es/curso-de-verano-2/">https://cities2030.es/curso-de-verano-2/</a>
Travel journal – Summer Course 2023	July 2023	Contains testimonies of participants from the public, private, social and academic sectors: <a href="https://short.upm.es/jeo91">https://short.upm.es/jeo91</a>
Minutes Book of the Summer Course 2023	July 2023	Summary and photographs of the sessions included in the Summer Course 2023: <a href="https://short.upm.es/agju7">https://short.upm.es/agju7</a>
Evaluation surveys of both editions	July 2022 and 2023	Results of the evaluation survey conducted during both editions of the summer course
Internal design and management materials	June 2022 and 2023	Detailed programme with the goals, participants, profiles, targeted audiences, etc.

**Table D14.** Organisations involved in citiES2030 (December 2023)

<b>Type/Sector</b>	<b>Organisations involved</b>
Municipality	7 EU Mission cities: Barcelona, Madrid, Sevilla, Valencia, Valladolid, Vitoria-Gasteiz and Zaragoza  Other cities: Cartagena, Gijón, Málaga, Pamplona, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Santander, Soria, Viladecans
Higher education institution	Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, Universidad Politécnica de Cartagena, Universidad Politécnica de Valencia, Universidad Pontificia Comillas, Universidad de Valladolid
Research centre	Basque Centre for Climate Change (BC3), Centro Nacional de Energías Renovables (CENER), ISGlobal, Centro de Investigación de Recursos y Consumos Energéticos (CIRCE)
Private company	Daleph, Bioartigas S.A., CARTIF, Ferroviario, Iberdrola, Ingérop, monoDestudio, Paisaje Transversal, Repsol, Resurge, Smart & City, Tecnalia, Social Gob, Acciona Energía, Anthesis Lavola, Triodos Bank and Green Finance Institute
Nonprofit/Civil society organisations	Red Madrileña de Lucha contra la Pobreza (EAPN Madrid), ECODES, Colegio Oficial de Ingenieros Industriales de Madrid (COIIM), Porticus, Oxfam Intermon, Foro Nesi.
Network	Red Española para el Desarrollo Sostenible (SDSN Spain), Fundaciones por el Clima, Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance, European Anti-Poverty Network

Source: citiES2030 website

**Table D15.** Interaction formats employed in the citiES2030 summer course

<b>Format</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>
Theoretical sessions	To inspire and stimulate critical thinking	<p>Scheduled in the mornings.</p> <p>Structured as roundtable discussions involving 3 to 6 participants.</p> <p>Meticulously prepared with speakers and moderators to establish clear objectives and overarching ideas.</p> <p>Focus on exploring the “whats.”</p> <p>Encourage audience participation through Q&amp;A using both microphones and digital tools.</p> <p>Careful time management ensures effective session pacing</p>
Practical sessions	To facilitate collaborative learning and knowledge building	<p>Scheduled in the afternoons.</p> <p>Structured as multi-actor workshops</p> <p>Integration of insights from theoretical sessions and participants’ experiences.</p> <p>Participants are divided into smaller and diverse groups.</p> <p>Emphasis on active participation from all attendees.</p>
Narrative capsules	To provide a break and creative inspiration	<p>Brief, relaxed and playful tone, facilitates emotional connection and empathy</p> <p>Utilisation of videos and inspiring images</p>
Informal networking	To ensure a welcoming atmosphere for casual conversations	<p>Inclusion of coffee breaks, lunches and dinners</p> <p>Selection of iconic venues</p> <p>Emphasis on hospitality and enjoyment</p> <p>Attention to budget allocation</p>
Boarding pass	To establish a unique course identity	<p>Contributes to a cohesive narrative and identity of the course through graphic design</p>
Travel log	To ensure continuity in the conversations initiated during the course	<p>Contains session videos, summaries and presentations</p> <p>Unified under a consistent graphic design</p>

## c. Data Sources of Case Study C

Table D16. Sources for the analysis of case study C

Evidence	Date	Description
El Día Después - Website	Since 2020	Contains the description of the platform and gathers the main results of the dialogues and projects implemented since its creation: <a href="https://diadespues.org/">https://diadespues.org/</a>
Presentations of strategic meetings	2020-2023	Presentations used in the strategic meetings of the platform, describing the vision, the evolution and the challenges
Strategic document for the consolidation phase	9 May 2020	Presentation and synthesis of the strategy deployed for the consolidation phase
Systematisation of the model	Sept. 2020	Description of the main characteristics of the organisational model of El Día Después
Learning report	9 Feb. 2021	Description of the main organisational learnings of the process from March 2020 to February 2021
Soria Dialogues 2021 – Website	June 2021	Contains the purpose, the programme and the results of the first edition of the Soria Dialogues: <a href="https://diadespues.org/el-dia-despues-empieza-en-soria/">https://diadespues.org/el-dia-despues-empieza-en-soria/</a>
Column in a local newspaper	6 July 2021	Column in a local newspaper about the first edition of the Soria Dialogues: <a href="https://www.heraldodiariodesoria.es/opinion/210705/5195/dia-parece-soria.html">https://www.heraldodiariodesoria.es/opinion/210705/5195/dia-parece-soria.html</a>
Soria Dialogues 2022 – Website	October 2022	Contains the purpose, the programme and the results (videos, photos, podcast, and impact in press and social networks): <a href="https://diadespues.org/construyendo-un-nuevo-contrato-social/">https://diadespues.org/construyendo-un-nuevo-contrato-social/</a>
Soria Dialogues 2022 - Programme	September 2022	Detailed programme, including schedule, speakers and the Road to Soria: <a href="https://short.upm.es/7abfj">https://short.upm.es/7abfj</a>
Full chronicle of the second edition	November 2022	<a href="https://diadespues.org/evento/hacia-un-nuevo-contrato-social/">https://diadespues.org/evento/hacia-un-nuevo-contrato-social/</a>
Internal design documents of the Dialogues	2020-2023	Including strategic design presentations, meeting minutes, the selection criteria, the rules, management documents, etc.

#### d. Interviews guideline within cases B and C

**Table D17.** Guideline interviews within case study B and C

Section	Questions
Introduction	Greeting and gratitude for participating in the interview.  Presentation of the interview objective: to explore the organising process and the outcomes of the case study regarding collaboration capability of the individuals and organisations involved
Background and objectives	Why was the decision made to organise this programme?  What specific objectives were pursued related to strengthening collaboration capability?  What role does this programme play in the ongoing of the organisational context?
Governance and co-creation model	Explain the governance model of the programme  What benefits does co-creation and co-responsibility provided?  What challenges arose when adopting this approach?
Course design	Which design elements contributed to achieving the objectives related to collaboration?  How do location, timing and interaction formats influenced goal attainment? What considerations influenced the choice of venues/spaces? How did these spaces contributed positively/negatively to collaboration capability?  To what extent are the timings (date, duration, periodicity) suitable for collaboration objectives?  To what extent timings and locations contribute to achieving a state of “presence”?  Are achievements celebrated in any way?  How did the informal and playful spaces created (cafés, dinners, sharing inspiring references) contributed to collaboration objectives?  What aspects could be improve to achieve these objectives?
Dialogue, power and conflict	What value does dialogue hold as a collaboration tool within this programme?  What strategies were implemented to promote a dialogical and symmetrical approach?  Were rules agreed upon for participation and dialogue?  Did situations of power imbalance arise? How were they managed?  How was conflict addressed during the programme? Are sources of dissent or conflict included in the documentation and systematisation of the programme? Are they used as opportunities for work and learning?
Results and learning	What learnings from the first edition, related to building a context to enhance collaboration capability, were applied to the second?  What evidence indicates that this programme contributes to the objective of strengthening collaboration capability?  What difficulties might arise in maintaining collaboration capability in the long term? How can they be addressed by the organisational context?
Closing	Is there anything else you would like to add or elaborate on?  I would like to extend my sincere thanks for your participation and insights.



## Appendix E. Dissemination of This Thesis

### *Academic literature*

**Ezquerro-Lázaro, I.**, Gómez-Pérez, A., Mataix, C., Soberón, M., Moreno-Serna, J., Sánchez-Chaparro, T., 2021. A Dialogical Approach to Readiness for Change towards Sustainability in Higher Education Institutions: The Case of the SDGs Seminars at the Universidad Politécnica de Madrid. *Sustainability* 13, 9168. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13169168>

Soberón, M., **Ezquerro-Lázaro, I.**, Sánchez-Chaparro, T., Moreno-Serna, J., Dóci, G. & Kordas, O. (2023). Supporting municipalities to develop collaboration capability to facilitate urban transitions and sustainability: Role of transition intermediaries in Madrid. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 426, 138964. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2023.138964>

Soberón, M., Sánchez-Chaparro, T., Oquendo-Di Cosola, V., Olivieri, F., **Ezquerro, I.**, 2022. Supporting Innovations to Incorporate the SDGs at Universities Through MOOCs, in: Avilés-Palacios, C., Gutierrez, M. (Eds.), *Ensuring Sustainability, Lecture Notes in Management and Industrial Engineering*. Springer International Publishing, Cham, pp. 317–330. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-95967-8\\_28](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-95967-8_28)

### *Practitioner literature*

itdUPM (2020). Manual para el diseño. Implementación y evaluación de conversaciones transformadoras [*Guideline for the Design, Implementation and Evaluation of Transformative Conversations*]. <https://drive.upm.es/s/YqjD41w87lhHcgk>

itdUPM (2021). Manual para el diseño, creación y facilitación de comunidades interdisciplinarias de investigación. [Guideline for the design, creation and facilitation of interdisciplinary research communities] <https://drive.upm.es/s/Ar8xZhEwReEuYu3>

### *Dissemination*

Ezquerro Lázaro, I. (19-20 September 2022) Building a collaborative science-policy culture in the university: the case of seminars and research communities at the Universidad Politécnica de Madrid. [Online Session 7A | Transforming Research, Governance and Education within Higher Education to Support Sustainable Development], 10<sup>th</sup> Annual International Conference on Sustainable Development, Sustainable Development Solutions Network and Global Association Master's in Development Practice Programs

Ezquerra-Lázaro, I. (29 November 2022) *Cómo crear contextos de colaboración que nos posibiliten el cambio [How to create collaboration context that enable change]* [Keynote speech] Encuentro Soluciones innovadoras para una buena vida en comunidad, Plena Inclusión, Madrid, Spain

Ezquerra-Lázaro, I. (24-26 May 2023) *A learning lens on partnerships*. [Roundtable Theoretical Frameworks for Partnerships] Partnerships Orchestrating Sustainability Transformations (POST) Spring School, Friedrich Alexander Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg (FAU), Nürnberg, Germany

Ezquerra-Lázaro, I. (25-26 January 2024) *Aprender la gobernanza colaborativa y anticipatoria en las organizaciones y sus ecosistemas*. Jornadas para el diseño de un programa formativo sobre gobernanza colaborativa y anticipatoria. UPV/EHU, San Sebastián, Spain

Holmberg, L. & Ezquerra-Lázaro, I. (29 June 2023) What we learned building capacities for urban transitions in Sweden and Spain. *Medium*. <https://medium.com/viable-cities/what-we-learned-building-capacities-for-urban-transitions-in-sweden-and-spain-b53f9ff22f17>

### *Training sessions provided*

“Nuevas formas de colaboración para las universidades” [New forms of collaboration in higher education], Curso de introducción a los ODS para el personal de administración y servicios de la Universidad Politécnica de Madrid (November-December 2021)

“Agenda 2030 y Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible” [2030 Agenda and the SDGs], Curso selectivo de la escala técnica de gestión de organismos autónomos (Instituto Nacional de Administración Pública, April 2022)

“Aprender a colaborar para la sostenibilidad dentro de la Universidad” [Learning to collaborate for sustainability within higher education], Curso de introducción a los ODS para el personal de administración y servicios de la Universidad Politécnica de Madrid (October 2022)

“Alianzas multiactor para los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible” [Multi-stakeholder Partnerships for the SDGs], XXVIII Curso selectivo del cuerpo superior de sistemas y tecnologías de la información de la Administración del Estado (Instituto Nacional de Administración Pública, March 2023)