**RMS webinar 22nd June 2023: Collaborations in Research**

Links shared:

[CCRP Principles (PDF)](https://www.ccrp.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/CCRP-principles-2.pdf)

[FRN Principles (FRN website)](https://sites.google.com/view/frn-working-group/frn-resources?authuser=0)

[Meghalaya living root bridge (Wikipedia)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Living_root_bridge)

[Hølmebakk bridge, Norway (magazine website)](https://www.azuremagazine.com/article/norwegian-scenic-routes-program-voringsfossen/)

**Notes from group discussions:**

**ESAf region discussion:**

What is the difference between collaboration and synergy?

* Synergy is just things working together, whereas collaboration is actually working together. Synergy is identifying things where you could work together, whereas collaboration is actually doing it.
* You don’t need to collaborate to have synergy. With synergy, you could be working together towards a similar goal without expressly collaborating. Collaboration is more actively working together.
* Collaboration is more intentional. You could have synergies between projects that are working on things that interconnect, but they might not be actively collaborating on anything. It may just happen that what they’re studying, their results, their processes complement each other or work together in an interesting way and could be put in relation to each other, but collaboration sounds way more intentional. You have to actually plan how you’re going to do it and what you’re going to collaborate on…

On the topic of farmer-researcher co-creation: to what extent do people think that they are successfully co-creating and collaborating, rather than it being a farmer-led or researcher-led process with the other group involved?

* Example of Pallisa district in Eastern Uganda, where farmers are applying the knowledge from the cereal FRN to production in horticulture and the local government has invited them to offer support and technical support to the government agriculture extension officers on the FRN approach…

The video talks about coming up with collaborations within teams and projects, but how then could we develop these structures within teams to develop collaborations, before even collaborating with other projects?

* Within teams, perhaps we don’t think in terms of structures, but instead encourage people to be open.
* Teams might have an agreement on a main goal/purpose, but there can be disagreement on other aspects. So, the collaboration is the main goal for working together, but there can be differences on other aspects even if the main goal is the same. Can collaboration still work with some disagreements if teams are still working on the common goal?
* Example from an interdisciplinary project. The team realised that they were creating opportunities to share what they were each doing. When they did organize meetings to share, these were too structured and they weren’t sharing their results and the kind of challenges they encountered (e.g., not being able to go to the field to do certain tests; not being able to get an ethics review for the interviews they wanted to conduct). Each team wasn’t aware of what challenges the other teams were encountering, how they were analyzing data, or what they did, etc. They concluded that they needed to meet more often, and that in an interdisciplinary setting it was great to visit each other’s test sites, project sites, and activities to be more aware of how each other work. This links to what Lucie said about us all coming from different perspectives and how bringing those perspectives together and listening to each other is really important.
* Back to the issues between synergy and collaboration, thinking of different CRFS projects, they usually work in synergy with each other; they have similar goals, and they’re working as part of the same team, and in some cases the projects will be directly collaborating with each other if they are working in the same country or similar areas of study. However, often there will be less collaboration in terms of research designs; finding ways of working together could prove to be beneficial in the longer term.
* People don’t need to necessarily be working in the same team, but if there is sharing between them, then it can encourage them to see each other’s perspective and what they’re working on. It depends on the institution you’re in.

What is the role that is played by the values and beliefs that different stakeholders have and what happens when those values and beliefs are in conflict?

* Example of religious values, where for some people it is not ok to drink alcohol, for others it is fine, and others don’t really mind. Within a team, we need to understand each other’s perspectives and not let that stop people from collaborating.
* In the case of agroecology, some people are very strong on using chemicals and fertilisers to maximise profits, whereas other farmers are trying to promote agroecology with very different beliefs. This may create even more difficulties than religion in a farmer working group.
* Religion is important to people; it is important to acknowledge and negotiate values in regions where they can influence the way people work in order to work together.
* Example of the FUMA GASKIA farmer organization that wanted to use urine as a fertilizer, and people were against talking about it although they were ok with the practice. When they changed the name of urine to a different acronym, then people were happy to use it.

**Andes Region Discussion:**

* You have to see what collaboration is for the community on a case-by-case basis. It is complicated, because there are communities whose ability to collaborate depends on their time and priorities.
* When we talk about ‘collaboration’, we risk oversimplifying. The objectives and needs of collaboration change. It must be a conscious issue.
* Many projects have struck a balance between institutions and communities in terms of reciprocity and commitment.
* Depending on the type of project or timing, we believe that some McKnight projects have more real collaboration results because they are worked on for a longer time.
* McKnight’s support process over time (approximately 10 years) is a very strong endorsement of the relationship with the communities and shows it is possible to have more real collaborative work and build ‘work bridges’ that facilitate research work.
* Long-term projects are more feasible for mediator development and collaborative research.
* In terms of the proposals for transformation to agroecology from government spaces, as researchers we must be responsible about what is going to be proposed (Ecuador), and try to make a positive and realistic impact.
* I think that when a project is being built, it is important that, starting with the research, it is co-constructed with the community - as Claire said - to see why the people who participate or do not participate do so (or not). Sometimes, when we read books or papers, this is not reflected, especially in the early conception stages of the research, where it would be important to make the research relevant to farmers and not just 'scientific' questions.
* Producers should be considered as a subject that has needs and thus projects should propose research topics from them, with the identification of problems to be able to make a general co-research plan, and later have more technical investigations for dissemination and advocacy. In general, this is not happening.
* Five years ago, these issues were already being discussed. Methodologies and historical memory about the principles of the Farmer Research Networks must be rescued.