


Territorial Development Series



The Evolution of Action Research for Territorial Development

Nurturing an intergenerational
and multicultural environment

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La evolución de la Investigación Acción
para el Desarrollo Territorial:
nutriendo un entorno intergeneracional
y multicultural

The Evolution of Action Research for Territorial Development: Nurturing an intergenerational and multicultural environment

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Miren Estensoro García

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Orkestra - Basque Institute of Competitiveness
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Chapter 2

Communicating Action Research in pluralistic research environments: The case of Orkestra-Basque Institute of Competitiveness

Patricia Canto-Farachala¹

Abstract

Communicating Action Research in pluralistic research environments: The case of Orkestra-Basque Institute of Competitiveness

To proactively contribute to address the societal challenges being faced by their home territories, universities must transition from linear transferrers of knowledge to inter- and transdisciplinary innovation hubs. To that end, they must create pluralistic research environments where different methodological approaches can co-exist and combine. The literature on action research for territorial development (ARTD) shows that creating pluralistic research environments where action research can flourish is not free from tensions. In this chapter I address one such tension, understudied in said literature: The tension that emerges when its methodological specificities spill over to research communication. To that end I draw from a set of interviews I developed in Orkestra-Basque Institute of Competitiveness, at a time when it was transitioning from a positivist to a pluralistic research environment to fulfil its mission of acting as a proactive agent of change in its home territory. The interviews were meant to reflect on a novel analytical framework for the dialogic communication of academic production from action research projects. I draw insights from my learnings that may contribute to the wider discussion on the tensions that may emerge around research communication when transitioning to pluralistic research environments.

Resumen

Comunicar la investigación acción en entornos de investigación pluralistas: el caso de Orkestra-Instituto Vasco de Competitividad

Para contribuir de manera proactiva a abordar los desafíos sociales que enfrentan sus territorios, las universidades deben dejar de ser transmisoras lineales de conocimiento para convertirse en centros de innovación inter y transdisciplinarios. Para ello, deben crear entor-

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nos de investigación pluralistas en los que diferentes enfoques metodológicos coexistan y se combinen. La literatura sobre investigación-acción para el desarrollo territorial (IADT) ha mostrado que la creación de entornos de investigación pluralistas donde la investigación acción pueda florecer no está libre de tensiones. En este capítulo abordo una de esas tensiones, poco estudiada en dicha literatura: la que surge cuando sus especificidades metodológicas se extienden a la comunicación de la investigación. Para ello me baso en un conjunto de entrevistas que desarrollé en Orkestra-Instituto Vasco de Competitividad, en un momento en el que este transitaba de un entorno de investigación positivista a uno pluralista para cumplir su misión de actuar como agente proactivo de cambio en su territorio. Las entrevistas tuvieron como objetivo reflexionar sobre un nuevo marco analítico para la comunicación dialógica de la producción académica de los proyectos de investigación acción. De lo que aprendí, extraigo ideas que pueden contribuir a la discusión académica sobre las tensiones que pueden surgir en torno a la comunicación de la investigación al transitar hacia entornos de investigación pluralistas.

Laburpena

Ekintza-ikerketaren komunikazioa ikerketa-ingurune pluraletan: Orkestra-Lehiakortasunerako Euskal Institutuaren kasua

Unibertsitateek, lurraldeko erronkei modu proaktiboan erantzun nahi badiete, ezagutzaren transferentzia linealetatik diziplina arteko eta diziplinaz gaindiko berrikuntza zentro izatera igaro behar dute. Horretarako, ikerketa-ingurune pluralak sortu behar dituzte, non gerturapen metodologiko ezberdinak elkar bizitzea posible den. Lurralde G arapenerako Ekintza-Ikerketari (LGEI) buruzko literaturak erakusten du ekintza-ikerketa loratzea ahalbidetzen duten ikerketa-ingurune pluralak sortzeak tentsioak dakartzala. Kapitulu honetan gutxi aztertutako tentsio bat jorratzen dut: ekintza-ikerketaren berezitasun metodologikoak ikerketaren komunikaziora zabaltzen direnean sortzen diren tirabirak. Horretarako Orkestra-Lehiakortasunerako Euskal Institutuan egin nituen elkarrizketa multzo batean oinarritzen naiz. Orkestra, ikerketa-ingurune positibistatik pluralista batera igaro den ikerketa zentroa da eta bere lurraldeko lehiakortasunerako eragile proaktibo izatea du misiotzat. Elkarrizketek komunikazio dialogikorako marko analitiko berri bati buruz hausnartzea izan zuten helburu. Kapitulu honetan jasotzen diren aurkikuntzek, testuinguruaren arabera diren arren, ikerketa-ingurune pluralistak sortzean ikerketa-komunikazioaren inguruan sor daitezkeen tentsioei buruzko eztabaida ireki eta aberastendu dute.

Communicating Action Research in pluralistic research environments: The case of Orkestra-Basque Institute of Competitiveness

1. Introduction and problem statement

Universities are called upon to play a proactive role in the sustainable transformations of their home territories (Cuesta-Claros *et al.*, 2022). To that end they must transition from one-way knowledge transfer to inter- and transdisciplinary interaction that fosters innovation. This, by successfully integrating quantitative approaches, disciplinary specialisation and competition, with stakeholder engagement, action research and collaboration (Gisenbauer & Tegeler, 2020). Universities must therefore create pluralistic research environments where different methodological approaches can co-exist and combine to enable innovative solutions for the sustainable transformation of their territories.

The literature on ARTD has shown that creating pluralistic research environments where action research can flourish is not free from tensions, especially when transitioning to research environments that can host different methodological approaches. The ARTD literature has identified tensions for managers (Aranguren, 2020); action researchers (Karlsen & Larrea, 2014; Larrea, 2019a) doctoral students (Romano, 2019); and for professional communicators working to make the voice of stakeholders visible in action research projects (Reizabal, 2020). Said literature has also explored tensions in research communication for action researchers, namely, resorting to linear approaches when communicating the academic production that results from dialogical research processes (Canto-Farachala, 2020; Canto-Farachala & Larrea, 2022).

So, while the literature on ARTD has explored tensions in research communication within the action research community, the tensions that emerge when communicating action research in research institutes transitioning from one-way knowledge transfer to inter and transdisciplinary interaction remain understudied. Addressing this gap can contribute insights to the discussion on the challenges faced by universities when trying to successfully integrate quantitative approaches, disciplinary specialisation and competition, with stakeholder engagement, action research and collaboration as depicted by Gisenbauer & Tegeler (2020).

To answer the research question: What tensions emerge in research communication when creating pluralistic research environments, I draw from a set of semi-structured interviews that I conducted in Orkestra Basque Institute of Competitiveness when doing my PhD. Orkestra has been described as a pluralistic research environment where action research co-exists with mainstream positivist research approaches under the umbrella of “transformative research” (Larrea, 2019a). Transformative research is a term that captures research that develops with different levels of engagement with public and private territorial stakeholders to address jointly defined territorial challenges (Aranguren *et al.*, 2021).

The interviews were meant to test the robustness of a framework on dialogic communication of action research academic production and the results of those interviews were condensed and analysed appropriately in the dissertation. The PhD process and its results have been published elsewhere (Canto-Farachala & Larrea, 2022; Canto-Farachala, 2020) and will not be repeated here. However, the interviews were also an opportunity to understand how the methodologically diverse group of researchers, communication professionals and research managers whom I interviewed, were experiencing the Institute’s transition from a positivist to a pluralistic research environment. The interviews therefore offer valid insights to the research question posed above.

In contrast to other chapters in this book, this one does not contribute new theoretical developments to the ARTD literature. The last lines of my chapter “Responsible Research Communication as an Experimental Approach to Third Person Inquiry in ARTD” published in *Roots & Wings of Action Research for Territorial Development* ends with an enthusiastic invitation to the ARTD community to “walk the path and experiment third person inquiry through the dialogical communication of their research outputs” (Canto-Farachala, 2020, p. 271).

However, four years later, there has not been any explicit process communicating our academic production along the lines of responsible research communication (RRC). I like to think though, that the discussion elicited by the framework, nurtured our critical awareness around how we communicate our academic production. This silence also provides more evidence to what we found when we used the RRC framework the first time, that it is costly and that: “...all these efforts are not feasible after every writing process” (Canto-Farachala & Larrea, 2022, p. 216). So, while this chapter does not make a new theoretical contribution to the ARTD literature it brings together the main tensions that were emerging in research communication practices when action research’s methodological specificities started spilling over to the wider research environment. Highlighting and bringing together these tensions can be useful for the wider discussion on the challenges that emerge when transitioning to pluralistic research environments.

As a final note in this section, I must add that doing the interviews on which this chapter is based, was hard. I followed, of course, all the criteria in the literature for performing interviews in one’s own organisation. However, while I tried to remain detached, I could not avoid having a personal expectation that the dialogical approach to research communication that I was testing would be well received in the Institute. It turned out that it wasn’t. While this had to do with many things, even with my own failure at better explaining RRC to my interviewees (who generously participated and contributed their best knowledge), it felt very personal at the time. I have never written about those interviews from a first-person perspective because I don’t seem to find the right tone. Every time I’ve tried, I sound bitter and sometimes right out naïve. However, this chapter helped me give closure to that experience because writing it made me aware of two things. First, that I have since, developed a thicker skin and second, that the personal is always political.

The chapter is structured as follows. In the first section I bring together the literature that underpins the discussion around pluralistic research environments: why they are important and what are their main challenges. This is followed by a second section where I explain the context of the case. In the third section I elaborate on the research method, providing more details about the interviews and how I documented my own reflections on the tensions I was identifying along the way. In the fourth section I bring together the findings from the interviews that are more relevant for the research question. This is followed by a discussion of the main findings and a concluding section.

2. Underpinning literature

Universities are called upon to develop a role as catalysts of change, contributing proactively to shape the conditions for and governance of socioeconomic development processes (Aranguren *et al.*, 2016) and drive the physical and sustainable transformation of specific localities or regions (Trencher *et al.*, 2014). Indeed, resources for research associated to certain public and private funding streams are increasingly conditional to demonstrating impact at the local level, while producing globally relevant knowledge (Beneworth & Fitjar, 2019). Future thinking on the role of universities in the context of daunting societal challenges at the

global and local levels (Gisenbauer & Tegeler, 2020) portrays them as integrated learning labs that have successfully transitioned from linear transferrers of knowledge to inter- and transdisciplinary innovation hubs; having successfully integrated quantitative approaches, disciplinary specialisation and competition, with stakeholder engagement, action research and collaboration. Future thinking also sees scholarly communication as increasingly about reducing barriers to the active participation of other societal actors and highlight a key role for funders and policymakers in creating environments with a long-term vision that may include developing their own publishing platforms to make sure research results are available for all (Guédon-Jean Claude *et al.*, 2019).

In practice, however, universities face considerable internal and external barriers that curtail the expectation that they play a proactive role in place-based development processes (Kempton, 2021; Kempton *et al.*, 2019). One important precondition is to enable pluralistic research environments able to host inter and transdisciplinary approaches (Greenwood & Levin 2007; Karlsen & Larrea 2014; Schneider *et al.*, 2019). This in turn, requires a new set of incentives that recognize engagement in career progression indicators (Benneworth, 2017; Watermeyer, 2015) since researchers working with participatory approaches take more time than their peers working with traditional positivist methodologies to publish their work. It also requires a whole new set of capabilities for researchers such as handling power relations; the ability to listen and communicate in real, multi-way dialogues; language, translation and mediation and making conflict emerge, which is necessary to co-generate new knowledge (Karlsen & Larrea 2014; Aranguren *et al.*, 2016; Oswald *et al.*, 2017; Costamagna & Larrea 2018).

This heightened need for a closer engagement with societal actors has brought to the forefront the importance of how research is communicated. In practice, the press release has become one of the most popular forms of science communication because it attracts public interest and the possibility of the press reporting on the project but poses the challenge of blurring the line with what would be considered public relations activities (Carver, 2014). Another implication is that the pressure to prove impact places the focus of science communication on funders or potential funders instead of on society more generally (Claessens, 2014). Also, in the battle for public attention, research institutes are driven to self-promotion, image building and maintenance and self-marketing (Marcinkowski & Kohring, 2014).

In this context important discussions taking place are whether researchers should understand that communicating their work to society is part of their role or not (Grand *et al.*, 2015); the need to strengthen the link between communication professionals and researchers and the need to re-examine the role that the latter play (Holliman, 2009; Holliman & Warren, 2017). Likewise, communication professionals may need to change their role from transferring information to “explicating contexts, mediating between actors and brokering relationships” (Broks, 2017, p. 4). Action researchers are seen as more likely to embrace innovative non-linear forms of communicating research (Cornish & Dunn, 2009). And in parallel to a transformed role for researchers and communication professionals in science communication practices, society also needs to change from a mindset where academia creates knowledge and society receives it an applies it (Canto-Farachala *et al.*, 2018).

The challenges related to institutional settings, researchers’ capabilities to engage and communicate their research outside academic settings can take a long time to overcome since they involve addressing questions related to how knowledge is produced and communicated. A possible way forward is to create challenge-driven research centres within universities with the specific mission of playing a proactive role in addressing societal problems with local agents (Goddard & Vallance, 2013). Said research centres can act as living labs

from which universities can draw lessons that can help them to gradually address some of the challenges mentioned earlier (Aranguren *et al.*, 2021).

2. The Case

2.1. *Context of the case*

Orkestra is a research institute created in 2006 within the University of Deusto, with the explicit mission of acting as an agent of change to improve competitiveness and well-being in the Basque Country. It is an interesting case for exploring research communication in research environments transitioning from one-way knowledge transmission to inter and transdisciplinary interaction because it has been portrayed as an example that illustrates how research institutes can play a proactive role in the socioeconomic development of their territories, overcoming some of the barriers that universities face due to their more rigid structure (Aranguren *et al.*, 2016; Aranguren *et al.*, 2021). Indeed, while Orkestra was created with an explicit mission to proactively engage in the socioeconomic development of its own territory, it was initially designed around siloed research departments based on a positivist approach to knowledge creation (Aranguren *et al.*, 2016). However, to fulfill its mission, it gradually transitioned to a pluralistic research environment hosting methodological approaches, like action research not normally present in the field of economic competitiveness. Accounts of the historical development of Orkestra and its contribution to the academic discussion on the role of universities in territorial development have been provided elsewhere (Aranguren *et al.*, 2021; Aranguren, *et al.*, 2016; Porter *et al.*, 2016; Romano, 2017).

2.2. *Context of the interviews*

The interviews took place in Orkestra, five years into an organizational reform that in 2013 had transformed the Institute's siloed structure, made up of research departments, into one based on research teams flexibly configured around the needs of projects. This organizational reform (that affected structure, leadership style, team, motivation and research objectives) shaped Orkestra's increasing ability to interact and engage with territorial stakeholders (Alcalde *et al.*, 2017). The reform also unveiled what was already being achieved by action research projects, in terms of the Institute's interaction with local stakeholders. By 2020 action research underpinned two of the Institute's longest-standing projects with local stakeholders (Aranguren, *et al.*, 2021). The organizational reform also eliminated a services department that had previously provided communication, translation, and publications support to researchers. Communication staff started participating directly in research projects, with a larger or lesser implication, depending on project's needs.

The interviews also took place two years into the Institute's 2017-2020 Strategic Plan where communication appeared, for the first time as a key activity. The words "dialogue", "process" and "participation" were used, together with "transmission", "forming opinion" "clear messages" and "product". The communication activities foreseen in the Plan were meant to "shape opinion and influence territorial agents and other stakeholders through the knowledge generated in the Institute" (Orkestra, 2017). Moreover, by then, in the two large action research projects developing at the time, communication professionals had been included as part of the research teams to facilitate communication among stakeholder groups.

3. The interviews

I performed the interviews as part of my then ongoing PhD process that specifically addressed the research question of how to make action research communication dialogic. The answer to the research question was an analytical framework on responsible research communication (Canto-Farachala, 2019). The objective of the interviews was to test the framework's robustness, so the interview schedule was designed around the framework's six features (see Annex 1). Considering that the interviews involved reflecting on an innovative approach to research communication (transitioning from linear to dialogic action research communication) they offer valid insights to this paper's problem statement and research question.

I selected the interviewees based on my knowledge of the Institute, making sure that the selection included researchers and communicators working with different methodological approaches and likely to approach the interview from different standpoints. I did 10 interviews, that included 6 researchers working with different research methodologies; 2 communication professionals working at that time in Orkestra (one of them hired specifically to work in an action research project), and the manager and deputy manager of the Institute. I interviewed the latter as communicators since the manager was a key communicator from their senior position in the Institute and the deputy manager handled resources, including those for communication activities.

In parallel to the interviews, I kept a research diary where I reflected on how the interviews were developing, and identified issues not directly related to the features of the analytical framework. I also documented exchanges with action researcher colleagues and with my dissertation supervisor.

The starting point of all the interviews was the idea behind the responsible research communication framework: that dialogical research communication, like dialogical research, could also be transformative. In the dissertation I analysed the interviews following the analytical framework's six features (See Annex 1). In the following section I identify the tensions that emerged from the interviews that are relevant to this paper's research question on What tensions emerge when communicating action research in research environments transitioning from positivist to pluralistic ones?

4. Findings

In this section I present the findings from the interviews that are relevant to the research question about the tensions that emerge when communicating action research in pluralistic research environments. The three headings draw from my research diary and reflect what I heard behind what was being said. I use "R" for researchers and "C" for communicators. The latter, as I mentioned earlier, include professional communicators working in Orkestra and the Institute's management team.

ITS TRANSFORMATIVE RESEARCH, NOT TRANSFORMATIVE COMMUNICATION WE'RE TALKING ABOUT HERE,
DEAR

During the interviews there was a strong bias to research processes when discussing dialogical research communication. I found it very difficult to keep the conversation focused on research communication because researchers kept going back to their research projects to draw examples. This was not the case with action researchers who found it natural to communicate their academic production dialogically.

Some researchers maintained that transformation occurs in the research phase and has nothing to do with how its results are communicated: *"You do your [change-oriented] research and then you communicate it"* (R4). For others, the academic production from research projects has an implicit transformative objective even if it is communicated in linear formats because: *"...you want to improve the state of the art that policy makers use to make decisions"* (R5). Moreover, academic publications could be an indirect pathway to change when used in new research projects dialogically: *"Writing a scientific article for a journal can be an indirect pathway to change because it helps to conceptualize new knowledge... When those conceptualizations are used in other research projects, they help to bring about change"* (R2).

Communicators wondered how much freedom researchers should have to design their own research communication activities. From an institutional point of view this could fragment communication efforts which would end up playing against the Institute's overall communication strategy. A challenge here would be achieving a balance between the possibility of fostering innovation in research communication and the need for all to abide by a set of common standards. *"We are not saying that the Institute should micro-manage how its researchers communicate their findings... but [The Institute] should foster a shared vision"* (C2).

Indeed, tensions were emerging because of different approaches to communication. Action research projects were developing their own internal communication tools *with* the stakeholders involved in the project such as newsletters, social media accounts, shared logos and their own communication plans and calendars. This clashed with the one-size-fits all research communication strategy followed by the Institute. This top-down approach on decisions about what was communicated and when, was more efficient, considering that, as one interviewee stated: *"the role of research communication in Orkestra is a minor one [compared to research] and resources are therefore not channelled to its activities"* (C4).

YOU SHOULD REALLY WORK ON YOUR PITCH -THIS SOUNDS EXPENSIVE, AND COMMUNICATION IS NOT OUR PRIORITY ANYWAY

Researchers felt that if dialogical research communication was important to strengthen the overall capacity of the Institute to fulfill its mission, then the Institute should provide resources through basic funding. This was due to two main reasons. First, most researchers stated that they lack capabilities *"...apart from my workload...I lack specific communication capabilities... actually I have never budgeted communication hours for myself"* (R4). Moreover, others highlighted the difficulties of negotiating a specific part of the budget for communication in the research projects that they carry out with other stakeholders: *"...we would need to separate part of the budget for communication; it would need to be negotiated...and made visible in the project..."* (R2). Another one elaborated: *"we already have difficulties budgeting hours for academic reflection...normally research takes you until the last day of the project...how can you extend the project's resources to write a paper, send it, wait for a response, do changes, send it again...and on top of that channel part of the project's resources to communicate that paper?"* (R4).

From a managerial perspective research communication was not seen as something the Institute should put its resources in: *"...the Institute is not oriented to communicate, it is oriented to change, and it approaches change in a different way...its resources are not in communication..."* (C2). Another communicator said that it was responsibility of researchers to think about a transformation objective for their research communication: *"researchers are*

the ones who set a change objective and communication staff can then help them to make their research findings more communicative" (C3).

Other researchers did not see the case for worrying about engagement when communicating research results *"Having a very well-known expert working in the research team who is continuously invited to participate in conferences and seminars helps... since he or she can regularly voice key messages"* (R6).

IT TAKES TWO TO TANGO

Regarding the framework's inclusive, facilitative, and collective features, all of which suggest a direct engagement with stakeholders, the most salient message from the interviews is that while communicating research outputs dialogically might also be transformative, it needs others out there willing to engage; it involves sharing power and being vulnerable because you depend on others. Writing with policymakers was, for instance, one example: *"... first you have to be willing to share power but then those with whom you share power with, have to take on the responsibility that comes with sharing that power"* (R2).

One of the communicators reflected that this type of approach to communicating research results is more difficult because *"It depends on whether other actors want to become part of your process"* (C3). One of the researchers stated that *"transdisciplinary research processes that really include the knowledge and views of other territorial actors makes researchers more vulnerable since there is more dependence on the knowledge and views of others"* (R1).

Regarding the emergent feature of the framework most researchers and communicators also highlighted that stakeholders often feel uncomfortable when they do not have a clear plan or strategy. So, even when communicating research results dialogically, flexibility would always be expected from researchers and / or the Institute and less so from stakeholders. This highlights a power dimension that must be acknowledge.

5. Discussion

Cornish & Dunn (2009) argue that communication and research perspectives start from similar assumptions about our way of being and interacting in the world. This was clear from the interviews, particularly from the strong bias to research processes when discussing dialogical research communication and its transformative feature.

Indeed, since the 2013 organizational reform, researchers were expected to exhibit a clear commitment to doing transformative research (Alcalde *et al.*, 2017), a concept that captures research that develops with different levels of engagement with public and private territorial stakeholders to address jointly defined territorial challenges (Aranguren *et al.*, 2021). All and especially those who came from a positivist research paradigm, had a stake in showing that their research fell under the transformative research umbrella. For those who had recently started engaging with stakeholders in their research projects, engagement was difficult, even leading to feelings of vulnerability. They were not ready to think of further dialogue and engagement when communicating their research results. This, however, stands as a challenge considering prospective exercises that see the future of scholarly communication as increasingly about reducing barriers to the active participation of other societal actors (Guédon-Jean Claude *et al.*, 2019).

While action researchers were ready to picture dialogue when communicating their academic production, they also stressed that in practice it was very difficult and required more

resources. The management team had a clear position on this when expressing that the role of research communication in Orchestra was minor and lacked resources. To suggestions by Benneworth (2017); Watermeyer (2015) or Reale *et al.* (2017), in the sense that academic institutions require a new set of incentives that recognize engaged research, the interviews show that those incentives would need to cover the whole research cycle to also include research communication.

Researchers also expressed uneasiness about being expected to communicate their work to society on their own. One of the reasons behind this could be that the two large action research projects in the Institute had innovated by including communication professional in their teams. Researchers working in other projects did not have these resources and the "services" department had disappeared. Irrespective of whether they felt that they lacked communication capabilities or not, the research environment in which they were working was clearly in need of re-examining research communication under the transformative research umbrella. This connects with Holliman (2009) and Holliman & Warren (2017) who suggest the need to re-examine the role played by researchers and communication professionals in the context of the trend in academia to develop a closer engagement with societal actors.

It should also be noted that the two action research projects that had their own communication professionals were long-term projects that had gradually developed trust and a shared vision with stakeholders. They were therefore ready to have conversations about the important role of communication and research communication and to earmark resources for said activities. They are exemplary cases of public agents providing resources for experimentation in research communication (Canto-Farachala *et al.*, 2018) in line with the trend identified by Guédon *et al.* (2019), who underline the important role to be played by public actors in the future of scholarly communication.

Finally, the interviews confirmed that pluralistic research environments characterised by inter and transdisciplinary knowledge interaction require efforts from researchers and communication professionals but that said efforts are worthless if there is no one interested in engaging on the other side, a point raised by Canto-Farachala *et al.* (2018). But beyond that, from the interviews it was clear that joint communication activities developing within the two large action research projects overlapped at times with the communication needs and approach followed by the Institute. Communicators worried that the organizational reform had led to the fragmentation of communication activities that were in turn hindering the Institute's capacity to send clear and unified messages to its stakeholders and potential funders.

This suggests that maybe research communication understood as public relations and self-promotion (Marcinkowski & Kohring, 2014) must be done by a dedicated communication professional and non-linear dialogic research communication with practical transformative aims must be done by the research teams. This scenario raises interesting questions regarding ownership, authorship, and power. If the research was collaborative whose logo should we use when communicating its results (i.e. in book covers and reports)? If we use logos from our stakeholders in our research results, then how do we signal our independence as researchers? Whose communication agenda do we follow when communicating research results? What happens if they diverge? These questions, linked to the sensation that stakeholders expect flexibility from researchers and are not ready to be flexible themselves highlight a power dimension that must be acknowledge. This relates to researchers' capabilities for handling power relations (Oswald *et al.*, 2017) but also to the wider academic environment in which transdisciplinary research and communication is expected to take place.

6. Conclusions

In posing the research question: What tensions emerge when communicating action research in research environments transitioning from positivist to pluralistic ones? I aimed to contribute insights to the discussion on the need for universities to successfully integrate quantitative approaches, disciplinary specialisation, and competition, with stakeholder engagement, action research and collaboration as depicted by Gisenbauer & Tegeler (2020). This, by analysing a case that can be thought of as a little experiment that unveiled tensions that may emerge when said integration is occurring.

Findings suggest that once the transition to pluralistic research environments is developing, three tensions for research communication emerge. First, the institutional architecture of research environments transitioning to pluralistic ones must acknowledge and take on differences in research communication brought about by co-existing methodological approaches. Second, efficient research communication (as in non-costly, centralised, pre-packaged) may be enough for communication at the institutional level and sending out key standardized messages but not enough when attempting to foster dialogical research communication or when research and research communication become interlinked elements of wider knowledge production processes. Dialogical research communication is more costly than linear approaches that are normally standardized and pre-packaged and requires more resources. Furthermore, in this scenario researchers will be playing a more active role in research communication and communication professionals will need to combine different methodological approaches to research communication for different purposes. Finally, research environments transitioning to pluralistic research environments will need to problematize authorship, ownership, and underlying power relations. This if, following Gisenbauer & Tegeler (2020) universities are to become inter- and transdisciplinary innovation hubs, where different stakeholders work together to design innovative solutions for complex challenges.

The three tensions above point out to breaking silos: between methodological approaches in research communication, between researchers and professional communicators, between researchers and stakeholders...Breaking silos and creating spaces for diversity to co-exist and innovate is always costly and hardly ever efficient. This counters the new public management trend present in many Higher Education Institutions in Europe to increase efficiency and enhance effectiveness (Broucker & De Wit, 2015). Future research will need to investigate how the trade-off between efficiency and participation is handled, in a prospective scenario where universities become transdisciplinary innovation hubs. Experiments like the case presented in this chapter may help to identify potential challenges.

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Annex 1: Interview Schedule

Features of the analytical framework	Guide questions for researchers	Guide questions for communicators
Change-oriented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — What role do you think that communication plays in helping research findings bring about change in territorial development? — At what point of your research processes do you normally decide to share your research findings with other territorial actors? How do you identify who these are? — Do you have expectations when sharing your findings with other territorial actors? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Is there an explicit change objective when communicating research findings (Raise awareness? Promote an issue? Influence policy? Fill knowledge gaps? Build capabilities?) — Is there a reflection regarding who needs to be involved? — Is work done to see if they understand the problem the same way? (are they willing to put resources into it?)
Smart	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — How do you normally share your research findings with other territorial actors? — In your view what works and what does not work? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — When communicating research findings does the Institute think through what tools and products can help to reach a wider audience through dialogue? (interactive publications, Open Data, blog posts, twitter campaign...). — Are the research communication tools and products in the Institute ends or means? — What works better, what does not? — What barriers does the Institute face in this regard?
Facilitative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Could you name some of the difficulties you face when sharing your research findings with other territorial actors? — How have you tried to overcome them? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — When communicating research findings does the Institute consider the possible barriers that sharing knowledge can face? (knowledge gaps, skills, time-zone, culture). Does it take into account language? — What are the main difficulties it finds when communicating research findings? — How does it overcome them?
Inclusive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Have you experienced situations in which your research findings have no resonance among other territorial actors? Did you overcome them? — How do you think your knowledge should influence decisions made by public and private policymakers in territorial development? — Has your knowledge been questioned by other territorial actors? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — When communicating research findings does the Institute reflect on <i>how</i> to include the theoretical and experiential knowledge of other stakeholders? (what questions am I asking? What stories am I telling?). — Has the Institute experienced situations in which its research findings had no resonance among other territorial actors? How was this overcome? — Has research been questioned by other territorial actors when trying to inform policy making or other? — How does the Institute handle conflict?

Features of the analytical framework	Guide questions for researchers	Guide questions for communicators
Emergent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Do you normally plan your knowledge-sharing strategies? — How do they develop? When are they over? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Are the Institute’s research communication strategies flexible? To what extent do they adapt to the decisions taking place in the dialogue? — How do they develop? When are they over?
Collective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Do you discuss and agree with other territorial actors how each will bring back and communicate any newly co-generated knowledge from within their own domain? — Do you think that defining clear roles like problem-solving knowledge-sharing processes is important? How are they important? — Are you aware of what is being made in the process? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — What environments are being made? What value is this space generating? Is new knowledge being systematized and shared?

Source: Adapted from Canto-Farachala (2019).