

« Participatory process: Insights and challenges from the STAGE Project. »

This contribution analyses a case study within the interdisciplinary STAGE project. STAGE (Stay Healthy Through Ageing) is a European program bringing together 22 partners from 11 countries around a common goal: to better understand the mechanisms of aging and to identify the conditions that enable people to age in better health.

Within this consortium, the Université of Liège (Belgium) and Amsterdam UMC (Netherlands) more specifically study the characteristics of the living environment and their link to healthy aging. The aim is to understand the impact of the built environment, with a view to mapping territories according to their influence on the health of their inhabitants, and to contribute to the development of infrastructure that is more accessible, inclusive and age-friendly.

To achieve this, we implement a participatory process that is currently unfolding in two contrasting contexts: Verviers, a former post-industrial city, and the rural municipality of Gouvvy. The aim of this process is to discuss and evaluate the characteristics of these areas with those who know them best: their inhabitants.

That being said, participatory processes have limitations, particularly regarding the inclusiveness and accessibility of the suggested activities. The objective of this contribution is to take a critical look at these approaches, to identify their strengths and weaknesses, and to draw lessons to improve and adapt future participatory practices.