



EQUITY



AMSTERDAM PUBLIC
HEALTH (APH)
SPONSORED

SYMPOSIUM ABSTRACT BOOKLET

CO-CREATION IN GLOBAL PUBLIC HEALTH: INSIGHTS FROM THEORY AND PRACTICE

This symposium examines the role of co-creation and participatory research in addressing complex global health challenges, including dementia, adolescent health, stigma and discrimination affecting LGBTQI+ communities as well as the unequal burden of cardiometabolic disease among migrants and ethnic minority populations. Focusing on power dynamics, contextual responsiveness and methodological tensions, it draws on empirical work across diverse settings to explore how co-creation can support more equitable and effective public health research and interventions. By foregrounding voices often excluded from biomedical agenda-setting, the symposium seeks to challenge dominant paradigms and advance inclusive, stakeholder-engaged approaches to health equity.

The Symposium grant is awarded to Katrina Messiha, Marie Skłodowska-Curie PhD Fellow in Public Health Co-creation at Amsterdam UMC (VU location) and formerly ESRI in the Health CASCADE Horizon Europe Project. A Photo Exhibition, highlighting the power of creative approaches for co-creation, runs in parallel to this Symposium.

The Symposium is supported by Amsterdam Public Health and the Amsterdam UMC PREPARED Catalyst Fund.

<https://www.amsterdamumc.org/en/research/institutes/amsterdam-public-health.htm>

Join related Special Interest Group: APH Participatory Research & Co-creation

This document has been authored by Katrina Messiha, with grateful acknowledgement to all the speakers for their contributions.



CO-CREATION IN GLOBAL PUBLIC HEALTH: INSIGHTS FROM THEORY AND PRACTICE

10.11.2025 | 13:30-17:30 | IN-PERSON. LOCATION: TBC.

A PREAMBLE

The growing complexity of global health challenges demands approaches that transcend disciplinary boundaries and traditional hierarchies of knowledge. Increasingly, co-creation and participatory research are recognised as vital means of generating more contextually grounded, equitable and sustainable solutions.

This symposium, “Co-creation in Global Public Health: Insights from Theory and Practice”, brings together scholars and practitioners working at the intersection of theory, methodology and practice to examine the potential of co-creation in addressing persistent inequities in global health. It focuses on a diverse range of pressing issues - from dementia and adolescent health to stigma and discrimination affecting LGBTIQ+ communities and the unequal burden of cardiometabolic disease among migrants and ethnic minority populations.

By engaging critically with the power dynamics, contextual contingencies and methodological tensions that shape collaborative research, the symposium seeks to illuminate how co-creation can move beyond tokenistic participation towards genuine redistribution of power in knowledge production. Through empirical examples drawn from varied cultural and institutional settings, it aims to advance understanding of co-creation as both a mindset and a methodological stance capable of transforming how global public health research is conceived, conducted and translated into practice.

WHAT MAKES
CO-CREATION IN GLOBAL
HEALTH EQUITABLE AND
HOW CAN WE RECOGNISE
AND SHIFT POWER
DYNAMICS (AMONG
STAKEHOLDERS) WITHIN IT?

HOW DO WE MOVE FROM
CO-CREATION AS A METHOD
TO CO-CREATION AS A
MINDSET ACROSS DIVERSE
CONTEXTS AND
STAKEHOLDERS?



CO-CREATION IN GLOBAL PUBLIC HEALTH: INSIGHTS FROM THEORY AND PRACTICE

10.11.2025 | 13:30-17:30 | IN-PERSON.



IN FOREGROUNDING PERSPECTIVES THAT ARE OFTEN MARGINALISED WITHIN BIOMEDICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL HIERARCHIES, THIS SYMPOSIUM SEEKS NOT ONLY TO CRITIQUE EXISTING PARADIGMS BUT ALSO TO MODEL ALTERNATIVE, STAKEHOLDER-ENGAGED AND REFLEXIVE APPROACHES TO THE PURSUIT OF HEALTH EQUITY.

AT A TIME WHEN GLOBAL HEALTH INEQUITIES ARE WIDENING AND TRUST IN RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS IS UNDER STRAIN, THERE IS AN URGENT NEED TO RE-EXAMINE HOW KNOWLEDGE IS PRODUCED, BY WHOM AND FOR WHOSE BENEFIT.



The attendees of this symposium can anticipate an immersive and thought-provoking programme that bridges theory, methodology and practice in co-creation for global public health. The event will convene leading scholars and practitioners to explore how participatory approaches can advance equitable, inclusive and contextually responsive research across diverse health challenges - from dementia and adolescent health to stigma and discrimination affecting LGBTQI+ communities as well as cardiometabolic inequities among migrants and ethnic minority populations.

Attendees will engage with presentations that illuminate both the conceptual foundations and practical applications of co-creation. Sessions will address the power dynamics inherent in collaborative research, the ethical and methodological complexities of working with marginalised populations and strategies for embedding co-creation as a mindset rather than a discrete method.

Highlights:

- Conceptual frameworks and theoretical roots of co-creation.
- Methodological reflections on fostering empowerment, transparency and power-sharing in interdisciplinary collaborations.
- Comparative case studies from Europe and Latin America illustrating co-design with adolescents and participatory action research with marginalised communities.
- Creative and visual approaches to enrich co-creation practices, including a concurrent photo exhibition.
- Interactive workshops examining ethical dilemmas and the practical 'messiness' of co-design with people living with dementia.
- Panel discussion and Q&A sessions fostering dialogue and reflection across disciplines and stakeholder perspectives.

Expected Outcomes and Added Value:

Expected Outcomes and Added Value:

- Foster interdisciplinary exchange (e.g., via prompts, statements, collaborative reflections) on co-creation and participatory research in global (public) health;
- Offer junior researchers conceptual and practical tools to design equitable co-creation processes;
- Strengthen the APH-GH community by promoting dialogue across research groups and institutions;
- Provide a platform for emerging scholars to present and receive feedback on their work;
- Advance inclusive research practices that meaningfully engage historically underrepresented communities in global (public) health; and;
- Highlight co-creation as a pathway to address health disparities and build trust in diverse, multicultural settings.

IN SHORT, THE SYMPOSIUM AIMS TO EQUIP RESEARCHERS AND PRACTITIONERS WITH BOTH THE INSIGHT AND THE PRACTICAL STRATEGIES NECESSARY TO EMBED CO-CREATION MEANINGFULLY WITHIN GLOBAL PUBLIC HEALTH RESEARCH AND PRACTICE.

13:30-13:40 Dr. Teatske Altenburg, Associate Professor –
Welcome & Introduction to Co-creation in global
public health: From method toward mindset

13:40-13:55 Katrina Messiha, PhD Fellow – Co-creation as an
approach in global public health research: Theoretical
roots and underpinning principles

13:55-14:10 Dr. Nessa Millet, Assistant Professor – From paper to
practice, and back again: Methodological
considerations for fostering empowerment,
transparency and power sharing during
interdisciplinary collaborations

14:10-14:25 Claudia Dictus, PhD Fellow – Comparative reflections
on co-design with adolescents in Finland and the
Netherlands

14:25-14:40 Dr. Natalie Evans, Associate Professor & Dr. Saskia
Duijs, Assistant Professor – The power of creative
approaches for co-creation and invitation to view the
exhibition.

14:40-14:50 BREAK

14:50-15:05 Laura Martínez Apráez, PhD Fellow – Adapting
methodologies to conduct participatory action
research with marginalised communities and health
activism in Colombia: How bottom-up approaches
can inform both research and intervention design and
contribute to influencing public policy

15:05-15:20	Muhau Mungamba, PhD Fellow – Co-creating cardiovascular health equity: Lessons from African migrant communities in Europe
15:20-15:40	Tanja de Rijke, PhD Fellow – Interactive workshop on ethical dilemmas and messiness with examples from co-design with people with dementia
15:40-15:50	BREAK
15:50-16:30	Dr. Mariëtte Hoogsteder, Assistant Professor – Panel discussion and Q&A facilitator Framing: Q1: How can co-creation in global health make health access more equitable? Q2: How can co-creation be understood as a mindset (not just a method)?
16:30-17:30	Networking & Borrel
18:00	CLOSE



DR. TEATSKE ALTENBURG
Associate Professor

I work as an Associate Professor at the Department of Public and Occupational Health at Amsterdam UMC. As a human movement scientist, I'm particularly interested in 24-hour movement behaviors, including physical activity, sedentary behavior and sleep. I'm specialized in participatory (action) research, in which I collaborate with children and adolescents throughout all research phases, i.e., from identifying their needs to co-creating and implementing solutions that improve their 24-hour movement behaviors and therewith optimize their health. My dream is that children and adolescents can participate in decision-making on matters that concern them and their lives.

Co-creation in global public health: From method toward mindset

I will introduce the topic of the Symposium - *Co-creation in Global Public Health: Insights from Theory and Practice*.

In this introduction I will address the benefits and challenges of co-approaches, the difference between co-creation as a method or a mindset and equitable co-creation.



KATRINA MESSIHA
Marie Skłodowska-Curie PhD Fellow

I am a Social Scientist within the EU-funded Health CASCADE project, where my PhD focuses on eliciting Theory-based Principles for Co-creation in Public Health. My research seeks to address health inequalities and complex "wicked" public health challenges through inclusive, co-creative and participatory approaches grounded in explicit theory. During my doctoral fellowship, I have contributed to evidence-based European health policy as an EU Policy Researcher at EuroHealthNet, co-developing the policy précis, "Promoting Health Equity through Social Participation and Citizen Engagement" for EU Member States. I am interested in bridging theory and practice to strengthen co-creation as a rigorous and equitable approach within (global) public health research and policy.

Co-creation as an approach in global public health research: Theoretical roots and underpinning principles

This talk explores co-creation in (global) public health research, examining its key concepts, theoretical foundations and practical applications. Drawing on some findings from my PhD, I will present a systematic and narrative review of how co-creation approaches have been applied in public health research and alternative research fields. I will elaborate on the dimensions of the co-creation process and highlight the potential of Critical Realism to strengthen its evidence base. Finally, I will introduce a Co-creation Roles Framework, illustrating its use in a systematic review of youth-oriented interventions in public health and conclude with a discussion of related implications for future research and practice.



DR. NESSA MILLET
Assistant Professor

I am based at the University Centre of Psychiatry at the UMC Groningen. My research explores how people make meaning of their health from a biopsychosocial perspective with a focus on prevention of non-communicable diseases (e.g. common mental health problems). The work I do is often conducted with lived experience at the forefront alongside embedding gender sensitive and intersectional approaches. I have conducted research in a number of medical settings including gynecology, transgender health and psychiatry. I am particularly motivated to understand how participatory research can be conducted transparently and equitably in medical and public health research in a way that empowers both researchers and patients/ citizens.

From paper to practice, and back again: Methodological considerations for fostering empowerment, transparency and power sharing during interdisciplinary collaborations

Co-creating research agendas and conceptual models with patients and community members is now common practice in medical and public health research. Despite the increasing rates of patient and citizen involvement in research worldwide, important epistemological questions remain regarding how to practically implement lived experience insights alongside theoretical (and other lines of knowledge) during study design phases. Drawing from co-creation work with trans and gender diverse people alongside clinicians and researchers working in transgender healthcare, I will reflect on the tensions and opportunities of practically applying the philosophical assumptions of co-creation (e.g., empowerment, equitable partnerships and transparency). Further, I will provide examples and lessons learned on avenues for transparently detailing lived experience contributions in scientific outputs.



CLAUDIA DICTUS
PhD Fellow

I am a researcher working on the EU-funded SmartCHANGE project at the AmsterdamUMC, where my PhD focuses on participatory research with adolescents. I have a background in Transdisciplinary research and a Research masters in Global Health. In addition to my academic career I have engaged in the practical work of improving wellbeing among adolescents and young adults in my work as co-founder and chair of the Our Bodies Our Voice Foundation.

Context and co-design: comparative reflections on co-design with adolescents in Finland and the Netherlands

This presentation will engage with the known truism "context matters," where the role of the local and individual situations in which participants find themselves is of particular importance in participatory research. With an increase in multi-country consortium research and more frequent demands for participatory components from funders, it is relevant to ask particularly how context matters, and what its implications are for using approaches like co-design in multiple settings.

Findings from SmartCHANGE, an EU funded innovation project focusing on the early prevention of chronic illness through AI supported behavior change tools, presents an opportunity to begin to explore this question. For this project the same co-design protocol was followed with adolescents aged 11-14 in both Finland and the Netherlands, allowing for a reflection on differences in the processes, their relationship to local contexts and the effect of both these factors on the study findings.



DR. NATALIE EVANS

Associate Professor

I am a social scientist with a background in public health and anthropology and an enduring interest in ethics and research integrity.

My research focuses on how responsible research practices are conceptualised and communicated within academic communities. Part of responsible research involves including all those affected by research in the research process. In the PREPARED project – which developed codes of conduct for research during crises and for fragile environments – we conducted extensive stakeholder engagement activities. Some of these utilized creative approaches, such as the photography and story project led by our colleague Iddah Akinyi (Partners for Health and Development in Africa, Kenya). Iddah's photos, and the stories of the co-researchers whose stories she spotlights, are part of the exhibition "Through a different lens: art approaches in co-creation".

I am also extensively involved in developing educational materials for researchers and trainers through the Horizon projects RE4GREEN, which aims to help researchers consider the environmental impact of their practices, and AIOLIA, which is developing guidance and educational materials related to AI ethics in human cognition and behaviour.

The power of creative approaches for co-creation and invitation to view the exhibition

Through a different lens: co-created art in health research.

This exhibition is entirely composed of artworks co-created with co-researchers and research participants from various Amsterdam UMC projects. The powerful exhibition conveys the lived experiences of individuals and communities whose voices are often underrepresented in traditional research. Through photography, storytelling, film and sculpture, the exhibited works illuminate how people experience vulnerability and resilience in complex and marginalized environments.

Through a Different Lens invites viewers to reflect on knowledge and expertise in health research, whilst enabling viewers to experience research findings in a whole new way.



DR. SASKIA DUIJS

Assistant Professor

I am a university lecturer and researcher at the department of Ethics, Law and Humanities. My work is grounded in participatory and innovative art-based approaches to understand the lived experiences of citizens, clients, paid and unpaid care workers, from a critical diversity and intersectional perspective. My academic work illustrates how societal inequalities trickle down into workplaces, shaping the health and wellbeing of care workers, in the face of precarization, racism and sexual harassment.



LAURA MARTÍNEZ APRÉIZ

PhD Fellow

I am an anthropologist (B.A., M.A.) and global health researcher (M.Sc.), currently pursuing a PhD at the Athena Institute (VU Amsterdam). I have over a decade of experience conducting Participatory Action Research in Colombia on different topics, including traditional indigenous medicine, sex work, drug use and harm reduction, and LGBTIQ rights. My doctoral research is being developed in collaboration with trans human rights defenders across Colombia, co-creating mental health and collective care strategies grounded in lived experience, community knowledge, and political struggle. I also critically examine the Non-profit Industrial Complex and the power dynamics that shape Global North-South research relations and activism.

Bridging Research, Intervention, and Policy: Bottom-Up Approaches in Colombian Trans Health Activism

Across Colombia, trans communities face intersecting forms of violence, exclusion, and precarity, with trans leaders often bearing the emotional burden of activism in isolation. This project, led by the Liga de Salud Trans (LST) in collaboration with the Athena Institute, sought to identify, strengthen, and adapt community-based mental health strategies while critically engaging with existing Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) tools. The research deconstructed conventional methodologies together with participants to co-create contextually relevant practices. Throughout the process, workshops and tools were continuously adapted to reflect the knowledge, needs, and languages of diverse trans communities, turning research into a constant process of co-development and mutual learning. Rooted in liberation psychology, collective care, and trans-led activism, the methodology challenged individualized and pathologizing notions of mental health, instead framing it as relational, collective, and political. The participatory process strengthened peer networks, generated region-specific strategies, and expanded leaders' capacity to link mental healthcare to structural transformation. Outcomes directly informed the mental health component of the Ley Integral Trans, currently advancing through Congress. This project shows how bottom-up, participatory research can bridge community knowledge, intervention design, and policy toward more inclusive and transformative health systems.



MUHAU MUNGAMBA

PhD Fellow

I am a doctoral researcher at Amsterdam UMC and Walter Sisulu University (South Africa), working at the intersection of global health, cardiovascular disease, and epigenetics. My research focuses on cardiometabolic diseases in African-ancestry populations, combining longitudinal data and epigenetic analysis to examine how biology, environment, and inequality intersect across the migration pathway. I work with data from the RODAM and Pros-RODAM cohorts, which span Ghana and major European cities. As an NRF-NUFFIC doctoral scholar, I am committed to bridging African and global health research networks and advancing co-creation and participatory public health approaches. My broader vision is to amplify underrepresented voices and translate research into culturally grounded, equitable strategies for global health.

Co-creating cardiovascular health equity: Lessons from African migrant communities in Europe

African migrants in Europe face a disproportionately high burden of cardiometabolic diseases (CMD), including obesity, hypertension, and type 2 diabetes often with earlier onset and more severe outcomes compared to host populations. Drawing on insights from the RODAM and Pros-RODAM studies of Ghanaian communities across sub-Saharan Africa and Europe, this talk explores how participatory and co-creative approaches can improve the relevance, trustworthiness, and effectiveness of public health research and interventions. I reflect on the limitations of top-down strategies and advocates for public health frameworks that center community voices, cultural context, and structural determinants of health. The session highlights co-creation as a necessary pathway to equitable cardiovascular health for historically underrepresented populations in global health.



TANJA DE RIJKE

PhD Fellow

My name is Tanja de Rijke and I am a final-year PhD student at the Department of Medical Psychology & Alzheimercenter Amsterdam at the Amsterdam UMC. My PhD research focuses on person-centred care in memory clinics and public involvement in dementia-related public health settings.

Ethical dilemmas and messiness during co-design

During this interactive workshop, I will share some examples of ethical dilemmas and messiness that arose during our co-design project with people with cognitive complaints, care partners, and clinicians. Hereafter, you will have the opportunity to reflect and discuss (potential) ethical dilemmas and complexities in your own projects in a safe space without forcing disclosure.



DR. MARIËTTE HOOGSTEDER

Assistant Professor

I work as co-ordinator of the Academic Collaborative Center Youth and Health. This is a structural collaboration between the research team Youth / CAPRI from the department 'Public and Occupational Health' (Amsterdam UMC) and eight public youth health care organisations in the North-Holland and Flevoland regions.

In the collaborative center, people in many different roles and functions (researchers, youth health physicians and youth health nurses, epidemiologists, policy workers and managers) work together in practice-based research, education and training. We collaborate with children, adolescents, parents schools, youth ngo's and grassroots and municipalities.

Interactive Session

I will facilitate this interactive panel discussion, guiding reflections on how co-creation in global health can promote equitable access to health services. Together, we will explore co-creation as a mindset—not just a method—using a dynamic fishbowl format that allows audience members to join the discussion, ask questions and share perspectives in a safe and inclusive environment.