



PAAR-Net Policy & Practice Repository — Policy and Practice Examples (2025)

COST Action CA22167 – Participatory Approaches with Older Adults (PAAR-Net)

“This report compiles nine examples of participatory research and practice with older adults submitted to the PAAR-Net Policy & Practice Repository. Each example demonstrates innovative, inclusive and cross-sector approaches to ageing, wellbeing, and participation.”

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Introduction

This report has been prepared as part of PAAR-Net's core objective stated in the Memorandum of Understanding: *"To coordinate the synthesis of existing knowledge on participatory approaches with deprived, vulnerable or marginalised older adults across sectors, disciplines, and jurisdictions."*

KPI: *First version of the Policy and Practice Repository on the Action's website by Q4 of the first year.*

The Policy & Practice Repository aims to collect, structure, and disseminate good examples of participatory research, policy, and practice involving older adults. It serves as a shared platform for Action members to showcase how participatory methodologies are being applied across Europe and beyond — in community, academic, clinical, and policy contexts.

This compilation includes nine good policy and practice examples contributed by PAAR-Net members, representing diverse approaches from different disciplines and countries. The selected examples highlight ongoing or completed projects that demonstrate inclusive engagement with older adults, particularly those in vulnerable or marginalised situations.

Each example follows a common format — outlining the project title, partners, target audience, summary, detailed description, budget or funding source, evidence of success, challenges faced, timescale, and contact details. This uniform structure was designed to facilitate readability, comparability, and future integration into the PAAR-Net online repository.

ParAge-Delphi

Normandy (France)

Coordinators & Partners

Coordinator: Antoine Langeard
COMETE U1075, *Inserm, Université de Caen Normandie*, France

Key Partners:

Gérontopôle de Normandie, Cerema Normandie-Centre, municipalities, urban planning services, and older fallers

Target Audience

The practice targets older adults at risk of falling outdoors, particularly those exposed to environmental hazards in public spaces.

The participatory approach specifically involved older adults aged 65+ who had previously fallen outdoors, considered as experts by experience, including individuals who may face cognitive, sensory, literacy, or digital accessibility challenges.

Summary

This participatory Delphi initiative aimed to identify falls risks, preventive actions, and barriers to preventing falls among older adults in outdoor public spaces. Conducted within the Normandy Regional Anti-Fall Plan, it integrated four complementary expert groups: older adults with outdoor fall experience, health and research professionals, urban planners, and local decision-makers. The study used an accessible three-round Delphi process, including community based Easy-to-Read (FALC) adaptations to ensure inclusion of vulnerable older adults. A total of 64 participants contributed in Round 1. The process enabled cross-sector consensus-building and highlighted solutions requiring joint action between public health, urban planning, and local communities. This initiative demonstrates an innovative, replicable, and inclusive approach to participatory research with older adults to inform policy and practice for safer and more age-friendly public spaces.

Detailed Description

The objective was to reach cross-sector consensus on risks, preventive actions, and barriers to reducing outdoor falls among older adults. The project combined participatory methods within a three-round Delphi process, integrating experiential, professional, and policy knowledge. Four expert groups were engaged as co-producers of knowledge: older adult fallers, health and research professionals, urban planners, and decision-makers. Older adults were explicitly recognised as experts, not as respondents. To ensure accessibility, the Round 1 questionnaire was adapted to Easy-to-Read (FALC) materials

by a group of trained older adults, enabling inclusion of participants with lower literacy or cognitive fatigue.

Activities included: co-design of the Round 1 questionnaire within the Regional Anti-Fall Plan working group (which also included older adults) open questions to collect experiences and proposals, AI-assisted thematic synthesis followed by systematic human validation, and two rating rounds to build consensus. The process valued equal voice across expert groups and allowed refinement of items based on participant feedback.

The study identified 124 proposals, prioritised through consensus criteria. Outcomes include a shared regional framework of risks, actions, and structural barriers, providing a basis for public-space interventions and policy integration. The approach is replicable for other regions seeking to embed older adults as partners in fall-prevention strategies.

Allocated Budget & Funding Source

None

Evidence of Success / Outcomes

Success assessed through: participation across all three rounds (64 to 49 participants), inclusion of older adults with lived experience, and consensus on actionable priorities across sectors. Results used to inform regional fall-prevention planning and cross-sector collaboration.

Challenges Faced

Barriers included lack of dedicated funding, time constraints for older participants, and balancing technical content with accessibility. The FALC adaptation and iterative reformulation addressed inclusivity challenges.

Timescale

March 2024 to July 2025.

Additional Information / Links / Contacts

Contact: antoine.langeard@unicaen.fr

Summary available on request (paper under review)

Example from Babes-Bolyai University

Romania

The case study was developed within the BIOTraCes - Biodiversity and Transformative Change for Plural and Nature-Positive Societies.

Romania's case and the project do not specifically target older adults. However, the local context, where many rural inhabitants are older adults, makes their inclusion in the project necessary.

Coordinators & Partners

Romanian team (from the Biotraces project involved in this activity):

Dr. Ruxandra Malina Petrescu-Mag

Associate Professor, Faculty of Environmental Science and Engineering, *Babes-Bolyai University*, Cluj-Napoca, Romania – Principal Investigator

Dr. Dacinia Crina Petrescu

Professor, Faculty of Business, *Babes-Bolyai University*, Cluj-Napoca, Romania – Team Member

Fundatia ADEPT

Facilitated the participation of local people in this workshop

Target Audience

Transformative change for improving biodiversity in the study area of Romania's case requires pluralizing, empowering, and embedding local people and their views in the transformation process.

Primary: Local community members in Romania (rural, high nature value landscapes) affected by land degradation, biodiversity change, etc.

Secondary: Groups whose knowledge and values are often under-represented (the project emphasizes plural values, marginalized groups). though older adults are not explicitly identified in available documentation.

Tertiary: Policymakers, local authorities, researchers, and practitioners engaged in sustainability, biodiversity governance, and participatory approaches.

Summary

This activity aimed to co-develop a long-term vision and adapted actions to address land degradation in the study area. The activity consisted of a workshop with local people, some of whom were older adults. The study is relevant for many rural areas in Romania and other countries where an aging population is increasing. It shows how local people can be involved in co-creation activities related to their living environment. It informs the

development of action plans and policy recommendations for land health in rural areas, where the dominant population is usually older adults.

Detailed Description

The activity aimed to co-create a vision for the desired future of land health and the solutions to achieve it. Land is the key asset for local people, most of them being engaged in farming.

Using a participatory qualitative design, it engages local people, including older adults, as active partners rather than passive subjects.

Data are collected through a workshop held in the study area. Sessions are audio-recorded and transcribed. Expected results include a co-created vision for healthy land, enhanced local awareness of land degradation, empowerment of local people, including older adults, through participation, and evidence-based recommendations for realistic actions.

Many of the local people are older adults aged 65 years and above. They also include vulnerable people: old people, people with poor economic conditions, people from rural areas, people with low education level, and Roma people.

Regarding the broader context of the project, the BIOTraCes project aims to co-produce knowledge and interventions that enable transformative change towards nature-positive societies by recognizing diverse values, empowering marginalized voices, revealing power dynamics, and embedding change into policy, economy, and society.

In the Romanian case, the project is working in high-nature-value rural landscapes and areas experiencing land degradation to engage community stakeholders via surveys, workshops, interviews, and participatory modeling to identify structural obstacles (“lock-ins”) and co-design pathways of change.

Allocated Budget & Funding Source

No direct financial funding for this activity. The project partner (Babes-Bolyai University, Romania) received funding for the entire participation in the Biotraces project.

Evidence of Success / Outcomes

Ethical approval obtained (Babes-Bolyai University, January 2023).

Active involvement of local people in the workshops – scenario development.

Initial feedback shows high engagement and a sense of empowerment among participants.

Challenges Faced

Limited availability (time restrictions) from the participants

Challenges in convincing people to participate in the workshop

All addressed through flexible interview planning, informed consent emphasis, and continuous ethical oversight.

Timescale

Duration of the Biotraces project: 2023-2026

June-August: development of the normative scenario script; September 2025 workshop implementation; October 2025-February 2026: Analysis and reporting.

Duration of the activity: June 2025-february 2026

Additional Information / Links / Contacts

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<https://www.biotraces.eu/>

Creating an Age-Inclusive Hospital Culture: “Respect for Older Adults Week” at SBÜ Tepecik Training and Research Hospital *İzmir (Türkiye)*

Coordinators & Partners

Organised by: SBÜ Tepecik Training and Research Hospital – Geriatrics Clinic

Collaborating units: Family Medicine Department (YAŞAM Unit), Internal Medicine, Hospital Administration, Geriatric Medicine

Lead Coordinator: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Fatma Özge Kayhan Koçak

Target Audience

Older inpatients and outpatients, their families, and healthcare professionals.

Particular focus on raising awareness among hospital staff and promoting intergenerational respect and communication.

Summary

This annual awareness initiative aims to promote respect, empathy, and inclusion of older adults within the healthcare system and the wider community.

During “Respect for Older Adults Week” (18–24 March), a participatory programme was implemented involving older adults, clinicians, and caregivers. Activities included public information stands, cognitive and motor capacity assessments, and interactive seminars on ageism and age-friendly care.

Older participants were not passive recipients but active contributors—sharing experiences, voicing expectations, and co-creating dialogue with health professionals.

The event highlights the hospital’s commitment to developing a culture that values older people’s perspectives and supports an age-inclusive environment.

Detailed Description

The event series was held between 20–21 March 2025 as part of Türkiye’s national ‘Respect for Older Adults Week (Yaşlılara Saygı Haftası).

Activities began with an opening session chaired by senior clinicians, featuring talks on ageism, healthy ageing, and participatory care models.

Older adults and their families attended as honoured guests and discussion participants. Their lived experiences and feedback on hospital services were collected informally during and after the event.

Interactive stations were set up in public areas for cognitive and motor capacity screenings, offering older participants personalised counselling on health and activity.

Volunteers, medical students, and clinicians co-created educational materials and visual displays with older participants.

The event served both as an educational and participatory platform, fostering dialogue between generations and between patients and healthcare staff.

Future editions aim to expand participation by incorporating older adults in the planning committee and integrating their insights into hospital policies on geriatric-friendly services.

Allocated Budget & Funding Source

Institutional support from SBÜ Tepecik EAH; in-kind contributions (venue, materials, volunteer workforce).

No external grant funding.

Evidence of Success / Outcomes

The event attracted over 150 participants, including older adults, caregivers, healthcare professionals, and students.

Positive qualitative feedback from participants and staff.

It raised institutional awareness about ageism and promoted a more participatory approach to geriatric care.

It strengthened collaboration between geriatrics, family medicine, and hospital administration.

Challenges Faced

Limited time and staff resources; balancing medical duties with event preparation.

Future editions will include earlier stakeholder engagement and the use of structured feedback tools to evaluate impact.

Timescale

Annual event (first organised in March 2025, planned as recurring).

Additional Information / Links / Contacts

Contact: fatmaozgekayhan@gmail.com

Reports and visuals available upon request.

Related topics: ageism, participatory health promotion, intergenerational dialogue.

‘Aphasia Pathographies as a Form of Sociocultural Participation in Ageing Research’

Universitat Pompeu Fabra (Spain) & University of Koblenz (Germany)

Coordinators & Partners

Dr. Ieva Stončikaitė

Postdoctoral Researcher, *Universitat Pompeu Fabra*
Departament d’Humanitats, Campus de la Ciutadella, Edifici Jaume I
Ramon Trias Fargas 25–27, ES-08005 Barcelona

Prof. Dr. Katharina Fürholzer

Professor for Interdisciplinary Studies, *University of Koblenz*
Institute of German Language & Literatures
Universitätsstrasse 1, DE-56070 Koblenz

Target Audience

Older patients with aphasia (65+) who are at risk of social exclusion due to their age and impairment

Summary

Traditional research often privileges experts-by-training while overlooking the lived expertise of those affected by illness. People with aphasia offer vital insights as experts-by-experience, yet participatory methods like interviews or focus groups often exclude them due to communication barriers. This paper proposes auto-pathographies—autobiographical illness narratives by people with aphasia—as an alternative mode of engagement. Created under conditions accommodating their needs, these texts enable authentic expression beyond normative language constraints. We argue that such narratives act as vicarious co-participation, allowing aphasic authors to contribute to knowledge production, challenge stigma, and promote inclusive understandings of language, ageing, and disability.

Detailed Description

The project’s objective is to understand how aphasia auto-pathographies—autobiographical and biographical illness narratives by people with aphasia—can advance co-participatory research in ageing studies. The main objectives are to highlight the voices of individuals aged 65+ living with aphasia as experts-by-experience and to demonstrate how narrative practices can serve as forms of co-participation and knowledge co-production. Through these accounts, we aim to promote inclusive social innovation across research, policy, and practice for equitable ageing societies.

Activities involve identifying and analysing selected aphasia pathographies, reviewing literature on participatory and narrative methodologies, and drafting a joint publication. Our co-written paper, currently under review in a Q1 journal, is also disseminated through conferences, etc.

Expected results include expanded international collaboration, enhanced methodological innovation in participatory ageing research, and strengthened capacity building within PAAR-net.

6. Allocated Budget & Funding Source

STSM PAAR-net

7. Evidence of Success / Outcomes

Outcome is pending, as the project is still ongoing

8. Challenges Faced

None

9. Timescale

ongoing

10. Additional Information / Links / Contacts

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Uncertain Futures: Understanding inequalities around work for women over 50 in Manchester

Manchester (UK)

Coordinators & Partners

Ruth Edson – *Manchester Art Gallery*

Professor Suzanne Lacy – *University of Southern California (USC)*

Dr. Sarah Campbell – *Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU)*

Professor Elaine Dewhurst – *University of Manchester*

Advisory Group Co-researchers:

Akhter Azabany (*Manchester resident*), Ernima Bell (*CARISMA Services*),

Sally Casey (*Aquarius Tenants and Residents Association*),

Atiba Chaudry (*GMBAMEN*), Rohina Omen (*MBMEN*),

Marie Greenhalgh (*Wythenshawe Good Neighbours*),

Teodora Ilieva (*Manchester resident*), Tendayi Madzuzu (*ZIWO*),

Jila Mozoun (*Raha – Women's Voices*), Elayne Redford (*Manchester City Council – Work and Skills*),

Nadia Siddiqui (*Women's Voices*), Circle Steele (*Wai Yin Society*),

Patricia Williams (*Manchester resident*), Louise Wong (*Wai Yin Society*)

Target Audience

Women over 50 experiencing intersectional disadvantage related to work. Note: Whilst 50 isn't 'old age', in employment contexts women 50+ are 'older workers'. Participants ranged from 50s-80s, two-thirds from minority ethnic backgrounds, including disabled women, migrants, and carers.

Summary

Uncertain Futures fuses socially engaged art, gerontological research, and community activism to explore work inequalities facing women 50+ in Manchester. Addressing Greater Manchester's higher-than-average economic inactivity rates (ages 50-64), the project centres on intersectional disadvantages experienced by women of colour, disabled women, and carers. Through co-designed research, public art exhibitions at Manchester Art Gallery, and civic engagement, the project amplifies marginalised voices and campaigns for policy change. The methodology integrates participatory research principles, feminist art practice, and community activism, creating lasting impact beyond traditional academic outputs through exhibitions, films, policy recommendations, and sustained community engagement.

Detailed Description

A 14-member advisory group co-developed research questions, a "data matrix" identifying intersectional inequalities across work phases, and interview protocols

through weekly online meetings (2020-2022, then monthly meetings to 2025). Members became co-researchers, recruiting 100 women from their networks 2/3 from Minoritised backgrounds. Interviews conducted at Manchester Art Gallery (2021) formed Phase 1 exhibition: anonymised transcripts as art artifacts with advisory group film. Activities included civic programme events with Manchester City Council, policy submissions, and a celebration dinner (filmed). Outcomes: Gerontologist publication (2023); research report with 10 policy recommendations; three university awards; sustained advisory group engagement; international exhibition (Berlin 2025).

6. Allocated Budget & Funding Source

Total: £103,000. Funders: Arts Council England, MICRA, ESRC, Awards for All, Evan Cornish Foundation, Metropolis, university participatory research funds, USC.

7. Evidence of Success / Outcomes

Awards: Manchester Culture Award 2022 (Social Justice/Equality); University of Manchester Making a Difference Awards 2022 & 2023.

Publications: Campbell et al., The Gerontologist (2023); Dewhurst & Campbell, special issue article (accepted, forthcoming 2025/26); UN Decade of Healthy Ageing Progress Report; The Conversation (2023); Art Monthly.

Exhibitions: Manchester Art Gallery (2021-2024); Wellcome Collection, London (upcoming 2026); Berlin n.b.k. museum (2025).

Films documenting process and participants. Policy engagement including Pensions Commission submission. Sustained 5+ year advisory group engagement. Testimonials emphasise trust, confidence-building, social inclusion. Model demonstrates arts-research-activism integration in gerontology.

Challenges Faced

Ethical approval timing versus artistic production required collaborative solutions (advisory group involvement, anonymisation protocols, multilingual consent).

Institutional constraints (limited funding, REF pressures) balanced against participatory principles through flexibility.

COVID-19 necessitated online adaptation, paradoxically enabling intensive relationship-building. Ongoing reflexivity addressing decolonisation, power dynamics, and white researcher positionality. Ruth Edson's community learning management role provided essential project continuity.

Timescale

December 2019 – 2025.

Key phases: consultation (Dec 2019-Feb 2020); COVID pivot to online (March 2020); advisory group formation (Nov 2020); co-design (2020-2021); ethical approval (June 2021); 100 interviews/Phase 1 exhibition (Summer 2021); Phase 2 exhibition/publications (2023); Phase 3 – Stories of Women, Work, and Uncertain Futures – exhibit until Feb 2025; Berlin exhibition (Spring 2025). Project continues with writing, exhibitions and talks and sustained community engagement.

Additional Information / Links / Contacts

Website: uncertainfuturesproject.co.uk

Key publication: Campbell et al. (2023), *The Gerontologist*, 63(10), 1654-1662.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gnad090>

Contact: Dr Sarah Campbell (sarah.campbell@mmu.ac.uk); Ruth Edson (Manchester Art Gallery)

Demonstrates arts-led participatory research creating lasting change through research, aesthetics, activism.

Creative Social Activity and Older Adult Wellbeing

Leeds (UK)

Coordinators & Partners

Professor Emma H. Wood

Leeds Beckett University- POI

Dr. Sam Isaac

Research Assistant

Target Audience

Older women aged 65 years and above residing in rural areas in North Yorkshire UK

Summary

This project collected evidence on the impact that participatory arts activities have on the wellbeing of older (post-retirement) women. The aim of the project was to identify which aspects of the activities are effective in bringing about positive outcomes such as increased feelings of social wellbeing, self-worth and inclusion. Each group participated in a number of different art activities over a 3-week period with the data gathering taking place weekly over a total of 6 months. The activities included ceramics, textiles, printing, paper craft and iPad art. Participants took part in group discussions about their lives as well as the art activities they had undertaken. These discussions were recorded and transcribed and used to identify key elements of the activities as well as create participants' life stories

Detailed Description

Five groups of 3 or 4 women took part in the research at sessions facilitated by Age UK at Kirk House in Northallerton. Four groups of 4 women participated in the research at sessions hosted at the Courthouse in Thirsk by Rural Arts.

The research also incorporated the use of innovative wearable technology to measure the participants' emotional responses to the creative sessions as well as their reactions in group discussions. In addition, participant observation was used and an Autographer camera was worn by the artist leading the sessions. This allowed unobtrusive photographs to be taken during each activity which were then used as points of discussion during the focus groups

Allocated Budget & Funding Source

North Yorkshire County Council Innovation Fund £20000

Evidence of Success / Outcomes

As a result of the project, there have been several areas of impact:

- The lives of those taking part were improved (albeit temporarily)
- The artist/art organisation can now implement what has been learnt in other programmes/interventions aimed at relieving social isolation and loneliness
- Such sessions have greater benefit and are more cost effective than a visit from a carer
- The wellbeing outcomes are likely to reduce the need for certain medications, increase social participation, stimulate brain activities not achieved elsewhere (i.e. through creativity)
- The recounting of happy and sad times had a marked positive effect on the self-worth, social identity of both the teller and the listeners. The craft sessions created a catalyst for this to happen in a 'safe' and supportive environment
- Reminiscence is restorative even when over a short time span (i.e. discussing the week before)
- Being amongst peers helping each other and learning from each other built self-confidence and reduced loneliness

Challenges Faced

1. Technology limitations: although of value, the wristbands on their own do not provide a meaningful assessment of the emotional response to the activities. The discussion groups, along with participant observation allowed the graphs to be interpreted.
2. Sample: those in most need and who would benefit greatly are the hardest to recruit. Ideally participants who are isolated or lonely need to be targeted for such interventions, rather than those already attending similar activities. Identification of this group is challenging but not impossible. There is also the need to recognise there are barriers to participation such as transport, health, lack of confidence and timing.
3. Surveys: whilst these provided useful background data but were not appropriate for assessing change in wellbeing. This is due to a number of factors including the participant's ability and/or lack of interest in completing them, the short time period between before and after (3 weeks) and the challenge of attributing any change to a specific activity.

Timescale

Start date – Jan 2017

End date – Jan 2018

Additional Information / Links / Contacts

Contact: e.wood@leedsbeckett.ac.uk

Yamantürk Day Centre: Participatory Early-Impact Review (Age-Friendly Access & Participation)

Kütahya (Türkiye)

Coordinators & Partners

Assoc. Prof. Evrim Erol

Department of Educational Sciences, *Kütahya Dumlupınar University*

Project Coordinator (study design, ethics & data management oversight, qualitative analysis, policy-brief synthesis)

Kütahya Municipality – Yamantürk Day Centre

Host and implementation site (participant access & recruitment, venue logistics, co-facilitation of photovoice and co-design sessions)

The Day Centre was inaugurated on 31 July 2025, with physiotherapy and ergotherapy facilities confirmed in the municipal announcement.

Provincial Directorate of Family and Social Services (Kütahya)

Facilitation of access and ethical procedures for older adults and family carers (advisory role)

Target Audience

Adults 65+ who use—or are eligible to use—the Yamantürk Day Centre, with purposeful inclusion of those at higher risk of social exclusion (e.g., low income, limited mobility/chronic conditions, living alone, low digital literacy, transport barriers). Older participants are treated as experts-by-experience shaping design and decisions. Family carers are a secondary audience given their role in access and continuity of support.

Summary

This practice delivers a participatory early-impact review of Kütahya’s Yamantürk Day Centre across five WHO Age-Friendly domains: social participation; community support & health; communication & information; transportation; outdoor spaces & buildings. A streamlined qualitative design will use semi-structured phenomenological interviews with 12–15 older adults (65+), followed by one–two focus groups (6–8 participants) to test and refine shared themes. Older adults are treated as experts-by-experience; analysis follows interpretative/descriptive phenomenology with transparent coding. Findings will be mapped to the WHO Age-Friendly checklist and distilled into a two-page, decision-ready policy brief (named owner + timeline) and a five-indicator mini-dashboard (e.g., accessible-entry ratio; median first-response time) to support short-cycle improvement and monitoring. A ≤500-word entry will be submitted to PAAR-Net’s Policy & Practice Repository.

Detailed Description

This practice conducts a participatory early-impact review of Kütahya's Yamantürk Day Centre across five WHO Age-Friendly domains: social participation; community support & health; communication & information; transportation; outdoor spaces & buildings. Older adults (65+) who use—or are eligible to use—the centre take part as experts-by-experience. A streamlined qualitative design is used: semi-structured phenomenological interviews (n=12–15) followed by one–two focus groups (6–8 participants) to refine priorities. Findings are mapped to the WHO Age-Friendly checklist and converted, with staff, into a two-page policy brief (named owner + short timeline) and a five-indicator mini-dashboard for short-cycle monitoring (e.g., Accessible Entry Ratio; Median First Response Time; Referral Completion & Time; Single-Transfer Access/Mean Travel Time; Participation in Low-Barrier Activities). A concise on-site field checklist (Yes/Partly/No) documents observable features (e.g., step-free entry, readable notices, visible help desk) to ground lived-experience accounts. Indicator targets follow WHO Core Indicators logic (baseline → 90-day → 180-day review) and are locally adapted with the municipality. Expected outcomes: clearer information and response pathways, feasible access upgrades, improved transport reachability, and a repeatable, light-touch monitoring routine

Allocated Budget & Funding Source

No direct financial support is required. The project will rely primarily on in-kind contributions from Kütahya Municipality (venue access, staff time, printing) and Kütahya Dumlupınar University (research coordination, student assistance). If eligible, a COST PAAR-Net Virtual Mobility (VM) Grant may be considered to support online analysis, indicator dashboarding, and policy-brief preparation.

Evidence of Success / Outcomes

Evidence will combine qualitative validation and a small set of WHO-aligned indicators. Qualitatively: theme saturation, brief member-validation notes from older adults, and concordance with the on-site field checklist. Quantitatively: a five-indicator mini-dashboard tracking baseline → 90 → 180 days—Accessible Entry Ratio, Median First Response Time, Referral Completion (%) & Median Time, Single-Transfer Access (or Mean Travel Time), Participation in Low-Barrier Activities. Adoption will be shown by a two-page policy brief, ≥2 quick wins, and regular monthly/quarterly reviews; a ≤500-word entry will be submitted to PAAR-Net's Repository.

Challenges Faced

Ethics & comprehension: Plain-language, staged consent and clear information are needed to support understanding in older participants.

Physical access & transport: Barriers such as non-step-free entries, unclear wayfinding and limited seating reduce participation; small built-environment fixes are often required.

Communication & digital divide: Low digital literacy and limited device/data access curb reach; low-tech, multi-channel communication is advisable.

Local measurement load: Translating WHO core indicators into feasible municipal metrics takes time and cross-department coordination.

Timescale

October 2025 – December 2026 (Pilot phase: Nov 2025 – Apr 2026; Analysis & reporting + light-touch quarterly monitoring: May – Dec 2026).

Additional Information / Links / Contacts

Assoc. Prof. Evrim Erol — Department of Educational Sciences, Kütahya Dumlupınar University

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Remaking Memories Together through place-based optique creation

County Durham (UK)

Coordinators & Partners

Professor Emma H. Wood

Leeds Beckett University

Dr. Zara Worth

Freelance Artist

Target Audience

Older adults aged 60 years and above residing in post-industrial towns in County Durham UK

Summary

Remaking Memories Together is a community art project aiming to deepen people's connection to each other and their county by celebrating special places in County Durham. 29 participants from 4 community groups will acquire new creative and curatorial skills over 16 workshops, learning to create optiques (a form of artists book). These will be exhibited at a Museum alongside a historic example from their collection. A project film and printed resources will ensure the project's legacy.

Detailed Description

This project aims to make people feel more connected to each other and to County Durham by teaching 4 creative community groups to make optiques depicting places of personal significance. Optiques (aka tunnel books, paper peepshows, and expanding views) were originally produced during the 19th century as souvenirs celebrating feats of Victorian engineering and architecture. 'like a pocket-sized staged set'. As objects designed to refresh memories and pass experiences on to others, they are an ideal medium for creatively connecting communities through place based storytelling. Remaking Memories Together will invite members of existing creative community groups to make optiques inspired by their memories of special places in County Durham.

Allocated Budget & Funding Source

Arts Council England Funding £15000

Evidence of Success / Outcomes

This is an ongoing project.

- Up to 29 members of creative community groups will have regularly participated in optique making workshops.

- A short film will document the process of making the optiques and the ideas behind the project that will be shown as part of the exhibition and shared online.
- The film will reach online audiences of at least 10,000 people.
- evaluation of the creative intervention to maximise the wellbeing benefits of the project. will include reflective conversations between artist, project participants, and researcher and staff at The Bowes Museum and Durham Libraries to explore the meaning of the activity, and any differences being involved in the activity has made to their wellbeing (self-worth, pride, belonging, confidence).
- use of pre and post workshop surveys to understand how the project has impacted participants sense of connection to each other and to their county.
- Feedback from the engagement and outreach teams at County Durham Libraries and the Bowes Museum to understand the impact of the project on their work.

Challenges Faced

Accessibility barriers for participants with mobility limitations. Workshops were taken to accessible locations close to their homes

Continuity of participation. This required a weekly commitment of 3 hours from participants for 4 weeks.

Timescale

October 2025 – Ongoing

Expected end date January 2026

Additional Information / Links / Contacts

Contact: Professor Emma Wood

e.wood@leedsbeckett.ac.uk

‘Setting the Scene’: Participatory Action Study Exploring Wellbeing Benefits of Participatory Arts for People Living with Dementia and Carer Partners

Cumbria (UK)

Coordinators & Partners

ESRC-funded CASE PhD project partnership between *Lancaster University* and *Theatre by the Lake, England*

Affiliations are up-to-date; roles at time of project are in italics:

Dr. Meghán Catherine Ward – *Postdoctoral Researcher, Bilkent University* – Doctoral/Principal Investigator

Professor (Emerita) Christine Milligan – *Division of Health Research, Lancaster University* – Doctoral Supervisor

Professor Emma Rose – *School of Arts, Lancaster University* – Doctoral Supervisor

Mary Elliott – *Theatre by the Lake* – CASE Project Representative/Supervisor

Target Audience

Broadly: community-dwelling older adults, 65+ years, with dementia.

Specifically: older adults with dementia from Northwest Cumbria already attending ‘Setting the Scene’ programme alone or with care partner.

Summary:

This ESRC-funded CASE project examined the effectiveness of the ‘Setting the Scene’ participatory multi-arts programme by adopting a participatory action research (PAR) and sensory ethnography design. PAR was adapted to a dementia context using visual and ‘in-the-moment’ data, both as sources of data and as tools for visual elicitation.

Detailed Description

Objectives: 1) Explore effectiveness of the ‘Setting the Scene’ model’s multi-arts approach in assisting wellbeing experiences; 2) Examine how to best sustain attention and engagement of participants during sessions; 3) Identify material/spatial/relational factors in wellbeing experiences and programme effectiveness; 4) Consider how group relations and family relationships during sessions contribute to, or are benefited by, arts-based engagement.

PAR was implemented in cycles of observing, reflecting, planning, and acting (see Appendices 1 and 2 for chosen methods and PAR cycle implementation).

Qualitative/ethnographic/visual methods were chosen to aid ‘observing’ or ‘reflecting’ in line with PAR.

The project illustrates how ‘voices’ of people with dementia can be supported in research contexts through more-than-verbal creative and elicitation channels.

Funding Source:

Research funded by the ESRC and Theatre by the Lake, Keswick, Cumbria.

Success & Outcomes:

Active involvement of older people with dementia and care partners in project design, data generation, action learning (e.g. questionnaires were rejected based on design feedback).

Project demonstrated what participation in arts can look like and what matters to attendees ‘in-the-moment’.

Academic outputs were doctoral thesis, journal publications, conferences and newsletters. Both an exhibition and digital toolkit of the ‘Setting the Scene’ model were created by Meghann using feedback from participants.

Challenges:

Post-fieldwork advisory boards of people with dementia, care partners, and other stakeholders were permanently cancelled due to COVID-19 lockdown measures. Overall intentions of PAR affected and participant voices limited.

Due to ‘Setting the Scene’ programme being well-established, practitioners were already revising it according to participants’ changing needs and interests. Participants generally satisfied; hence, PAR actions were minimal.

Timescale:

Pilot study: Jul–Sept 2018

Main fieldwork: Oct 2018–Jul 2019

Post-fieldwork analysis (impacted by COVID-19): Jul 2019–Apr 2020

PhD thesis submission: June 2021

Exhibition and toolkit publication: Oct 2022

Additional Information & Links

Thesis: <https://eprints.lancs.ac.uk/id/eprint/163543/1/2021WardPhD.pdf>

Toolkit: <https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7059109561206493184/>

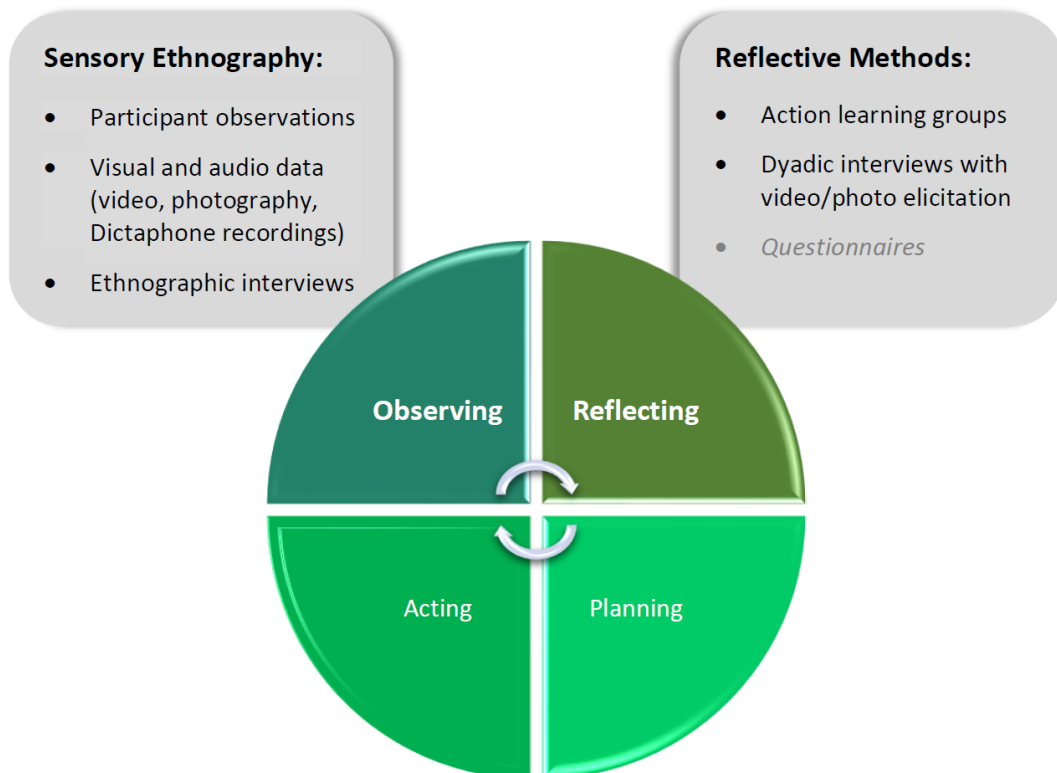
Papers: DOI:10.1111/area.12899

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/tesg.70028>

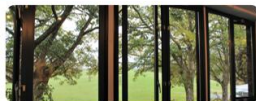
See link for an article written by Meghann with Jenn Bell, ‘Setting the Scene’ practitioner.

See Appendix 3, Theatre by the Lake photographic exhibition.

Appendix 1



Appendix 2



Phase 1: Pilot Study – brief ‘action and reflection’ cycle

- Four session visits
- Testing materials (forms, consent forms, surveys)
- Two interviews



Phase 2: Beginning main fieldwork using traditional four-step PAR cycle

- Eight session visits
- Three dyadic interviews and two group interviews with theatre staff
- A nine-member action learning group



Phase 3: Repeat Phase Two plus new actions/refinement of activities

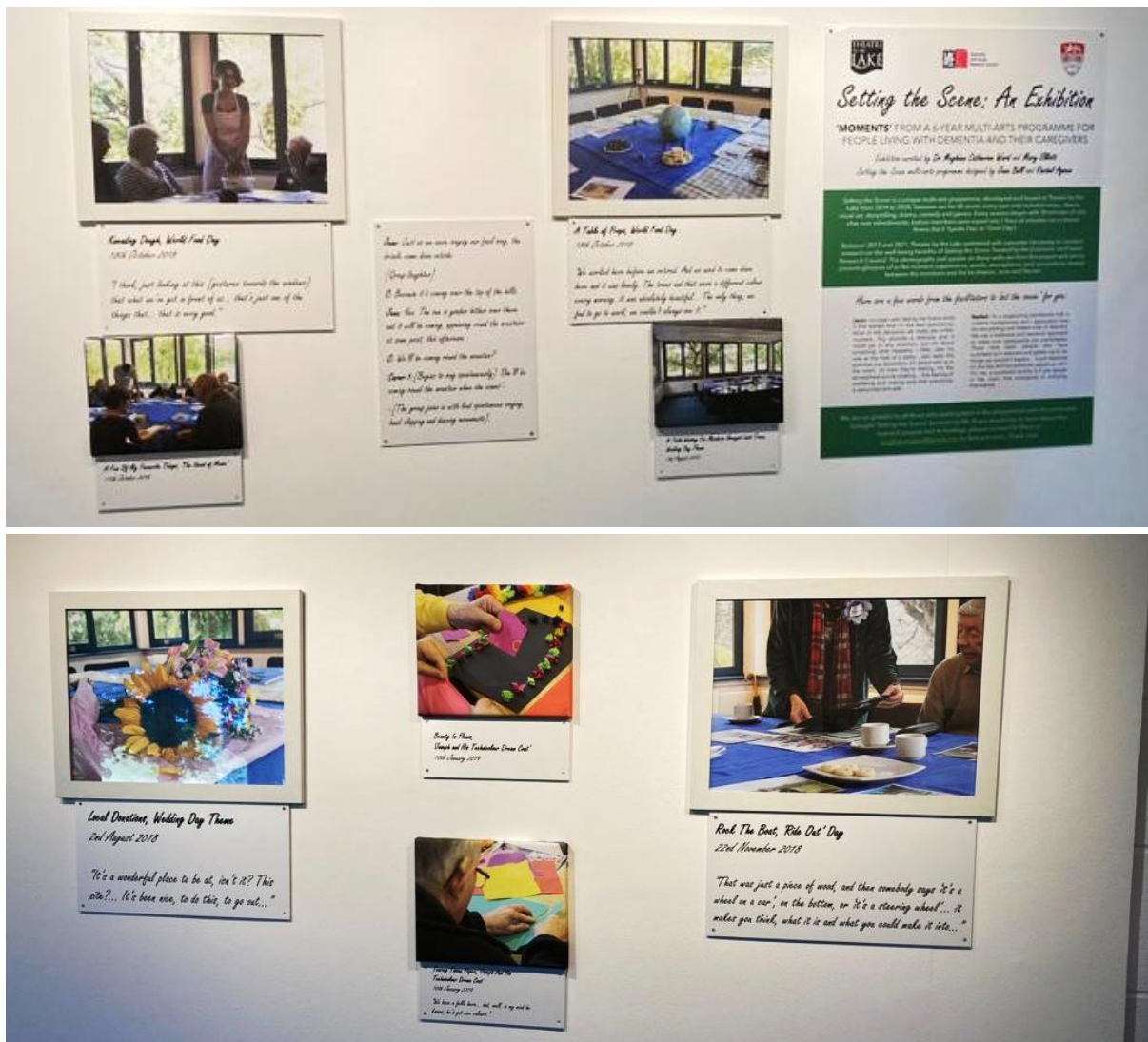
- Seven visited sessions
- Five dyadic interviews and two interviews with theatre staff
- A sixteen-member action learning group

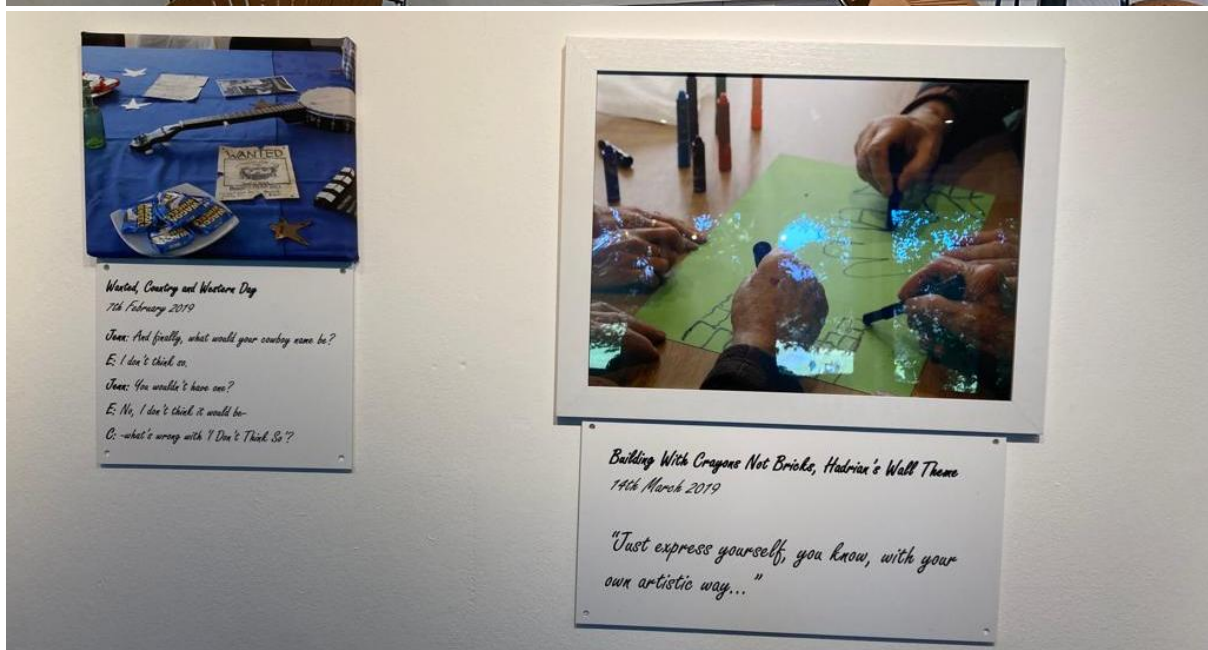


Phase 4: Post-fieldwork. Develop preliminary findings and research dissemination

- Occasional visits maintained to sessions (not recorded)
- Deliberative panel to discuss preliminary findings and content for toolkit/guidebook (cancelled)

Appendix 3





Synthesis and Outlook

The collection of good practice examples compiled within the PAAR-Net Policy & Practice Repository demonstrates the diversity and scope of participatory approaches implemented across ageing research, policy, and practice in different national contexts. Each initiative represents a unique socio-cultural, institutional, and disciplinary configuration—ranging from health and social care interventions in Türkiye and France to creative, arts-based collaborations in the United Kingdom, a sociocultural participation project in Spain and Germany, and community-based environmental engagement in Romania. The inclusion of both completed and ongoing initiatives reflects the evolving and dynamic character of participatory methodologies in ageing research and related policy domains.

Despite contextual variations, all examples share a set of core principles, including inclusion, empowerment, and co-production with older adults. Collectively, these practices illustrate how participatory approaches contribute to strengthening intersectoral collaboration, improving the design and delivery of services, and promoting innovation within policy and practice. Furthermore, they demonstrate the value of participatory engagement in enhancing evidence-informed policymaking by ensuring that the lived experiences and perspectives of older adults are systematically integrated into decision-making processes.

The synthesis of these examples reveals the cross-national potential of participatory approaches to address shared societal challenges such as social isolation, ageism, accessibility barriers, and the limited representation of older adults' voices in research and policy formulation. As such, the repository not only maps current practices but also supports future comparative analyses, collaborative research, and policy dialogue among participating institutions.

In line with the objectives of COST Action CA22167 (PAAR-Net), the Policy & Practice Repository serves as a continuously evolving knowledge base that fosters mutual learning and transnational cooperation. It provides a foundation for the exchange of evidence-based practices and contributes to the development of inclusive and context-sensitive ageing policies across Europe and beyond.