Lessons from the 'Dark' Side: Emotional Labour and Positioning in Cross-Sectoral Collaborations

Katia Dupret

Roskilde University, Denmark/ katia@ruc.dk

Anya Umantseva

Roskilde University, Denmark

Daniela Lazoroska

Lund University, Sweden

Abstract

Collaboration across disciplines and stakeholders is important in handling complex societal problems. Even if collaborating is acknowledged as contributing toward societal change and innovation, collaborators' emotional experiences during development, consolidation and completion of a given project are underexplored. This article discusses emotional labour in three cross-sectoral collaborations using participatory observations and interviews. It analyses the potentials and pitfalls of focusing on emotional labour that foregrounds collaboration as a dynamic that changes with the development phases of a project trajectory. The study finds that rendering interpersonal dynamics visible may both be a way to gain authority and legitimization in the collaboration but can also be used as a strategy to marginalise others. On the other hand, maintaining the invisibility of emotional labour can also be an expression of power. The obscurity of these complex dynamics makes it difficult to navigate and propose what makes a good collaboration. The paper aims to contribute, from a practitioner-oriented and theoretical vantage point to a more reflexive and sustainable practice and nuanced understandings of collaborative practices in research and at an institutional level, particularly in the field of social change and innovation.

Keywords: Research Collaboration, Work Identity, Emotional Labour, Social Innovation

Introduction

It has become an axiom that we need collaboration to be able to address complex societal issues. But how do participants in cross-sectoral collaborations experience the endeavour? Despite a long history of collaborative inter- and trans-disciplinary research in various interrelated fields such as responsible research and innovation (RRI) studies (Dupret et al., 2022), organisation studies (Farchi et al., 2023), science studies (Aicardi and Mahfoud, 2022), social entrepreneurship and

innovation studies (Kosmynin, 2022), participatory design (e.g., Bratteteig and Wagner, 2016), etc., key aspects of cross-sectoral research remain underexplored. Much of the literature on this topic focuses on how important it is to ensure that the perspectives and worldviews of stakeholders are considered when creating social innovation, interventions and design 'leaving no one behind' (e.g., Dupret, 2023). The focus on cross-sectoral scientific collaboration is key to complying with ambitions of responsible research, where focus areas are stakeholder engagement, gender equality, ethics, open access, governance and science education (Dupret et al., 2022: 13). However, less attention is paid to the interpersonal dynamics of collaboration and the emotional labour among collaborators, with some few exceptions (cf. Branch and Duché, 2022; Hillersdal et al., 2020; Resch et al., 2021; Smolka et al., 2021). Hence 'the dark side' was chosen as part of the title of this article, as an attempt to communicate our focus on the interpersonal dynamics within collaborations that are kept hidden and not often directly verbalised and dealt with. Darkness is in this sense a matter of bringing attention to the unknown, such as to the dark side of the moon, proverbially speaking. However, 'darkness' can also sound sinister when social dynamics that are not addressed with care can result in increased inequality, exclusion or marginalisation. The importance of bringing increased awareness to the emotional labour and positioning in cross-sectoral collaboration is hence dual and could work to strengthen scientific knowledge and to decrease consequences of collaborations.

In this article, we examine collaborations that are oriented towards social innovation and societal engagement (cf. Dupret et al., 2022). By collaboration we mean the collective pooling of resources – participants' time, ideas, motivation and/or networks – towards a common goal, done in an inclusive manner, within the timeframe of the project at hand. Emotions play a particular role in collaborations and can be considered a resource. Emerald and Carpenter (2015) describe emotions as assets that can focus or amplify important elements of an interaction. This focus is helpful to societally engaged researchers tasked with promoting reflexivity, because it can guide them towards themes that situate science in society (e.g., values) (Branch and Duché, 2022). Consideration of the excitement, awkwardness or bewilderment of traveling in new collaborative territories may stimulate a sensitivity to meaningful differences (Haraway, 2016). This sensitivity may be prompted by scholarly disagreements that are made legitimate by the conventions of intellectual arguments, but these tensions may also surface in less verbalised ways (Hillersdal et al., 2020). We argue that, especially in newly established collaborations, difference is often first felt or experienced as an affective tension in particular situations, as excitement, bewilderment, doubt, resignation, etc., rather than as an explicated, verbalised understanding. Following Hillersdal et al. (2020), this emotional sensitivity to disciplinary and other types of differences may lead to other ways of addressing a research object and ultimately a societal problem.

In addition to the limited focus on the relational and emotional aspects of cross-sectoral collaborative work in science, we found that while there are increasing expectations on behalf of policy makers, funders and institutions that research be collaborative (Hillersdal et al., 2020), there are no practice-oriented guidelines on how to collaborate. Methodological and analytical guidelines on how to explore and analyse the collaboration are also scant. As we show in the methods section, there were likewise limitations in terms of how we could analyse a collaboration. The paper thus contributes to ongoing discussions within science and organisation studies inspired by the strand of research that has explored emotions in collaborations in the practice of science (Hillersdal et al., 2020; Branch and Duché, 2022; Smolka et al., 2021). We therefore pose the following research question: What role does emotional labour play in cross-sectoral/transdisciplinary research collaborations and how are positions negotiated in this process?

Case study methodology

The overall aim of this article overlaps with the approach of the research endeavour, being a research collaboration that studies collaboration and societal engagement on behalf of research-

ers. This was a generative overlap, and we present our approach as well as describe the data gathered. Following Brannelly and Barnes (2022) our approach is aligned with emergent methodological developments from the perspective of applying feminist care ethics to research practice. Feminist care ethics seeks to centre care for individual and collective wellbeing and to identify the mutuality of responsibility to remedy social injustice. Such an approach to research acknowledges the challenges from participatory modalities of research and embraces the destabilisation of hierarchies of knowledge and methods for generating them.

The research was conducted by three researchers from Roskilde University (henceforth, the Roskilde University team) with research expertise in anthropology, social psychology and social innovation. The researchers are at different levels of seniority. The Roskilde University team collaborated in collecting and analysing the data. The research subjects, consisting of university researchers and external actors, collaborated among themselves.

The research was conducted as part of a work package of a Horizon 2020 project, in the form of a university alliance.[1] The aim of the study at hand was an increased understanding of the experiences of cross-sectoral research collaborations oriented towards societal engagement and social innovation. The focus of the research is emotional labour in a collaborative environment – such as that of cross-sectoral academic collaborations, a theme that resonates with what Smolka et al. (2021: 1079) call the "affective turn in STS". The specific characteristics of these collaborations include potential differences in tenure and funding among collaborators, what is considered valid scientific knowledge and how this knowledge should be produced, and what the objectives of socially engaged research are. Open calls were sent out to members of the alliance that would enable researchers from universities to conduct minor case projects with participants from at least two universities and societal actors. Three cases were awarded funding of 10,000 euros each. The Roskilde University team's focus was not on the content of the project per se but on the considerations candidates had about collaborating. The cases ran from the autumn of 2022 to the early summer of 2023.[2] The research team followed the entire period of collaborative development of the cases. In terms of the commonalities and specificity of the cases, they represent differences in tenure, disciplines, institutions and sectors (academia, private sector and NGOs). The cases were an amalgamation of political and educational sciences, economy, social innovation, social psychology, management, engineering, information design, coding and the digital humanities. While our analysis is based on a limited sample, we propose that it is illustrative of social psychological mechanisms that are prevalent as structural conditions of collaborations (cf. Dupret et al., 2023) enabling us to extrapolate collaboration processes to the field of democratisation of scientific knowledge and societal engagement in general.

Two teams were composed of only female researchers and practitioners, while one team was a mix of genders. Two teams were composed mainly of social sciences disciplines, while one team represented a mix of STEM and social sciences. Although important observations can be made about how different gendered, discipline- and seniority-related characteristics affected the dynamics of the collaborations, in the scope of this paper we will omit deeper elaborations, due to the sensitive nature of these observations that can compromise the anonymity of the participants.

Participants and observers – who is who – at what stage?

The cases were variously organised, with the non-academic partners being either part of project management or not. In one, they were directly involved in defining and developing the research project. In another, two in the project group played a double role, one being both a researcher and engaged as a member of the non-academic organisation prior to the project, and the other being both a representative of research in the case and a researcher at Roskilde University. In the third case, non-academic partners were involved at a later stage of the project. Two of the cases

were all-female teams and the third was predominantly male.

The case participants were relative strangers to each other, with a few of them having previous acquaintance, which perhaps made meetings seem 'public' and less of a space for disclosure and vulnerability. There are likewise multiple roles and directions of exchanges with the researching team that need to be considered. While we took part in many of the meetings between collaborators, the degree to which we were invited to engage with the topics and process of the cases varied. Sometimes we were observing more than participating, at other times the reverse. While during some meetings we were asked to remain silent (although questions were not discouraged), at others the case participants would actively ask for our research expertise and perspectives on issues such as logistics of workshop planning, research design, participatory perspectives, etc. Our reflections on our positioning can perhaps be summarised as follows. 1) We were relegated to the role of the silent partner or funder with expectations of deliverables. 2) As 'the resource', we had an opportunity to network and co-produce with academic peers. 3) Blending of the roles between 'the observer who is a participant' and 'the participant who is an observer'. The latter role is not unique and speaks to the multiplicity of roles and allegiances that many of us have in collaborative projects. Nevertheless, there is a need to find emotional and pragmatic grounds for negotiation and compromise on further action. In the analysis, we address how to collaborate while acknowledging the multiple allegiances that can be at play.

Thus, it was not simply a question of 'investigating researchers' versus 'case participants', but positions changed. We propose that positioning, whether referring to case participants or to ourselves as researchers, is not stable.

Observing emotional labour

Observing the emotional labour in the collaborations, we intended to capture both verbal and non-verbal signals. The verbal included how the participants approached discussing different themes, and how they navigated the misunderstandings, tensions and confrontations that arose. Besides observing the content of conversations between collaborators, we intended to capture the non-verbal clues – changes in the perceived environment of the collaborators' online or physical spaces of interaction. Kolehmainen (2019: 46) refers to such observations as research on affective atmospheres, where the researchers "sense, experience and read atmospheres on-site". To observe and record the dynamic affective atmospheres we integrated our own researcher-bodies as sensors of the research-sites (Dupret and Krøjer, 2023; Kolehmainen, 2019; Smolka et al., 2021). We collected the 'embodied-affective data' (Kolehmainen, 2019: 47) by observing and sensing the changes in the participants tones of voice; changes in conversation dynamics (e.g., interrupting each other, dismissing certain questions and remarks, or bringing up questions that did not mirror the content of the conversation at hand); as well as intermittent changes in the pace and structure of the meetings.

Insecurities on what collaboration is all about

Experiencing the cases as participant observers within a short period of time made the positioning of the different collaborating parties visible. This contrast enabled us to view the differences in both how we position ourselves and how we are positioned in the cases that are given the same conditions for running their respective projects. During our participant observation meetings there were frequent expressions of insecurity and doubt. These expressions were directed towards all participants – collaborators and participant observers alike. Roles and intentions were questioned and the lack of collaborative guidelines and collaborative criteria was called out as an issue (this point is further addressed in the findings). We, the authors of this article, also experienced insecurity with regard to our approach and role. Insecurities about our relationship with those we are researching is a topic of methodological development when applying feminist care ethics to research practice (cf. Brannely and Barnes, 2022). As qualitative research requires relational labour to varying degrees, if professional training has focused solely on the techniques of a meth-

odology we are employing (ignoring the qualities and nuances of developing relationships), one can easily interpret insecurity as failure (Brannely and Barnes, 2022). We chose not to shy away from this insecurity but, following Hillersdal et al. (2020), to treat it as a generative friction that might lead us to reconceptualise the research and help us think of societal problems from more diverse perspectives. Thus, we align ourselves as contributors to methodological debates on feminist care ethics in research practice, as we acknowledge our doubts and insecurities; these are not compartmentalised in the 'darkness' of the unverbalised. We wish, as Haraway (2016) would have it, to 'stay with the trouble' and analyse how different positions and access to resources within research collaboration demand different types of relations, with emotional labour flowing in between.

Description of the qualitative data

The data was obtained through participant observation in online and on-site case meetings and workshops, as well as follow-up interviews with case participants. The online meetings were held on Zoom and lasted 60–120 minutes. Notes were taken during all meetings. Most online meetings were recorded. We attended 16 online meetings throughout the project phases of all three cases and 8 on-site or online workshops or seminars. Online meetings were usually planning meetings, mostly dealing with logistics, and on-site meetings were part of the methodology (data gathering with stakeholders) or outputs. We visited all the cases in the countries where they were based – Denmark, France, and Greece – and followed their collaborations throughout the period of the collaborative projects. Participation at our end in online and on-site meetings and interviews varied between one to all three members of the team, depending on availability. As it was a collaboration on behalf of our team, this implied collective attendance at the events; we all read each other's notes taken during meetings and arranged meetings where we discussed analytical themes, as well as co-authoring this article.

We conducted five follow-up semi-structured interviews with case participants. The interviews were partially transcribed, to highlight sections of interest. The follow-up interviews were conducted after the completion of the active phase of the collaborative experiments. The interview objective was twofold. Firstly, we intended to clarify points that were not explicitly discussed during the meetings we observed; for example, participants' motivation for taking part in this project, how they heard about it, how well they knew the other partners prior to engaging in the collaboration. Secondly, the interviews aimed to give participants space to reflect on their experiences in this project with questions about the collaboration process; for example, how team roles were decided upon, what their obstacles and learnings were, what their experiences were regarding the cross-disciplinary or cross-sectoral nature of the experiments, and how our presence as observers affected their collaborative process. The data collected from participatory observations and the interview data complemented each other. While the data gathered during participant observation allowed us to observe the tensions, negotiations and emotional labour of the collaboration process, the interviews allowed participants to look back on the collaborative experiments and reflect on their experiences: what they learned, what they appreciated and what they would have done differently.

The short time span of the study can, in some respects, be regarded as a methodological limitation. However, it was also an advantage. As all partners were new to each other, that made the establishment of new routines and negotiations visible. Due to the short-term nature of the cases, we had the chance to observe multiple stages of collaboration including the start, consolidation and completion.

Theoretical resources and analytical strategy

Theoretically we draw on concepts from social psychology that help us understand how interrelational dimensions in collaborations can be conceptualised. For us to qualify research collaborations that are oriented towards social innovation, we find two theoretical concepts relevant: emotional labour and positioning.

Emotional labour

We explicitly paid attention to the origins of our own unease, excitement, awkwardness, bewilderment, etc. and acknowledged these emotions as important aspects of the data. Realising that we felt uneasy about certain aspects increased our ambition to explore the meaning and importance of emotional labour, because it pitted us against dilemmas that we had ourselves naturalised and simplified in our professional practice. Due to the complexity of these relational dynamics and their obvious importance to both the process and the output of a collaboration, we have contributed to existing research by discussing whether one should explicitly engage in emotional labour as a professional way to conduct research collaboration.

In the exploration of emotional labour, we draw on a particular part of STS research that studies the role of emotion in scientific knowledge production and cross-collaboration (Branch and Duché, 2022; Hillersdal et al., 2020; Pickersgill, 2012; Smolka et al., 2021). Affective tensions arise in collaborative situations involving different knowledge production practices. This can transform scientists' relationship with their work. Matters of concern can activate and channel emotions, and they sometimes transform the relationships scientists have with their work and its organisation. Thus, science is intrinsically social, with relationships between scientists tightly interwoven with processes of knowledge production (Pickersgill, 2012). Emotions give meaning to the bonds and exchanges in the social groups we belong to and the solidarity we feel with others in those groups (Creed et al., 2014). Emotional displays occur within the interpersonal context of the relationships between researchers, participants, topic and place (Cylwik, 2001). For example, Branch and Duché (2022) show that vulnerability felt by researchers is at times necessary to be able to guide emotional reflexivity and should be taken into consideration when defining and managing emotional labour. While they focus on how emotional labour is about masking the emotional difficulties researchers experience in collaborations, we see vulnerability in collaborations as a dynamic that can contain both potentials and pitfalls in strengthening collaborative outputs. To develop our analytical take we take inspiration from the term 'disconcertment' understood as – "a bodily felt disruption that is experienced when our taken-for-granted assumptions are contradicted" coined by Smolka et al. (2021: 1078). We link it to emotional labour in the sense that we analyse the social dynamics as a professionalised willingness to show emotional reactions of unease or of experienced differences in the partnership and collaborations. While disconcertment potentially risks jeopardising the development of the partnership, it can also show a willingness to be vulnerable. Further, inspired by the use of the concept by Law and Lin (2010) (originally coined by Verran (1999)), we argue that our cultivation and articulation of disconcertment is a crucial tool for interrogating and making visible the political and cultural norms framing our collaborative practices. This approach goes beyond subjectivities and institutional forms, which can have a tendency to reproduce Western knowledge traditions and understandings of hierarchy and authority.

We understand emotional labour as embedded in a political and structural perspective, and we acknowledge that social science methodologies and approaches should be invited to greater openness towards reflexivity. However, what this openness and new types of social psychological dynamics involve in relation to scientific knowledge production is only scarcely researched. An important exception is Hillersdal et al. (2020), who argue that scientific knowledge production is bound to hegemonic (Western) ways of understanding the world. This can potentially be countered by an affective approach to knowledge production that can challenge that view and show how connections between disciplines, people and problems add to an interdisciplinary project's potential for social change. This is an important inspiration for us, as the potential of interdisciplinary research, which has been celebrated as a robust solution to the increased complexity of societal and planetary problems, perhaps lies in the deliberate exploration of contested ground, where the affective sensitivity we experience is important in identifying and defining what action could be taken. When researchers engage in interdisciplinary collaboration with attention to affective dynamics, the potential for a more

reflexive mode of knowledge production can be strengthened.

Emotion and affect are used interchangeably in this paper. We approach these as not belonging to particular individuals or representing private emotions. Rather, they are effects of situated practices (Dupret and Pultz, 2021; Hillersdal et al., 2020; Smolka et al., 2021). We approach the affective tensions of collaborative situations as effects of the expectations, institutional conditions and cultures that people have embodied and bring into the situations. Hence, emotions are the effects of the collaborative situated practices, and private and professional boundaries are blurred. Emotional labour has different connotations and theoretical roots both in critical work psychology and more mainstream organisation studies. Some scholars differentiate emotion work from affective/emotional labour by distinguishing between paid and unpaid work (Hökkä et al., 2020). In this paper, however, we use 'emotional labour' to refer both to the paid work needed to establish, say, relations with external partners and collaborators and to the unpaid work part of everyday life necessary to maintain a sense of professional integrity and wellbeing. The boundaries between paid and unpaid work are blurred. These perspectives support the relevance of examining how particular ways of organising – collaboration being one of them – interplay with emotional labour. We build on these research perspectives that acknowledge that there is a lack of both attention to the cost of this work and instruction on how to manage it (Branch and Duché, 2022; Hillersdal et al., 2020). We thus add to the current discussions about the affective turn in science studies by further exploring affect in collaborative knowledge production as generative of new avenues for inquiry.

Positioning

Positioning is a concept that describes how people relate to each other. It is both a process and a dynamic collection of beliefs that results in the individual's understanding of their rights, duties and room for manoeuvre, for example in a collaboration. It is a dynamic process through which roles are negotiated. They are assigned, denied, challenged, circumvented, and redefined either by oneself or by others in the interaction. The roles and the way we talk about them and act within them determine the boundaries of the collaboration and the meanings of what people say and do. Branch and Duché (2022) suggest that researchers' positionality is also relevant in how they adapt research tasks within a sociopolitical context, and they challenge the idea that researcher objectivity should exclude affective dimensions. Moreover, they point to the fact that when looking at positioning in collaborative research, the focus has often been on how participants would be marginalised or excluded, while less attention is paid to the dynamics of how researchers become affected and are vulnerable in these types of collaborations (Branch and Duché, 2022).

During our observations, we took note not only of what was said, but also of the many instances of silence, interruptions, confusion, questions that were left unanswered or issues that were brushed aside. These perspectives aid us in our thinking about the consequences of what is not made explicit in collaborations. As we show in the analysis, one needs time for positioning, for discussing, for making things visible. An emotional labour approach aims to make things explicit in exchanges where they are implicit.

Through investigating different dynamics of positioning, we get an understanding of the social, individual and moral factors at stake in collaborations. Theoretically, we draw on the initial work on positioning theory by Davies and Harré (1990). We will address positioning according to the specifics of the situation and who is involved in the positioning (self, other). Given the dynamics of the interactions, we argue that positioning is always interactive. We view positioning in collaborative projects as being tied to legitimacy, implying the right to occupy a particular position of power. We thus examine what behaviour and strategies our informants applied to position themselves and to relate to others.

Analytical strategy

We chose to follow the abductive approach as our key analytical strategy – going back and forth between the data and the theory, shifting between consolidating conceptual and empiri-

cal themes (Timmermans and Tavory, 2022). After each meeting where we, the authors, engaged in participatory observations, each author wrote notes with their initial reflections and emerging analytical themes. These notes were exchanged by email after each meeting. When the observations and follow-up interviews were completed, meeting recordings and interviews were partially transcribed. The authors started thoroughly reading the compiled data (transcripts, meeting minutes, notes after meetings, interview transcripts), making notes of emerging themes and concepts. Following the abductive approach, we allowed the data to drive the emergence of initial conceptual themes; for example, noting the diverse facets of emotional labour which emerge at different stages of collaboration – starting, consolidating and concluding. Later we went back to the empirical data to retrieve examples of participants' quotes or descriptions of situations from the interactions between participants, which would illustrate the conceptual arguments.

Analysis

In the analysis section, we view collaboration as a process that runs through three stages: starting, consolidation and completion. These stages link to other experiences as well, including both private circumstances and those present in collaborators' working conditions or organisations. Emotional labour is shaped by living conditions and the number of caring responsibilities in general, people's engagement elsewhere, whether they need to be away from home and have work-related caring responsibilities or are emotionally involved with the study cases in their research.

Initiating collaboration – working with strangers

This analytical section deals with emotional labour dynamics that are particularly prevalent at the beginning of a research collaboration. The dynamics and exchanges are focused on the logistics of project execution and getting to know each other, less on differences in scientific approaches and methodologies or research questions to be developed.

We noted that collaborators might, from the outset, try to smoothen any differences in joint interests and mission. As observers of three case studies, we took note of there being an openness during these initial meetings, expressed as time spent on activities such as "checking the energy in the room", or conversing in a way that can be interpreted as chatting and being playful with the amount and type of methodological and/or theoretical approaches that could be applied further on in the project. Participants kept potentially different or conflicting interests mostly to themselves. We can speculate that focusing on the logistics related to deliverables was a comfortable way to create a seemingly effortless and disagreement-free environment. This phase, in which positioning dynamics are not explicit, was characterised by an unspoken agreement to keep questioning and sharing of concerns or vulnerabilities to a minimum. Aspects of this largely hidden emotional labour, such as trying to fit into the flow and concealing one's doubts and questions, only become visible retrospectively, in later stages. Not all decisions to "go with the flow" are necessarily experienced as positive. Collaboration can also imply, or demand, a self- and mutual erasure of differences between partners (Breeze and Taylor, 2018: 24).

When the informants later reflected on things they could have done differently, that also indexes this difference of opinion or approach that they might have held during the meetings with the teams. This calls us to consider what emotional reactions collaborators (including researchers) might be erasing in themselves or hiding in collaborations. As we will show below, a more visible positioning dynamic appears in collaborative breakdowns (such as misunderstandings, or questioning). For example, during one follow-up interview, a researcher shared that, because not all the research partners were engaged in collaborative proposal writing (they were invited to the project at a later stage), this researcher was under the impression that the project was of a different nature:

> But that was my mistake, I was not engaged in the project from the very beginning. (…) I thought it was about working with students, or to visit other countries with students, other university systems,

> or having joint courses. But then I saw it was a research project. (Researcher 1)

This researcher spoke about the assumption that the nature of the project was clear to everyone involved, although this was not the case:

> And I thought it was clear for everybody. And maybe if I knew it was about a research project, I would apply myself differently, I don't know. (Researcher 1)

The researcher shared that although there was no unified consensus from the beginning on what the project was about, the initial meetings were not dedicated to clarifying these differences and creating a unified vision between collaborators. The researcher expressed regret that these different visions about the output and goal of the collaboration were not discussed from the beginning, and that participants dived into activity planning without clarifying the various roles and addressing uncertainties:

> The meetings were just to organise the … [deliverable], but the objective was not to create a common culture between the backgrounds. (…) We didn't talk about our perceptions, about our role in the project. We started the project directly and the objective was to do the … [deliverable]. From the first meeting it was as if I had the same points of view as others. ... But this common thread, it wasn't really set. (Researcher 1)

In the end, participants shared their appreciation for being involved in the project because it gave them the opportunity to delve into topics and methodologies they were not familiar with. They said they were happy to "go with the flow" because of the new insights gained. Because researcher 1 was not engaged in writing the proposal and defining the objectives from the beginning, they might have felt uncomfortable about sharing the feeling of misinterpretation of the nature of the project, and hence made the choice to get on board along with the other partners, without explicitly calling for renegotiation of the project's objectives: "From the meetings, at different moments, I started to understand" (Researcher 1)

In such instances, the individual requiring visibility for their concern could end up being blamed for the breakdown, rather than addressing what the collaborative process – as we know it – has required: for some subjects or topics to be neglected, silenced, or hidden. Aiming for collaborations to be or seem smooth could perhaps indicate an overruling of certain positions by others.

Summing up on the initial stage of collaboration

While there might be anxiety and vulnerability in the initial stages of collaboration, particularly when it implies working with strangers, it did not seem to be addressed during our observations. This may be for a good reason, as professional emotional labour also implies 'putting on a face', which usually means inhabiting the culture and discipline oneself to adopt a role, or sometimes, even a mood. It is a way of making oneself appear welcoming to others. We suggest that in cross-sectoral collaboration, experienced partners know how to strategically be diplomatic at the beginning, to get the collaboration established. However, there may also be cultural differences at stake in how 'putting on a face' is interpreted and practised; some may be particularly welcoming, others may be more reserved in relation to new collaborators.

In all three cases, collaborations were initially oriented toward logistics about when and how to meet with each other and with external stakeholders. Doubts that might have changed the direction of the project were possibly kept at bay, and perhaps decision-making was not equally distributed. When external stakeholders or even partners are involved in negotiation, who has a right to define things is not visible. But explicit positioning is not a win-win approach per se, as a nonconsensual demand of mutual affective sharing can also be exploitative. At the outset, people are new in the positioning dynamics of a collaboration and might not know the agendas, power and interests of others. If one is in a precarious position or pressured situation (on a personal, professional and/or organisational level), it can perhaps seem logical to be cautious about making visible one's preferences or information, and even

more so one's insecurities and feelings of vulnerability.

Consolidation

Once partners have had their tasks and various resources clarified, mandates and decision-making power are negotiated. More explicit conflicts seem to follow the initial phase, where the realities of concrete tasks, resources and responsibilities must be addressed (Pultz and Dupret, 2023). At this stage, we experienced explicit positioning dynamics related to issues such as authority and legitimacy, with disconcertment coming clearly into view. This section deals with these aspects of emotional labour.

Acknowledging disconcertment as important in emotional labour

As time elapses, concrete decisions and distribution of tasks and responsibilities are negotiated. In the cases included in our research, the initial excitement seemed to change character, as agendas became even more pragmatic and movement from one item to the other accelerated, bearing in mind the short duration of the project. Disconcertment increased, as did the attempts among collaborators to smoothen things out, trying to present the collaboration as a harmonious experience among participants where all collaborators are on the same page. Feelings of disconcertment growing from disrupted certainty are a very common but rarely addressed aspect of interdisciplinary collaborations (Smolka et al., 2021). Disconcertment arises from collaborators "detecting metaphysical or epistemological difference" (Smolka et al., 2021: 1081) between their disciplines and worldviews. In that paper, the authors describe disconcertment as an emotion that is embodied – for example, expressed in uncomfortable laughter. Addressing collaborators' disconcertment requires feeling safe to express it and others to detect it. To create a collaborative atmosphere where disconcertment can be explored, "collaborators must perform the work of attention, sensitivity, and cultivation—in other words, they must perform affective labor" (Smolka et al., 2021: 1083). Our observations of collaborative experiences suggest that engaging in emotional labour and exploring each other's disconcertment could help avoid rendering invisible some collaborators' questions and uncertainties.

For example, in one project, disagreement and different expectations started to resurface explicitly during one of the final Zoom meetings, when participants delved deeper into the data collection method. The dialogue in this meeting revealed to us observers and to the participants some of their crucial differences in understanding 1) what is valid (scientific) data, 2) what the objectives of data collection in the project were, 3) what the objectives and scope of the project deliverable were, and 4) what resources were available for data collection.

> Is it scientifically valid if we have the written input from the participants and we add some notes, (…) it will be on a very subjective level, does it make sense? (External partner 1)
> Is there a scientific objective here? Our objective is to disseminate. (Researcher 1)

> I do not have the capacity to transcribe, and I cannot hire someone to do that. It is not viable for me. It's a no. I mean, I can, but it would be abusive. (…). This is a small project, I cannot do. (External partner 1)

For us as observers, the disconcertment that was felt during the meeting was a productive source of reflexivity – it felt like an opportunity for participants to visibilise and discuss the assumptions and beliefs about what being objective or subjective means for (scientific) knowledge production, and if or how research can combine multiple objectives, for example, data generation and societal engagement. Participants interpreted the disagreements revealed as a signal to step back and discuss different expectations of the project outcomes:

> From what I hear, we might need to sit ourselves down and to stake out what is the scope of what it is that we want to do in terms of publication. It sounds to me like we are coming from different expectations, from different objectives. (Researcher 2)

With our case observations, we have also experienced disconcertment and boundary settings on the part of case teams toward the Roskilde

University team of researchers. This happened sometimes when we inquired directly about how collaboration was experienced by the case team. During our initial observations, we noted that there was excitement about the Roskilde University team's presence during the meetings. Over time, on several occasions we were called to re-establish our transparency in our role as observers. We reminded case participants of our motivation in coming to the meetings. Participants in one case, for example, expressed that they would like to have the meeting on their own to establish their roles and achieve a mutual understanding of core concepts, or as one informant put it, "…we need time as we do not share the same discourse." They suggested that this initial mutual sharing was only possible without observers. Boundary setting and positioning of others as not belonging among the collaborators can be an ambivalent process, because while for some, communicating a clear boundary can be perceived as a necessary element of defining a transparent work process and a delimitation of decision mandates, others can perceive it as control. How boundaries are communicated and perceived also depends on the norms under which collaborators were professionally socialised – depending on a sector, academic culture, performance criteria, etc. Hence, finding space for reflexivity about how we set boundary positionings and how we perceive each other's boundaries, especially in collaborations with actors from different backgrounds, is important for inclusive collaboration processes.

What kind of power relations must collaborators comply with when addressing disconcertment in front of the other collaborators? Emotional labour is not only about registering emotions but also about expressing and feeling emotions that are considered 'suitable' in a given setting/organisation (Dupret and Pultz, 2021). The 'suitability' is quite central, because it is discursively defined and reinforced through power relations and norms. Engaging in emotional labour in ways that make more explicit what collaborators express emotionally can help us understand the differences in what types of knowledge are approved of and reinforced through power relations and norms.

Dynamics of legitimisation

The dynamics of (de-)legitimisation often become visible in the consolidation stage of the collaboration, especially when disagreements are more visible than in the initial phase. Professional (de-) legitimisation and positioning processes emerge to navigate negotiations which are inevitably interwoven with power relations.

> You call it collaboration; we call it engagement and responsible research (External partner 1).
> I have read Vygotsky about the importance of understanding context (External partner 1).
> Without structure, we are just talking (Researcher 2).

During the observations, we witnessed these positioning dynamics in the form of, for example: showing an awareness of the requirements of funding bodies (as we were understood to be by one participant, who asked to discuss how to generate a deliverable from the data collected); positioning oneself as an experienced professional (participants mentioning how their various research responsibilities and managerial roles provided them with insights on project and team dynamics); positioning oneself as academically knowledgeable/excellent by bringing up a recognised academic name: "This is a great paper. It has been written by …(name), who is one of the top figures in [this discipline]" (Researcher 2); questioning the authority of an academic partner by suggesting that the person's use of certain qualitative methods was not 'hard data', hence not scientific and therefore delegitimising the validity of the collaborative process, but also inviting another researcher with expertise in the same qualitative method to evaluate the use of this method. The twofold delegitimisation/legitimisation positioning of oneself and others seemed to be a quest for authority to define the right to evaluate and decide the method used.

These positioning processes are performed through: calls for structuring (professionalising) the collaboration, appealing to standard ethical concepts such as 'transparency', summoning authority based on professional visibility or by being theoretically savvy. In these positionings, going with the flow, spontaneity and improvi-

sation are seemingly made invisible. They can reinforce traditional academic and non-academic hierarchies, making it difficult for collaborators to experience new roles and tasks in these projects. It can also make it harder for partners that are in some way a minority in the collaboration – by, say, being the sole representative for a discipline – to impact the direction. Collaborations, as we show in the following section, need to maintain their openness to questioning, as it keeps open the possibility of exploring and including different voices. The balance between saying and agreeing with something that creates a good atmosphere, on one hand, and questioning positions, project aims, differences in epistemologies, etc. on the other, is a central part of what a collaboration is.

Engaging with concerns

In our social interactions we always talk against a background and within a context. We are always contrasting our experiences and making meaning from what we think or feel. Collaborations are particular because they can be so intensely relational, stirring and catalysing these processes of meaning-making. In collaborations, there needs to be a consensuality of design. The definition of problem and methodology should leave ample space for participants to ask questions and make amendments both at the outset of the project and along the way. There needs to be time for discussing and engaging with differences and decisions. When we collaborate, do we talk about who has the right to define the direction the project is taking?

On several occasions, we witnessed participants being marginalised when their concerns were made invisible by a change of topic or brief answers that did not align with the questions raised. During one instance, for example, a case participant suggested to their team members that they address a particular concern. Several times during the discussion the participant's concern was overruled by prioritising space to address the logistics of meetings and planning, and saying that the concern could be addressed afterwards, which could be seen as trying to make the collaboration seem harmonious.

> Researcher 2: Are you kind of on board with the things that we have said and where we are converging on?
> Researcher 1: Yes, there is no problem for me, I just need to know the problem of this [deliverable]…, the objectives, the scope.
> Researcher 2: Why don't we make this the guiding question for the next meeting, so after we've discussed all the workshop practicalities, we talk about the tension or the spectrum of….
> Researcher 1 (interrupts): Because I think all of us need to define the objective and the problem of this [deliverable].

Postponing to address concerns can be seen as delegitimising the needs and concerns of the person who was not aligned with the direction the project was seemingly taking. This participant was questioning, rather than giving solutions and suggestions. This role was positioned as marginal in this situation. The team was going for the thing that works, the smoothest solution. Thus, we experienced how, when a member of the group was questioning the central premises of their collaboration, this mutual questioning became a source of tension rather than a source of co-production.

The emotional labour that brings collaborative concerns to the table involves being clear (both to oneself and to collaborators) about what each one of us wishes to make visible. The positioning dynamics we experience may in turn raise reflections about whether to make visible the specificity of our institutional/sectoral behaviour, culture or power. Naming something in a collaboration can function as an erasure of these differences. Based on our observations, collaborations can easily slip into self- and mutual erasure. What is implicit is only made visible in collaborative breakdowns, exemplified by misunderstandings or questions. The person questioning can be blamed for the breakdown, rather than examining what collaboration as we know it has required: that some subjects or some aspects of subjectivity be neglected, paused, made invisible. Does collaboration then imply a particular kind of compromise that depends on emotional labour and positioning dynamics? This can mean compliance to the tune of whoever is the loudest, has the most power, or claims a particularly vulnerable position

that the collaborators are positioning themselves within and committing themselves to in the name of 'care ethics'.

Summing up on the consolidation stage

The consolidation phase of collaborating is when concerns are more clearly negotiated. During this stage, differences in collaborators' objectives and academic worldviews produced feelings of disconcertment and "the unsettling experience of questioning what had so far been taken for granted" (Smolka et al., 2021: 1090) – feelings which can be unwelcome by other collaborators because they seemingly disrupt the harmonious flow of collaboration. However, following Smolka et al. (2021), if addressed with a level of reflexivity, disconcertment can produce awareness among collaborators regarding their "ingrained ... scientist habitus" and "perceptions of normality" (Smolka et al., 2021: 1091). It is an awareness that can be an asset in producing responsible research and societal engagement with external partners. In the observed cases, disagreements and disconcertment might have been more disruptive than generative at the time, but they were approached as reflexive learnings afterward.

The question then arises: how can the discomfort and unsettlement when facing differences, often accompanied by dynamics of invisibilising (of topics or people), which almost inevitably arise in heterogenous and new collaborations, be sources of reflexivity (about our positioning as knowledge producers and relational human-beings)? Power can be treated as an absent-but-implicit, which is made present in 'collaborative breakdown'. Consensus and attempts to smoothen things over do not signify the achievement of harmony and alignment of the team members but perhaps an overruling of a certain position over others. Apparent consensus is not an absence of difference but perhaps the acceptance of demands for positioning each other and oneself as invisible.

Completion

This final analytical section deals with how projects were completed in each case and the interpersonal positioning dynamics during that stage. During one meeting to which a case team had invited external participants, the focus was to interact with these participants and consider possible future collaborations. However, one of the team members kept steering the plenary discussion toward finding specific proposals and solutions for what the final output of the collaboration should be. This team member on multiple occasions positioned us as representatives of the Roskilde University team, seemingly seeking guidance on what the format of the meeting might be and its potential takeaways. Several other members of the case team seemed confused by this focus and attempted to shift back to the content of the event at hand. The attempt to attach a particular mandate of deciding collaborative takeaways and formats for our participation in the event can be seen as an effect of internalising the external expectations in defining the success of a project or a collaboration as based on the timely production of deliverables. Also, it held us in a rather stereotypical position of 'funder' with concrete expectations of material deliverables by certain dates. Societally engaged research projects can often play into these types of instrumental requirements. This team member's reactions turned out to resonate not only with the type of deliverables often expected in collaborative research projects but also with the hectic pace of daily work-life that this case team member possibly experiences. The consequence is reduced space for open-ended exploration. The Roskilde University team discussed how this was, in fact, not so different from our professional lives as academics, where we are reliant on external funding for continued research, and we were reminded that while we did not share the case team member's concern for their specific deliverable, we too had worries about our own deliverable. While our analytical gaze was on the quality of relationships, we had to keep an eye on our external expectations. Our conditions mirrored each other.

In another case observation, we yet again noted that the Roskilde University team could be perceived as such a source of external expectations, but, in this case, as an expert resource. During our initial meetings, the senior member from the Roskilde University team questioned how the academic collaborators from the observed case understood their involvement with external

actors, because the extent and nature of the case's involvement with these actors was not clear to the Roskilde University team. This resulted in a lengthy discussion between the case team and the Roskilde University team about the meaning of involvement, participation, and collaboration. The senior representative of the Roskilde University team was invited to provide concrete suggestions on possible modes of involvement, as well as to comment on their possible analytical significance. During a later on-site meeting, one of the case participants addressed this question directly, saying that they have been "good" at changing the focus after what they took to be an intervention at the Roskilde University team's end and re-thought participation and motivation in the project. As can be seen, our questioning shifted our positions as observers to participants, but perhaps also showed us as somehow having the power to expect a particular outcome from the case. The positioning of the senior member in the Roskilde University team as an expert can relate to several aims, such as acknowledging the need to qualify participatory dimensions in the collaborative project at hand, simply to make its impact better; to problematise participation within their team and with external stakeholders; to build relationships by acknowledging the role of the Roskilde University team member as a senior, with previous experience of similar research.

Another case observation illustrated that our presence, observations, and questions may have been perceived as an obstacle to case participants reaching their goal. Prompted by questions to reflect on their collaborative experience, a participant said that the focus on collaboration is a meta-perspective that they are not trained to conduct and do not have time to do. Their focus was on the particular project and managing the goals they set out to achieve. In this case, the goal of the project was tied to the specific academic goals of several of the participants. They wanted to dedicate their time to ensuring that the logistics were in place and that more strategic academic outputs, such as articles and academic presentations, would be tended to. In this example, the Roskilde University team was positioned as the ones responsible for the reflexive dimensions of the collaboration, as that was seen as the Roskilde University team's focus, hence not in the strategic interest of the case team. But this was not something that should be part of the cross-sectoral collaboration at hand. The positioning of the Roskilde University team placed us as experts on the topic, who could evaluate how the cases diverge or conform to an ideal type. But this was not what others were skilled at or should be expected to do, particularly not those who might have been trained in disciplines that were dealing with macro-structures and not human micro-interaction per se. Even though emotional labour is mostly researched and applied in sectors involving relation work, such as services and care, collaborative work is in fact part of most sectors today, increasing the importance of raising awareness of how interactions and science production are affected by this additional work, regardless of the scientific paradigm applied or the scientific question being researched. This perspective posits reflecting on and working with how we work in collaboration as a 'nice-to-do' rather than a 'must-do', as yet another item on the invisible labour list. In the consolidation phase, the quality and potential of the relationships might be worked on but still approached as an appendix to the time used on project deliverables. Emotional labour implies that interpersonal exchanges in collaborations do develop and shift but rather out of sight, on the collaborators' own time and initiative.

In follow-up interviews, participants shared their appreciation of the learnings that the collaborations have brought them. Interestingly, most of these learnings were related to the differences (cross-cultural, cross-disciplinary or cross-sectoral) which, during the consolidation phase of the project, had often caused tensions, misinterpretations and disagreements. During these interviews, participants shared their professional learnings and the impact on them in terms of reflexivity.

The exchanges that we had during the follow-up interviews were different (often more reflexive and transparent) than the data we collected from the observations. This was probably because of the temporal aspect, as participants had time to think through their experiences, but perhaps also due to the shift in all our roles in the interviews compared to the observations, from them being observed by us to being a conversa-

tion partner and a more active co-creator of data. This resonates with the pressure felt when participating in projects with funding tied to project descriptions and outcome expectations. Much can be at stake, such as livelihood, reputation and ideas about professionalism. However, the disconcertment of feeling observed and possibly 'evaluated' is an important dimension that may merit reflecting upon by all participants in the collaboration. It is an inherent part of interactive positioning. Hence the establishment of trust and transparency is central to be able to balance constructive collaboration with leaving space for questioning.

Summing up on the completion stage

The conditions under which the three observed collaborative research cases unfolded were particular in that observers were present during the interactions. While this role was a source of some anxiety and there was a need for clarity of boundaries and expectations, as we showed, it seems that it was beneficial for participants to have the space and time for reflective discussions on how they collaborated. The appreciation was most prominent during the follow-up interviews, where case participants could voice concerns that they might not have had the opportunity to address during meetings in which the focus was predominantly on logistics.

From our perspective as observers of three cases, it seems to be helpful if cross-sectoral collaborations were to include time for reflecting and voicing concerns that might not be given space in purely logistical meetings. Nonetheless, in one of the cases, where reflecting on the process of collaboration was prompted by our Roskilde University team, we could feel some resistance. It was framed like a strategic concern rather than an element that would benefit teamwork in general. This tallies with a point made previously, that talking about our doubts and concerns demands a level of vulnerability that goes beyond the experience of disconcertment. It should be done consensually, and perhaps with an openness that not all will be willing to share, making them vulnerable. Lacking consensuality on this matter can make it seem like boundary-crossing.

Discussion and concluding remarks

We are asked to collaborate, but it is not made explicit what that entails, and we do not enter collaborations having explicit tools and strategies to do so. Researchers often attend to collaboration as a necessity and requirement on behalf of funding bodies, or as a side-effect, as an invisible but necessary commitment. Collaboration seems to be treated as mundane, relational and gendered knowledge, and thus, rendered invisible, but it nevertheless influences how knowledge and experience are constructed. We have learned from other scholars within the field of collaboration/integrative research who apply an affect and feminist approach in STS, e.g., Hillersdal et al. (2020), Smolka et al. (2021) and Branch and Duché (2022), that affect plays an important role in collaborative dynamics. For example, Hillersdal et al. (2020) point to the fact that, as a consequence of the political drive towards finding societal solutions through cross-sectoral collaborations and the funding criteria that follow from this development, there can be a risk that collaborating research teams are formed based on strategic intentions rather than on collective reflections about how to organise and practice interdisciplinarity. Interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral research collaborations thus tend to figure mostly at a strategic level and in external presentations. Internally – they argue – within projects, the way forward is diffuse. Through an analytical STS approach, they demonstrate how it is important to account for affectivity and sensitivity in order for collaborators to strengthen their ability to act in relation to other people's interests that one does not necessarily share. This sensitivity makes available other ways of sensing and tackling problems that can challenge power structures and hegemonic practices.

We add to Hillersdal et al.'s (2020) approach to the experiences of everyday collaboration by expanding the analytical concepts applied. Through positioning, we keep an awareness of how there are no easily defined strategic or structural answers to collaboration. We show that attention to everyday experiences, this does not mean that interests, roles and power dynamics can be stabilised, and hence foreseen, or managed. Rather, through an affective STS

approach we show that the positioning and roles of collaborators are dynamic. The importance of making visible or keeping invisible is situational and should be evaluated in relation to possible reinforcement of power dynamics and other types of vulnerabilities. If collaboration keeps on being treated as mundane, it leaves collaborators in a situation where the premises of collaboration are based on presumptions about the various partners' cultures, interests and resources and, not least, decision mandates that are not explicitly acknowledged. Likewise, how we understand science is still associated with ideas of neutrality, thus leaving no space for addressing emotional labour. This acknowledgement has had very different trajectories in scientific disciplines and institutions, but the amount and nature of interpersonal work required to collaborate is still not widely addressed, with a few exceptions (e.g. Hillersdal et al., 2020; Smolka et al., 2021; Branch and Duché, 2022). In this paper, we have analysed the lack of acknowledgement of the emotional labour involved in research collaborations, as well as how this makes it difficult to address and distribute the tasks and processes required to ensure an inclusive and socially sustainable practice.

What we call professionalisation of collaboration, or addressing it as a standard procedure nevertheless, might have consequences beyond the fact that it is resource-intensive. While the inclusive methodological approach and a degree of intimacy between cross-disciplinary scientists are essential to knowledge production, emotion research practices can, paradoxically, have undesirable implications for the structuring of work and the social relationships underpinning responsible scientific knowledge production. We need to question what it would take for wide dissemination of skill sets and discourses around collaboration, as it can make some actors' collaboration 'unworthy' as they do not have the institutional support and access to collaboration upskilling resources to collaborate in a professionalised way. Furthermore, addressing emotional labour in collaborations is not without its problems. People do not easily share their vulnerabilities and expectations. Expressing vulnerabilities could potentially affirm hegemonic positions, both within the team and also in our exchanges as a research team observing collaborations. People are not necessarily used to such types of collaboration (which might be considered slow, demanding affect, revelation of matters that are private and thus seemingly irrelevant, etc.), which in many academic settings might be considered 'unscientific' and could therefore cause unease. While studies on affective collaborative research within the field of STS – including our own – suggest more attention should be paid to feelings and emotions in our professional work, we also raise the concern that proposing to listen, and be aware of emotions, attending to psychological dynamics requiring intimacy, can be very hegemonic and marginalising. It can require a personal commitment in professional relations, which is something you are not entitled to expect nor should you be coerced into providing simply because you are collaborating. One can raise these issues for discussion and perhaps question who has the right to define how the collaboration should go. Expecting collaborators' inner experiences to be made accessible could also threaten to expose these in another arena of capitalist exploration and exploitation, such as in scientific publications. This tension illustrates the point that sometimes when we collaborate, the result of our collaborations is out of our hands. Both the process and the product can have detrimental effects because they acquire a life of their own and can be used and misused by others.

Based on the insights obtained from the analysis of emotional labour and positioning, how should we then design research collaborations? We can start by acknowledging that collaboration is a highly sensitive matter; it involves participants' sense of self and can trigger insecurities and feelings of incompetence. Collaboration in most fields of research depends on lengthy tacit or embodied experience. One can, perhaps, consider and acknowledge one's own and other collaborators' needs (or lack thereof) for attending to the emotional dimensions of a collaboration, and the boundaries of doing so. We are called to acknowledge our interconnectedness and our mutual vulnerability, to take care of each other and to ask ourselves how we make sure we acknowledge this fundamental premise that we are interconnected. This perhaps demands

making space for uncertainty and questioning. Or perhaps accepting that collaboration should not be expected but actively negotiated.

We call for the provision of adequate space and resources in collaborative projects for (in-) visible interpersonal dynamics to be attended to, in ways that make it possible to negotiate power imbalances in a consensual manner. We acknowledge that rendering visible the implicit dynamics of emotional labour and positioning is not necessarily the way to increase the experience and outcome of collaborations. However, it is an important takeaway that the inconsistencies of interpersonal dynamics are difficult to deal with and should not be instrumentalised per se.

This paper further contributes with an empirical dimension to the body of literature addressing emotional labour and positioning. Adding to existing research that includes the role of the researcher, or academic, in the analytical gaze (e.g., Hillersdal et al., 2020), we show how our positionings not only vary across different collaborations (e.g., funders, controllers, experts), but also shift in time (e.g., from initiation of collaboration to its completion). As such, it is an addition to the emerging field that addresses the complexity of relational dynamics and emotional labour in cross-disciplinary and cross-sectoral collaborations.

We have found that relational issues come to light in moments of confusion, questioning or conflict. This approach perpetuates the lack of any process or approach that collaborators could adopt to act otherwise. Nonetheless, this is an aspect of collaborations that could have the potential for mutual learning through the inclusion of silenced perspectives, which could generate different approaches to innovation and problem-solving. If we are to tackle complex societal problems, we need to understand and learn from different partners and perspectives, particularly those that challenge 'established' ways of doing things, as that could challenge power relations. The increased quest for science to be oriented towards societal engagement and social innovation calls for professionalisation of cross-sectoral collaborations. This paper contributes to pinpointing the important focus on emotional labour as part of cross-sectoral collaborations that should be considered in future research, in ways that acknowledge that emotional labour takes place at all levels but may be rendered invisible.

Acknowledgements

The three collaborative experiments that this paper is based upon are initiated and have received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101035808 work package 3 headed by Roskilde University, Denmark.

References

Aicardi C and Mahfoud T (2022) Formal and Informal Infrastructures of Collaboration in the Human Brain Project. *Science, Technology, & Human Values 49*(2): 403-430 DOI: 10.1177/01622439221123835.

Branch TY and Duché GM (2022) Affective Labor in Integrative STS Research. *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 49(1): 131-150 DOI: 10.1177/01622439221143804.

Brannelly T and Barnes M (2022) *Researching with Care: Applying Feminist Care Ethics to Research Practice*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Bratteteig T and Wagner I (2016) Unpacking the Notion of Participation in Participatory Design. *Computer Supported Cooperative Work* 25(6): 425–475.

Breeze M and Taylor Y (2018) Futures and Fractures in Feminist and Queer Higher Education. *Journal of Applied Social Theory* 1(2): 1–11.

Cylwik H (2001) Notes from the Field: Emotions of Place in the Production and Interpretation of Text. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 4(3): 243–250.

Creed WED, Hudson BA, Okhuysen GA, and Smith-Crowe K (2014) Swimming in a sea of shame: Incorporating emotion into explanations of institutional reproduction and change. *Academy of Management Review* 39: 275–301.

Davies R and Harré R (1990) Positioning: the Discursive Production of Selves. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior* 20(1): 43–63. DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-5914.1990.tb00174.x.

Dupret K (2023) The Role of the Social Entrepreneur When Designing for Social Sustainability. In: Langergaard LL, Dupret K and Eschweiler J (eds) *Learning about Social Entrepreneurship and Management in Times of Social Transformation.* Ethical Economy, vol 66. Cham: Springer, pp. 33-48. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-47708-9_3

Dupret K and Krøjer J (2023) A Carefully Engaged Researcher's Body. In: Lydahl D and Mossfeldt Nickelsen NC (eds) *Ethical and Methodological Dilemmas in Social Science Interventions*. Cham: Springer, pp. 243-256. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-44119-6_16

Dupret K, Umantseva A, Lazoroska D, and Eschweiler J (2023) *Research collaboration for societal engagement and social innovation: Guidelines and reflections for best practices*. Roskilde: Roskilde University.

Dupret K, Eschweiler J, Umantseva A and Hyldkrog RVB (2022) *Mapping Innovation and Societal Engagement: - Responsible research through a care ethics perspective*. Roskilde: Roskilde University. https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.31722.59845

Dupret K and Pultz S (2021) Hard/heart worker: Work intensification in purpose-driven organizations. *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management* 16(3/4): 488-508. https://doi.org/10.1108/QROM-07-2020-1989

Emerald E and Carpenter L (2015) Vulnerability and Emotions in Research: Risks, Dilemmas, and Doubts. *Qualitative Inquiry* 21(8): 741–750.

Farchi T, Dopson S and Ferlie E (2023) Do We Still Need Professional Boundaries? The Multiple Influences of Boundaries on Interprofessional Collaboration. *Organization Studies* 44(2): 277–298.

Haraway DJ (2016) *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chtulucene*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Hillersdal L, Jespersen AP, Oxlund B and Bruun B (2020) Affect and Effect in Interdisciplinary Research Collaboration. *Science & Technology Studies* 33(2): 66–82. DOI: 10.23987/sts.63305.

Hochschild A (1983) *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Hökkä P, Vähäsantanen K and Paloniemi S (2020) Emotions in Learning at Work: a Literature Review. *Vocations and Learning* 13: 1–25. DOI: 10.1007/s12186-019-09226-z.

Kolehmainen M (2019) Affective assemblages: Atmospheres and therapeutic knowledge production in/through the researcher-body. In: Salmenniemi S, Nurmi J, Bergroth H, et al. (eds) *Assembling Therapeutics*. London: Routledge, pp. 43–57.

Kosmynin M (2022) Social Entrepreneurship Organisations and Collaboration: Taking Stock and Looking Forward. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research* 28(2): 441–470.

Law J and Lin W (2010) Cultivating Disconcertment. *The Sociological Review* 58(2_suppl): 135-153. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.2011.01966.x

Pickersgill M (2012) The Co-production of Science, Ethics, and Emotion. *Science, Technology, & Human Values, 37*(6), 579-603. https://doi.org/10.1177/0162243911433057

Pultz S and Dupret K (2023) Emotional status and emotional labour: exploring the emotional labour among casualised and tenured knowledge workers. *Culture and Organization* 30(2): 158-178. https://doi.org/10.1080/14759551.2023.2258433

Resch B, Hoyer P and Steyaert C (2021) Affective Control in New Collaborative Work: Communal Fantasies of Purpose, Growth and Belonging. *Organization Studies* 42(5): 787–809.

Smolka M, Fisher E and Hausstein A (2021) From Affect to Action: Choices in Attending to Disconcertment in Interdisciplinary Collaborations. *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 46(5): 1076–1103.

Star SL and Strauss A (1999) Layers of Silence, Arenas of Voice: The Ecology of Visible and Invisible Work. *Computer Supported Cooperative Work* 8(1-2): 9–30.

Timmermans S and Tavory I (2022) *Data Analysis in Qualitative Research: Theorizing with Abductive Analysis*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Verran H (1999) Staying True to the Laughter in Nigerian Classrooms. In: Law J and Hassard J (eds) *Actor Network and After*. Oxford and Keele: Blackwell and the Sociological Review Monograph Series, 47(S1), pp. 136–155.

Notes

1 The three collaborative experiments that this paper is based upon are initiated and have received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101035808 work package 3 headed by Roskilde University.

2 One of the cases was eventually withdrawn from the case study due to a high level of vulnerability and concern for the external stakeholders collaborating with the team. Adding an extra layer of investigation could potentially impose too much stress on both the implicated researchers and the external stakeholders and add an increased amount of complexity to the different layers and roles among the various collaborating participants. The case therefore primarily serves as general background knowledge.