

Good tips and tools to lead and work in interdisciplinary projects

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Antje Gonera & Solveig Langsrud, Nofima



This Booklet is a summary of a seminar and workshop held at Nofima in June 2023 and shows work tools, methods, skills and "good practices" for the successful implementation of complex interdisciplinary (research) projects. It aims to help succeeding even better with these projects in the future.

It is about

- People
- Processes
- Perspectives

The different phases of interdisciplinary projects

- Application phase
- Start-up phase
- Execution and delivery phase

And some specific challenges

- Handling conflicts and power structures
- Learning and reflection in complex projects



POEPLE

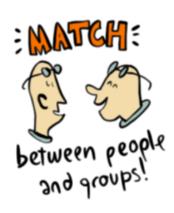
- Consider interdisciplinarity at all levels of the project
 - Choose a coordinator with interdisciplinary experience and respect
 - Put together a multidisciplinary internal team and steering group
 - Choose work package leaders carefully and have regular meetings
 - Show empathy see the world through other people's eyes
- Think diversity and use everyone's strengths
 - Different personalities and leadership styles succeed w/interdisciplinary projects
 - It helps if you like each other
 - Be aware of the role of young, less experienced will have in the project
 - Be a good listener
- Show curiosity, flexibility and patience
- Show interest for real work-related problems and people





2. open minded



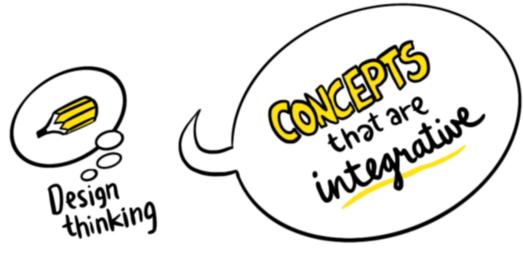


PROCESSES

Everybody needs to know what they are supposed to do and how

- Ensure frequent, clear and good communication
- Always ask when you don't understand
- Embrace different ways of empirical work (qualitative / quantitative, laboratory / real context)
- Create predictability but be aware that you can face unpredictability for periods
- Be flexible with work processes (sometimes interdisciplinary other times within the disciplines)
- Plan for interactions
 - Plan enough time for team building early in the project
 - Use facilitators and design-based methods (work visually & interactively, think problem & solution)

Focus on the end result / outcome





Also working within your discipline







PERSPECTIVES

- Recognize and manage the differences in scientific cultures
 - Find a concept / framework where everyone can meet and build bridges between concepts
 - Create a glossary differences in terminology can create conflicts
 - Be realistic recognize the limitations of each discipline
 - Challenge quantitative vs qualitative approach
 - Use visualizations and prototypes to achieve shared understanding and learning
- Be a good role model
 - Familiarize yourself with and respect other disciplines and cultures
 - Open up for creativity and multiple ways of working
- Embrace failure and uncertainty but learn from it!
- Meet each other intellectually on an equal footing
 - No discipline or title is better than the others







Everybody

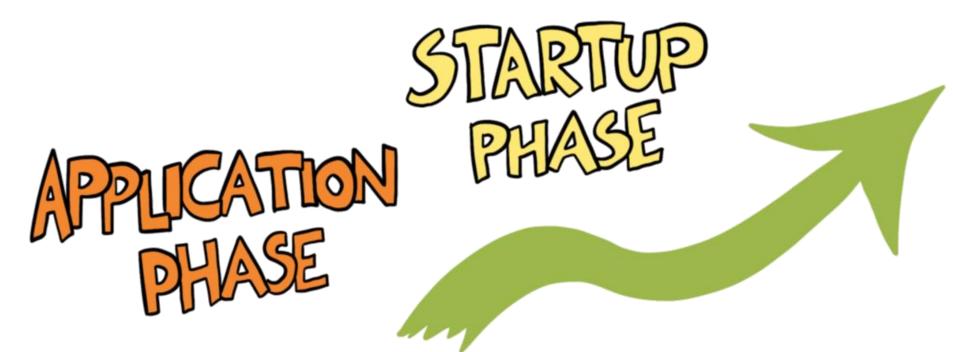
experience

Somethin

WIND:

PROJECT PHASES

MPLEMENTATION & DELLYERY



CATION PHA

- when the funding call
- Understand the funding





interdisciplinary





- Follow funding calls and think proactively and forward-looking
- Have a clear timeline for application writing with early deadlines
- Find a topic that is interesting, controversial, motivating for the whole team, concrete enough to work on, possible to talk about to a larger audience
- Assemble a diverse team
 - Complementary strengths and the same work ethic
 - Multidisciplinary research team in each country and each work package
- Meet in person: Build a project and concept that everyone has ownership of
- Involve the industry and consider their needs
- Assign clear responsibilities
- Visualize concepts and thoughts towards others



STARTUP PHASE

- Be clear about roles, responsibilities and project plan
- Dare to be clear about how "we work together"
 - Here we listen to everyone regardless of gender, age and role
 - Everyone must be heard, but not everyone can decide
 - Bring administrative staff to meetings
- Get people talking all perspectives are important
- Facilitate communication
 - Create agreement on definitions and concepts
 - Develop common language, do not use unfamiliar abbreviations
 - Let all industries and disciplines explain their perspective
- Show respect both push and pull are needed
- Do something fun together!
- Create a shared vision i.e. futuring / vision workshop













Each research field has its personality types.



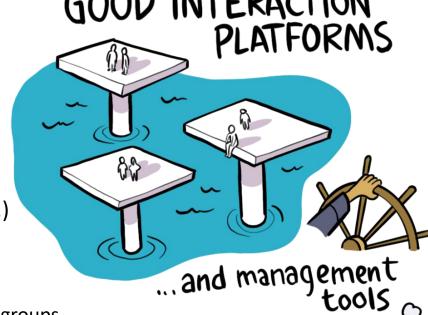


SAUNA and SAKE

Bonding is important

IMPLEMENTATION & DELIVERY

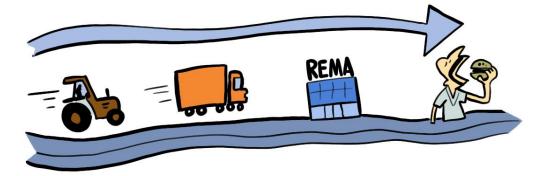
- Ensure good interaction platforms (Teams, Sharepoint, etc.)
 - Share results continuously in the team
 - Have good systems for document management
- Have enough administrative help / expertise (contracts, finance, IPR, IT, etc.)
- Ensure regular meetings between people
 - Have frequent meetings in the project management group
 - Have annual project meetings (physical) and regular online meetings in smaller groups
 - Use creative innovation work and workshops that involve many people in the project: insight work, idea generation, prototyping, testing
 - Have dedicated roles for research and innovation, involve industry actively
 - Make interdisciplinarity a topic and actively reflect on it
- Have good plans in place, but deal with the fact that things can change
- As a coordinator, dare to use "detours" & "shortcuts" and give concrete support
- Use the consortium agreement to manage the project
- Focus on goals and vision
- Talk about the project and acknowledge everyone who contributes







MAKE A USER JOURNEY

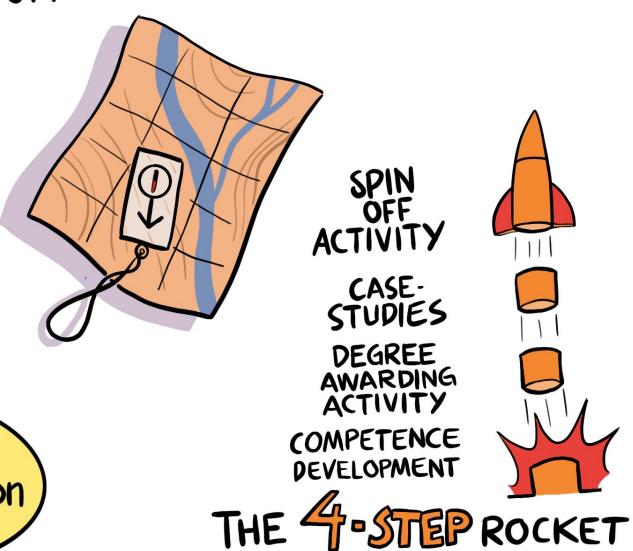


TRANSLATE from to

Insights

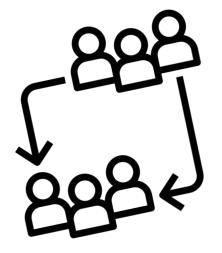
Possibilities for innovation

OPPORTUNITY MAP



CHALLENGES





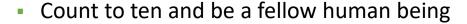


ST MANAGE BALANCE OF POWER

.ANGUAGE is power.



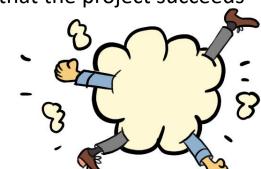
Missing anguage can make visible.



- Ensure transparency and security in the project
- Focus on the matter and not the person
- Call rather than write an email in difficult situations
- Be aware that language is power: English is often the only common language and not everyone is equally good at it
- "The project officer in the EU is god" she/he can save you or kill you... Have a good relationship good dialogue, she/he is concerned that the project succeeds







Distinguish between GOOD and BAD conflicts



Not all conflicts can be sorted out.



Possibly somebody should be separated.

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LEARNING & REFLECTIO ... how to make it happen in the project?

Models and terms must be UNDERSTANDAI



Give things time

Be open and curious about other disciplines

Dare to do things in a new / different way

Work together "in the field" - do common things and reflect in advance and afterwards

Use design methodology to visualize and concretize

Share professional content (e.g. theories, methods, practices) in joint meetings so that others can understand and reflect on it

Send out material for preparation ahead of reflection meetings

Summarize and share experiences with each other

Ask questions when you don't understand

Use face-to-face meetings for reflection (and not Teams)

When working with companies you need to have

Before

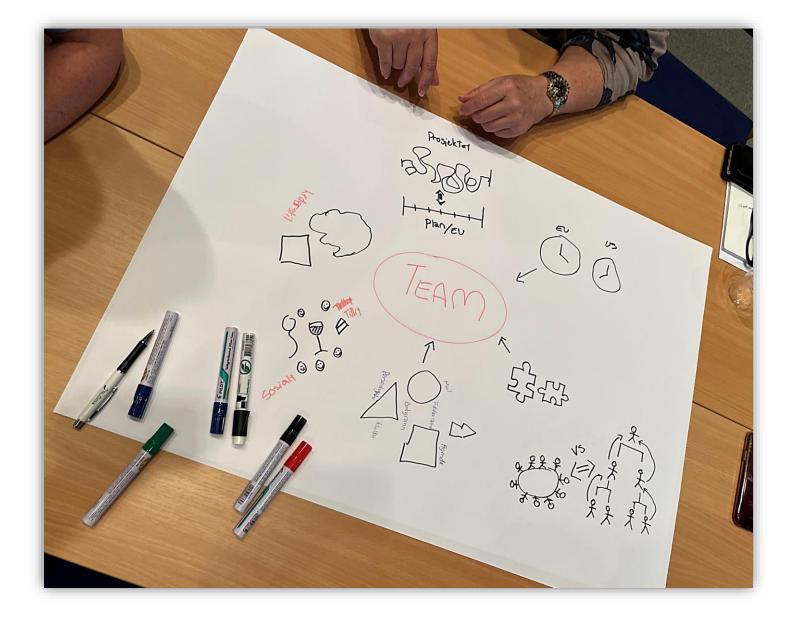






«INTERDISCIPLINATION IS NOT SOMETHING THAT JUST HAPPENS, YOU HAVE TO FACILITATE WELL FOR IT»





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