



## NEWS

### Welcoming Laura Belmon to the SIG Leadership Team

We are delighted to announce that Laura Belmon, MSc., has joined the ISBNPA Participatory Research SIG leadership team and will be supporting our communications efforts.

Laura is a Research Associate at the Department of Public and Occupational Health at Amsterdam UMC, where she works within the APH Health Behaviours & Chronic Diseases and APH Methodology groups.

With a background in public health and extensive experience in participatory research methodologies, Laura brings a wealth of knowledge to our SIG. She has been actively involved in projects focusing on improving health behaviours through participatory approaches, and her expertise will be invaluable in enhancing our communication strategies. Her role will focus on increasing engagement with our members and facilitating the dissemination of the latest developments in participatory research.

We are excited to have Laura on board and look forward to the energy and insights she will bring to our communications initiatives.

Welcome, Laura!

Find out more about Laura's work at the [Amsterdam University Medical Centres](#).



## Join Us

### WE NEED YOU!!!

Are you interested in Participatory Research in Health Promotion and planning to visit the ISBNPA conference in Auckland next year? Become our ambassador and join our leadership team!

Please contact Maïté Verloigne ([maite.verloigne@ugent.be](mailto:maite.verloigne@ugent.be)) and Teatske Altenburg ([t.altenburg@amsterdamumc.nl](mailto:t.altenburg@amsterdamumc.nl)).

## Research Spotlight

A recent study, *Facilitating co-research: lessons learned from reflection forms within three participatory action research projects* by Emke et al., provides valuable insights into the role of facilitators in Participatory Action Research (PAR) projects. The study examined reflections from three PAR projects involving children and adolescents, highlighting the importance of thorough preparation, flexible facilitation, and the creation of a safe and engaging atmosphere.

Facilitators found that incorporating active, creative participatory methods and ensuring shared decision-making fostered ownership among co-researchers. The study also emphasized the need for facilitators to continuously adapt to group dynamics and to reflect on their own influence on the process. This research contributes practical strategies for enhancing facilitation in PAR and encourages critical reflection by facilitators to improve their collaboration with co-researchers.

Emke et al.  
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<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12961-024-01210-x>

Health Research Policy  
and Systems

RESEARCH

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### Facilitating co-research: lessons learned from reflection forms within three participatory action research projects



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#### Abstract

**Background** Mutual learning and shared decision-making are key elements of Participatory Action Research (PAR), highlighting the important role of the facilitator to support this. This study aims to illustrate how a facilitator can contribute to successful PAR sessions based on the reflection of three PAR projects.

**Methods** Participatory sessions took place with adolescents for 3–4 school years. After each session ( $n=252$  sessions across three projects), facilitators filled in a reflection form that assessed the group process and their facilitating role. Facilitators independently coded a selection of 135 reflection forms partly deductive and partly inductive based on core PAR principles derived from a pragmatic literature search.

**Results** A well-prepared session – for example, including active and creative participatory methods and a clearly stated goal – contributed to efficiency and the necessary flexibility. Making agreements, making sure everyone is heard and taking ‘fun-time’ appeared important for creating and maintaining a safe, functional and positive atmosphere. Finally, facilitators needed to encourage co-researchers to take the lead and adapt to the group dynamics, to ensure ownership and shared decision-making.

**Conclusion** In-depth qualitative analyses of a standardized reflection form used in three different PAR projects resulted in various lessons to support facilitators in collaborating with co-researchers in PAR projects.

#### Highlights

- Detailed preparation of participatory sessions with multiple scenarios allows the flexibility needed for productive sessions.
- Ensuring a positive, safe and functional atmosphere encouraged productive participatory sessions.
- Facilitators need to continuously adapt to the characteristics, moods and emotions of co-researchers.
- We present an improved reflection form to support facilitators in optimizing their PAR sessions.

**Keywords** Facilitation, Co-research, Participatory action research, Reflection

## Future Direction

Participatory research can be messy!

There are many topics we can cover, but what do you want? This is the essence of participatory research! So, let us know what YOU want to see covered and perhaps who YOU would like to see us collaborate with. Click the link below to join the conversation.

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