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Flying with the Fairies: A Qualitative Ecological Psychology Study of IDG Practitioners' Collaboration in Practice

Natálie Rudzītis

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Supervisors: Patric Nordbeck & Tove Lundberg

Abstract

This study explored how Inner Development Goals (IDG) practitioners described collaborating across organisations and fields, and what affordances for collaboration they enacted in their work across teams. Using a qualitative, interpretative design grounded in a critical realist approach, semi-structured interviews were conducted with IDG practitioners, who are professionals working with sustainable transformation across many applied professional sectors. By offering a process-oriented account of real-life collaboration instances of the IDG community, the study addresses an empirical and pragmatic gap of how collaborating unfolds and aims to support the development of new practical resources for IDG practitioners involved in cross-organisational collaboration. The data was analyzed using experiential reflexive thematic analysis which resulted in several main and sub-themes. The first theme, “Working with-in differences”, highlighted that IDG practitioners engaged with disciplinary and hierarchical differences through relational and embodied practices, including intentionally erasing hierarchy, developing shared cross-disciplinary language, and/or attuning to shared physical presence in teamwork. The second theme, “Working beyond conventional incentives”, challenged conventional rigid organizational structures and predefined incentives for collaboration, where IDG practitioners suggested how they utilized alternative incentives and created conditions for inter-organisational collaboration to unfold. The study suggests that collaboration is not a fixed competency, but an ongoing, situated process, continuously enacted through relational, embodied, and intentional engagement with differences and contextual constraints.

Keywords: Inner Development Goals, ecological psychology, reflexive thematic analysis, collaboration, component-based models

Thank you

No adventure has ever been completed by one person alone, and so I would like to express my gratitude to the supportive and guiding team behind this project.

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A very special gratitude travels to my close classmates, who created a caring and, many times, therapeutic environment which doesn't automatically come with scheduled and predefined academic curriculum. Thank you for the laughs and cries and congratulations on your accomplishments!

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Introduction

Striving for sustainable and just life on Earth according to the latest United Nations' report on Sustainable Development Goals' (SDG) progress, cannot depend only on technological innovations and on pursuing outdated economic growth-systems thinking of today's world (United Nations, 2025). Moving towards the 2030 SDG agenda (United Nations, 2015) calls for mobilizing psychological capacities that enable individuals and organisations to engage in sustainability-oriented thinking and action. Sustainability research has been on the way of articulating that inner, psychological dimensions of transformation, and outer, sustainability action, cannot really be pulled apart, suggesting that people are the agents of changes and not separated from desired changes (Wamsler et al., 2021). In response to this recognition, the Inner Development Goals (IDG) community has articulated a set of inner human competencies considered essential for sustainable transformation at individual, organisational, and societal levels (Ankrah et al., 2023; Inner Development Goals, n.d.). While these inner competencies, summarized through the IDG Guide (Inner Development Goals, 2023), has gained substantial global traction, their application and implementation in today's socio-economic systems depend on people working across organisations and sectors, voluntarily bringing the IDG competencies to their daily work lives. In this study, I refer to these individuals as the 'IDGs practitioners'. For these professionals, implementing IDG competencies presents complex inter-organisational and multi-sectorial boundaries that already constrain collaborating with others across fields. So, if and how cross-disciplinary and cross-sectorial collaboration for inner-outer sustainable development happens in real life remains poorly understood. In addition to such sectorial boundaries, how IDG competencies are understood and used within the current socio-economic systems and in empirical work poses another challenge for their application in real collaborating environments.

Component-based Competencies in Collaborating Realities

Collaboration, or rather collaborating, is not a one-time event consisting of specific traits that are stable across situations and context. Collaborating, viewed as a dynamic process, is continuously negotiated between people and their environments, and happens according to what a given context offer to the people involved (Richardson et al., 2008). These grounds, applied to cross-disciplinary work for sustainability transformation suggest

the following; If inner (human competencies) and outer dimensions (collaborating behaviour) of sustainable transformation cannot be pulled apart, then the IDG competencies, meant to enable that transformation, cannot be understood in isolation from the collaborative practices through which they are exercised. Yet the dominant way competencies have been conceptualised and operationalised works against this premise.

Component-dominant accounts treat competence as a collection of discrete, nameable attributes, such as knowledge, skills, abilities, or attitudes, that can be aggregated and measured independently of the situations in which they are exercised (Škrinjarić, 2022). This tradition traces back to McClelland's (1973) comparison of successful and unsuccessful performers and Boyatzis's (1982) resulting lists of "basic" and "superior" managerial competences, and it persists in how the field formally represents competence today. Mikhridinova et al.'s (2024) taxonomy of competence models is explicitly built around decomposing competence into input-based sub-constructs (knowledge, skill, ability, attitude) and output-based ones (behaviour, performance), then representing and scaling them through hierarchies, ontologies, and numeric proficiency levels. Despite the authors' gesture toward a more holistic and interacting alternative models, the operational tools that dominate the field still require competence to be broken into stable, denotable parts to be assessed or trained.

This logic carries into how *collaborative* competence gets defined in practice. Aleo et al.'s (2026) study of community-based interprofessional health and social care teams is a case in point. In their study, the international expert panel reached consensus on 58 discrete "core teamwork competencies", organised into five thematic areas and mapped onto the EU's European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations skills taxonomy (European Commission, n.d.). The method itself, where experts iteratively agreeing on, amending, and ranking named competency items, presupposes that effective teamwork can be specified as a simple checklist of attributes to attain. The study's strong agreement on what the components are, paired with low agreement on *how they are actualized* once collaboration is actually attempted, points to the limits of a componential models. Because, how competence is mobilised, or fail to be mobilised, is connected to situational instances of individuals working together in a concrete situation, not the inventory of competencies itself. This is consistent with arguments outside the collaboration literature, e.g. Hamill's (2013) account of embodied leadership development, which suggests that skilled leadership performance develops not through the acquisition of discrete traits, but through embodied, in-the-moment practices. The

difficulty, then, is not that no competence lists exist for collaboration, they clearly do, in increasingly granular and standardised form. But such lists were built to answer questions of selection, assessment, and curriculum design, not to explain how competence is enacted relationally, in situ. A list of inner competencies, such as the IDGs Guide, however well specified, does not by itself describe what happens when practitioners bring those competencies into contact with one another inside real life relational collaborations.

IDG Competencies Applied in Team Collaboration

Existing empirical work on IDG-related practice has begun to address this and other real life application gaps. Rupprecht and Wamsler's (2023) evaluation of a Global Leadership for Sustainable Development programme found that while participants reported substantial development of reflective and relational inner competencies stipulated in the IDG Guide, a notable proportion struggled to translate inner competencies to the organisational level, highlighting a gap between inner competencies-building and its application in collaborative, organisational practice. This pattern is seen in another Wamsler et al.'s (2024) programme evaluation work, where very few participants explicitly connected their inner competencies learning to system-level change application. Ives et al. (2023) in their systematisation of the emerging field of inner transformation research, argued that such transformation must be understood as interdependent across individual, collective, and system levels, and not as isolated competencies model. This body of work suggested that while inner human competencies for sustainability change can be cultivated, they have to be translated into applied work, being the current bottleneck in IDGs implementation in practice. There is also limited empirical insight into how work of IDG practitioners unfolds in practice, across disciplines and organisations. This gap was also stated directly by the IDG Research Community itself when I consulted them on their needs for research around IDGs implementation, resulting in the current study's aim and its theoretical underpinning.

An Ecological and Dynamic Perspective on Collaboration

The present study explores *how* collaborations happen through IDG practitioners' accounts of real life cross-disciplinary work, requiring to position collaboration in the reality of complex contexts. Hence, for this study, the assumptions of what collaboration is, is grounded in ecological psychology's process-based theoretical lens.

Ecological psychology considers collaborating to be an ongoing process of dynamic relationships and interactions between people and their environments (Gibson, 1979; Richardson, 2008). The stance taken here follows Richardson et al.'s (2008) six principles for an embodied-embedded approach to behaviour, which rejects the view of cognition and action as internally generated processes merely carried out upon a passive environment. From this perspective, collaboration is a process of what happens between people, engaging in collaborative work, and their environments where collaborating happens. This is also consistent with Richardson et al.'s (2014) theoretical account of interaction-dominant dynamics, which describes system-level order, e.g. how a cross-organisational team ends up collaborating, as arising from ongoing interaction of all involved, not from fixed, component-driven structure and predictions. This situates collaboration as dynamic and relational system, that can be only understood through relational empirical lens.

Central to ecological psychology is the concept of affordances, that are relational possibilities for action that emerge through people's engagement with their environment (Gibson, 1979). An affordance, in this sense, is neither a property of the person nor of the environment alone, but a property of relationship between the two. An example of an affordance in collaborating could be when a person perceives that a colleague does not understand the instructions of a task, so she offers a further explanation that will allow the colleague to now participate fully in the given task. Rietveld and Kiverstein (2014) extend this concept of affordance by arguing that the affordances available to a person depend on the skills available within their sociocultural background and perceptions, so that collaborators inhabit a genuinely rich and varied landscape of affordances for collaborating instead of relying on narrow set of fixed possibilities of working together. What makes this concept of landscape of affordances particularly valuable for collaboration is its departure from component-dominant models. Without placing collaborative competencies inside individuals, affordances allow collaboration to happen through the relation between people and their contexts, which may result in the same practitioner being afforded very different collaborative possibilities depending on who else is present, what resources are available, and what the moment calls for. Collaboration, in this view, is not something a practitioner has, but something a situation offers and a practitioner and teams enact. This dynamic was illustrated empirically by van Klaveren et al.'s (2025) study of multidisciplinary team meetings, which suggested how contexts, team constitution, and resource constraints open or foreclose the

affordances available for team-learning behaviours, such as sharing and co-construction. In Wright's (2019) account of embodied organizational routines, bodies are brought forth as active contributors to how work unfolds, contradicting the assumptions of being passive carriers of action. This is a framing that can be read through an ecological lens. Pointing toward the affordances practitioners perceive and enact through bodily engagement with their working environments, suggests a venue and value for including embodied practices in collaborating spaces. This ecological lens allows collaboration to be studied as an enacted process, unfolding across people and their perceived environments. In the present study, affordances may be described through the IDG participants' real life collaborating instances they share as accounts of collaboration in their real working life.

Studying Collaboration as Enacted Process via Qualitative Inquiry

Understanding collaboration as the perceiving and enacting of situated, relational affordances carries methodological implications for this study. Given the aim of exploring how collaborating happens across fields and organisations, I decided to employ an explorative approach of real-life experiences, instead of testing predefined variables or establishing generalisable relationships. A Big Q qualitative paradigm (Braun & Clarke, 2022) was therefore adopted, treating knowledge as co-constructed between researcher and the participants, valuing reflection, rigor, positive interpersonal rapport, and depth of engagement over checklist-style validity and reliability criteria more suited to (post)positivist research. This orientation suited the study's critical realist grounding, and previously discussed ecological psychology's theoretical underpinning, that resulted in the study's qualitative design.

The qualitative, experiential approach was employed to access the participants' experiential and situational examples of collaborating. Participants' descriptions of how they perceived and acted when working with others were interpreted to build an account of how collaborating unfolds across these shared, experienced instances. Guided by this framework, the study was structured around the following research question: How do IDG practitioners collaborate across organisations, and what affordances for collaboration do they enact in their work?

Method

In order to explore how cross-organisational collaboration happens in the IDG adjacent network, I conducted an interpretative qualitative interview study with participants associated with the Inner Development Goals (IDGs) community. Data were generated through semi-structured open-ended interviews and analysed using experiential reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) (Braun and Clarke 2006; 2019a; 2021). The study was grounded in critical realist perspective (Maxwell, 2012), which views participants' narratives as meaningful descriptions of their lived experiences, socially and environmentally interconnected across and within their lived contexts. The inherent process ontology of ecological psychology (Gibson 1979; Richardson et al., 2008), shapes how collaboration itself is understood in this study, as a process that takes shape between people and their environment, while they interact. Critical realism, meanwhile, provides the opportunity to study collaboration through qualitative method, allowing participant's lived collaborative experiences to be treated as meaningful windows into something real, even in retrospection. The process ontology approach motivated the development of the interview guide's questions (see Appendix B), asking about descriptions of practices and processes in the participants' past collaboration practice. This allowed me to generate interconnected insights about collaborating, and to draw on the participants' experiential embeddedness within their perceived contexts and systems. This methodological decision was in alignment with Braun & Clarke's (2022) proposed principles for qualitative research design's coherence and fit. It further aligned with Levitt et al.'s (2017, pp. 9-10) concepts of methodological integrity in qualitative research designs, whereby design choices should support the research's goals, respect the researcher's epistemological stance, and fit the subject matter under investigation.

Recruitment

Recruitment took place between January and April 2026 through the Inner Development Research and Co-Creation network, which is a global community of researchers and change makers aimed at enhancing inner development and human flourishing as keys to global sustainable development. The reason for selecting this organization was a mutual interdisciplinary research collaboration interest. I was invited to present the study during two online network meetings, where the IDG members were introduced to the study's information

and aims and invited to participate. Furthermore, the wider IDG network also received the study invitation email shared by the network's members between February and March 2026.

Individuals interested in participating completed an informed consent form (see Appendix A) and booked an interview time window through Calendly online booking system. After mutual consent, the participants were also invited to participate in a post-study focus group, where the results would be discussed in relation to the community's continuous learning programmes.

Participants

Due to the pragmatic nature of the study's aim, to share the insights of real life interdisciplinary IDG collaborative practices, purposive sampling was used to recruit participants with specific experiences and within specific community. Participants were eligible if they had professional experience of interdisciplinary or cross-organisational collaboration and were active within the wider IDG community. Participants were also required to be at least 18 years of age and able to participate in an online interview conducted in English.

Twelve individuals initially expressed interest in participating. One participant later withdrew for personal health reasons, and one participant did not have sufficient interdisciplinary collaboration experience to participate in the study. The final sample consisted of ten participants of working age. Gender information was not collected as part of this study, as it was not relevant to the research aim of exploring collaborative practice. Their occupations varied across fields and disciplines, spreading across professional consulting work, NGO, and academia, where they attempt to integrate inner development into existing professional environments, e.g. in leadership training programmes or academic curricula.

Interviews

The interviews were conducted between late February and mid-April 2026. A semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix B) was developed in line with guidance on qualitative interviewing (Bryman, 2016, pp. 469-476) and conceptually informed by the relational and process-oriented theoretical principles of ecological psychology (Gibson, 1979; Richardson, 2008). These principles were embedded in the interview questions by, for example, inviting the participants to recall and describe concrete collaborative situations,

instead of encouraging participants to interpret their experiences through thinking and feeling prompts. Prompting questions encouraged participants to elaborate on how collaboration happened in their view, what contextual elements were present, and how they responded within those situations (see Appendix B). I also used a grounding technique of inviting the participants to close their eyes and imagine ‘going back’ to specific collaboration instances to recall some interactional details. In my experience, this helped participants to relax and recall examples from their practice without feeling too rushed or pressured.

Following the first two interviews, a minor revision to the first question was made to improve the clarity and flow of the interview. The change made was in the Q1 wording: instead of referring to the ‘IDG guide’, the question was reformatted to ‘inner development for outer change’, which gave the participants a broader space to reflect on their professional involvement in collaboration of all sorts. I observed that this helped the participants to express themselves without second-guessing their answers, so they could share their stories freely. Furthermore, the open-ended questions interview format allowed participants to have flexibility in describing their collaborative experiences within various contexts while consequently enabling me to maintain the interview’s focus on the study’s aim.

Nine interviews were conducted via Zoom because of geographical dispersion of the participants. One interview was conducted in person in an office space in Copenhagen. Interviews lasted between 49 and 85 minutes ($M = 65$ minutes). The interviews were audio recorded and the recordings were transcribed using Lund University's transcription service Sunet Scribe. All participants were pseudonymised prior to analysis.

Data Analysis

The interview material was analysed using experiential Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2019a; 2021). This approach was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to develop themes of how collaborating happens across participants’ narratives, while remaining sufficiently flexible to explore the relational and contextual nature of collaborating. The analysis adopted a primarily inductive approach, however the analysis was not absolutely theory-free, which aligns with Braun & Clarke’s (2022) qualitative stance on subjectivity being part of the qualitative analytical process, as well as the Big Q’s position in qualitative research. Initial coding and themes development were grounded in participants’ descriptions of collaborative experiences, not organized

around predefined theoretical concepts. Whereas the processual ontological stance of ecological psychology guided the overall design of the study and the formulation of the interview guide questions.

The RTA began with interview transcripts familiarization. By repeated reading and listening to the recordings, the data was coded inductively in NVivo software (Lumivero, 2025). Initial coding generated fourteen descriptive code groups comprising approximately 250 coded extracts. The codes captured some of the first patterns across the shared narratives, for example, *context comes first*, *feeling the space*, *nested in real world*, or *intuition over analysis*. The coded extracts were subsequently reviewed through an iterative process of comparison, clustering, and refinement, grounded in the participants' narratives about collaborating. Candidate themes were actively developed through repeated engagement with the coded extracts and continual reflection on how well they captured recurring patterns relevant to the research question. Several early candidate themes, e.g. *Attuning to context*, *Navigating difference and plurality*, or *Creating relational spaces*, were reviewed and re-shaped with the help of free writing exercises and pen and paper drawings. These exercises helped with visualizing the threads of meaning across the extracts while capturing possible affordances for collaborating. This iterative process resulted in the final thematic structure with two themes and four associated subthemes, further discussed in the Results section. A third candidate theme, centered on the participants' reflections about collective interdependence, was developed during analysis but later set aside. I recognized that my personal resonance with this theme outweighed the evidence for it across participants, upon which I discarded it. One relevant extract was instead reconsidered within the existing thematic structure, however it did not support the thematic richness and was not used at the end.

Throughout the analysis, supervisory discussions supported the reflexive process by challenging interpretations and strengthening the coherence of the developing themes before the results were finalized (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The reflexive journal was also utilized as my reflective tool throughout the whole project's period, to capture my assumptions and progress through the study. The thesis' final themes represent recurring patterns of meaning describing how collaboration unfolded across IDG practitioners' accounts of real-life cross-organizational collaborating experiences.

Ethical Considerations

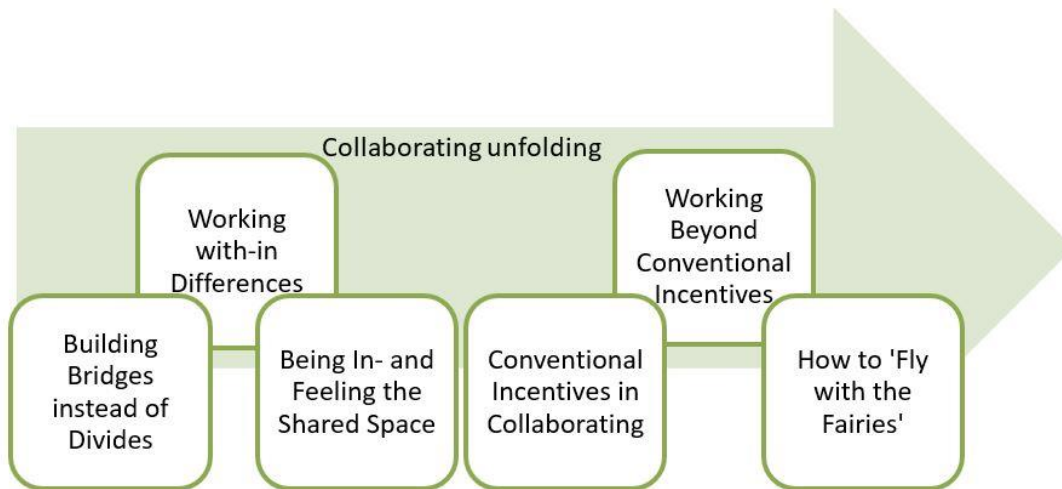
All participants received written information about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, their right to withdraw at any stage without consequences, and the intended use of the collected data. Written and signed informed consent was obtained before each interview. Participants were de-identified during transcription, assigned pseudonyms, and any potentially identifying information was removed from interview extracts presented in this thesis. Additionally, to respect the participants' professional and personal integrity, upon one participant's request to review their shared narratives for accuracy, the researcher obtained their final permission to use their data extracts shared in this report.

Results

The analysis of ten interviews resulted in two final themes and four subthemes generated from IDG practitioners' professional stories of working across fields and bringing inner development into cross disciplinary collaborations. The theme "Working with-in differences" illustrates how IDG practitioners collaborate with and within disciplinary and hierarchical differences. "Working beyond conventional incentives" theme depicts how practitioners respond to rigid, outcome-driven organisational incentives by enacting emergent and context-attuned alternatives to conventional ways of collaborating. The thematic map (see Figure 1) presents the final themes structure visually:

Figure 1

Thematic Map of Collaborating Unfolding Through Contexts and Collaborative Practices



Working with-in Differences

The first theme, “Working with-in differences”, describes the lived realities of individuals coming together to collaborate on projects of all kinds while each individually bringing differences in the form of context, worldview, specialization, and pre-defined roles. As one of the participants, Ash, mentions, working ‘with-in’ diversity and differences tends to be generally misinterpreted:

I always say that “we love diversity, but mine”. And that's not diversity. When we find another one that thinks in a different way, we don’t like it. And we want to collaborate, so we have to be open to others that don’t think like we do.

Ash illustrates how superficially cheering for diversity ‘on paper’ exposes how unprepared and perhaps untrained people are for working with and within diversity in real life. Ash continued saying that “we need to accept that collaborating might mean making space for others”. On this note, the following subthemes discuss how to make such collaboration happen in real-life settings. The subtheme “Building bridges instead of divides” discusses the inevitability of differences in cross-disciplinary collaborations and how to work with them. The second subtheme, “Be in- and feel the space”, turns attention to shared spaces and

embodied aspects of collaborating, highlighting a unifying physical quality that people inherently share irrespective of their perceived differences.

Building Bridges instead of Divides

In this subtheme, the participants propose that differences are inherent features of interdisciplinary collaboration, and they are to be acknowledged, not treated as a problem to be removed. This acknowledgement ties to what expectations might be set for interdisciplinary collaboration in practice, as described by Ash:

We are all different and, in my experience, you can't just roll out the big carpet, make everyone understand it in the same way and get the same experience. We are different and we are not supposed to be the same, that's a big misunderstanding.

Ash points not only to expectations about the outcomes of collaboration, but stresses that the process of collaborating requires respect toward all members and their diverse contexts. So, the IDG practitioners shared their experiences of how they respect diverse contexts and opinions by giving space and voice to all participants of their working teams. When working on a strategic collaboration project, Fir, for example, mentioned how they worked with hierarchy amongst the team members:

So we work a lot on giving empowerment to the employees, not only to the management. We use first name to erase your function and role, if you really want to be you and to contribute and to collaborate you don't have to have to be in a hierarchy because it's a bias.

Erasing perceived roles and their associated abilities and limitations was seen as giving space to employees who may not otherwise have a chance to take part in strategic decisions, due to professional positions that can be limiting. This is one way of building a bridge for everyone to bring their whole selves into collaboration. Hierarchy was also raised by another participant, in a clinical context. Poplar describes how a willingness to understand veterinary patients' contexts, not only to give professional guidance, can help build a strong team for animal recovery:

Sometimes when the animal comes [to the vet] sick and you prescribe some medicine, two weeks later, the owner comes back with the animal still sick. In a lot of cases the owner, in fact, didn't understand the dosage or the medicine is expensive and the owner didn't buy the medicine. All of this can be avoided by using non-violent communication with the owner.

When faced with a problem that requires a collaborative approach of people from different contexts, erasing perceived social hierarchy and establishing common understanding are approaches to create a safer space for authenticity and solving issues as a team.

The importance of communication in building bridges amongst differences was brought up by multiple participants. Amongst them, Blackthorn spoke about communication as “a dance around formulation of what is possible to undertake together”, suggesting that what can be done in a team depends on how challenges and teams' abilities are formulated. Whereas Maple highlighted how “different disciplines communicate in their ‘own specific’ languages”, which is a deeper insight suggesting that communication can be challenged by specific disciplinary jargon, potentially restraining cross-disciplinary collaboration to proceed. To prevent this from happening, Maple suggests that:

They [cross-disciplinary team members] have a different language, so we always need to take this into consideration. We need a kind of broker between the different parts of the system and the fields.

By sharing their experience of developing a common language or a ‘broker’ within cross-disciplinary teams, Maple suggested that a relatable, shared language is another valuable bridge across the disciplinary divide. Maple, Blackthorn and Poplar have suggested that instead of holding onto labels and titles in collaborating, the focus should shift to enabling collaboration to happen in the first place. And even though erasing hierarchy or learnt ways of communicating may not always be possible, creating new common grounds amongst teams' differences paves the way of possibilities to work together. Finding new ways of common ground may also be an antidote to ward off the risk of assimilation in collaboration, and ensure integration of diversity in teams working together, which is Blackthorn's advice:

People want to learn from each other, but they don't want to be taking over each other's way. It's not a synergy of two approaches when assimilation happens, you need to find something new that is big enough for both.

This reflection suggests that it is also likely for differences to co-exist while collaborating, that differences do not need to be consolidated. With Blackthorne's perspective, "Building bridges instead of divides" subtheme shows that for IDG practitioners, diversity and differences are an inherent reality of cross-disciplinary collaborating. The participants suggest that collaborating itself should become the core goal of bringing people together, with roles and differences acknowledged and drawn on as connectors that enable cross-disciplinary work to unfold.

Being in- and Feeling the Shared Space

Beyond building bridges across individual and disciplinary differences, the IDG practitioners also described paying close attention to the spaces where collaborating happens. The "Being in- and feeling the shared space" subtheme illustrates how collaboration unfolds through physical and sensory experiences, and how such experiences can be created. When working with teams, the participants described being embodied and embedded in a shared space as the reality when coming together with others, and not merely as a matter of thinking about common ground. The physical presence of everyone in a room becomes a way of connecting with those involved in collaborating. Cedar proposed that attuning to one's own presence enables attuning to the presence of others, also called the concept of "social fields". He describes it as:

It's the idea that moods and atmospheres are contagious and we are all influenced by social fields constantly... and when social fields shift, the energy moves from being only in the head to also including the heart. People are more vulnerable, more open, usually things slow down a little bit and you can use your own body as an instrument to sense into the field.

The space and the people within the shared space seem to interact and change one another, suggesting that body can become an instrument for social connection, something both tangible and observable. A similar experience was described by another participant while facilitating embodied exercises with an organisation's team. According to Rowan:

It is important to create a somatic experience with them [an organisation's team]... [How?] I would say the energy changed. But it's a matter of the information that you deliver in the space that creates a new resonance, a new understanding, a new feeling, a new sense of current reality.

For Rowan, the space that people collaborate in can be something receptive and organic, adapting to what is brought into it.

Somatic or body-sensing experiences in shared spaces were mentioned across participants through their team-building practices and exercises, usually preceding some planned collaborative work. Amongst the IDG practitioners, two of them use somatic experiences specifically when working with private and public company clients. Fir brings their passion for movement into facilitating team building and strategy workshops, which makes it an organic part of her professional practice:

I'm a dancer so I work with my body. I like to propose things in the space, to be outside, to feel the elements. I really use my body during my animations with companies... I feel that if something is wrong they can tell me because I feel that energy...

In this example, Fir as well refers to somatic and space sensing in a similar way as Cedar's "social fields" sensing, where the body sensing can connect with the space and others. Another participant leans into using a specific sensory exercise in body-social connecting. Rowan shares how utilizing sound in organisational teamwork creates a pathway for connecting individuals in teamwork:

Sound helped them to open up. When we were doing the breathing exercise, N was playing the shruti box, an ancient Indian instrument for vocalizing. We did

vocalization, for example. So please consider sound in everything I told you before, because when I say body activating ‘the intelligence of the body’, the first example of sound is our voice.

In Rowan’s professional practice, using the body brings people back to their embodied existence, with sensory reality and sensory intelligence. When body and sensory engagement are brought into view, relating to each other on such fundamental physical level may eliminate any perceived differences amongst teams. This may seem obvious to some involved in any physical literacy practice, however forgetting about the body and biology in our professional lives has been stressed as a technology developmental trend and an existential risk. Through Ebony’s words:

We have to be reminded of the biology of things. Your own biology, too, is something so valuable. And obviously in the virtual world people live in, the biology of things is totally forgotten. The server needs the biology, without the natural resources there ain’t no server built so...

Using space and sensory experience to enrich collaboration may be an antidote to the disconnection of existing largely within virtual spaces, an increasingly common condition given today’s globalized ways of working. Ebony also points out that such disconnection is not only interpersonal, but systemic. A disconnection from the biological realities and constructed spaces that are themselves in fact still grounded in biological resources. Therefore, body, biology, and shared physical space are presented not as peripheral to professional collaboration, but as central to how diverse teams are able to work together in real life. Throughout this subtheme, body and space are portrayed as transcending capacities of real time collaborating and involving people in somatic and sensory experiences during and before teamwork creates more interconnected synergies, giving diverse team members chance to move beyond their perceived differences.

Working Beyond Conventional Incentives

The second theme highlights how IDG practitioners view organisational structures and incentives as failing to adapt to today’s global and societal needs, and how this, in turn, limits

interdisciplinary collaboration. Participants describe how such rigidity shows up in real-life collaborative practice through the “Conventional incentives in collaborating” subtheme. In the second subtheme, poetically named “How to ‘fly with the fairies’”, participants share how it is possible to collaborate beyond typical organisational structures and limitations, focusing on context and needs instead.

Conventional Incentives in Collaborating

IDG practitioners described organisational systems and outcome-based expectations as the conventional approach to making collaboration time- and cost-efficient in service of revenue. These approaches seem to add little positive motivation to interdisciplinary collaboration, offering instead external pressure to collaborate under scarce resources. Pine describes this reality well, drawing on their international teamwork experience:

We did this 2-year project together with five other international partners. It was this pre-designed process, the project plan was pre-designed; phase one, two, three, and so on. And we realized, there was no time for sharing our respective views on the PL topic... So later in the project, we faced some difficulties and we didn't have time for a feedback loop because it was always too late.

With pre-defined project timelines and correspondingly assigned budgets, shared needs and context can be missed entirely, placing collaborators into inflexible, tight-deadline spaces that do not allow for quality outcomes. The saying “time is money” is too narrow and fragmentary to guide or incentivize cross-disciplinary collaboration, which must contend with far more than time and money to address substantial world issues. Reflecting on the damage such assumptions do to environmental sustainability work, Rowan says:

And still, unfortunately, companies don't take the sustainability risk to find new possibilities. Why? Because 80% of them work under pressure. And sustainability is just a request that is coming from the legislature with very strict deadlines. So there is no space for innovation. You only have time to execute.

Rowan's experience circles back to the rigidity of the current systems disallowing to restructure any resources for environmental transformation and using sustainability as a superficial check mark to cross. When it comes to interdisciplinary collaboration around complex targets, e.g. reaching the Sustainability Development Goals without further depleting the natural resources that sustain life, sustaining the thinking, working methods, and structures that caused today's environmental crises will unlikely lead to a change. Time- and money-based incentives for collaboration enable old approaches to persist and prevent new ones, such as working collectively, from succeeding. Ebony captures this contrast well, by comparing collaboration within volunteering spaces being challenged by "not giving it the same amount of priority or enough focus, because it's dealt with in a different currency", vs the conventional business act where:

The transaction is quite clear: I provide a service and you pay for the service. There's something around money being a lever for engagement. It's a control mechanism that kind of determines that we have to interact.

Money as "a lever for engagement, a control mechanism" is a view shared by many participants, and a difficult convention to overcome. Yet if money is reconceptualized as carrying no inherent value of its own, representing instead the needs visible in the world, it can become a lever for redirecting collaborative work towards different priorities. This reconceptualization is brought to life in Rowan's professional life:

I have an idea of the quantity of money the companies invest in the communication, or in the marketing, which is sometimes insane! So the intention is that they also start to care for how they are arriving at the end of this fiscal year beyond a revenue point of view - are we exhausted? Are we energized?

Rowan's work of reconnecting people in organisations to a more sustainable way of living, and bringing cultivation of wellbeing specifically to professional setting, offers a fresh perspective on how inner sustainability needs to be reflected upon before shifting toward acting sustainably in the world. New narratives, in which time and finances are reinvested in how people, as social beings, actually function, challenge not only the rigid structures of

capitalist values, but also open space for more organic, alternative ways of making collaboration sustainable as well. This subtheme thus challenges the rigid and conventional incentives limiting needs-based collaborating to unfold. Since time and money, in practice, do not provide the conditions most conducive to needs-based cross-disciplinary collaboration, the following subtheme turns to how IDG practitioners work instead.

How to ‘Fly with the Fairies’

In many collaborative contexts, conventional incentives of financial outcomes or fixed schedules do not allow collaboration to unfold because people who collaborate have different needs to attend to when collaborating. This final subtheme explores what alternative incentives for collaborating look like in the work of IDG professionals whose work focuses on inner sustainability change to enable outer sustainability change. The participants described attuning to the needs of people within their lived contexts, as team work facilitators. Acacia, for example, shares that their work:

... depends on who I’m meeting with and what they need and what they are struggling with, I always design my way of working based on this. So I don’t have one way of collaborating.

The needs and contexts at hand decide how collaboration might happen in Acacia’s experience. A similar level of need-based adaptability in structuring collaboration was shared by Cedar:

We don’t use a very fixed agenda with a very clear intention and all details planned. We let go of that completely to see what happens. So there’s something about emergence. More like trying to see what the room needs instead of imposing what you think.

Working from within needs at hand, and adapting collaborating conditions accordingly, reflects the reality that contexts vary and that collaborating cannot take a single shape for everyone. Ebony affirmed this directly:

Context comes first actually. The outer environment is first in terms of where we look at and how we look at understanding in a development contextually. My organizational and work context is never linear, it's always we switch and swap, and I go from here to there, and I feel it's sometimes a very intuitive practice, depending on the needs.

Meeting teams where their needs and contexts are, invites for collaborating in respectful manner, without needing to impose a predefined agenda or a fixed way of working. It is undoubtedly challenging to remain aware of contextual limitations for collaborative work, e.g. knowledge gaps, budget constraints, limited resources, and responding to these requires creative effort and leadership willing to explore, sometimes against convention.

This is why it is especially valuable to share the IDG professionals' innovative approaches to collaborating from within needs and constraints. The following examples illustrate how such collaboration is practiced in real-life scenarios. Starting with Fir, who reflects on their leadership approach to “trying to convince clients to allocate more time to cultivate team opening and listening to each other”, which is never an inherent part of the official partnership:

I think I take more time and it's not enough! I've tried this recently when we did four hours of walking, focusing on being and relating to each other, at the end of the day. It was like ‘wow what a quality of our conversation we shared!’ So I think it's more powerful but it's like, well it was not measured...

Proposing an unconventional activity, and trusting it to benefit team cohesion and collaboration, reflects a trust in process over an exclusive focus on results or diligently adhering to schedules. Taking time “off the agenda” to build connection before working together appears to be common practice among participants. ‘Asking for forgiveness rather than permission’ seems to work as a strategy against rigidly set itineraries, as Pine describes his experience below. Here, Pine reflects on the value of “check-ins”, small personal reflections on team members' daily lives, and how valuable such reflections are for collaborating:

It was quite cool because those meetings with those people always have a clear check in and a check out but in my normal life in the office and the traditional organizations of people I meet with there is no check in. A simple questions in the beginning: ‘how do you start your day?’ And then people told little bit more than just what they drank for breakfast... so we like stole 10 minutes of those 90 minutes meeting but it was so important to the quality of the collaboration in terms of what we talked about and what we came up with together.

Pine points out that it is not necessarily the time itself that matters for reaching collaborative outcomes but rather offering people space to relate to one another beyond their roles as co-workers, which brings a qualitative improvement to the collaboration itself. Viewed from a perspective of potentiality, instead of strict accounting of minutes and outputs, participants indirectly suggest that being together, and subsequently working together, requires a degree of freedom and flexibility. Fir, for example, shared that when given the freedom to co-create and co-work, results emerge through collaboration even in the absence of clarity. Here in their work experience, Fir worked with a subsidiary facing many economic troubles, such as director leaving, and the company was looking for new direction together:

The output when you just let it go, you are just in presence and right there, were these moments of kind of collective energy and someone who wasn’t expected to say anything, she said: ,okay, I’m okay to take the direction.’ It wasn’t expected at all, but they were really connected and confident that there was this kind of energy to say: ,okay yes of course you are the one !’

Fir’s trust in emergence, within both the collaborative process and problem-solving, is the foundation behind this subtheme’s name analogy of “Flying with the fairies”. The name is drawn from Ebony’s own words: “I tend to say that I fly with the fairies. It’s my way of saying that I believe there is much more to life when we place context at the forefront of everything, it roots it in real life”. Her phrase captures how collaboration is not only about achieving goals through time and financial measures, but is a process that unfolds within contexts and among the people present within it. By leaving predefined agendas, trusting in emergence and non-linear team work, and allowing people to relate to each other,

collaborating unfolds *despite* conventional structures and incentives. The IDG practitioners' approaches to cross-organisational collaborating can inspire other individuals and organisations to move beyond their current conventions for collaborating, to serving real contexts and real needs, where sustainability collaborative work will have a chance to unfold. As a closing reflection on this theme and study, Pine joins me in offering words of hope and encouragement for others walking a similar path of inner-outer sustainability work:

I think the IDGs work could be very helpful to get people to both get the competence and the guts to sacrifice some of their time to help somebody else. And just believe that they will benefit themselves as well because we're part of the same system.

In Pine's reflection, enacting change inevitably connects one to the world and others around. The IDG competencies, in Pine's perspective, may offer new perspectives and opportunities for collaborating practices resulting in outcomes reaching beyond standard expectations.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to explore how IDG practitioners describe collaborating across organisations and fields, and what the possibilities for collaboration in their professional work are. By the two main themes, "Working with-in differences" and "Working beyond conventional incentives", I illustrated that collaborating involves actively engaging with disciplinary and contextual differences, while resisting rigid incentives in favour of context-attuned, emergent ways of working. Together, these two themes extend the ecological grounding of collaboration developed in the literature review. The findings are well described through the perspective of collaborating as an ongoing process, continuously negotiated between people and their environments, and shaped by what a given context offers (Richardson et al. 2008). Read through the concept of affordances (Gibson, 1979; Rietveld & Kiverstein, 2014), the two themes show collaboration as something a situation offers and practitioners enact. This also speaks to the gap of applying competencies and collaborating across fields, identified in the IDG literature (Rupprecht & Wamsler, 2023; Wamsler et al., 2024; Ives et al., 2023). Inner competencies alone do not explain how collaboration actually

unfolds. Collaborating requires attending to the relational, situated opportunities through which competencies are exercised.

Consistent with van Klaveren et al.'s (2025) account of affordances in multidisciplinary team meetings, the subtheme “Building bridges instead of divides” shows that non-hierarchical, inclusive team dynamics invite co-constructive collaborating across professional differences. Interpreted against Rietveld and Kiverstein's (2014) concept of a landscape of affordances, erasing hierarchy does not simply change team atmosphere, but reshapes which possibilities for collaboration, e.g., contributing, resonating, being heard, become available or salient to team members in the first place. Read alongside one participant's account of developing a shared ‘broker’ language across disciplines, this suggests that the register of communication, not only its frequency, may be central to how cross-disciplinary collaboration is enacted. This is particularly relevant for interdisciplinary IDG work, where practitioners work across different roles and different professional vocabularies in collaborative practices.

In the second subtheme, “Being in- and feeling the shared space”, IDG practitioners described attuning to their own presence, to others, and to the physical space they collaborated within, as a way of connecting beyond perceived differences. This aligns with Wright's (2019) critique of organisational routines literature that treats people as disembodied actors, overlooking the active role the body plays in how collaborative work may unfold. Hamill's (2022) doctoral thesis extends this further, finding that embodied practice can shift organisational power dynamics from “power over” toward “power with”, suggesting that embodiment does not simply accompany collaboration, but can actively reshape the social and hierarchical dynamics within it. While much of this literature centers embodiment as a leadership or organisational competency, IDG practitioners suggest something more foundational. Attuning to shared space was not a technique applied to collaboration, but the very medium through which relational, cross-disciplinary connection preceding collaboration became possible. This is consistent with ecological psychology's own emphasis on the organism-environment system as the proper unit of analysis for understanding behaviour, in this case collaborating, instead of organism and environment explored separately (Richardson et al., 2008). Hence, the IDG practitioners' stories of attuning to shared space propose a direct enactment of organism-environment system in real life practice.

To represent the systemic realities IDG practitioners work within, the subtheme “Conventional incentives in collaborating” suggested that pre-defined timelines, budgets, and outcome-based expectations were among the structural obstacles hindering inter-organisational collaboration. This is consistent with Wamsler et al.'s (2021) call for linking inner and outer dimensions of sustainability transformation, since the participants’ critiques were rarely framed as purely practical complaints, but as evidence of a deeper mismatch between conventional, capitalist-value-driven incentives and what sustainable collaborative work requires. Rowan’s reconceptualization of money to represent real needs people have in their work environments suggests how the participants actively reframe from those conventional incentives and turn into what collaborating requires in real life contexts. This reframing, however, invites a critical question. Critical literature on inner-transformation and approaches to systemic problems (e.g., Nordbeck, 2026; Purser, 2019) warns that individual-level shifts in mindset or meaning-making can quietly shift the burden of large-scale change onto individual responsibilities, leaving institutional structures and incentives unexamined and unaccountable. Notably, Rowan’s own critique of sustainability being reduced to “a superficial check mark instead of a possibility for companies’ transformation” suggests that IDG practitioners are themselves aware of this tension. While this study cannot claim such awareness holds true for all inter-organisational practitioners, this kind of systemic awareness may help prevent the burden of sustainability work from falling solely on individuals.

In connection with this system-individual tension, the IDG practitioners shared how their work moved from tension into collaborative practice. Consistent with Richardson et al.’s (2008) third ecological principle of behaviour being emergent and self-organised, the subtheme “How to ‘fly with the fairies’” illustrates participants as trusting in unplanned, context-responsive collaboration practices, where some of them completely let go of fixed, predefined schedules in collaborative work. This is also consistent with Richardson et al.’s (2014) theoretical account of interaction-dominant dynamics, which describes system-level order, e.g. how a cross-organisational team ends up collaborating, as arising from ongoing interaction of all involved, not from fixed, component-driven structure. Interpreted through the lens of interaction-dominant dynamics, IDG practitioners’ practices of letting people collaborate without too many boundaries allows collaboration to unfold and self-organize according to what is available to the people at moment. Through some examples of emergence in collaborating, the IDG practitioners experienced that outcomes emerged

through the ongoing interplay between people, contexts, and spaces, despite differences and limiting structural obstacles. This intentional, emergent way of collaborating opens what Rietveld and Kiverstein (2014) call a landscape of affordances: the whole range of possibilities for how collaboration might unfold based on what becomes available through ongoing group work. Within this landscape, collaborating itself can be understood as a higher-order affordance or the possibility of people coordinating and acting together in the first place, before any specific plan is made. This possibility to collaborate can be actualized through more specific, situational affordances, as illustrated by some of the IDG practitioners' examples: Pine's account of unstructured "check-ins" illustrated one such affordance in practice. By setting aside a fixed agenda, possibility for personal reflection and trust became available within the team, which otherwise would have been left unrealised by a set agenda. Fir's account of working with a subsidiary in crisis showed a similar affordance in their context at the time: trusting the emergent team process, without a predefined plan, made space for the team to find a completely unexpected new direction. Nevertheless, both examples were recounted retrospectively, offering only a retrospective account of how affordances might have played role in collaborating, not offering a direct observation of what happened. Here, van Klaveren et al. (2025) demonstrates the value of examining affordances as they arise in real, observed team practice, and offers an alternative methodological approach for future research seeking to explore IDG collaboration processes as they unfold in real time.

Implications for Cross-Organisational Practice

The study themes consecutively serve as several implications for organisations and facilitators engaged in interdisciplinary, sustainability-oriented work. Given the participants' emphasis on erasing hierarchy and roles and developing shared language across disciplines, organisations seeking to support cross-disciplinary collaboration might consider deliberately creating space for role- and title-free interaction, alongside facilitation that helps bridge disciplinary vocabularies.

Given the centrality of embodied and sensory practice to how participants described connecting across differences, facilitators designing collaborative processes may benefit from incorporating shared physical presence and somatic awareness into team-building work, preferably facilitated by experienced somatic coaches than unexperienced team leads.

Given the participants' critique of rigid incentive- and outcome-based motivation for collaborating, organisations aiming to support genuine interdisciplinary collaboration may need to build in flexibility and unstructured relational time in their timelines and budgets.

And finally, to any individual facilitator of interdisciplinary collaboration, dare to hold space for emergence and better 'ask for forgiveness than permission'.

Strengths and Limitations

A methodological strength of this study lies in its sample. The participants worked across public, private, academic, and consultancy sectors, offering diverse professional backgrounds that support the richness of the resulting themes. This diversity was achieved through purposive sampling (Patton, 2014), deliberately selecting participants whose expertise provided rich accounts of how interdisciplinary collaborating happens in their life.

A further strength lies in the study's applied orientation. Instead of being driven solely by a theoretical or academic gap, the research's aim was developed in response to a need identified by the IDG community itself, with results intended to inform the future development of supporting materials for inter-organisational collaboration.

Two other aspects of the study's design are worth reflecting on. First, as with any qualitative study interpreted by one person, the data were coded and analysed through a single researcher's lens. Consistent with reflexive thematic analysis' epistemological position (Braun & Clarke, 2022), this is treated not as something to be corrected, but as an interpretive resource shaped by my own background and standpoint. My academic psychology background has been predominantly driven by quantitative and positivist psychology inquiry. However, my growing interest in qualitative approaches since my undergraduate degree, together with exposure to ecological psychology, shaped my decision to frame collaboration as a dynamic and relational process, instead of something consisting of specific variables. This lens was made visible and interrogated throughout the research process in my reflexive journal maintained and revised across the study, alongside supervisory discussions described in the Method section.

Second, despite the study's process-oriented framing, data collection relied on participants' retrospective accounts rather than real-time observation of collaboration as it unfolded. Direct observation of IDG training and collaboration had been considered, but available opportunities fell outside the study's data collection window. Retrospective, open

and rich accounts of collaborating experiences nonetheless offered reflective sensemaking around participants' collaborative practices, consistent with the study's critical realist lens, which holds that underlying processes can be meaningfully accessed and interpreted through participants' accounts, even when not directly observed as they occurred.

Future Research Recommendations

The themes organized around collaboration being a process of people and their environment at hand, that needs unfolding, provided an analytical lens through which future IDGs practice can approach collaborating across contexts. I would like to suggest what a bigger study scope and resources could explore, given a future research opportunity.

Considering the accounts shared through the subtheme "Being in- and feeling the shared space", collaborating may be enabled through body- or somatic engagement of people involved in and within collaborating environments. In these accounts, the body and senses activation were talked about as a gateway for connecting to others, to spaces, and to feeling what a shared space may afford. This tends to be otherwise omitted in spaces where collaboration is expected to happen in more ordinary, seated and thinking, classroom-like set ups. Because the present study relied on participants' retrospective, verbal descriptions of collaborating, it captured how affordances for collaboration are talked about. How body sensing and activation might actually enact collaborating in the moment must be explored through a more direct observation study, complementing the current interview-based accounts. An ethnographic or video-based study design, where the researcher could observe IDG practitioners during real cross-organizational collaboration episodes, could technically allow for affordances, e.g. how walking outdoors enables conversation and problem-solving flow between people, to be traced in situ. Carefully designed real-time observation study may then further allow for more direct inferences of which particular somatic affordance could be useful for collaboration to happen, on top of the affordance's analytical reconceptualization provided by the present study.

The second theme, "Working beyond conventional incentives", stressed a need for more autonomy in handling collaborative spaces around situated and unique needs present in every different collaboration constellation. Every team is unique, and every space in combination with a group of people occupying it will potentially enable different layers of collaborating to happen or restrict it. Where specified time windows or too rigid agendas limit

collaborating to unfold, the subtheme “How to fly with fairies” suggested that emergence, not rigidity, provided the potential for collaborating and solutions to emerge instead. Future research could therefore examine more closely how this kind of emergent self-organization might happen in practice, where structural boundaries, such as time and financial resources, subliminally would not dictate collaborating to happen under specific conditions. In such study, team collaboration practices, such as Theory U practices (Scharmer, 2018), or gamification, organized around emergence and being present could be tested in experimental organizational contexts to observe how emergence may lead to co-creative results, and how it could compete against the current standardized well-defined agendas and collaborative expectations.

These examples of future empirical directions circle back to the question this study set out to ask: How IDG practitioners describe collaborating across organizations, and what affordances for collaboration they enact in their work. The present study answered this through what participants said about their experiences and attempted to interpret specific practices through the lens of affordances for collaborating. Future research, focusing on bodily and emergent affordances of collaboration, could extend this ecologically reconceptualized understanding of collaboration to be empirically observed in real time, and possibly real collaborative instances.

Conclusion

This study aimed to explore how IDG practitioners experience and describe collaboration across organisations and fields, and what affordances for collaboration they enact in doing so. Its contribution addressed a gap in existing empirical literature and the explicit IDG community’s need to explore how collaboration is lived and enacted in practice, beyond the cultivation of inner competencies. Using an ecological psychology lens and reflexive thematic analysis, the resulting qualitative themes portrayed collaboration as something unfolding among people and their collaborative spaces, a process enacted through relational and embodied practices, unfolding despite conventional structural rigidity and disciplinary differences. In their professional team-based collaborating instances, the IDG

practitioners enacted specific affordances for collaboration, for example, creating intentional space for reflection, or allowing for new emergent ways of working, that became available through attending to contexts-based engagement of people and shared spaces. The study also points to its limitations and suggests empirically driven advice for future research examining collaboration processes in practice in real time.

The results of this study are to be dedicated to the IDG practitioners' network to support the development of future practical tools and resources for inter-organisational collaboration for global sustainable transformation.

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Appendix A: Information and Consent Sheet?

Study title: Inter-organisational collaboration within the Inner Development Goals community:
A qualitative study Invitation to participate

Invitation to participate

You are invited to take part in a master's thesis study conducted by Natalie Rudzitis, at the Psychology department of Lund University. Before deciding whether to participate, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what participation involves. Please take time to read the following information.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to explore how practitioners working with the Inner Development Goals (IDGs) guide experience and navigate inter-organisational collaboration in their professional practice. The study focuses on how collaboration unfolds in real-life contexts, including what supports or constrains collaborative action across organisations and sectors. This research takes a qualitative, experience-based approach grounded in ecological psychology, which views collaboration as a dynamic and context-dependent process rather than a fixed set of skills or structures. The thesis' published findings may later be used to inform learning initiatives (e.g. a masterclass) for the IDG community and practitioners.

Why you have been invited

You are invited to the study because you are currently, or have recently been, involved in IDG-related work that includes collaboration across organisations, sectors, or IDG stakeholder groups. Your cross organisational experiences are valuable for understanding how IDG-related collaboration is perceived and enacted in practice.

What participation involves

By choosing to participate, you are invited to take part in an online-based one-to-one semi-structured interview lasting approximately 60 minutes. The researcher has designated some extra time in the interview's scheduled time slot, should the interview take more time.

- The interview will take place online (e.g. via Zoom or similar platform)

- The interview will focus on your experiences of collaboration, not evaluating your performance or skills
- With your consent, the interview will be audio-recorded and later transcribed for analysis

Voluntary participation and right to withdraw

Participation is entirely voluntary. You are free to decline participation or to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without any negative consequences. If you choose to withdraw, any data collected from you will be deleted, provided this is requested before the data have been anonymised and integrated into the analysis.

Confidentiality and data handling

All information you provide will be treated confidentially:

- Your name, organisation, and any identifying details will be removed from transcripts and reports
- Pseudonyms or general descriptors will be used in any written material
- Only the researcher and her supervisor will have access to the interview recordings
- Audio recordings will be deleted after the end of the project, expected to be June 2026

The study complies with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The researcher and her supervisor will adhere to conduct this thesis in accordance with the principles of the Law (2003:460) on Ethics of Research Involving Humans (<https://etikprovningensmyndigheten.se/>).

Risks and benefits

The study does not involve any physical or psychological intervention and is not expected to pose any risks. Some participants may find it reflective to discuss collaboration challenges, however, you are free to skip any question you do not wish to answer. You are not reimbursed for their participation and are not insured through Lund University while taking part of the study. If this raises any concerns, please contact the researcher for more information.

There is no direct personal benefit from participating, but your contribution may help improve understanding of collaboration processes within the IDG community and support future learning and development initiatives.

Use of the results

The results will be primarily used for the master's thesis in psychology at Lund University. Findings may also be presented in academic contexts (e.g. seminars or conferences). Any further use of the findings beyond academic purposes will only occur in anonymised form.

Contact information

If you have any questions about the study or your participation, please contact:

Researcher:

Natalie Rudzitis

MSc student in Psychology

Lund University

Email: koudelevanatalie@gmail.com

Supervisor:

Patric Nordbeck

Department of Psychology

Lund University

Email: patric.nordbeck@psy.lu.se

I, the undersigned, confirm that:

I understand the information about the project.

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project and my participation.

I voluntarily agree to participate in the project.

I understand I can withdraw at any time without giving reasons and that

I will not be penalised for withdrawing nor will I be questioned on why I have withdrawn.

The procedures regarding confidentiality have been clearly explained (e.g. use of names, pseudonyms, anonymization of data, etc.) to me.

The use of the data in research, publications, sharing and archiving has been explained to me.

I understand that other researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the data and if they agree to the terms I have specified in this form.

Participant: _____ Name of Participant _____ Signature _____
_____ Date

Appendix B: Interview Guide

Research Question

How do IDG practitioners collaborate across organizations, and what affordances for collaboration and implementation do they perceive and enact in their work?

Interviewer's 'to keep in mind':

- Let the participants tell stories
- Keep bringing them back to action and context, instead of solely feelings and thinking

Questions - Warm up and context block

Context & Role (to situate the interviewee in the context of cross-organisational collaborating work)

Q1: Can you briefly describe your professional or work context and how does the inner transformation for outer change takes part in it? - capture cross-org instances

Share the guide to help with narratives (reflect if it's a good idea):

Inner Development Guide

 Being Cultivating Our Inner Life	 Thinking Understanding Our Complex World	 Relating Caring for Others and the World	 Collaborating Building Trust and Working Together	 Acting Leading and Enabling Change
Inner Compass	Critical Thinking	Appreciation	Relationship-Building Skills	Courage
Integrity & Authenticity	Perspective Skills	Connectedness	Inclusive Mindset & Intercultural Competence	Hope & Optimism
Openness & Learning Mindset	Systems Thinking	Humility	Co-creation Skills	Conscious Use of Resources
Self-Awareness	Long-term Orientation & Visioning	Empathy & Compassion	Communication Skills	Proactivity
Presence	Creativity	Forgiveness	Mobilization Skills	Resilience

Q2: How does initiation on cross-org work usually happens?

Q3: How does collaboration with other organisations usually show up in your work?

(Reflect on how the 5 IDG pillars / Collaborating / acting parts play role in your collaborations...)

Q4: How does conflict or misunderstandings show in collaborating with others?

Questions - Collaborating episodes block

Concrete RECENT inner-outer transformation work episodes - take a breath

(to anchor the discussion in real life experiences of implementing and/ or collaborating with others around the IDG framework)

Q1: Think about a recent work you have done with another organisation/ team. Can you describe, in pure descriptive way, what happened in an exercise (transformational) with others? Walk me through what happened.

- Can you think of one specific meeting or moment?
- Can you describe a different collaboration episode...?

Q2: What Became Possible / Difficult to Do

(perceptions for action, inaction, coping in strange situations)

What felt **possible/ achievable** to do in that collaboration/ situation?

What felt **difficult** or out of reach in that collaboration/ situation?

When you encountered an obstacle in your collaboration, what did you do?

What happened there at that moment?

What actions **felt easy** or natural?

What actions did you **hesitate** to take?

Questions - What Shaped the Specific Collaboration Events

(potentially touching upon the Constraints-led approach's variables of individual-, task-, environment- constraints for action)

Q1: What aspects of the situation influenced how things unfolded the most?

*Optional prompts: perceptions for actions, role/ experience, task goals, time, expectation, the environment, resources

Questions - Adaptation Over Time

(self-organising aspect of adapting to the situations of collaborating with others)

Q1: How do you think your approach to inner-outer transformation work with other changed over time? Describe/ compare 2 situations

- Tell me more...
- Refer to specific collaborations the participants referred to before
- Can you describe and compare 2 events of how?

*Optional prompt: What situations have taught you something about yourself and others? Can you describe how?

Questions - Closing Reflection

Q1: What do you think others should understand better about transdisciplinary work where inner-outer transformation is at its centre ?

Q2: Is there anything important/ meaningful we haven't talked about?