International research collaborations and networks

Challenges and solutions to assembling and working in international research teams

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Introduction

International research collaboration has increased in almost all scientific disciplines in recent years (Wagner, 2018), including communication and media studies. Collaborative forms of knowledge production across borders can bring many advantages: When researchers from different countries work together and bring relevant contextual knowledge about the languages, cultures, and media of the countries being studied, common problems of comparative research, such as ethnocentrism, paternalistic views, parochialism, or safari research, can be reduced (Hantrais, 2009). Collaboration across borders enables researchers to gain access to and collect data about different populations, enabling larger-scale comparative studies. More fundamentally, collaboration is considered a highly effective means to facilitate innovative research through the pooling of resources, leading to increased productivity and disciplinary progress (e.g., Akkerman et al., 2012; Beaver, 2004; Katz & Martin, 1997).

This chapter traces the current composition of international research teams in communication and media studies, building on findings from systematic reviews of English-language journals, anecdotal reflections, and a qualitative study about comparative communication scholarship (Volk, 2021). It shows that international research teams are often dominated by Western scholars and are not truly international, arguing that more diverse and inclusive research teams are needed to produce more meaningful and context sensitive research. Therefore, the chapter explores typical challenges to assembling and collaborating in international research teams across geographic distances and cultures, focusing on the obstacles that emerge at the level of the team, the research process, the project management, and the contextual environment. Moreover, the chapter identifies typical solutions to mitigate or overcome such challenges and to create conditions for fruitful collaborations. Lastly, it calls for the composition of more diverse research teams and formulates demands for researchers, associations, and funding agencies.

International research collaborations in communication and media studies

Empirical evidence from scientometric analyses of journal publishing shows that co-authorships—a common proxy for research collaboration—have grown steadily and substantially over the past decade across virtually all scientific disciplines (e.g., Gazni et al., 2012; Henriksen, 2016; Wuchty et al., 2007). Some scholars have described this development as a "collaborative turn" of science (Olechnicka et al., 2019, p. 176) or as a "team science revolution" (Bozeman & Youtie, 2017, p. 2). Over time, co-authorships have not only increased in size, but have also become more internationally diverse (Kwiek, 2020; Wagner et al., 2015). Studies indicate that more than 25% of articles are published by international co-author teams where authors are spread across multiple countries (Hu et al., 2020).

This trend has arguably also affected the field of communication and media studies: From the 1980s to 2013, co-authorship in communication studies has increased from less than 30% to nearly 60%, according to a scientometric analysis of 4.5 million articles in the Web of Science (Henriksen, 2016). Supporting this development, a systematic review of 441 comparative communication studies published from 2000 through 2015 by Hanusch and Vos (2020) found that the proportion of co-authorships was 56%, and international co-authorships accounted for 26%. A more recent systematic review of 335 comparative communication studies published from 2015 through 2019 revealed that co-authorships rose to 76% and that international co-authorships even accounted for 36% (Volk, 2021).

Despite trends toward greater diversity in recent years, on closer inspection, co-authoring teams in communication and media studies are often not truly international. A look at the authors' geographical affiliations reveals that most international co-authorships consist of researchers from the West who often collaborate with other researchers from the West and less often with researchers from non-Western countries. The proportion of comparative studies produced without any "Western" participation is consequently low and ranges below 15% (Hanusch & Vos, 2020; Volk, 2021). Even in larger international co-authoring teams—composited of scholars from across the world—researchers from resource-rich Western countries are often overrepresented in numbers and occupy the "driver seat" by serving as project leaders (e.g., Hanitzsch, 2008; Kraidy, 2018; Stevenson, 2003; Wilke & Heimprecht, 2012). The dominance of Western scholars is also evident in co-citation analyses; for example, an analysis of 147 comparative studies published from 1979 through 2014 showed that the 50 most-cited scholars were exclusively from Europe or the United States (So, 2017)—indicating a powerful publishing and citation circle. This imbalance also has consequences for the objects of investigation: both the countries (e.g., Lind et al., 2025) and languages (e.g., Lind & Volk, 2025) studied in comparative research are disproportionately often Western and rich countries, resulting in a Western-centric bias and blind spots in many of communication and media studies.

Of course, the dominance of Western scholars is not limited to comparative research but reflects a deeper stratification of communication and media studies. Across the discipline, the underrepresentation of scholars from the Southern Hemisphere is evident in co-authorships and citation patterns, editorial positions in communication journals, or positions in professional associations (e.g., Chakravartty et al., 2018; Demeter, 2018; Goyanes & de Marcos, 2020; Waisbord, 2019). Possible reasons for this disparity are the

more favorable opportunity structures in Anglophone and (Western) European countries, where there are better funding opportunities and researchers have privileged access to travel funds to build and maintain international networks with colleagues (e.g., Esser, 2019; Mutsvairo et al., 2021). But even in Western countries, particularly funding for cross-national research endeavors remains limited, as grants are typically awarded at the national level (Esser & Hanitzsch, 2012). This often means that only those who can acquire their own national funding participate in collaborative projects (Lauerer & Hanitzsch, 2019), which in turn is more likely to be the case in Western countries and for well-networked researchers. Although scholars have problematized such structural global inequalities and called for "de-Westernization" or "de-centering" communication and media studies (e.g., Curran & Park, 2000; Waisbord & Mellado, 2014), a "deep internationalization" is far from being achieved (e.g., Badr et al., 2020).

The lack of truly international research teams can be problematic for the further development of communication and media studies for several reasons. The underrepresentation of diverse epistemological perspectives from the Global South (e.g., Africa, Latin America, Eastern Europe, East Asia, or the Middle East) can lead to a certain type of research that mainly produces knowledge about Western countries and ignores other world regions or theoretical perspectives (e.g., Demeter et al., 2023; Richter, 2016; Suzina, 2021; Takahashi, 2023; see also Radue et al. on media systems research in this book). Furthermore, it can lead to research that takes mostly US-American or Western-connoted concepts as universal and applies them to non-Western contexts without much critical reflection (e.g., Averbeck-Lietz & Löblich, 2017; Mutsvairo et al., 2021). And even if research teams are at first sight internationally diverse, collaborations may be "lopsided" (Kraidy, 2018), for example, when Western scholars take the lead and impose their research perspectives on scholars from non-Western regions who merely become producers of datasets instead of being able to contribute their deep contextual expertise (Hanitzsch, 2008; Lauerer, 2023). A one-sided team composition can thus be a hindrance to the further development of concepts and contextualized approaches in comparative studies. Against this backdrop, it appears essential that the composition of international research teams becomes more diverse and inclusive—especially with regard to the inclusion of more scholars from underrepresented countries in the Global South (e.g., Hanitzsch et al., 2019).

Types, levels, and phases of international research collaborations

Research collaboration can occur at the level of individuals, universities, funding agencies, or nation-states and can take various forms: from inter- or transdisciplinary to international collaborations, from temporary to permanent collaborations, from informal to formal collaborations, and from small-scale to large-scale collaborations (Bozeman et al., 2013; Chompalov et al., 2002; Hara et al., 2003; Wang & Hicks, 2015). Research collaboration is often defined as a temporary social process in which at least two individual scientists divide labor and pool their expertise to jointly produce knowledge (Katz & Martin, 1997; Laudel, 2002). When at least three individual scientists work interdependently

on the joint production of knowledge, they can be referred to as a research team (e.g., Salas et al., 2017; Ulnicane, 2015).

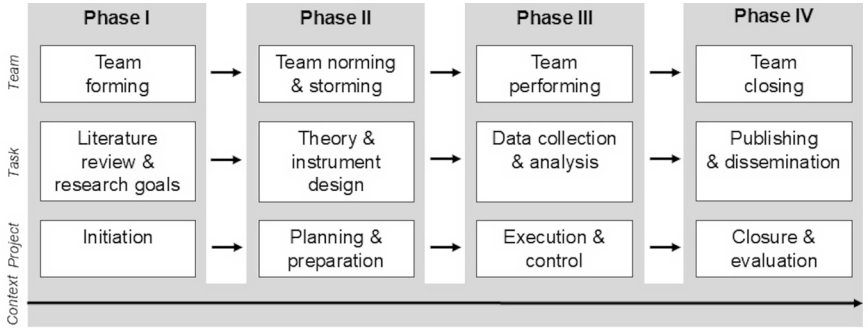
Even though research collaborations bring many advantages, any type of teamwork is also associated with challenges, which may constrain or prevent fruitful collaboration (Bozeman et al., 2013; Bozeman & Youtie, 2017; Sonnenwald, 2007). International research teams, which often work on temporary projects across geographic locations and time zones, arguably face more complications than national teams due to cultural, epistemological, or contextual differences between team members (Kosmuetzky, 2018; Mante-Meijer & Haddon, 2005; Walsh & Maloney, 2007). Although science studies, the sociology of science, the science of team science, and organizational psychology have been empirically researching collaborations for some time, very little is known to date about collaborations, especially in the social sciences and in an international setting (e.g., Chen et al., 2019).

This also applies to international research teams in communication and media studies. Such research teams can be organized very differently (Esser & Hanitzsch, 2012): some follow a truly collaborative model of teamwork where all collaborators are equal (e.g., Lauerer & Hanitzsch, 2019), whereas others are organized in a centralized way and directed by one country with leadership authority (e.g., Volk et al., 2025), while others are very independent and work rather individually than collaboratively. However, the various challenges that arise in international research teams in communication and media studies have hardly been researched to this point (Powers & Vera-Zambrano, 2018). While several studies have attempted to identify which solutions can help to mitigate typical challenges in the natural sciences, that is, which factors can facilitate or enable fruitful collaboration (e.g., Bozeman & Youtie, 2017; Meissner et al., 2022; Olson et al., 2008; Stokols et al., 2008), there are no empirical studies that have focused specifically on communication and media studies, except for a qualitative study by Volk (2021).

While it can be assumed that some of the challenges of international collaboration are common to all disciplines, the field of communication and media studies may face particular hurdles due to its fragmentation, diversification, and hyper specialization and its lack of a "theoretical or analytical center that could lend intellectual coherence to a vast academic field" (Waisbord, 2019, p. 121). The fragmentation of communication and media studies arguably makes it more difficult for international teams to find a common theoretical and methodological basis. In contrast to researchers in the natural sciences, communication researchers cannot simply assume, for example, that theories about freedom of the press, journalistic ideals, or hate speech "travel" across national borders and have the same meaning in different contexts (Hasebrink & Herzog, 2002; Hasebrink et al., 2009; Wirth & Kolb, 2004). Rather, they must take into account that many theories carry with them a certain "cultural baggage" (e.g., liberal-democratic bias due to their development in Western countries) and that non-Western contexts require different theories. This, in turn, requires theoretical flexibility and openness to the development of new theories on the part of all participants. This specificity of the discipline can thus be a particular obstacle to collaboration and may even be exacerbated by the different national academic cultures of communication scholars, who may bring different epistemologies (e.g., positivist, empiricist, constructivist, or hermeneutic) to a team (e.g., Averbeck-Lietz & Löblich, 2017).

Following the conceptualization by Volk (2021), which has built on the literature on team science (e.g., Engelbrecht et al., 2016; Sonnenwald 2007) and theories of temporary organizations (e.g., Kosmuetzky, 2018; Wöhlert, 2020), both the challenges and solutions of international research collaboration can be differentiated according to the "level" and the "phase" in which they occur during a collaboration process (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Levels and phases of research collaborations (source: adapted from Volk, 2021, p. 361)



First, a conceptual distinction can be made between four levels at which challenges and solutions may arise (Volk, 2021):

- At the *team level*, which refers to the social dynamics of a collaboration, challenges and solutions can occur, for example, with regard to team diversity, geographic distance, trust among or commitment of team members.
- At the *task level*, which refers to the actual research of a collaboration, challenges and solutions can occur, for example, with regard to the choice of methods, labor division, or coordination.
- At the *project level*, which refers to the structure and organization of a collaboration, challenges and solutions can occur, for example, with regard to the acquisition of project funding, project management, leadership, or communication.
- At the *context level*, which refers to the environmental conditions of a collaboration, challenges and solutions can occur, for example, with respect to academic or national cultures, or surrounding geopolitical and societal contexts.

Second, a conceptual distinction can be made according to the phase during which particular *team-*, *task-*, and *project*-related challenges emerge and solutions are implemented; empirical research suggests that *contextual* challenges and solutions do not fluctuate over time (Volk, 2021).

I. In the *initiation phase*, challenges can arise and solutions may be implemented, especially when it comes to putting together a diverse team and agreeing on research questions and the organizational structure of a project.

II. In the *planning phase*, challenges may arise and solutions may be implemented, particularly in the search for a common basis in the teams, the consensus on theoretical frameworks and instruments, and the preparation and planning of data collection.
III. In the *execution phase*, challenges may arise and solutions may be implemented, particularly with regard to the ongoing commitment and performance of team members, overcoming obstacles to data collection and analysis, and monitoring progress and budget.
IV. In the *closing phase*, challenges may arise, and solutions may be implemented, especially when it comes to maintaining the motivation of team members, finalizing and disseminating publications, and evaluating and reporting on the success of the project.

Based on these distinctions, in what follows, the chapter provides an overview of typical challenges and typical solutions of international research collaborations in communication and media studies. It relies both on anecdotal reflections of research projects and the qualitative study by Volk (2021), which was based on expert interviews with 15 communication scholars from 10 countries who served as project leaders of international research teams and reported on their experiences with collaborative research projects.

Typical challenges of international research collaborations

International research collaborations in communication and media studies may face various challenges at the level of the team, task, project, and context, which often overlap and fluctuate over time. As there is no quantitative research on the scope and frequency of these challenges, only approximations of typical challenges can be given based on the qualitative study mentioned above.

Team-related challenges

Team-related challenges are manifold and likely more pronounced than challenges at other levels. A frequently mentioned problem in the initiation phase concerns the difficult team building and time-consuming search for potential collaborators, particularly from the Global South. Since personal networks or friendships seem to prominently influence team composition (e.g., see Cohen et al., 2013; Wilke & Heimprecht, 2012; Wirth & Kolb, 2004) and researchers from non-Western countries are often less represented at international conferences where networks are built due to limited travel funds, they are potentially excluded from such networks (e.g., see Takahashi, 2023). In addition, due to the comparatively small size of the discipline, there are only a limited number of colleagues from the Southern Hemisphere with expertise in a specific topic and comparative methods. Moreover, as each country typically has to raise its own funds, researchers from the Global South are often structurally disadvantaged due to poorer funding conditions (e.g., see Cohen, 2012; Lauerer & Hanitzsch, 2019). Finally, pragmatic considerations are also relevant for team composition, which are oftentimes influenced by the politically motivated interests of national or regional funding agencies (such as the EU)

in finding collaborators from specific countries (e.g., see Hasebrink et al., 2009; Lauerer & Hanitzsch, 2019).

When team building is successful and teams begin working together, other problems often arise. The most common barrier faced by teams is probably the varying degrees of commitment or lack of commitment of individual members throughout a collaboration process, for example, individuals' unreliability, unpunctuality, or non-responsiveness (Volk, 2021). Another prominent challenge is diversity in the team, such as when members have different theoretical preferences (e.g., macro vs. micro level theories) or methodological preferences (e.g., qualitative vs. quantitative methods) and come from various disciplinary backgrounds (e.g., sociology, political science, psychology). While team diversity can be a source of creativity and innovation, it can also make building consensus throughout collaboration difficult (Hanitzsch et al., 2019; Wilke & Heimprecht, 2012). In addition, the goals of the collaborators can also differ and lead to conflicting goals or destructive internal competition (Cohen, 2012), ultimately even resulting in team member drop-out. In international teams, geographical distance and working across different time zones also pose a challenge, as face-to-face meetings and informal discussions are only possible to a limited extent (e.g., see Cummings & Kiesler, 2005; Walsh & Maloney, 2007). Moreover, especially for large teams, a team spirit or shared identity as a team can be difficult to achieve.

Task-related challenges

At the task level, the conceptual and methodological complexity of international research projects, in particular, is probably the most typical obstacle. For example, disagreements about a common theoretical framework that is suitable to different contexts (e.g., journalism ideals) can arise and lead to poor compromises that fall short of comparative goals (e.g., see Edelstein, 1982; Hanusch & Hanitzsch, 2017). In addition, difficulties typically arise in developing adequate instruments (e.g., context sensitive emic or standardized etic instruments) and achieving equivalent translations across different languages (Hanitzsch et al., 2019; Hasebrink et al., 2009). Furthermore, international teams may face difficulties in targeting hard-to-reach groups such as journalists or politicians, especially in non-democratic countries, accessing media archives and particularly non-digitized media, or dealing with varying database restrictions and legal situations in different countries. Furthermore, the division of tasks poses a typical problem because national subprojects are often strongly interdependent, since equivalence is to be achieved, and require high levels of methodological expertise from all collaborators (e.g., see Mante-Meijer & Haddon, 2005; Wilke & Heimprecht, 2012). Other typical challenges include unclear responsibilities for tasks and coordinator roles, and insufficient or varying data quality between sub-projects, which can lead not only to conflicts but also to lack of comparability or even failure to achieve the project objectives (e.g., see Lauerer & Hanitzsch, 2019). Such challenges often surface in the planning and execution phases (i.e., during instrument development and data collection).

Project-related challenges

In terms of project-related challenges, the biggest obstacles appear to be in the areas of communication and leadership. Communication problems particularly include language barriers among non-native English speakers but also a lack of sufficient or informal communication, which can both lead to misunderstandings and loss of information. The fact that English is the lingua franca in academia, and is consequently used in most research collaborations, can be a disadvantage, especially for researchers from the Global South, where English may not be taught or spoken as frequently as in Western countries (Suzina, 2021). Especially in the initiation phase of a project, obtaining sufficient funding poses a typical challenge, ranging from general uncertainties related to insufficient funding in different national contexts to complicated administrative requirements of the funding organization (especially the EU), or to the unwanted influence of private sponsors on the project (e.g., see Esser & Hanitzsch, 2012). In addition, a lack of or unstable leadership and unplanned shifts in management tasks during the course of the project often pose a challenge, which may result in negative consequences, such as budget or schedule overrun. When resources are unequally distributed in teams and Western scholars have privileged positions in teams, this can possibly also result in acceptance problems for the project leadership (e.g., see Wilke & Heimprecht, 2012). Over time, project-related challenges are likely to surface across all phases.

Context-related challenges

At the contextual level, challenges are likely to arise in relation to different cultural norms, for example, when team members from different backgrounds have conflicting working styles (e.g., with regard to punctuality) or diverging expectations about academic hierarchies (e.g., authority, power distance) or gender roles. In larger international teams, national academic cultures in particular can create tension. For example, when positivist-empirical approaches typical of Anglophone cultures clash with hermeneutic epistemologies, which are more prevalent in the French or Latin American contexts (e.g., see Averbeck-Lietz & Löblich, 2017). Moreover, team members may hold conflicting assumptions about scientific quality and rigor (e.g., with regard to "messy and fuzzy" datasets, see Badr, 2023) or diverging views of research as a form of activism (Hasebrink et al., 2009; Mante-Meijer & Haddon, 2005). The sociopolitical environment can also become an obstacle, particularly in situations where political instability or war among countries hinders or complicates collaboration, for example, when researchers from regions in direct conflict with each other (e.g., Israel and the Middle East, Russia and Ukraine) are to work together. Different degrees of academic freedom in different countries can also pose challenges, especially for researchers from non-democratic countries with restricted freedom of expression who may have more difficulty carrying out certain research or even fear safety concerns or reprisals (Badr, 2023).

Typical solutions of international research collaborations

In addressing the multiple challenges, international research teams in communication and media studies can draw on different solutions at the team, task, project, and context levels, which can be combined in different ways and at different times to avoid or mitigate obstacles. There is no large-scale evidence on the prevalence of specific solutions in international research teams, but it is likely that the adoption of a solution depends on the project configurations and the project coordinator. In what follows, typical solutions identified in a qualitative study by Volk (2021) are described.

Team-related solutions

At the team level, a typical solution is to invest a significant amount of time in assembling a reliable and committed team, taking into account not only scientific but also "soft" criteria, such as pre-existing relationships (e.g., prior collaborations) and trust (e.g., reliability). For fruitful diversity in a team, members should have a common scientific perspective, but also bring different expertise, skills, and contextual knowledge to the table (e.g., see Hantrais, 2009) and have a genuine interest in the research subject. Differences in the goals of individual team members (e.g., regarding publications or authorships) should be discussed and reconciled at the beginning. To address team cohesion issues, a common solution is to invest time in team building and cultivating the imagination of a team as a "family" or "community" (Volk, 2021). Team building can rely on the creation of frequent team events (e.g., during international conferences) and opportunities for socializing and informal conversations, such as team lunches or dinners (e.g., Mante-Meijer & Haddon, 2005; Wöhlert, 2020). In addition, creating and maintaining a good working atmosphere in which team members trust each other and practice mutual respect, openness, and a willingness to compromise is a typical approach to prevent or deal with conflicts.

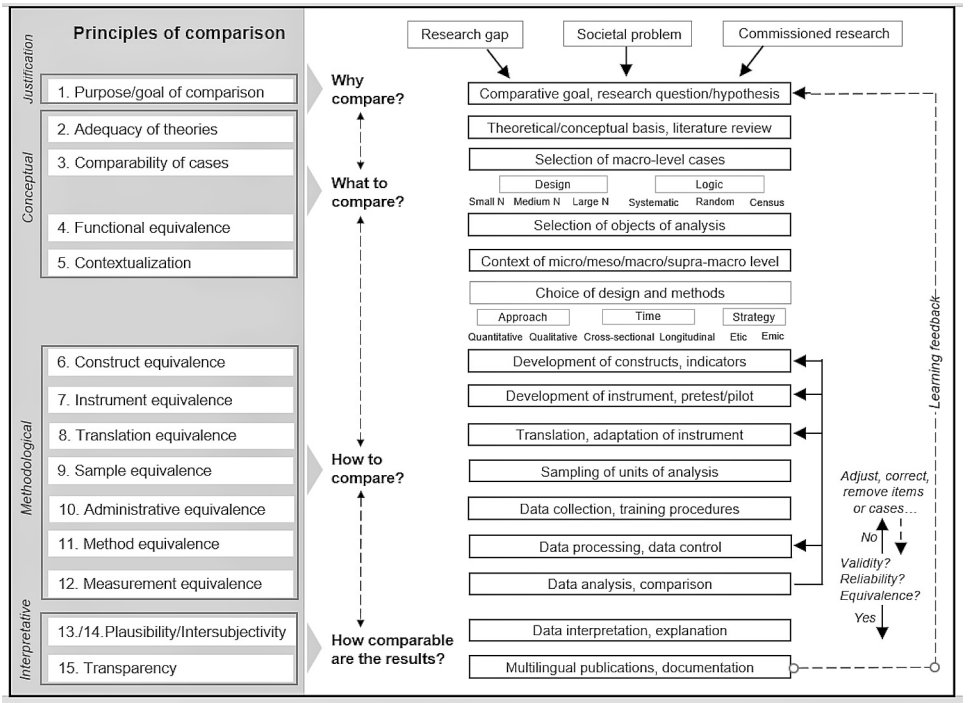
Task-related solutions

A typical solution to task-related challenges is to establish decentralized coordinators, typically at the country or regional level, to monitor data collection and coordinate work progress (e.g., Lauerer, 2023). To prevent shortfalls in task fulfillment, a common solution is to divide work packages based on interests and expertise and decouple tasks from each other so that collaborators can work less interdependently. A common approach to address the complexity of comparative research is to allow sufficient time for theoretical discussions about core concepts and definitions and for developing a common understanding of scientific principles that guide data collection and analysis. To support collaborators with varying methodological skills, written instructions (e.g., guidelines), method training (e.g., coding, data analysis), or support structures (e.g., statistical consultation) can be set up (Hanitzsch et al., 2019). For the problems posed by reintegrating separated work packages or datasets collected at the country level, one solution is to provide standardized templates and detailed guidelines for all methodological steps

(e.g., instruments, sampling), facilitating the harmonization of datasets for the purpose of comparative analysis.

Teams can follow the proposed process model for comparative communication research (Figure 2) and discuss the requirements for comparability and equivalence step-by-step (Volk, 2021, p. 111). At the justification level, teams need to answer the initial question: What is the rationale for a comparison, that is, *Why compare?* At the conceptual level, teams need to answer the question *What to compare?* and agree on an appropriate theoretical approach for comparison, select comparable cases and equivalent objects, and conceptualize the role of contextual factors. At the methodological level, it is imperative that teams discuss *How to compare?* and establish equivalence of constructs, instruments, translations, samples, administration, methods, and measurements. Finally, at the interpretative level, teams need to reflect on *How comparable are the results?* and discuss the findings against the background of contextual conditions as well as in light of possible limitations or alternative explanations.

Figure 2: Process model of comparative communication research (source: Volk, 2021, p. 111)



Project-related solutions

At the project level, various solutions can be adopted to tackle problems, not only with respect to project management issues but also team- or task-related problems. One of the most common solutions is to discuss and formalize agreements at the beginning of a

research project, for example, regarding authorship, data access and ownership, or intellectual property rights (Cohen, 2012; Lauerer & Hanitzsch, 2019). Such formalized agreements should also define clear project goals, time plans, and work packages, as well as sanctions to be applied if team members do not fulfill their tasks (e.g., no access to full comparative datasets; Lauerer & Hanitzsch, 2019). Another common solution for avoiding difficulties in project management is to establish a clear leadership structure and self-governing bodies, such as an executive board, in the initiation phase. Appropriate digital communication infrastructures (e.g., videoconferencing), suitable tools for collaboration (e.g., Google Docs, Slack), and regular meetings can mitigate communication losses (e.g., Wilke & Heimprecht, 2012). An egalitarian discussion culture and clear decision-making rules (e.g., voting mechanisms) can facilitate efficient consensus. To solve funding problems, cross-financing of countries with fewer or no resources by well-resourced (mostly Western) universities or countries can be used (e.g., Hanitzsch et al., 2019). Also, pre-structured templates for national funding applications can be provided to improve the chances of success in obtaining funding.

Context-related solutions

At the contextual level, solutions often aim to make cultural diversity and differences between national academic cultures fruitful and to use potential points of friction in a productive way (Volk, 2021). Such solutions typically try to appeal to team members' sensitivity and tolerance toward cultural differences, to a mindset of openness to other epistemological perspectives, and to patience and reflexivity (e.g., Bozeman & Youtie, 2017; Haintrais, 2009). In the event of conflicts, a constructive or even humorous approach to dealing with differences (e.g., joking about cultural stereotypes) can help to seek a good compromise (Volk, 2021). In order to prevent sociopolitical aspects from having a negative impact on research, one solution is to leave political differences aside as far as possible and instead focus on common goals—namely, the joint research project.

Toward assembling truly international research teams

This chapter has examined the composition of international teams and shown that they are often characterized by power asymmetries and are not inclusive of scholars from the Southern hemisphere. It has described and systematized typical challenges and solutions to international collaboration, showing that assembling *truly* international teams poses a considerable challenge in itself. Yet, teams need to become more internationally inclusive—even if this means more potential for friction—because it can be assumed that increased diversity of disciplinary, epistemological, theoretical, and cultural backgrounds will be beneficial for the progress of the discipline. Looking ahead, more research is needed to examine the power asymmetries in international research teams, underlying structural causes, and consequences for what is (not) researched.

There have already been many statements and demands on how the "decentering," "de-Westernization," "deep internationalization," or "cosmopolitan transformation" of the discipline can and should be advanced (e.g., Badr et al., 2020; Curran & Park, 2000;

Waisbord, 2019). What they probably have in common is that further development of the discipline is to be understood as a joint responsibility of various actors in the academic community and science policy.

With regard to the question of how research teams can become more truly international in the future, the following demands can be made of *researchers*, *associations*, and *funding institutions*:

a) *Researchers in the Global North* can contribute to more inclusive teams by not only looking for collaborators in their existing networks but by specifically addressing calls for participation to researchers from the Global South and practicing openness toward different theoretical and epistemological approaches (Ganter & Badr, 2022). They could use AI-powered translation tools for identifying and translating relevant publications from journals published in languages other than English to engage with research written in Arabic, Chinese, French, Spanish, and so forth. When setting up project management structures, leadership or coordinator roles should be equally distributed across regions, rather than being dominated by Western scholars. To counteract structural inequalities within research teams, resources can be redistributed so that richer countries cross-fund data collection in less well-financed countries (Lauerer, 2023). Including colleagues from non-Western countries with contextual knowledge and language skills promises valuable insights, as data could be gained about regions that have so far been underrepresented in communication and media studies, which would be beneficial for future theorizing and context sensitive research (Hantrais, 2009). Since large heterogeneous teams may have more potential for conflict than small teams, it is advisable for project leaders to anticipate typical pitfalls and prevent them as best as possible in order to find a good balance between efficiency, scientific rigor, and inclusivity (Lauerer, 2023). For this purpose, they can draw on a growing number of toolkits and best practice guides for successful team research (e.g., Bennett et al., 2018; Facer & Enright, 2016).
b) *Researchers from the Global South* can participate in virtual conferences or workshops, use online platforms to make their research and expertise visible, and express interest in collaborative opportunities. They can gain collaboration experience in local settings and build regional networks within the Global South (e.g., Demeter et al., 2023), which may also lend them more visibility in other scientific communities. Since international professional associations are the main venue for scientific exchanges, becoming a member provides access to global networks and information on international projects seeking partners. To attend international conferences and network with other scholars in person, researchers can search for funding opportunities and conference grants specifically designed for researchers from underrepresented geographic regions. They can also take advantage of the recent internationalization efforts of international associations, such as making submissions in languages other than English, editing special issues with a regional focus on scholarship from the Global South, or hosting regional conferences (e.g., Takahashi, 2023). Moreover, they can take advantage of free AI-powered tools for translation or English copy editing of their manuscripts and submit them to high-impact journals, which are key to international visibility.

c) *Scientific associations* can take further steps to foster genuine internationalization, both at the central level and at the level of divisions (Badr et al., 2020). On the one hand, they should continue to support but also invest more in reducing conference fees or subsidizing travel grants for scholars from underrepresented countries, or provide competitive funding grants for innovative research ideas, especially from the Global South. On the other hand, they could establish mentorship networks or virtual workshops (e.g., providing advice for conference submissions, publishing, and first-time attendees) and offer virtual networking platforms that enable building more diverse and inclusive research networks (e.g., Esser, 2023; Lauerer, 2023; Mitchelstein, 2023). Conference planners should ensure that research from the Global North and South is not segregated, and that research is equally visible (e.g., Esser, 2023). Efforts for internationalization should also concern the structures of associations and affiliated journals, for example, by filling more leadership positions with researchers from non-Western regions.

d) *Funding agencies* need to create more suitable framework conditions for international research in the social sciences, for example, by developing appropriate internationalization strategies and cooperating more with non-Western national funding agencies to enable cross-border research. Targeted funding of smaller North–South collaborations is needed (Waisbord, 2023), as research shows that collaboration partners are often selected pragmatically on the basis of calls for proposals for third-party funding. In addition, more funding lines for comparative research on a small international scale are desirable.

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