# PAAR.NET

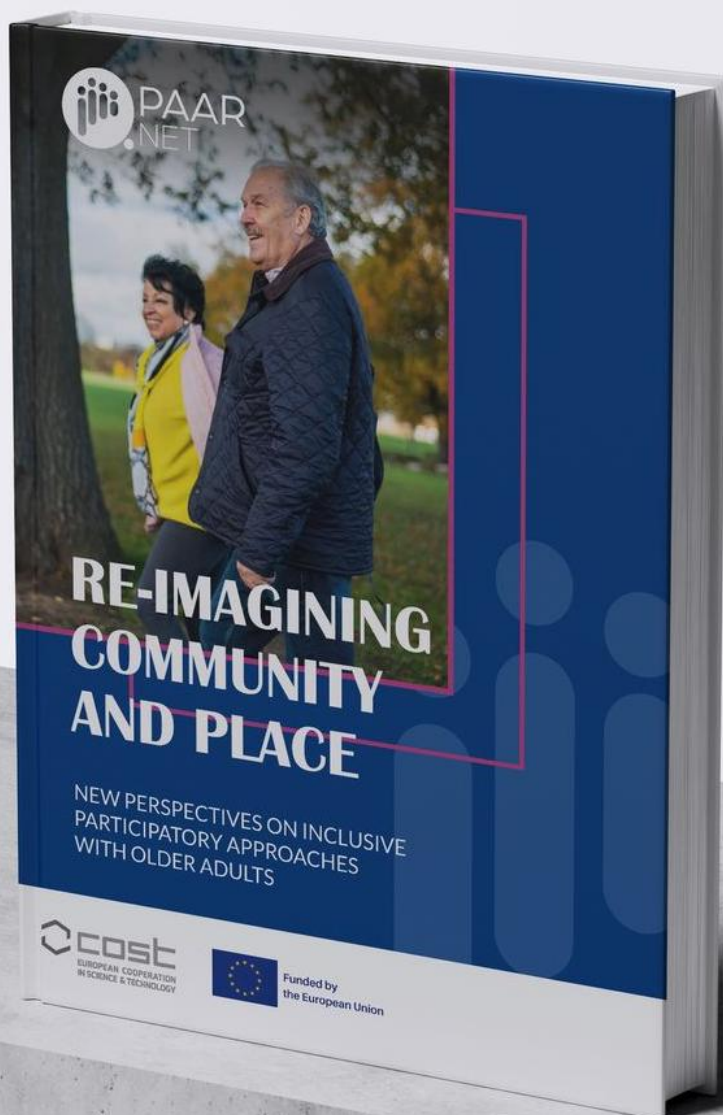## SPOTLIGHT ON CASE STUDIES IN WHITE PAPER 2
## RE-IMAGINING COMMUNITY AND PLACE



### KEY LEARNING AREAS

→ **Social Exclusion and Marginalisation**

→ **Local Networks and Inclusive Decision-Making**

→ **Representation, Intersectionality, and Future Directions**

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# Re-Imagining Community and Place
# INTRODUCTION TO OUR CASE STUDIES

## Learning from Real Experiences of Ageing, Belonging and Participation

The case studies featured form a powerful learning strand within *White Paper 2: Re-Imagining Community and Place*, developed by the PAAR-Net Working Group on Community and Place. Together, they trace how older adults, researchers, and communities across New Zealand, Luxembourg, and France work side by side to build connection, trust, and representation.

### Our Approach

Each case study unfolds in its own cultural and social context but shares a common purpose, **to show that inclusion and belonging are created through practice, relationships, and participation in everyday community life.** Through three insightful case studies, *White Paper 2* and PAAR-Net highlight how community and place are re-imagined when older adults are recognised as partners in knowledge creation and decision-making. Learning are presented in three cross-cutting themes:

* **Social Inclusion and Marginalisation** – how older adults build belonging through participation.
* **Local Networks and Inclusive Decision-Making** – how relationships connect older communities with governance.
* **Representation, Intersectionality, and Future Directions** – how diverse voices can reshape research and policy.

**The insights from the case studies invite reflection on how similar principles can be applied in different contexts to build stronger, more inclusive communities for all ages.**

### New Zealand – Tai Kaumātuatanga: Older Māori Well-being and Participation

*Charles Waldegrave, Giang Nguyen, Monica Mercury, Catherine Love, Chris Cunningham, (The Family Centre Social Policy Research Unit, Lower Hutt, Wellington, New Zealand)*

Māori elders (kaumātua) worked in partnership with researchers through a series of hui, gatherings of reflection, song, and dialogue, to define what wellbeing means within Māori communities. Their collaboration produced the **Māori Wellbeing Scale**, a framework grounded in spirituality, whakapapa, and collective responsibility. The study filled critical evidence gaps and demonstrated how community-led research can shape policy and services that reflect Indigenous values and lived experience.

### Luxembourg – Ageing as a Migrant: Support Networks and Care in (Dependent) Old Age

*Ute Karl (Protestant University of Applied Sciences, Germany), Anne Carolina Ramos (University of Fribourg, Switzerland)*

Through life-story interviews and follow-up conversations, older migrants revealed how language, trust, and informal neighbourhood ties sustain well-being in a multilingual society. Their accounts showed how family and community connections fill the gaps left by formal systems, and how age, migration history, and gender intersect to shape access to care and a sense of belonging. The research gave visibility to a population often excluded from policy debates and highlighted the importance of recognising transnational and linguistic diversity in ageing policy.

### France – Citizen Design: A Participatory Research Project with Older Adults

*Marion Scheider-Yilmaz (PACTE Laboratory, University of Grenoble Alpes, France*

In France, researchers and municipal partners tested a hands-on model of participation that invited older citizens to co-identify local priorities and present practical solutions to decision-makers, including a common assessment framework and toolkit. Working with neighbourhood associations and local councils, participants developed "action sheets" for public discussion, bringing community knowledge into municipal planning. The approach expanded participation in local governance and demonstrated how older adults can help shape more responsive and inclusive public policy.

# Social Inclusion and Marginalisation

**01**

In the context of the *Re-Imagining Community and Place* White Paper, social inclusion is understood as a deeply local process, one that grows through shared spaces, relationships, and participation. Inclusion takes root when older adults are part of shaping the communities they inhabit and can see their presence reflected in the life of that place.

The three case studies in White Paper 2 show that inclusion grows from everyday participation, from conversations that build trust, from neighbours who support one another, and from shared decisions that give people a sense of ownership over their community. When older adults engage as contributors rather than observers, they help reveal what truly sustains community life: relationships, reciprocity, and a sense of shared responsibility for place.

## Collective Participation and Belonging - Māori Wellbeing Framework, New Zealand

The *Tai Kaumātuatanga: Older Māori Well-being and Participation* **study in New Zealand** demonstrates how participatory research can strengthen inclusion while generating practical tools that reflect community realities. Through a series of hui, Māori elders (kaumātua) worked with researchers to co-create a Māori Wellbeing Scale, a framework of indicators that express what a good life means within Māori communities. The scale was built from collective discussions, songs, prayers, and reflections that identified values such as spirituality, interdependence, respect, and contribution to *whānau and community.

By developing the scale together, participants ensured that measures of wellbeing were grounded in lived experience and shaped by local meaning. The process reinforced the role of elders as knowledge holders, strengthened social ties, and produced evidence capable of guiding inclusive policy and community planning. The learning from this work is that when older adults define and measure what matters to them, participation becomes a foundation for belonging, connection, and shared ownership of community life.

**Access on pages 44 - 50**

*\* whānau is a Māori term (that means extended family, but it carries a much deeper social and cultural meaning than the English word "family." It represents a collective unit of care, belonging, and identity, central to Māori wellbeing and community life.*

# Social Inclusion and Marginalisation

**01**

## Networks that Sustain Inclusion, Luxembourg

The **Ageing as a Migrant. Support Networks and Care in (Dependent) Old Age, Luxembourg** case study explores how everyday relationships underpin social inclusion in later life. Through in-depth interviews and follow-up dialogues, older migrants shared how friendship, language, and informal neighbourhood connections help them stay active and engaged, even when formal systems can feel distant. The research revealed that well-being often depends less on services and more on social networks that offer trust, conversation, and belonging.

By returning to participants to discuss findings and refine interpretations, Older migrants became partners in shaping how their experiences were represented, and their insights now inform how communities might better support ageing in place. The learning here is that inclusion grows from connection, from sustaining the networks that make older migrants feel known and valued in the places where they live.

**Access on pages 51- 59**

## Citizen Design and Social Inclusion of Older Adults, France

The *Citizen Design* case study from France illustrates how structured participation can address social marginalisation by giving older adults a visible and influential role in community decision-making. It applied participatory and social design methods to bring older residents and local authorities together in a shared process of problem-solving. Through a series of workshops, participants identified key local issues such as access to services, mobility, and social connection, and developed practical proposals for improvement. These proposals were captured in "action sheets" and presented directly to municipal representatives, ensuring that older people's experiences and ideas informed local planning.

The project successfully engaged older individuals who had been least represented in civic life, providing an inclusive space to build confidence, visibility, and a renewed sense of belonging. It also demonstrated to local authorities how user-driven participation can reveal overlooked barriers to inclusion and lead to more responsive community solutions. Replicated across eight additional regions, *Citizen Design* offers a sustainable model for strengthening social inclusion through everyday participation.

The success of the inclusive tools and methods in engaging participants of varying backgrounds and civic involvement levels highlights the potential for these approaches to be adapted and scaled across different contexts.

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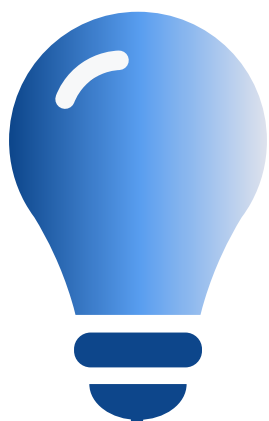
## 01

When older people help define priorities and design solutions, communities become more practical and responsive. Their lived knowledge improves policy and planning because it reflects how services and spaces are actually used..

## 02

Across all three cases, the strongest protection against marginalisation came from everyday relationships, from family, neighbours, and friends. These local networks are the foundation of community life, providing trust, connection, and practical support that formal systems can learn from and build upon.

## 03

Active involvement in research, planning, and civic life helps older adults gain visibility and a stronger voice. Participation shifts their position from being service users to being contributors who help shape the future of their community.

## 04

Communities that routinely involve older adults in planning and decision-making create places where ageing is visible, valued, and connected to the wider social fabric.

## Prompts for Reflection:

- How do our communities recognise and include the voices of older adults in shaping local life? Reflect on who currently participates in community discussions and whose experiences remain unheard.

- What everyday relationships, networks, or spaces could be strengthened to support inclusion and belonging for older people where you live or work?

- How might decision-makers, researchers, and citizens work together to make participation by older adults a normal, valued part of community life?

## Quick Link

https://paar-net.eu/wp-content/uploads/White_paper_WG2.pdf

# Local Networks and Inclusive Decision-Making

**02**

The *findings of White Paper 2* highlight that older adults' participation often begins within the local networks they already trust. These networks of neighbours, family, community groups, and voluntary associations create the relationships that give older people visibility and voice. They are also where ideas about local improvement take shape long before they reach formal decision-making spaces.

In each case study, these everyday networks acted as a bridge between lived experience and structured decision-making. In New Zealand, Māori elders translated community knowledge into a wellbeing framework that local authorities could use. In Luxembourg, older migrants' informal support circles made visible the realities of ageing in a multilingual, mobile society, offering policymakers insight into barriers often missed by formal data. In France, the Citizen Design approach turned residents' local networks into organised participation, connecting citizens directly with municipal leaders through shared workshops and dialogue.

**The key learning from the three case studies can be summarised as**

## Collective Decision-Making through Community Networks, Māori Wellbeing Framework, New Zealand

The *Tai Kaumātuatanga: Older Māori Well-being and Participation* study demonstrates how local governance can grow directly from community relationships. Older Māori identified spirituality, whakapapa, and collective responsibility as the core elements of wellbeing.

Through a series of hui, elders and researchers worked together to develop the Māori Wellbeing Scale, a framework that captures wellbeing through shared values and interdependence between people and place. Each stage of the process was rooted in dialogue and reciprocity. Knowledge from elders shaped the structure and content of the indicators, while the research process itself strengthened community ties and respect between participants. The completed scale gave policymakers a set of measures that reflect community priorities and provide a culturally grounded evidence base for decision-making.

*White Paper 2* notes that this work shows how inclusive governance can emerge when decision-making is embedded in the relationships and networks that sustain community life. The Māori Wellbeing Framework turned collective experience into structured knowledge, creating a model of participation that joins local insight with policy relevance.

# Local Networks and Inclusive Decision-Making

**02**

## Networks of Care and Everyday Decision-Making, Luxembourg

The *Ageing as a Migrant: Support Networks and Care in (Dependent) Old Age* study examined how older migrants in Luxembourg manage daily life through overlapping personal and institutional networks. The research mapped relationships between family, neighbours, friends, and care professionals, showing how these links provide stability and support where formal systems alone are insufficient.

Through biographical interviews and follow-up discussions, older migrants described how language, trust, and reciprocity shaped their access to care and information. These conversations became a shared process of reflection, allowing participants to confirm or challenge how their experiences were represented. The project made visible the everyday negotiations that sustain independence and belonging within complex social systems.

*White Paper 2* highlights this study as evidence that local and linguistic networks function as informal decision-making spaces. They connect older migrants lived realities with policy understanding, ensuring that planning and service delivery take account of how people actually navigate support in multilingual and transnational settings

**Access on pages 51- 59**

## Linking Local Voices to Political Decision-Making, France

The *Citizen Design* initiative in France tested how local participation can influence municipal decision-making. The participants designed and presented concrete solutions to key local players and decision-makers. The two formed groups constituted: one with older adults highly involved in social and civic activities, the other with older adults who are usually less or not involved in such activities.

The project demonstrated that community networks can act as a bridge between citizens and policymakers. Associations and informal groups played a key role in connecting participants with the process and ensuring that different experiences were heard. Direct presentation of ideas to decision makers created an immediate exchange between residents and institutions, turning participation into dialogue rather than consultation.

*White Paper 2* notes that this collaboration changed how local decisions were developed and implemented. It showed that older adults' everyday knowledge adds depth and practicality to municipal planning, while the participatory process itself strengthens the networks that sustain local democracy

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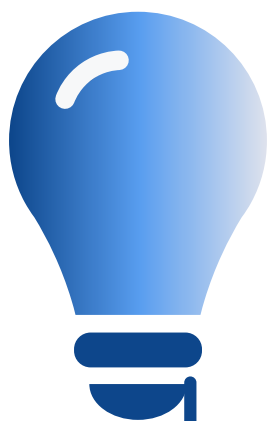
## 01 The Invisible Infrastructure

The *White Paper* highlights that networks of neighbours, family, and voluntary groups do more than provide assistance — they sustain the relationships that hold communities together. They are described as "the invisible infrastructure" that supports ageing in place and ensures that decisions about community life remain connected to real needs.

## 02 Value of formal–informal collaboration

Across all three cases, *White Paper 2* identifies the value of formal–informal collaboration. It notes that inclusive decision-making emerges when "the knowledge of communities, researchers, and local authorities intersect," allowing policy to evolve through dialogue rather than instruction.

## 03 Participatory approaches create legitimacy and accountability

The conclusion of White Paper 2 stresses that involving older adults and their networks in the design of research and policy "strengthens transparency and public trust."

Decisions that grow from community participation are seen as more legitimate because people can trace how their experiences shaped the outcome.

## 04 Inclusion cannot rely on one-off projects

The paper cautions that inclusion cannot rely on one-off projects. It identifies the need for "continuous interaction between community networks and governance structures" so that participation becomes part of how local systems operate, not an occasional exercise in consultation.

## Prompts for Reflection:

- How do older adults contribute to local decision-making through the networks they are part of?
  What support or structures could strengthen the role of older people's networks in shaping how communities plan, prioritise, and respond to change ?

## Quick Link

https://paar-net.eu/wp-content/uploads/White_paper_WG2.pdf

# Representation, Intersectionality, and Future Directions

## 03

*White Paper 2: Re-Imagining Community and Place* positions the three case studies within a broader call to confront the persistent gaps in representation. It emphasises three connected priorities:-

- *hearing the voices of unrepresented groups,*

- *recognising intersectionality in ageing, and*

- *directing future research towards those most affected by exclusion.*

The three case studies illustrate these dynamics in practice. Each reveals both the potential of participatory approaches to reach those who are often overlooked and the structural barriers that continue to limit full inclusion. By widening participation and co-producing knowledge with older adults whose perspectives are rarely prioritised, future research and policy can move beyond describing inequality to transforming the systems that sustain it.

## Representation through Culturally Grounded Participation, New Zealand

The **Participatory Approaches with Indigenous Communities to Improve Policy Responses | *Tai Kaumātuatanga* study** demonstrates how representation in ageing research depends on the ability to generate culturally specific evidence. *White Paper 2* highlights that most policy data overlook uniquely Māori experiences of wellbeing, loneliness, and discrimination. When these realities are not recorded, decision-makers rely on incomplete information, and the distinct needs of Māori elders remain invisible.

By co-creating the Māori Wellbeing Scale, elders and researchers produced knowledge grounded in community values and collective responsibility. This process not only corrected the evidence gap but also showed that Indigenous participation can redefine what counts as valid data. It connected cultural identity, social experience, and structural decision-making — illustrating intersectionality in practice.

The learning from this case sits at the core of *White Paper 2's* final theme: inclusion cannot be achieved without changing how evidence is built and used. Future policy and research must embed Indigenous perspectives within ongoing systems of governance, ensuring that representation is defined by how far culturally grounded knowledge informs actual decision-making

# 03 Representation, Intersectionality, and Future Directions

## Representation and Intersectionality in the Lives of Older Migrants, Luxembourg

The *Ageing as a Migrant: Support Networks and Care in (Dependent) Old Age* case study reveals how representation in later life is shaped by overlapping factors of age, gender, migration, and language. Through biographical interviews and follow-up dialogues, older migrants described navigating fragmented care systems, transnational family responsibilities, and daily challenges of communication in a multilingual society. *White Paper 2* notes that these accounts make visible the complexity of ageing across borders, experiences that are rarely captured in conventional research or policy data.

The study shows that older migrants are often absent from decision-making processes that affect them, not because of a lack of interest but because existing systems are not designed for transnational lives. Language barriers, cultural expectations of care, and insecure residence status intersect to create forms of invisibility within both research and policy. *White Paper 2* identifies this as a major gap in representation: despite being highly affected by social and economic transitions, older migrants' experiences are rarely used to inform service design or community planning. The *White Paper* concludes that future policy must integrate these perspectives systematically, building research and governance structures capable of reflecting the lived diversity of older populations and the cross-border networks that shape their wellbeing.

**Access on pages 51 - 59**

## Broadening Representation in Civic and Political Life, France

The *Citizen Design: A Participatory Research Project with Older Adults* case study explored how older people can be meaningfully represented in civic decision-making. Many participants had little previous involvement in public life, and the project created structured opportunities for them to collaborate with local associations and municipal authorities on community priorities. *White Paper 2* recognises this as a significant contribution to understanding representation: it demonstrated how deliberate facilitation and partnership can transform civic engagement from consultation into shared decision-making.

The case study exposes how participation is shaped by structural and social inequalities. Age intersects with other factors such as gender, health, education, and income, influencing who feels able to take part in civic processes.. *Citizen Design* demonstrates that civic participation can become a pathway to broader inclusion when structures are intentionally created for it. The learning lies in how it reframes representation as an active practice rather than a demographic label. *White Paper 2* identifies this as an emerging direction for research and policy: ensuring that older adults are visible in the democratic process through the sustained recognition of their experience, priorities, and capacity to shape public life.

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## 01
### Representation depends on the quality of evidence within place.

When cultural and social realities are missing from local data, the distinct experiences of older adults in their communities remain unseen, and services reflect only partial truths.

## 02
### Intersectionality shapes how people belong and participate:

Age interacts with gender, ethnicity, migration, disability, and class, influencing access to networks, visibility in community life, and capacity to take part in decisions about place.

## 03
### Co-created knowledge connects people and policy.

When older adults work with researchers and local actors to define wellbeing and participation, evidence becomes rooted in lived experience and directly informs community planning.

## 04
### Future inclusion depends on embedding diversity in local systems.

Sustainable participation requires structures that continuously engage underrepresented groups in shaping the evidence, decisions, and relationships that sustain community life.

## Prompts for Reflection:

- Whose voices shape your community's understanding of ageing, wellbeing, and belonging — and whose are still missing?
- How do gender, culture, language, or life experience influence who feels represented in local decisions?
- What changes would allow older adults from all backgrounds to see their realities reflected in the evidence, policies, and places that affect their lives?

## Quick Link

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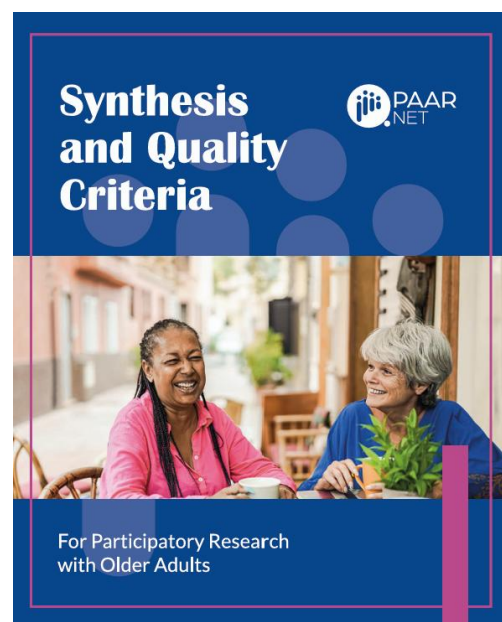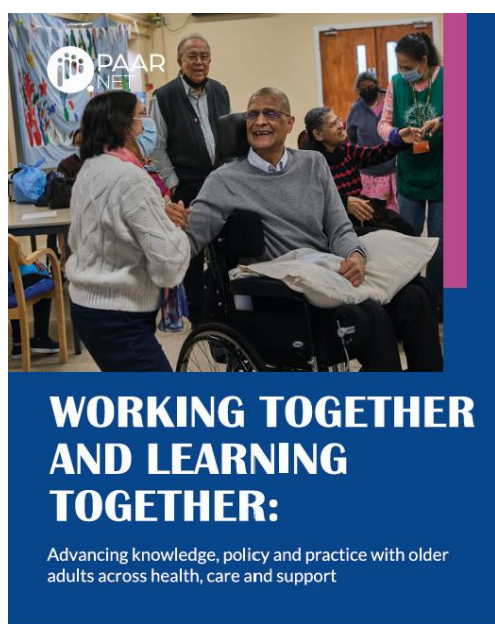
# The value of Case Studies in PAAR.NET

Case studies are central to PAAR.Net's mission to understand and strengthen participation, ageing, and resilience across Europe. They bring evidence to life by showing how older adults, researchers, and communities work together to shape more inclusive policies and practices.

Each PAAR.Net White Paper features real-world examples that capture learning from different perspectives: Check out the other PAAR.Net White Papers:

**White Paper 1** –**Working Together  And Learning Together:  Advancing Knowledge, Policy And Practice With Older Adults  Across Health, Care and Support**

**White Paper 3** – **Participatory Approaches with Older Adults in Technology and Innovation: Challenges, Opportunities, Experiences, and Future Directions**

**White Paper 4** – **Synthesis and Quality Criteria for Participatory Research with Older Adults.  International Explorations of Participatory Approaches with Older Adults in Research, Policy, and Practice: Challenges and Opportunities**



**WORKING TOGETHER AND LEARNING TOGETHER:**

Advancing knowledge, policy and practice with older adults across health, care and support



**White Paper**

Participatory Approaches with Older Adults in Technology and Innovation: Challenges, Opportunities, Experiences, and Future Directions



**Synthesis and Quality Criteria**

For Participatory Research with Older Adults

**Together, the case studies in all four  White Papers reveal how participation grows from lived experience,  turning insight into action and helping communities everywhere to re-imagine ageing in place.**

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