The third Nethics symposium "Shared voices, Shared responsibilities? Ethical dilemmas in participatory research and co-design" addressed a growing need for reflection and discussion of ethics and research integrity in the social and behavioral sciences, where co-design and participatory research are growing in popularity. These practices are motivated by values of care, justice, and equality, giving those represented in research a voice in the design of research projects, the collection and interpretation of data, as well as in communication and valorization of research insights. Cocreation and participation research projects also come with ethical dilemmas and challenges to research integrity. How to deal with privacy, responsibility to funders, the independence of researchers, and relationships with members of the community represented in the research?

After a brief welcome to NETHICS by chair Rene Bekkers, Jacqueline Schenk introduced the basics of co-design and participatory research. She highlighted the potential advantages, including empowerment of communities, diversity of study populations, higher reliability and validity of interpretations, connections with practice, and societal impact. At the same time, there are also potential disadvantages, including a higher intensity and longer duration of research, training and support requirements, role conflicts and power asymmetries, adjustments to informed consent procedures, and challenges to research integrity. These issues require careful consideration in ethics review and continuous reflection.

Julia Wittmayer summarized the principles and practices of transformative research and discussed how current policies in academic institutions enable and hinder transdisciplinary work. She discussed principles in the Netherlands Code of Conduct for research integrity, individual and peer-formulated concerns, and stakeholder-informed principles. Distributed ethical stewardship and enablement may clash with institutional safeguards and centralized oversight. Wittmayer called for institutional experimentation with continuous rather than one-shot ethics review and an ethics coach and peer support groups for participatory research.

Susanna Osinga introduced a dilemma game to discuss ethical challenges in participatory research and co-creation. After the break catered by Brownies & Downies we discussed these dilemmas in small groups. In the subsequent plenary discussion of the dilemmas, it was clear that participatory research creates ethical and research integrity challenges throughout the entire cycle of research: not just at the design of research projects, but also in the collection of data, and in communication with funders and the press. How much influence can stakeholders have on the selection of participants and research methods? While the Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity forbids the influence of 'non-scientific or non-scholarly considerations' in these aspects, the principle of responsibility requires researchers to take societal interests into account. Another insight emerging in the discussion is that researchers would benefit from support structures that they can access throughout the research project. Good practices for ethics committees include the appointment of representatives who can give advice to researchers about their ongoing research, and the involvement of data stewards who can advise on data anonymization and privacy issues.

We hope that the symposium contributed to knowledge about participatory research among members of ethics committees, and a reflection on current procedures: do they effectively address the needs of researchers?

Slides of the presentations: https://osf.io/sc98f/files/r2xe7

Dilemma game: https://osf.io/sc98f/files/mzvkc