

# Science Communication and Storytelling

OWN YOUR STORY

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# Introduction

## What is Communication and Storytelling in Research?

Oeduverse's science communication module addresses ownership of the academic narrative in a process-driven and experiential way. The title of the module block is: Own Your Story. It invites early career researchers to get in touch with their motivations and articulate their authentic 'research story'. The module enables researchers to think like designers, engage in the process, identify and articulate their needs, imagine their optimal academic scenarios and learn to communicate their ideas to diverse audiences. The overarching question of the course is: How do you stay in control of your research story and prevent expectations, stress or fear from overtaking and telling your story instead of you?

## The Need for Communication and Storytelling in Research Training for a Sustainable Researcher Education

It is often a challenge for researchers to explain the importance and potential of their work to colleagues, committees, funding partners or the general public. Especially if they have not been trained in storytelling and communication skills, and are primarily focused on the scientific work itself.

The module enables researchers to use communication skills and story-telling principles to make complex or technical content easier and more accessible to a diverse audience. In addition, the module offers tools to translate these principles and skills into one's own research practice and to draw up a workable roadmap.

Sharing experiences with peers, identifying problems and possible interfaces with (non-scientific) target audiences and stakeholders is an empowering experience for the participants. It evokes a horizontal mindset that enables the participants to define the conditions and relationships and to identify the necessary changes leading to their optimal research environment.

## Goals of the Training

- Connect to your authentic story and design your optimal research environment.
- Address the ownership of your academic narrative.
- Think like a designer, imagine your ideal scenarios, map and articulate your needs and learn to communicate your ideas to diverse audiences.
- Collect tools that enable you to 'own your story', to have a sense of agency ; storytelling and presentation skills
- Exercise new ways of using your imagination and apply that in your communication and storytelling



- Gain insight into how you communicate about your work to various audiences
- Formulate your needs and envision your optimal research environment and career development
- Create your personal roadmap of resilience

## Meeting points and Synergies with other Training

The Science Communication (SC) module is on the last day of the Oeduverse Summer/Winter University/Hackathon and provides communication tools to summarise the insights gained by the participants during the Open Science (OS) and Mental Health (MH) modules into an actionable roadmap in which all modules are represented.

The SC module overlaps with the other modules in several aspects, like working on research communication in different media to diverse audiences (OS module) and allow participants to articulate their needs for an optimal research environment (MH module).



# Communication and Storytelling in Research - Own your Story

## The Training Day Concept

The immersive storytelling of Own Your Story unfolds from the daily practice of the researchers, starting with the mapping of personal motivations and career plans:

What drives you as a researcher and how do you stay true to your motivation? How do you envision the optimal research environment that supports your needs and helps you thrive? What are the obstacles you face? How can you connect to peers, supervisors, stakeholders, or non-academic audiences?

The Own Your Story workshop includes design thinking, (immersive) storytelling, communication and presentation assignments suitable for online and offline learning environments. Participants work individually, in smaller groups and in a plenary setting. They design, communicate, present and give feedback to each other. Active listening, clear and engaging communication, constructive feedback and authentic presentation are the recurring elements of the training.

At the end of the module the participants make a visual roadmap, a communication action plan that describes the steps towards their optimal research environment.

## Day Schedule

The day is divided into four sections:

PART 1 | YOUR AUTHENTIC STORY

PART 2 | STAY TRUE TO YOUR STORY & THRIVE

PART 3 | COMMUNICATE YOUR STORY TO DIVERSE AUDIENCES

PART 4 | ROADMAP



See here in detail:

## Module III: Science Communication: Own Your Story

### Facilitators

Speakers: Petra Ardai, SPACE  
Esther Verhamme, SPACE

### Preparation

We ask you to come with curiosity and an active attitude.  
Prepare yourself to join this session with video on.

### 9:00 - 9:40

#### Introduction- ownership of the story

Thinking like an artist  
The unknown as a source of creativity  
Interactive assignments and plenary discussion

### 9:40 - 10:00

#### Mapping motivation, Goals, Impact

In this interactive session you will map what motivates you and your fellow researchers. What is the optimal research environment that would support your goals?  
In this session you exercise active listening, empathising, and reframing context. You work in groups/ pairs in break out rooms

### 10:00 - 10:30

#### BREAK & Preparing Presentation

You prepare a short but engaging presentation based on the interview with your peer by reframing their story to communicate the impact. Individual work.

### 10:30 - 11:30

#### Presentation

During the presentations you look at communication and storytelling skills like framing and structure, and presentation skills like clarity, focus, tone of voice. You will reflect on online and non verbal body language and the culture of feedback giving. Plenary discussion.

### 11:30 - 12:00

#### Define the optimal research environment

In this session, you map and discuss the optimal research environment that would support your motivation, goals and envisioned impact of your research.  
Interactive mapping with plenary discussion.

### 12:00 - 13:30

#### LUNCH



<b>13:30 - 14:00</b>	<p><b>Challenges, Obstacles, Change</b>          In this session you will define the challenges you need to overcome to create change.          Interactive mapping and plenary discussion</p>
<b>14:00 - 14:30</b>	<p><b>Target Audience</b>          In this session you define challenging target groups and develop a communication strategy to connect to them.          Group work in break out rooms.</p>
<b>14:30 - 15:00</b>	<p><b>Presentation</b>          Presenting profile of target audience and communication strategy.          Plenary discussion.</p>
<b>15:00 - 15:15</b>	<p><b>BREAK</b></p>
<b>15:15 - 16:30</b>	<p><b>Rehearsing the Revolution</b></p> <p>You imagine/ ideate the changes you need and design the optimal research environment.          You create a road map of the change.          You exercise design thinking like creating a scenario and prototyping.          Group work in break out rooms.</p>
<b>16:30 - 17:00</b>	<p><b>Roadmaps</b></p> <p>Plenary discussion and feedback session about roadmaps.</p>

## Day Schedule Breakdown

<p><b>Morning</b>  <b>9:00-12:00</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Part 1&amp;2</li> <li>- Introduction: Ownership of the story</li> <li>- Envision the supportive research environment</li> </ul>
<p><b>Afternoon</b>  <b>13:30-17:00</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Part 3&amp;4</li> <li>- Building the story and engaging different audiences</li> <li>- Interactive Transition Game</li> <li>- Working on roadmaps</li> </ul>

### Detailed breakdown of the programme:

#### Morning 9.00 - 12.00



## PART 1 | YOUR AUTHENTIC STORY

Discover your inner powers. Why did you initially become a researcher? Who or what are your motivators? Practise active listening. See yourself through the eyes of your peers. Connect to your incentives.

After a few warming up exercises and introduction the group zooms in on the individual motivations and drives of the participants.

Example of a Warming Up Exercises:

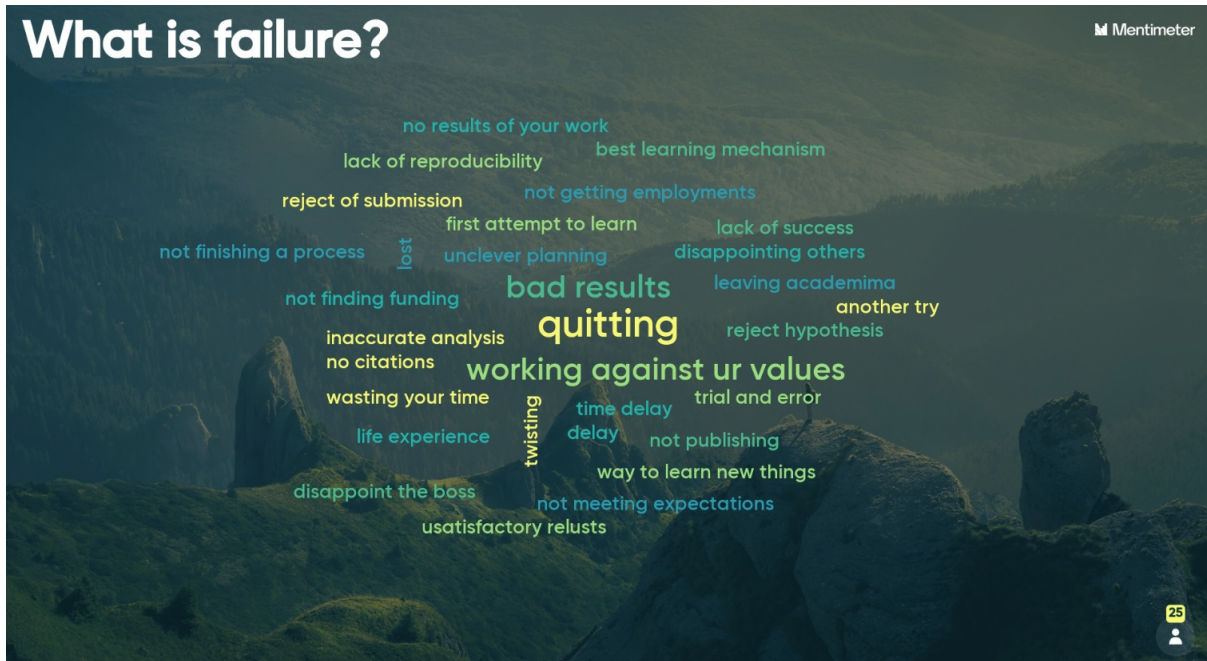


Figure 1: Warm up, asking. “What is failure in your opinion?”

After the warming ups participants interview each other in couples following the questions and subjects below (exercise one).



EXERCISE ONE

**If you knew you could not fail, what would you want to achieve with your research and change the world?**

**What resources inner and outer do you now have to help you achieve that?**  
 Inner resources: Talents, strength of character, as well as knowledge & skills you've acquired.  
 External resources: relationships, contact & networks you can draw on (not to forget babysitters, rich relatives, computer savvy friends, as well as your location, employment, and financial assets).

**What resources inner and outer do you need to acquire to follow your calling? What do you need to learn and to get?** f.e. grants, contacts with supervisors, support your peers and colleagues can give you, assertiveness training.

**How might you stop yourself? What obstacles might you throw in your way?**  
 We all have familiar patterns of self doubt and sabotage

**How will you move through and around these obstacles?**

**What can you do in the next week (no matter how small the step) that will move you along this path?**

Figure 2: Peer exercise for common understanding and a first use of communication skills.



Figure 3: A goal setting experience in the group.

After the short in depth interviews the participants re-frame each other's stories and present it in short plea's to the group. This exercise is an empowering experience for the participants because they realise common ideals, goals and motivations they share. In this exercise both storytelling and presentation skills are tackled.

A selection of responses to questions from different editions of Oeduverse are in the following:

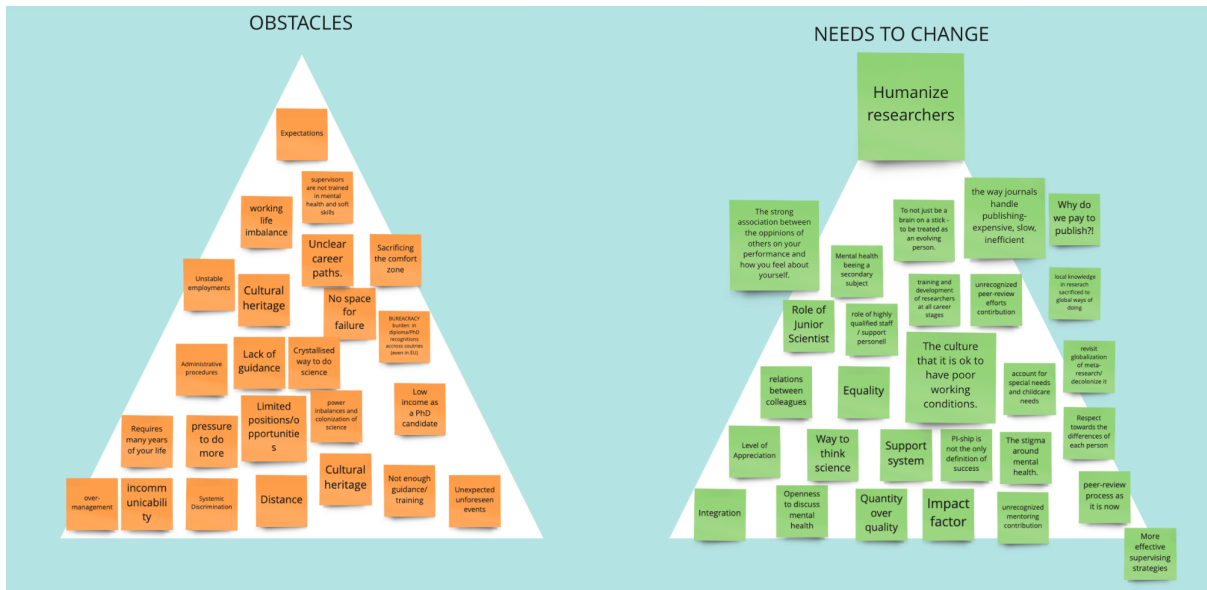




## PART 2 | STAY TRUE TO YOUR STORY & THRIVE

What are your goals? Use your imagination and ideate different futures for your research practice and the academic realm. Identify obstacles and challenges and discover ways to overcome them.

Participants map in small groups the obstacles and challenges and envision the change that would lead to their optimal research environment supporting the motivations and goals gathered in the exercises before.



**Afternoon 13.30 - 17.00**

## **PART 3 | COMMUNICATE YOUR STORY TO DIVERSE AUDIENCES**

Use personas to gain insight in your stakeholders. How do you communicate with different target audiences? Engage, inspire, and persuade without compromising your message.

### **Working with the Persona templates.**

In part 3, after the lunch break the participants discover how to use communication (customised messages) and storytelling to reach effectively and authentically their target audiences. By following the questions below and creating a persona that represents the target audience, they map the needs of relevant stakeholders.

### **Intellectual needs of target audiences**

- How does your research connect to my project?
- Which aspects are not connecting?
- Is this idea novel, interesting and feasible?
- When will it be delivered?
- Is it cost- effective?
- Is it worth my investment?

### **Emotional needs of target audiences**


- Is this person someone I can trust?
- Do I like this person and the way they go about their work?
- Do I admire or share their values?
- Can I see myself / my team working with them?



Examples of mapping stakeholders and target audiences:




### Mr. Rasheed



<b>Keywords</b> Billionaire, manager, CEO, clever	<b>Challenges</b> We have the scientific and transferable skill for the job He is uneducated in my PhD field	<b>Frustrations</b> We have no experience on the corporative world We are much older than him	<b>Responsibility, power</b> Make profit Hiring people	<b>Expectations towards your research</b> That I have the skills need in a corporative world That I increase the profit of the company
	<b>M/W/O</b> Age: 26, public administration, CEO Education Job title	<b>Targets / Ambition</b>	<b>Sources of information</b> CV Referees Supervisors Social media	<b>I am in when</b> The values match
<b>Organisation/ Em</b> pharmacology	<b>(Pre) Knowledge</b> Political science and public administration	<b>What I need to make a decision</b> Not pursuing my expertise Permanent contract	<b>I am out when</b> The salary is good	
<b>Personality</b> Stingy, confident, arrogant				

### Prof Valerie Amos



<b>Keywords</b>	<b>Challenges</b> Economic challenges to manage university, maintaining the good ranking of university, retain students	<b>Frustrations</b> Patriarchal society, impractical ideas	<b>Responsibility, power</b> University Rector, Head of School of Computer Sciences Can make decisions which affect the whole university	<b>Expectations towards your research</b> high quality proposals/ideas excellent speaking skills
	<b>M/W/O</b> Female Age: 55, PhD, MSc Education: Head of the University of Dreams Job title	<b>Targets / Ambition</b> Gaining funding Producing high caliber research High publication/citation rates Making the university more inclusive	<b>Sources of information</b> University HR department, Heads of schools, University communities, Journals, Student Speakers	<b>I am in when</b> University traditional values are met Suggestions that make the university a better place
<b>Organisation/ Employer</b> University of Dreams	<b>(Pre) Knowledge</b> Management Teaching in University Computer engineering Supervising Researching	<b>What I need to make a decision</b> Evidence Assurance that it's economically sustainable	<b>I am out when</b> Suggestions are too vague and not feasible in a short term people are not open to dialogue and to modify their proposals the meeting is too long and she wastes her time	
<b>Personality</b> Responsible, innovative but has traditional values				

By getting to know the person behind the 'scary and powerful' stakeholder the participants get a grip on the angles of communication they can use. As a next step they develop a



communication strategy for presenting the project of one of the participants to the imagined target audience persona.

While creating this communication strategy they focus on the questions:

- What do we need to take into account considering the agenda of the other?
- Where can we create a common ground and what level of interest/ knowledge does this stakeholder have?

## PART 4 | ROADMAP

How do you stay aligned with your motivations and thrive in your research?

1. How does the research environment look like that supports your career plans?
2. What do you want to change?
3. Who are your allies? How can you join forces?
4. What do you say no to, and which tendencies do you embrace?
5. How can communication be the driving force behind the change you envision?
6. Bring all the above elements together into a feasible personal roadmap of the radical change you need.

In this part the participants gather all the insights and learnings of the Science Communication, Mental Health and Open Science modules and translate them into an actionable roadmap articulating the short and long term steps of the change needed to realise their optimal research environment. At the end of the SC module, the participants share their roadmaps in a plenary feedback round as a preparation for their end presentation on Day 5, the closure of the Oediverse Hackathon.





### Example of the slide presentation:

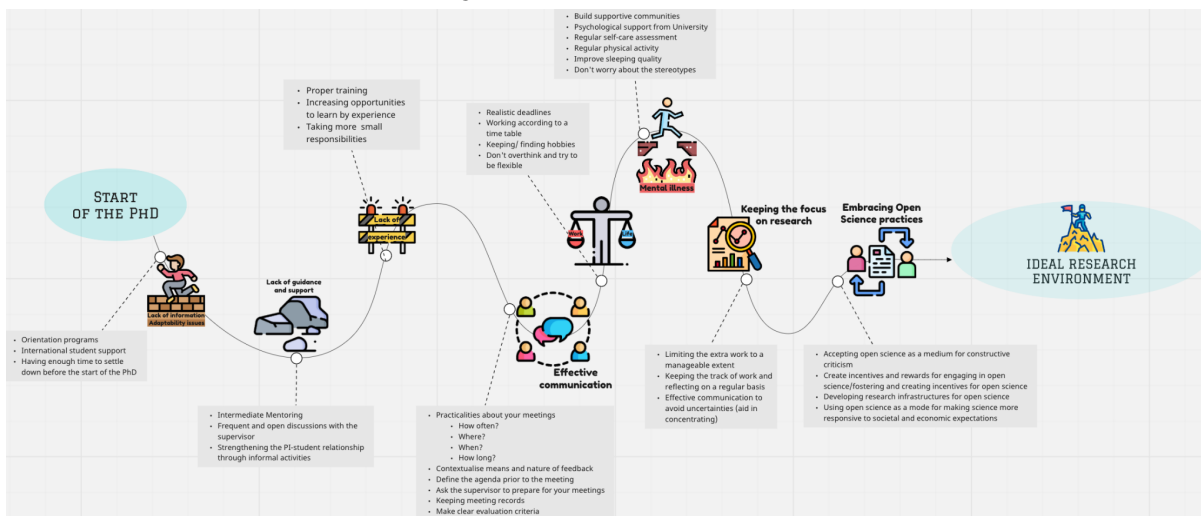
PART 4 | ROADMAP

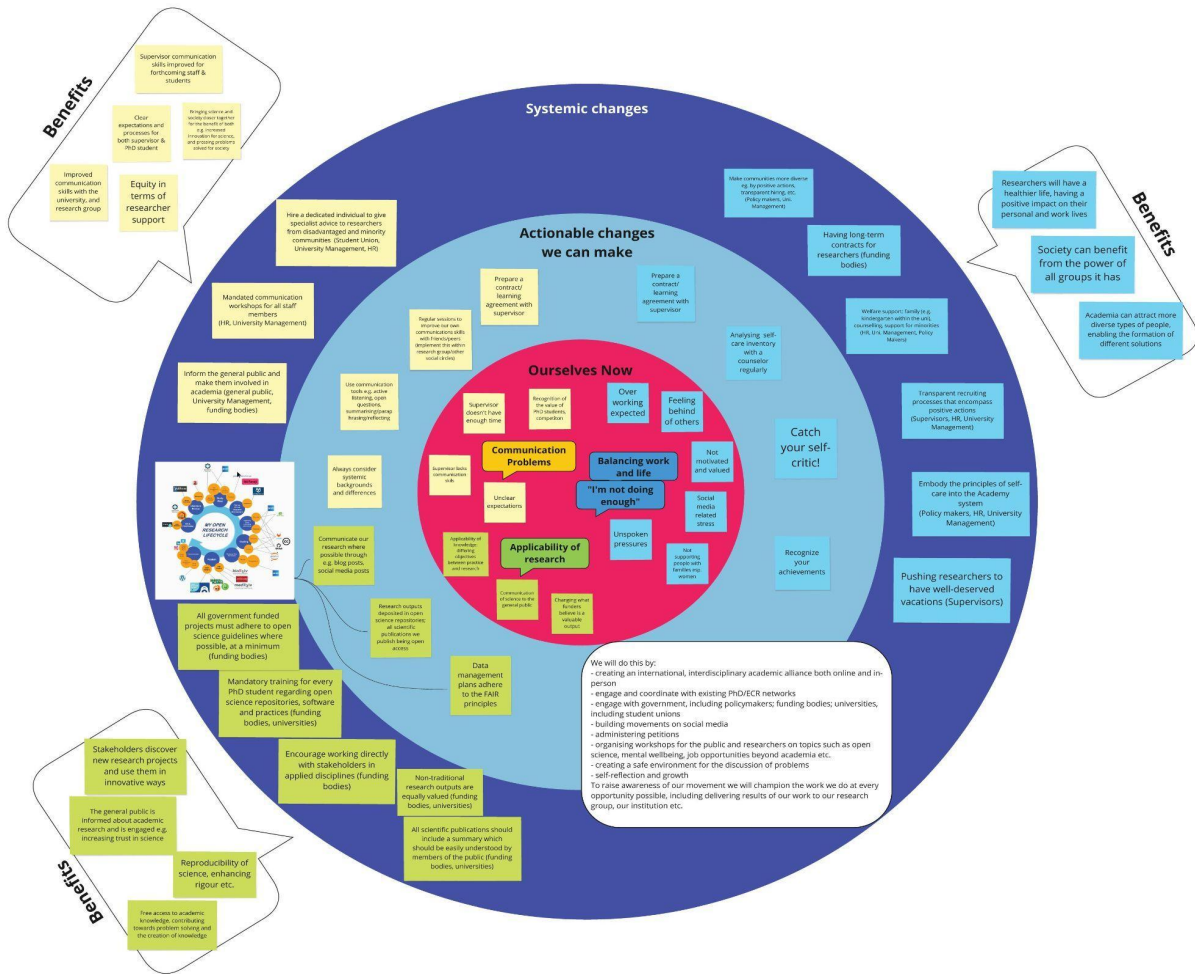
Ideating

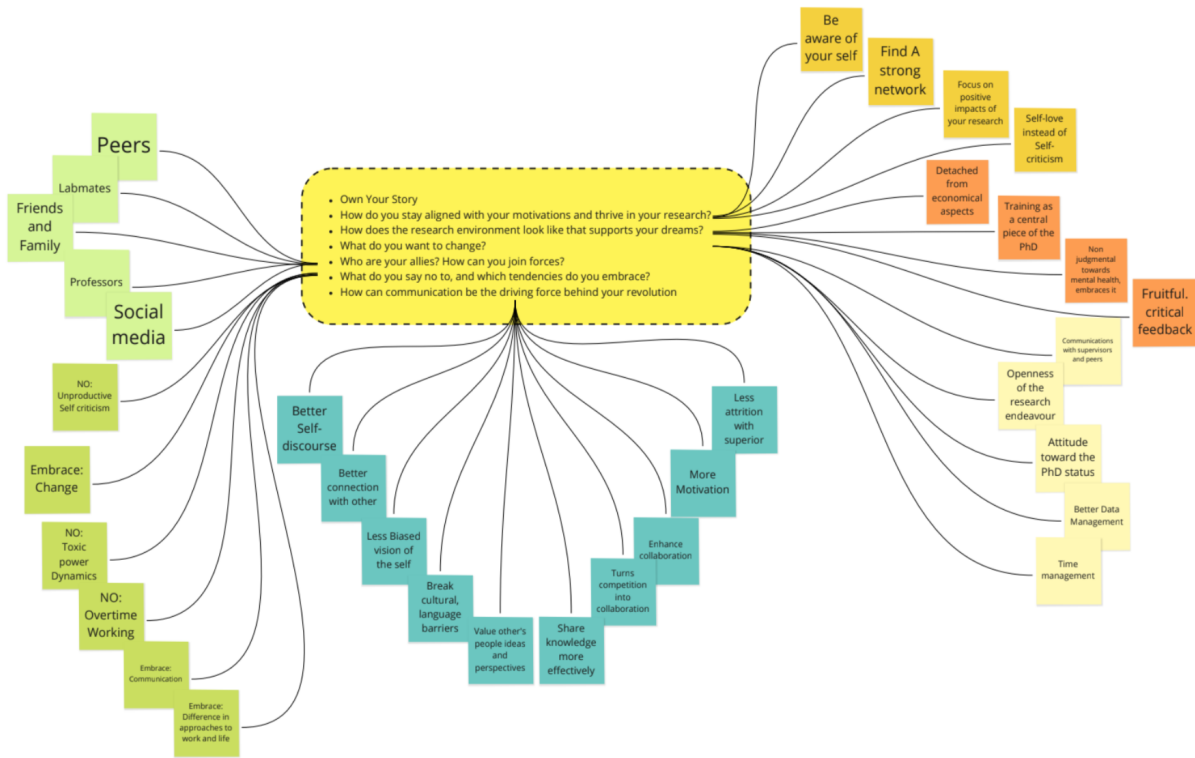
- Which radical changes (revolutions) would help you both (researcher and stakeholder) to create an optimal research environment and collaborate?
- What are the obstacles you need to overcome?
- How can you join forces and prevail?

(30min)

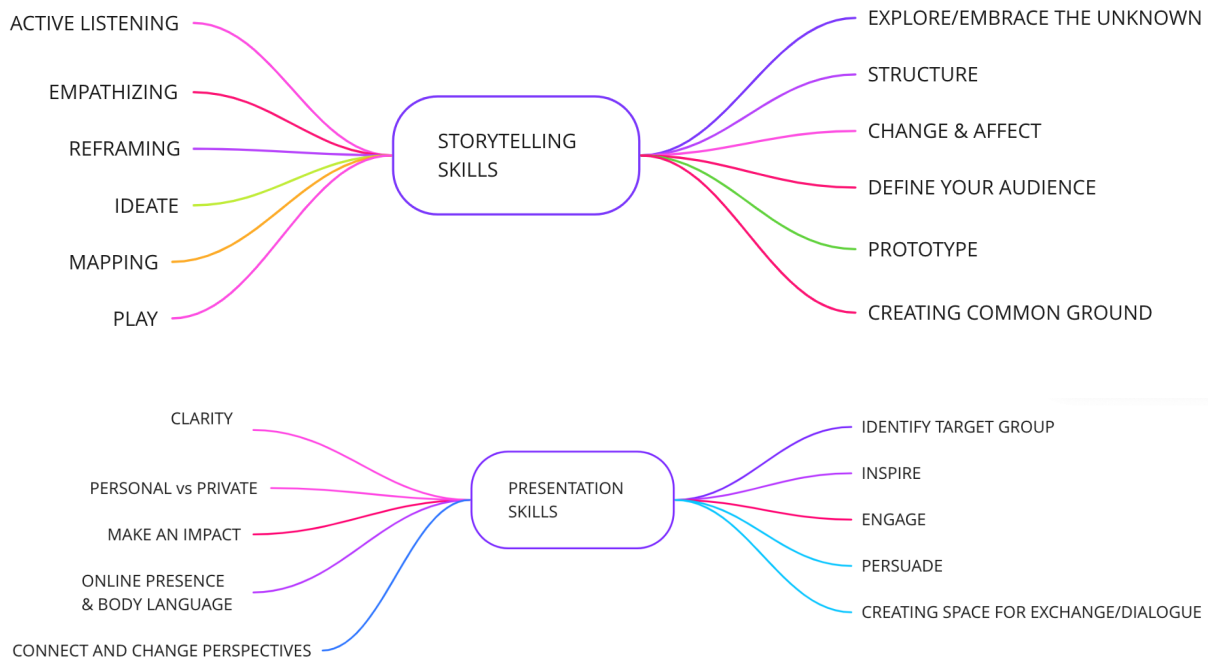
### Examples of roadmaps created by participants:







### Skill learned during Own Your Story:



## Module Hackathon Outputs and Integration

On the last day of the hackathon, the SC module looks at the challenges formulated on day one of the hackathon from a communication strategy and storytelling point of view, integrating all the experiences gained by the participants in the OS and MH modules.

The SC module provides practical tools, information and insights to create the actionable roadmaps that answer the challenges of the Hackathon, but also to adapt these roadmaps to the personal needs of the researcher.

The ideation on the optimal research environment, the essentials of the personal motivations and career plans and the mapping of the target audiences are captured in Miro boards and in Mentimeter outputs.



# Events and Lessons Learned

## Summer School 2021

We have seen that science communication is an important asset in the researchers' toolbox. We observed that the SC module is able to capture the challenges of the Hackathon in actionable roadmaps.

We had a very active group of participants who were eager to think out of the box and formulate their needs by modelling the challenges in the free space of the imaginary.

## Winter School 2022

We realised that early career researchers needed more tools and coaching in presenting, as we had previously expected. We reduced the number of exercises and created more space for presentation, feedback, discussion and exchange of experiences.

As trainers, we gained a better understanding of the communication obstacles the participants face when addressing various stakeholders and adapted the assignments accordingly. We formulated more precise questions that allowed the participants to work on specific cases that were more in line with their personal needs.

