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Abstract

Academics are increasingly required to balance the expectations of the ‘old’ academy with a future model of universities as interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary ‘problem solvers’. This paper highlights changing expectations of academics in producing alternative research outcomes in collaborative, practice-based research. Through a series of workshops with 20 researchers, preferred research outcomes and tensions in achieving these outcomes were identified. The tensions identified are presented as three dichotomies comprising the tension between: (a) ‘I versus We’ ? individual versus team expectations & outcomes. (b) Disciplinary outcomes versus inter-/transdisciplinary outcomes. (c) Learning versus research objectives for the students and academics involved. These tensions reflect the authors' experiences of working in three international sustainability projects, drawing on lessons learned from these projects, with recommendations for universities seeking to implement interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary doctoral and postdoctoral programmes.

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Recommendations include the need for formal and informal leadership models, strong communication skills, empathy and willingness to learn from each other. A need for more systemic changes within university administration to better reward and value the breadth and depth of collaborative work, while facilitating open learning cultures and practice-oriented learning opportunities and curricula across faculties was also identified. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)