

---

## WORKSHOP ABSTRACT

### Participatory research in caring communities: Practice what you preach?

23<sup>rd</sup> International Conference on Integrated Care, Antwerp, Flanders, 22-24 May 2023

Hanne Bakelants<sup>1</sup>, Suzannah D'Hooghe, Octavia Kint

1: Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Brussels, Belgium

---

**Background:** Participation is presented as a key principle of caring communities. Participatory research directly includes communities and through co-producing knowledge, it would foster sustainable change that matches with local communities' needs. However, in practice, participatory approaches are challenging, and theoretical principles are not always easy to translate in practice.

**Aim:** The goal of this workshop is to jointly advance our understanding of participatory research in relation to caring communities, and to discuss and exchange the challenges and pitfalls related to this type of research.

**Participants:** The workshop is for everyone who is interested in developing, understanding, or evaluating caring communities or wants to be an active part of it. Both people with and without experience in the subject are welcome.

#### **Methods:**

1. Brainstorm about participatory research in relation to caring communities. What is meant by participation in participatory research? Who 'should' participate? (10min)

2. Presenting three case studies using participatory research methods within different community settings (i.e., an urban neighborhood, a municipality, and a higher educational institution) and with different community members (i.e., inhabitants and users of the neighborhood, socioeconomically disadvantaged adults, university students and staff). Each case will present 3 challenges faced within the process. (30min)

- Suzannah D'Hooghe studies the role of the perceived local environment in health-promoting behaviors among socioeconomically disadvantaged adults in two peri-urban municipalities in Flanders. Community-based participatory approaches such as walk-along interviews, photovoice, and focus groups were used to i) identify environmental factors affecting eating behavior and recreational walking, and ii) identify actions to promote healthy eating and stimulate recreational walking.

- Octavia Kint is involved in a co-creative research project on caring communities in two neighborhoods in Brussels. 80% of the neighborhood-built surface is not used for housing, and is characterized by a large presence of 'atypical' neighborhood users: musea, public institutions, companies, shops, commuters,... Together with a group of neighborhood co-researchers we

investigated and experimented with how a caring community could be built together with these 'atypical' neighborhood users.

- Hanne Bakelants studies the development of a Compassionate University in one university setting in Brussels. A participatory action research approach is used in which staff and students
  - i) share challenges they encounter when confronted with serious illness, death, and bereavement,
  - ii) co-define objectives for developing a compassionate initiative within the university context,
  - and iii) co-create and execute an implementation plan in collaboration with the research team.

3. Interactive part: Reflections on case studies: pitfalls, challenges, and opportunities (30 min)

- What are the limits of participation for community stakeholders and researchers?
- How can we increase community support and involve new stakeholders?
- How to deal with power relations?

Participants will be divided into groups to discuss these questions related to their practice, followed by a collective discussion.

4. Closing: Plenary 'sharing' session (20 min)

**End goal:** People will go home having an example of what participatory research can look like in different contexts and the challenges and opportunities that appear in its practical application.