Royal
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Participatory Geographies
Research Group

12 - 13 May 2021

Contemporary Issues in Participatory Geography:

Challenges, Opportunities, and New Directions

A trans-disciplinary online event in cutting-edge participatory research

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Sponsored by the Participatory Geographies Research Group of the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG).

Welcome!

We are excited to welcome you to the *Contemporary Issues in Participatory Geography* event.

This event aims to bring together cutting-edge knowledge and practice in participatory research, transcending disciplinary boundaries and embracing different perspectives from academia, policy, and practice. We invite participatory researchers, activists, creatives, policy makers, and practitioners to attend presentations and discussions on current themes within participatory research. We welcome attendees from diverse backgrounds, career stages (particularly welcoming of postgraduate and early career researchers), and those within and beyond academia.

Themes for the event focus on issues, opportunities, and adaptations for participation in recent times – bringing together different insights and experiences to create a narrative for future directions in participatory research. This includes participatory and collaborative working in policy and practice arenas; barriers and adaptations in third-sector and grassroots community research; critical and reflexive participatory practices; issues and opportunities for online participatory research, including innovative tools and methods; new and emerging issues in social justice, (digital) ethics, and disparities brought about during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Over the course of two days, the event broadly offers a space for knowledge sharing, discussion, reflection, and collaboration. This will include a mix of keynote lectures, interactive workshops, a panel discussion, and opportunities to socialise and network.

We would like to warmly thank all those involved in making this event happen — Kahina Meziant, Susanne Börner, Thea Wingfield, Laura Sobral, Martina Locorotondo, Jack Lowe, Ian Babelon, Cris Ibarra, Fred Dunwoodie Stirton, session contributors, the PYGYRG Committee and the RGS-IBG.

How to join:

The event will be held entirely online via Zoom; links to join will be circulated via email to registered participants at a date close to the event. Please feel free to join us for the full two days, or specific sessions which interest you. The event will be recorded and made available online.

Event updates:

We will post updates on the PYGYRG website and Twitter page — follow regular updates and Tweet about the event using the hashtag #Participatory21.

Accessibility:

Is there anything we can do to enable you to be able to fully participate in the event? We have a budget available which can be used to help increase the accessibility and inclusivity of the event. For example, upon request we can provide access to an automated transcription (live captioning) software such as Otter.ai, which can be used on personal computers or mobile phones. Please get in touch with the event coordinators with any queries or requests, and we will do our best to support you.

Event organisers:

Caitlin Hafferty, Countryside & Community Research Institute, University of Gloucestershire (caitlinhafferty@connect.glos.ac.uk; Twitter: @CaitlinHafferty) and Bruna Montuori, Royal College of Art (bruna.montuori@network.rca.ac.uk; Twitter: @brunamontuori).

Sponsored by:

The Participatory Geographies Research Group (PYGYRG) of the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG).

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Programme overview

Wednesday 12th May 2021   *All times are London time (GMT+1)*

09:45-10:00   *Zoom link opens*

10:00-10:15   Welcome and introduction to the day — *Bruna Montuori*

10:15-11:15   **Opening talk:** What does the future of participatory research look like? — *Participatory Geographies Research Group (PYGYRG) Committee*

11:15-11:30   Break

11:30-13:00   **Presentations and discussant:** Navigating tensions in Participatory Research with Third Sector Organisations

Presentation 1: Reflexivity, community work, and the state — *Kahina Meziant*

Presentation 2: Negotiating roles, establishing correspondences, and enacting care — *Bruna Montuori*

13:00-14:00   Lunch break and networking

14:00-15:45   **Workshop:** The Art and Practice of Participatory Research at the Science-Policy Interface— *Thea Wingfield and Laura Sobral*

15:45-16:00   **Wrap up and close** — Bruna Montuori

Thursday 13th May 2021   *All times are London time (GMT+1)*

09:15-9:30   *Zoom link opens*

09:30-09:45   Welcome and introduction to the day — *Caitlin Hafferty*

09:45-10:30   **Presentation and discussant:** *La Tela*: Resisting Isolation Through the Arts 'in Common' - *Martina Locorotondo*

10:30-10:45   Break

10:45-12:30   **Workshop:** Challenges and Opportunities of Digital Participatory Research during COVID-19 - *Susanne Börner*

12:30-13:30   Lunch break and networking

13:30-15:00   **Panel discussion:** Past, Present, and Futures of Participation: Key Considerations for Research & Practice — *Jack Lowe, Ian Babelon, Cris Ibarra, Fred Dunwoodie Stirton, Caitlin Hafferty*

15:00-15:15   **Wrap up and close —** Caitlin Hafferty

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Guidelines for participants

We intend to run the event as a respectful, inclusive, and equitable space - you can view the Royal Geographical Society's Code of Conduct here.

How to join:

♦ We are using Zoom as the platform for the event — we encourage that you are registered on the platform and download the latest version. **Links to join will be emailed to all registered participants.** Please contact the event coordinators with any questions about how to join.

♦ **Please do not share any event links with anyone else or on social media.** They are for registered attendees only. We have a maximum number of people who can join the event at one time, and this has been based on the number of registrations. By not sharing the Zoom links with others, you are also helping to prevent incidences of "Zoom bombings" (i.e. internet trolls) which could disrupt the event or even lead to its cancellation.

Accessibility:

♦ Is there anything we can do to enable you to be able to **fully participate** in the event?

♦ We have a **budget available** which can be used to help increase the accessibility and inclusivity of the event. For example, upon request we can provide access to an automated transcription (live captioning) software such as Otter.ai, which can be used by participants on personal computers or mobile phones.

♦ Please get in touch with the event coordinators with any queries or requests, and we will do our best to support you.

General guidelines and code of conduct:

♦ This online event will be moderated in the normal sense by the event and session coordinators. This will include starting and stopping presentations and acting on any code of conduct issues. The event organisers will handle the technical aspects of managing security throughout the event, but *all delegates* are responsible for creating a safe and secure event for everyone involved.

♦ The event coordinators and session contributors will be present to manage the technical and communications aspects of each of the sessions. Any issues and questions should be channelled through them to help the sessions run smoothly.

♦ The event coordinators and session contributors reserve the right to put any delegates causing a   nuisance (e.g. "internet trolls" or "Zoom bombers") 'on hold' and they will not be able to participate in the session until it is deemed appropriate. If there are any further instances of disruptive or inappropriate behaviour then the delegate will be removed from the event permanently.

♦ The event coordinators reserve the right to 'lock the meeting' completely, which prevents any new   attendees accessing the event. They also have the right to end the event completely if there are continued episodes of disruption by multiple individuals.

♦ Issues that cannot be handled by the event coordinators will be escalated to the next level of management.

Guidelines for participants (cont.)

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Meeting recordings:

- All sessions will be recorded and made available for public viewing online, after the conference. Notes and transcripts from the event sessions may also be made publicly available on the PYGYRG website.

- You can **opt-out** of these recordings (during or after the event) by contacting the event organisers Caitlin Hafferty (caitlinhafferty@connect.glos.ac.uk) and Bruna Montuori (bruna.montuori@network.rca.ac.uk).

- Recordings may be edited before being made publicly available, including editing out any disruptions which may have occurred.

Asking questions:

- You can ask a question during a presentation using the Zoom chat function. The host of the session will select a few questions, and will either read these out on your behalf or invite you to ask them "live" (depending on available time and the nature of the session).

Twitter:

- Our Twitter account is @PYGYRG — we will post announcements and updates here. We will be tweeting live from the conference, so your image could appear in some of the screenshots that we may post to Twitter.

- We will use the hashtag #PARTICIPATORY21 to post and follow announcements. We warmly encourage participants to use Twitter during the event, if they are able to (you can find out how to sign up here).

If anything goes wrong:

- This is our first time organising an online event of this size, so please do bear with us through any technical difficulties. If any issues do happen, please be patient with us and we will try to get things fixed as quickly as possible.

If you have any questions, please contact the event coordinators:

Bruna Montuori (bruna.montuori@network.rca.ac.uk) and

Caitlin Hafferty (caitlinhafferty@connect.glos.ac.uk).

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Programme: Wednesday 12th May

Session 1: What does the future of participatory research look like?

Opening talk (10:15-11:15 BST)

Facilitated by members of the RGS-IBG Participatory Geographies Research Group (PYGYRG) committee. View committee members' affiliations and contact details here: https://pygyrg.org/pygyrg-organisation

What does the future of Participatory Geographies look like? Addressing this question, the first session of the event will kick off with a collective discussion on the theme. Hosted by members of the Participatory Geographies Research Group, we will explore ideas and reflections with the audience to warm the conversation and get everyone on board for the two day event.

Session schedule:

10:15 - We open the session with one question: "*What does the future of participatory research look like?*" and distribute participants into break out rooms.

10:20 - 10:35 Participants move to breakout rooms (each facilitated by a PYGYRG member) to discuss the question and add key ideas/words to a collaborative document *(coordinated by Eveleigh Buck-Matthews)*.

10:35 - 10:40 Participants return to the main room.

10:40 - 10:55 Participants share what they have discussed with comments from committee members (facilitated by PYGYRG committee members).

10:55 - 11:00 Introduction by Mike Kesby - comments on the breakout group activity, the history of the PYGYRG, and the ethics of participatory geographies.

11:00 - 11:10 Eveleigh Buck-Matthews will make a short presentation on how to join the PYGYRG, key events you can join, and information for postgraduate and early career researchers.

11:10 - 11:15 Wrap-up and break.

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Programme: Wednesday 12th May

Session 2: Navigating Tensions in Participatory Research with Third Sector Organisations

Presentations and discussant (11:30-13:00 BST)

Presentation 1: Reflexivity, Community Work, and the State

Speaker: Kahina Meziant (Doctoral Researcher, Northumbria University).

Participatory approaches to research can be highly valuable in supporting communities. Hardly divisible from an activist-oriented scholarship, these approaches carry with them ideologies and epistemologies that are not always shared by all members of the community. In my PhD project, I have, and am continuously experiencing the tensions that arise from diverging political and ethical outlooks on the work undertaken. The questions of what to do with these tensions, how to negotiate them, and ultimately how to *sit with* them as a necessary step to building trust and implementing long-term change, is at the heart of this presentation. I will talk about the importance and the difficulty of practicing reflexivity as a delicate balance between critically examining one's own work and accepting the researcher as an *enabler*.

The empirical context of my work is located in 'spaces of welcome' for people identified as "migrants", "asylum seekers" and "refugees". Within this, I challenge the structuring mechanisms of these spaces as imposed by state -sanctioned organisation frameworks. Those tend to reproduce violent hierarchies (white-savior complex), entrench racialized identities, and prevent deeper reflexive practice from emerging.

*Kahina Meziant is a third-year PhD researcher in the Department of Geography and Environmental Science at Northumbria University. Her investigation looks at the experiences of forcibly displaced people with the English third sector through an anticolonial lens. She is particularly interested in creative methods of inquiry that consider participants as co-producers of knowledge and in which a reflexive praxis is central. **Twitter: @KahinaMzt***

Presentation 2: Negotiating Roles, Establishing Correspondences, and Enacting Care

Speaker: Bruna Montuori (Doctoral Researcher, Royal College of Art).

Participatory methodologies support researchers to create a more meaningful relationship with the context and subjects of their work. Particularly with local organisations and grassroots movements fighting for justice from below, enacting participatory methods engenders multiple elements for reflection: power imbalances, issues on positionality and self reflexivity, reciprocity and mutual support, among others. In my PhD research, I have been working in partnership with an NGO based in Maré, the largest set of favelas in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Dealing with a context marked by different disputes of power, a legacy of social exclusion and issues on representation allowed me to better understand my position as a researcher and external collaborator.

From my research experience in Maré, I seek to explore in this talk ideas involving the role of the researcher, learning when to speak and to listen, and understanding how to correspond back to your research partners. Common habits such as obliterating oneself and learning how to deal with rejection are a few points to be discussed, which I will connect with my own experience in fieldwork. Through notions on ethics of care, I aim to go deeper in the relationship between researchers and participants in light of unpredictable contexts, and explore the tensions woven in language and cultural exchange. From academia to real life situations, I intend to bring the lessons I learned and the challenges of working with an organisation rooted in social movements from the 1970s.

*Bruna Montuori is a designer and third-year PhD researcher at the School of Architecture, Royal College of Art, London. She investigates the relations between narratives and spatial justice through the work of Redes da Maré organisation in Maré, Rio de Janeiro. Her research interests encompass ethics of care, feminist and decolonial thinking, exploring intuitive approaches for participatory processes. **Twitter: @brunamontuori, academic profile, personal website.***

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Programme: Wednesday 12th May

Session 3: The Art and Practice of Participatory Research at the Science-Policy Interface

Workshop (14:00-15:45 BST)

Organised by: Dr Thea Wingfield (University of Liverpool) and Laura Sobral (Instituto Universitario de Lisboa and TU Wien).

A myriad of complex issues facing the world: climate crisis and clean energy, public health, human rights and justice, conservation, social and economic development, education, and food security, are the target of an increasing number of policy documents, looking for solutions that call for transformative approaches. Policy specialists in health, education, environment, culture and the economy are unified in their invitations to breakdown disciplinary silos and advocate bringing together specialists and non-specialists to: define problems that are locally relevant but hinge on national and international governance, imagine desirable futures that cultivate inclusivity and improve the quality and relevance of research outputs. The approach is appealing in theory but can be difficult to achieve in practice. This workshop is targeted at individuals who are working to break down disciplinary boundaries and incorporate the voices of academic and non-academic actors in participatory or transdisciplinary research.

We invite contributions from researchers, students, industry, civil society, and policymakers with experience or interest in participatory and collaborative working at the science-policy interface. The workshop aims to generate recommendations for participatory and collaborative working designed for a broad audience with a common interest in working beyond traditional disciplinary boundaries. The contributions will form material for the workshop which will be discussed and refined and published as a short guide for researchers – *The art and practice of participatory research at the science-policy interface*.

Schedule for the session:

2.00 - 2.10 Zoom opens / housekeeping

2.10 - 2.30 Introductions to workshop facilitators, workshop schedule, and the collective   document

2.30 - 3.00 Contributors present (total of 6 / 5 min each)

3.00 - 3.05 Facilitators distribute participants into 3 breakout rooms

3.05 - 3.30 Breakout rooms discussions with one facilitator in each group / each group to produce 2 recommendations to be added to the collective document

3.30 - 3.35 Participants reconvene in the main room with five min break + last minutes to write

3.35 - 3.55 Groups present in 3 min their debates and recommendations followed by a collective debate and analysis of the document / Q&A

3.55 - 4.00 Closing the workshop

Thea Wingfield is a teacher in physical geography in the Department of Geography and Planning at the University of Liverpool specialising in water and river basin management, disaster risk reduction and climate resilience. Her professional background spans academic research, environmental regulation and ecological monitoring. Her research employs transdisciplinary and participatory methods to encourage a broad participation of actors, social learning and integrate the multiple environmental, social, cultural, political and spiritual aspects of environmental decision making. **View Thea's academic profile** [here](#).

Laura Sobral is an urbanist and PhD researcher at Instituto Universitário de Lisboa and at Technische Universität Wien. She investigates territorial policies that foster the distribution of local power through the co-production and co-governance of public spaces. Laura is a co-founder of the Instituto A Cidade Precisa de Você [The City Needs You Institute], a CSO that improves public spaces through collective social actions. She is the author of the book 'Doing it Together – cooperation tools for the city co-governance' (ZKU Press, 2019). **View Laura's academic profile** [here](#).

Programme: Thursday 13th May

Session 1: *La Tela*: Resisting Isolation Through the Arts 'in Common'

Presentation and discussant (09:45-10:30 BST)

Speaker: Martina Locorotondo (Doctoral Researcher, Centre for Urban Research on Austerity (CURA), De Montfort University).

La Tela is an on-line participatory art process which was initiated by the open-community of l'Asilo – one of the commons of the city of Naples (Italy) – seeking to feed communitarian ties despite physical isolation, when the first lock-down in March 2020 was enforced.

La Tela is also an open-ended artwork living on the web, which takes its ever-changing shapes from people's interactions happening during a weekly virtual assembly every Wednesday from 7 PM to 9 PM. Its temporary configuration is accessible at the on-line address http://www.exasilofilangieri.it/la_tela/#Arti_Virali; anybody could take part in the assembly by sending an email at the address la_tela@exasilofilangieri.it.

Indeed, one of the purposes that underlie the experimentation of La Tela is the one of over-coming a notion of art as expression of an individual "genius", while it proposes instead inter-actions and relationships between ideas and people as the founding core of creativity.

The presentation will be opened by an introduction on the Beni Comuni (commons) of Naples, in particular l'Asilo, whose open-community began La Tela. It will highlight how La Tela reflects some of the sedimented practices of the former, and at once how it represents a contingent response to the pandemic.

Then, the participant process of La Tela will be illustrated, as well as some of La Tela's temporary outcomes and its art-works.

The session will be concluded with an occasion to reflect on the process of researching as a PhD student on a participant on-line process like La Tela, by adopting at their turn a participant methodology.

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Programme: Thursday 13th May

Session 2: Challenges and Opportunities of Digital Participatory Research during COVID-19

Workshop (10:45-12:30 BST)

Organised by: Dr Susanne Börner (Marie Curie Global Fellow, University of Birmingham and University of Sao Paulo).

The workshop will focus on the challenges and opportunities of conducting digital participatory research during covid-19. It is mainly aimed at early career and postgraduate researchers using participatory methods and practices in their research and working across different disciplines and geographical contexts. However, other participants are also welcome. The workshop will open with a short presentation by Dr Susanne Börner on the ethics and practicalities of conducting digital participatory research with young people in vulnerable communities in the urban periphery of Sao Paulo, Brazil. Caitlin Hafferty (Countryside and Community Research Institute, University of Gloucestershire) will then give a short presentation on key considerations for the "best practice" use of digital tools for engaging diverse participants in environmental decision-making processes. Based on the two presentations, we will then discuss different issues related to data collection in new and ongoing research under covid-19. Participants are invited to share short case-studies (approx. 3-5 minutes) related to their main challenges (and opportunities) of conducting digital participatory research under covid-19. This can include but is not limited to issues such as access to communities, trust- building, the impact of wearing masks and physical distancing, digital inclusion/exclusion, power dynamics, practicalities, scientific norms, etc. During the workshop, we will also discuss pathways for future action, such as a call for case-studies on the ethics of participatory action research during covid-19 hosted by the International Collaboration on Participatory Health Research (IPCHR).

Schedule for the session:

10.45-10.55 Zoom Opens

10.55-11.00 Welcome from the organizer and introduction

11.00-11.15 Ethics and practicalities of online youth participatory action research (e-YPAR) in the urban periphery of Sao Paulo, Dr Susanne Börner (University of Birmingham & University of Sao Paulo)

11.15-11.30 Digital tools for participatory environmental decision-making, Caitlin Hafferty (Countryside and Community Research Institute, University of Gloucestershire)

11.30-11.40 Q&A on the presentations

11.40-11.45 Introduction to the IPCHR call for individual case studies on Ethics in participatory research under Covid-19

Writing your own case study (exercise)
Case studies can focus on one or some of (but are not limited to) the following issues:
♦ Access to communities during Covid-19
♦ Trust-building online
♦ Issues of privacy and confidentiality in online communications
♦ Tackling digital exclusion

11.55-12.25 Sharing of some of the case studies (max. 3-5 minutes each) and collective debate on pathways to future action

12.25-12.30 Closing remarks and reflections

Dr Susanne Börner is a postdoctoral Marie Curie Global Fellowship based at the School of Geography, Earth, and Environ-mental Sciences at the University of Birmingham, UK, and the School of Public Health at the University of Sao Paulo, Brazil. She uses youth participatory action research to investigate young people's local knowledge and social practices related to the food-water-energy nexus and disaster risk reduction in Brazil. She also holds a PhD in political sciences from the Univer-sity of Frankfurt, Germany, with a focus on environmental justice and determinants of community participation. With an interest in applied and impact-oriented research both in Latin America and in Europe, she aims to identify pathways for integrating youth knowledge into public policies for a sustainable and healthy urban development. Twitter: @Borner-Susanne, academic profile.

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Programme: Thursday 13th May

Session 3: Past, Present, and Futures of Participation: Key Considerations for Research and Practice

Panel discussion (13:30-15:00 BST)

The purpose of this discussion is to bring together diverse perspectives and experiences around broad themes and issues in participatory research, approaches, tools, methods, frameworks, and "best practices". These will then be brought together to create some key considerations which will be made publicly available on the PYGYRG website. The discussion will be framed by 5 broad questions which are intended to be flexible, open to interpretation and debate (e.g. in terms of any issues or paradoxes regarding the questions themselves). We welcome four panellists from diverse backgrounds within and beyond academic geography to discuss these key issues — **Jack Lowe** (Royal Holloway, University of London), **Cris Ibarra** (Federal University of Pernambuco, Brazil), **Fred Dunwoodie Stirton** (Countryside and Community Research Institute, University of Gloucestershire,), and **Ian Babelon** (Northumbria University). This session will be convened by Caitlin Hafferty (Countryside and Community Research Institute, University of Gloucestershire).

We will cover the following questions in this discussion, as well as inviting questions and contributions from the audience:

1. **What is participatory research?** *What does "participatory" mean and what does it involve?*

2. **Why is participation important?** *What are the benefits of participation and for whom?*

3. **Are there any risks and challenges?** *What are the risks of participation and how could they be mitigated?*

4. **What participatory methods, tools, platforms, and/or frameworks are there?** *What digital (remote) and in-person participatory methods exist and what are the associated challenges/opportunities?*

5. **How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted our ability to engage? What can we learn from current issues to inform future research and practice** *How has participatory research and practice adapted during the pandemic — what can we learn to inform future methods and approaches?*

Jack Lowe is a cultural geographer, digital media artist and visiting lecturer in Digital Storytelling at Royal Holloway, University of London. His interdisciplinary, practice-based PhD research involves independently developing and testing location-based games, to explore their potential as interactive and participatory platforms for engaging with places through storytelling. Twitter: @jackalowe, academic profile, personal website/blog.

Maria Cristina Ibarra is a PhD in Design, professor and researcher at Federal University of Pernambuco, Brazil. Her research is located at the intersection of design and anthropology, focusing on the role of non-designer skills in design processes, collaborative and participatory practices in urban space, the consequences of modernity/coloniality in design practices, among others. Twitter: @cris_ibarrah, academic profile, personal website/blog.

Fred Dunwoodie Stirton is a Research Assistant at the Countryside and Community Research Institute, University of Gloucestershire. His research has explored participatory approaches to integration with refugees and asylum seekers in Europe. His research interests lie in community-based integration, conflict management, co-production and peer-research. View Fred's academic profile here.

Ian Babelon is currently Research Fellow at Northumbria University investigating 3D city models for collaborative urban planning as well as net-zero retrofit in social housing. His research and consultancy interests include mixed methods and communities of practice in community engagement, sustainability in the built environment and spatial planning. He is former editor-in-chief of the blog of the AESOP Young Academics network (Association of European Schools of Spatial Planning). Twitter: @IanBabelon, academic profile, personal website.

Caitlin Hafferty is a PhD researcher at the Countryside and Community Research Institute, University of Gloucestershire. Her transdisciplinary research interests include participatory methods, technology, planning and environmental decision-making. Specifically, she is interested in how researchers, practitioners, and policy makers use digital tools to engage the public and other stakeholders in environmental decision-making processes. Twitter: @CaitlinHafferty, academic profile, personal blog/website.