Towards Impactful Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) in informal settlements 2.0
Workshop report, 30 August – 1 September, Rotterdam NL

Table of Contents

'*Viva Mathare! Long live Mathare!*' seems a befitting takeaway from the three-day workshop held to collectively think of ways to substantiate impactful results when conducting Community-Based Participatory Research, focusing particularly on the communities in Mathare– an informal settlement in Nairobi, Kenya. Community comes first– be it action, be it research.

The principles behind conducting impactful CBPR were incorporated in the workshop itself with interdisciplinary researchers, academics, NGO workers, government representatives, coming together as stakeholders to reach a consensus on how to maximize results through their consolidated efforts. The workshop and its outputs are an inviting opportunity for anybody willing to make academia a reciprocal and co-constitutive process.

The three-day workshop was organized in IHS, Rotterdam, jointly by IHS, International Centre for Frugal Innovation, Nuvoni Research, Mathare Special Planning Area Research Collective (MSPARC), Leiden University and TU Delft. It builds on phase 2 of the Core-IMPACT project of LDE Global that develops a catalytic approach to impactful CBPR and was piloted in Mathare informal settlement.

The workshop aimed to:
1. Further the design of a non-digital data repository for the Mathare informal settlement,
2. Co-create a practical guide for meaningful, impactful CBPR and
3. Deepen the interpretation and engagement with 'research waste' in informal settlements, and (potentially) develop a research agenda.

The workshop constituted of participants from four different approaches:
1. **Community Representatives** from MSPARC, Ghetto Foundation, as well as community representatives from South Holland
2. **Government** members from Nairobi City County government and the Rotterdam Municipality
3. **Academics** from IHS (Erasmus), University of Nairobi. ISS (Erasmus), Leiden University, TU Delft, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and De Haagse Hogeschool
4. **NGO**s, namely ICFI, Nuvoni, Slum Dwellers International (SDI).

Introduction

There is an amazing opportunity in Kenya. Under the Special Planning Area provision in the Physical and Land Use Planning Act, approved in 2019, community organizations in informal settlements can propose upgrading programs. But what activities to propose, what do communities want and what would work well? Researchers can help communities in preparing such plans. However, a lot of research is wasted, as researchers extract information from communities without feeding back. The workshop discussed how researchers and local government can support community organizations in developing upgrading plans for issues such as solid waste management, housing, and safety. Focusing on the informal settlement of Mathare, the participants in the workshops developed:

1. A repository of academic research done in Mathare
2. An outline for a guide on how to do community based participatory research.
3. Publications on research waste to create awareness on CBPR among researchers.
4. Ideas to strengthen the network ('community of practice') of community leaders, researchers, and governments.

Day 1

The workshop was opened by remarks from the director of IHS, David Dodman and the director of LDE Global, Wim van den Doel.

Before in Rotterdam in August 2023, the workshop was first piloted in June, 2023 in Nairobi. Following are the main takeaways from the first phase as recollected by Alice Menya and Stephen Nyagaya.

The Nairobi Workshop Reflection (from June, 2023)

The workshop in Nairobi began the work toward formulating a framework for CBPR in informal settlements, piloting the program in Mathare, such that the participants were physically taken into the settlements. The four main activities that the participants indulged in were:

- Activity 1: Data Mapping

- Activity 2: Living debates/ Research café

- Activity 3: Stakeholders engagement in research

- Activity 4: Research ethics

After the Nairobi workshop, following were the main resolutions:

- Inventorise available spatial data

- Facilitate robust Community mobilization

- MSPARC stakeholder mapping

- Enhance engagement of stakeholders within MSPARC

- Establish a core working group/steering committee in MSPARC for coordination of the SPA process

- Craft data sharing agreement

- Support monthly community dialogues

- Structuring the SPA activities and discussions according to thematic areas

While a lot on the list of resolutions has been achieved, there remains a long way to go. The workshop in Rotterdam served as a good platform to renegotiate and delegate the resolutions.

One of the main goals that has since been achieved is the centralization of the repository. This was talked about by Lucy Oates introducing the room to MSPARC, and the development of the website being undertaken.

MSPARC is a coalition of Kenyan and international agencies with research-based expertise on urban development. Their aim is to improve the quality of life for Mathare's residents by conducting mission-oriented research, specifically by using data to support Mathare's efforts to be granted Special Planning Area status.

For the purposes of this, there has been the initial establishment of a repository of research done on Mathare (since 2012) and is currently being digitalized and moved on to the website for easier access.

Fishbowl Conversation for Stakeholders in CBPR for Development in Illegal settlements

After a short break, the group was indulged in a fishbowl conversation with Beatrice Hati as the moderator, where MC represented **the community**, Marion, **the government** and Joseph Kimani, the **civil society**. The activity invited participants and audiences to think how the three different facilitators of development in illegal settlements come together. The slightly heated conversations bought forth the contentions and point of cooperation. Following are the main takeaways from the conversation:

- Primarily, there is a lack of participation from academics and politicians in the conversation around development in illegal settlements, like, Mathare. Thereby, it points towards a diminishing process of knowledge production and the refusal of politicians to associate themselves with the complex web of problems in 'problem' areas like Mathare.
- The discussion stressed on the importance of 'responsible' research, done in consultation with local communities, especially vulnerable groups, like the youth. Stress was placed on the significance of co-creation/co-production of knowledge. Public participation is required at every step of the research:
  - ➔ Development agenda should be set up by the local communities, thus the research question should directly be borrowed from local communities.
  - ➔ Data collection and analysis should be done reciprocally.
  - ➔ Engagement of researchers with the community should be long-term and continuous, since understanding community is a continuous process.

- The discussion also left the group with several questions, such as:
  ➔ How much of the participatory results should be included in the actual planning?
  ➔ How can the government tackle the high levels of informality in planning and implementation to better incorporate the needs of the local communities?

## Right to Reyeroord: The role of design and researchers in providing (a) space for youth

The latter part of the afternoon was led by Emiel Rijshouwer where he talked about the role of researchers as social designers, focusing on the case study of Reijeroord, Rotterdam, where he stressed the role of design and research in providing a space for youth.

Right to Reyeroord is a play on Henri Lefebrve's framework, Right to City, wherein it is claimed that instead of urban spaces being dictated by market forces, they should be shaped and governed by the people who inhabit it. At the core of the right to city is engagement, empowerment, and emancipation.

As per the research design Emile worked with, the researcher needs to:
- Start with an "urgency"
- Work with stakeholders and the public, who redefine the urgency
- Thus, long-term solutions are co-created
- Which then lead to interventions
- Which creates values ➔ thereby, restarting the cycle

This cycle is displayed below visually:
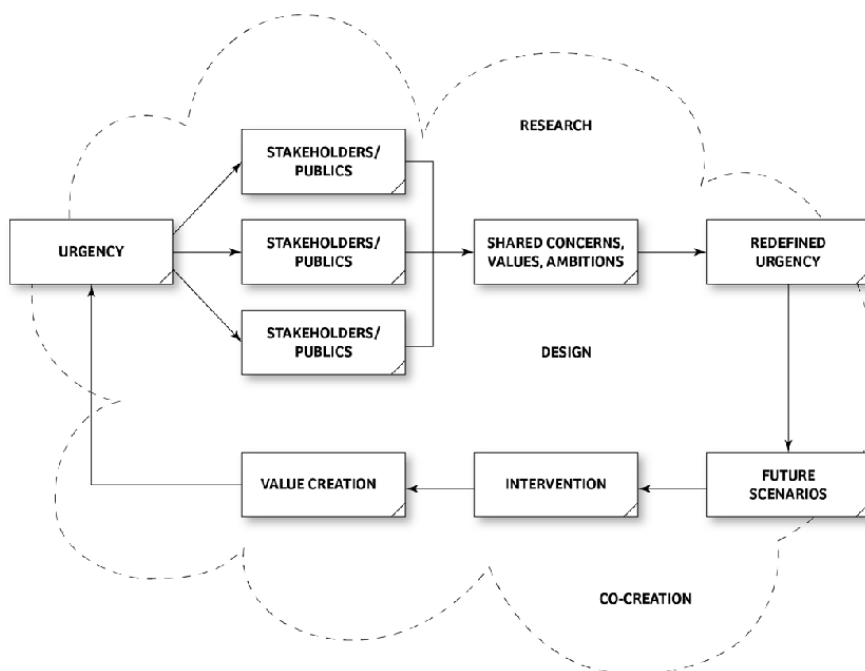
The questions Emiel's research seeks to answer is:

1. How to provide space for youth in Reyeroord
2. How does/can the municipality contribute to providing space for youth in Reyeroord?

The research process generated important insights for researchers, such as:
- The importance of agency → letting the youth decide for themselves what 'space' is
- Allowing the target group for the research to learn by doing → Letting the youth occupy space both in the research and in their actual neighborhoods
- The significance of partnering with communities → The research partnered with neighborhood alliances, youth councils, etc.
- The importance of reciprocity and politics

The workshop participants then engaged with the content of the presentation, wherein the main outputs and questions were as follows:
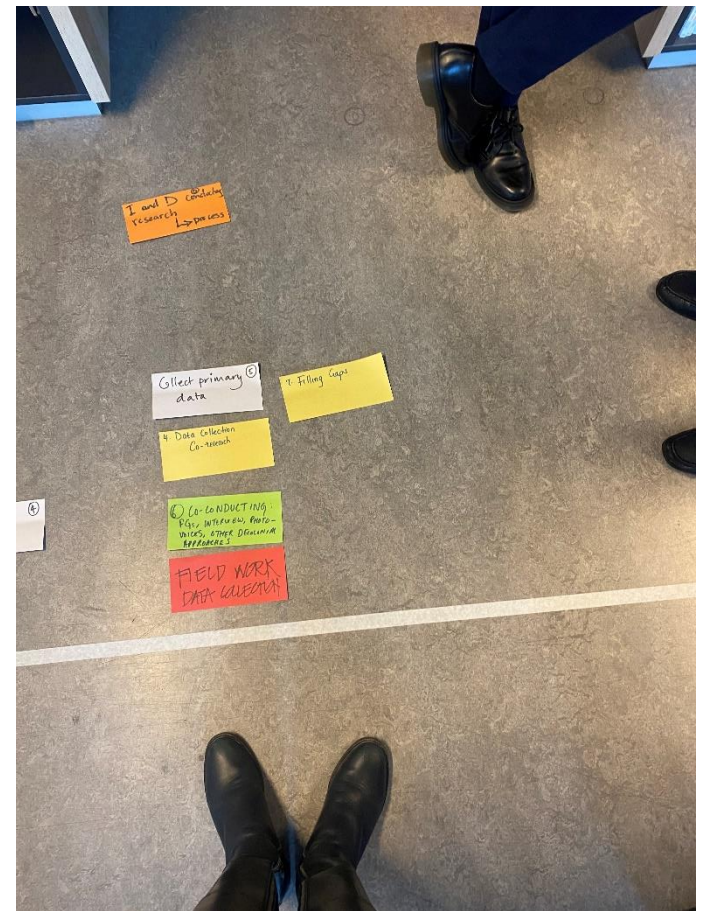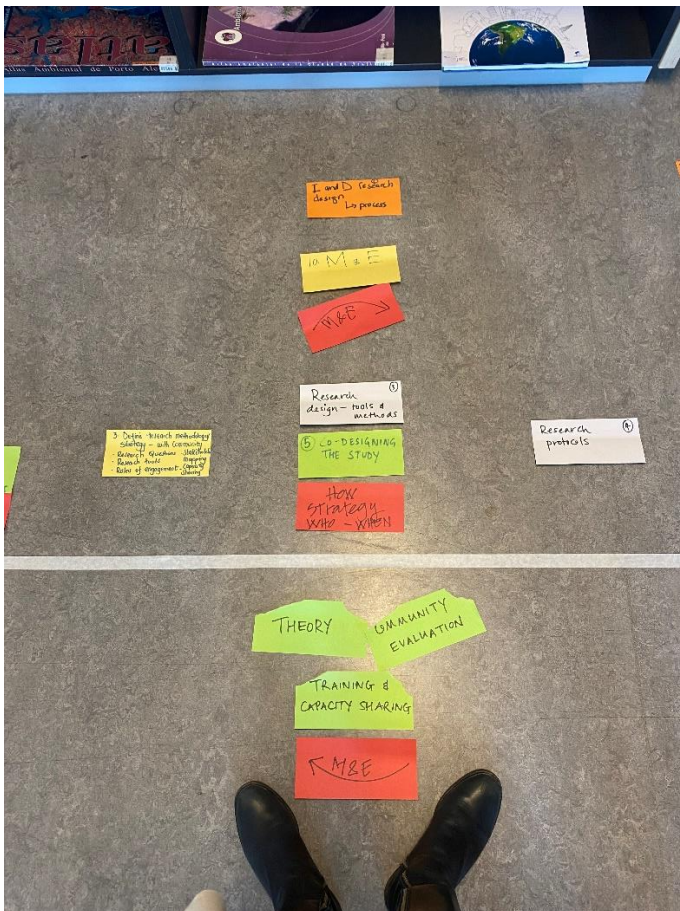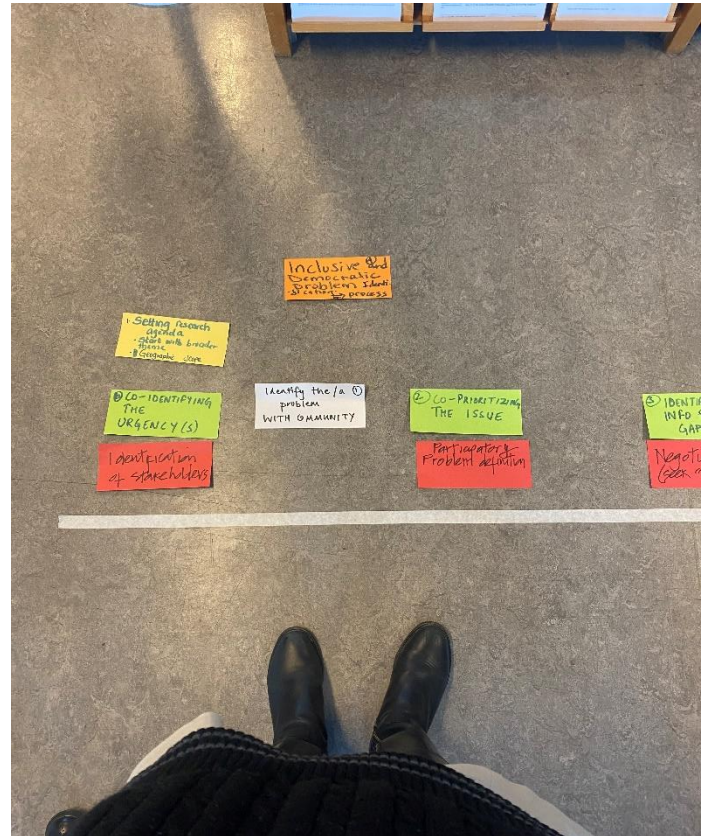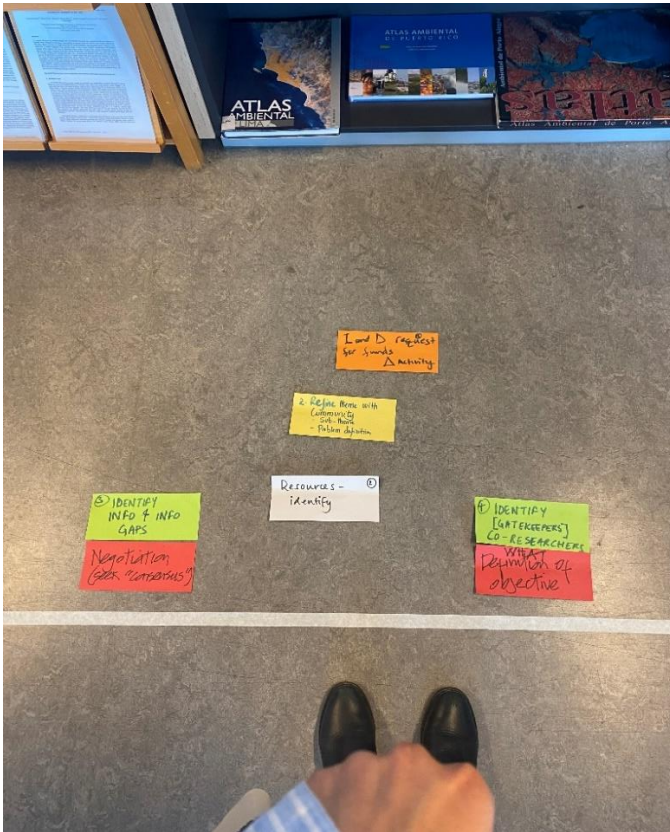- There is a lack of trust in academia amongst people.
- Youth (and likely, other communities) see themselves as whole, and not segmented like researchers do.
- The use of heavy academic jargon and institutional language affects the approach to research, narratives, etc. Thereby organic language and process is very important.
- Plans should follow the resources available.
- Youth (and likely, other communities) do remain static, and are rather dynamic, throughout the process of research.

The presentation and the conversation that followed, mirrored the insights and the concerns, brought forth by the researchers working in Mathare Nairobi. This points toward the transnational nature of research and the benefits of knowledge sharing across nation-states, cities, neighborhoods. The call is to practice making academia borderless.

Brain Sprint: 10-step research model for CBPR

The final activity of the day was led by ISS professor, Kees Bierkart, where he engaged the participants in developing a 10-step research model for community based participatory research.

The participants were divided into groups of 3-4 and to the best of their abilities, asked to come up with a 10-step approach to CBPR. Following are the results:

Photo 1 (top-left):

- I and D request for funds ↳ Activity
- 2. Refine theme with Community – Sub-theme – Problem definition
- Resources – identify ①
- ③ IDENTIFY INFO & INFO GAPS
- Negotiation (seek "consensus")
- ① IDENTIFY [GATEKEEPERS] CO-RESEARCHERS WHAT
- Definition of objective

Photo 2 (top-right):

- Inclusive and Democratic problems & identi... ↳ process
- 1. Setting Research agenda – share with broader theme – Geographic scope
- ③ CO-IDENTIFYING THE URGENCY(s)
- Identification of stakeholders
- Identify the/a ① problem WITH COMMUNITY
- ② CO-PRIORITIZING THE ISSUE
- Participatory Problem definition
- ③ IDENTIFY INFO & GAP...
- Negot... (seek...

Photo 3 (bottom-left):

- I and D research design ↳ process
- 10. M & E
- M&E →
- Research design – tools & methods ①
- ⑤ CO-DESIGNING THE STUDY
- How strategy – WHO – WHEN
- 3 Define approach methodology Strategy with community Research questions Research tools Roles of engagement
- Research protocols ④
- THEORY
- COMMUNITY EVALUATION
- TRAINING & CAPACITY SHARING
- ← M&E

Photo 4 (bottom-right):

- I and D conducting research ↳ process
- Collect primary data ⑥
- 7. Filling Gaps
- 4. Data Collection Co-research
- ⑥ CO-CONDUCTING RGDs, INTERVIEW, PHOTO-VOICES, OTHER DECOLONIAL APPROACHES
- FIELD WORK DATA COLLECTION

While groups differed in their approaches, their was an overarching similarity in the results. Below is the compilation of the 10-step process curated across many groups:

1. Setting the research agenda/ co-identifying the urgency(s)/ inclusive and democratic identification of problems
2. Co-prioritizing the issue/ Participatory problem definition
3. Identifying information gaps/ identifying the resources available/ identifying the requests for funds
4. Identifying co-researchers (gatekeepers)
5. Co-designing the research → tools and methods
6. Setting the research protocols
7. Primary data collection/ Filling gaps
8. Analysis
9. Co-production of knowledge/ Reporting
10. Dissemination and feedback / Reflection

While some groups chose to focus the end of the research on celebration, others felt the need to establish long-term impact. The entire research process is also marked by constant monitoring and evaluation.

Research Waste

At the beginning of Day 2 Beatrice Hati's invited the group to critically reflect on research and ones role as s researcher through her presentation on Research Waste, which problematized research practice by analyzing research as wasteful.

A resident of Mathare was once heard saying, "…so another one of this research? …You know we are tired of scientists. My community is not a goldmine." The disappointment of the statement captures a very sad reality- a quick scan of a room full of researchers shows how problematic research can be when it fails to produce societal benefits. Research should redeem the **human and material costs** of its investigation with **commensurate gains of social and scientific value,** otherwise Research becomes wasteful.

Research is prone to being wasteful at each of its step, due to many factors, such as:
- Irrelevant questions
- Inappropriate methodologies
- Poor reporting
- Invisible data
- Knowledge Prejudice

However, 85% of research waste is avoidable.

The problem of research waste is a massive global phenomenon, with the number of scientists worldwide reaching 9 million and global research spending growing faster than the economy. The other looming issue the asymmetrical powerplay, with most of the research now taking place in the Global South the funds and researchers for which are supplied by the Global North.

An "attractive site" for such research in pursuit of intellectual curiosity are the informal settlements in Africa, which have now become over-researched with disproportional societal benefit. Mathare in Nairobi is a glaring example of an illegal settlement that remains 'over-researched with no impact.'

Which bring us to the question: How might we counter research waste in Mathare? Following are a few solution:

Visible research:
- Repository - 233+ research outputs in the last decade.
- Minimize duplication of research

Value from research:
- Repository - 'waste' or a 'landfill'
- Different forms of knowledge
- Consumable knowledge – art, games

Participation throughout the life cycle:
- Research With and By communities

The conversation on Research Waste is very urgent and complex, especially for Social Sciences and Development practitioners. The conversation was closed with many open-ended debates, such as,
- is it really waste, if intellectual curiosity is being fulfilled?
- what is the ethicality of producing or reducing research waste?
- and how significant is investment-impact mismatch in determining the amount of research waste generated?
- is research without societal impact ethical?

Bospolder-Tussendijken (BoTu) Field Trip

At the end of Day 2, the participants visited the **Bospolder-Tussendijken** neighborhoods in Rotterdam, where special attention is paid to community-based organizations, bringing neighbors together and facilitating youth engagement in the neighborhood. In BoTu independent companies work with governments to provide services like housing maintenance, ensuring minimal drugs abuse, providing a platform for residents to voice their concerns, etc.

Reflections from the visit

Participants from Nairobi noted that in contrast to how things generally worked in Kenya, in Rotterdam it looked like the government remained very close to the people and that the neighborhoods in the city are very diverse. These are lessons they hope to take back with them to their respective communities. From the perspective of the Kenyans, it was very interesting to see private countries being subcontracted by the government to provide services in social housings.

However, there was a recognition of the reality that poverty is relative, and that Nairobi and Rotterdam were looking at two very different sets of problems due to the difference in how poverty is operationalized in the two cities. Although what remains similar between the two contexts is the importance of communities and the centrality of community building efforts.

The main takeaways from the trips were:
- Illegal (or legal) settlements are always 'HUMAN' settlements.
- Change needs to not start with government; Community and Civil Society need to be equally empowered to be able to take action.
- It is very important to contextualize housing in and around the bigger political landscape it exists in and is born out of.

Day 2/3

A significant part of the workshop- second half of Day 2 and all of Day 3 was spent with the entire group being subdivided into three smaller groups depending on their research interests.
- Group 1 were to focus on the Mathare Repository,
- Group 2 on a guide on how to do CBPR and
- Group 3 on Research Waste.

The groups first focused on *defining and prioritizing the needs/pains/gains* and then on *co-creating solutions and action plans*, for the respective area of research interest, with an expert facilitator. The discussion brought together academics, politicians, civil society members and students, providing a holistic overview of the existing problems and the possible solutions.

Mathare Repository

The research done on Mathare has been collected and stored in a repository to streamline the efforts of academics, civil society, and government.

What has been done so far?

Following is a brief outline of what has been done so far:

1. Database of 200+ results
   * Currently stored in an Excel spreadsheet
   * 185 Open Access, 48 not-Open Access
   * Newspaper archives (Daily Nation – 90 articles to be added)

2. Resources coded based on:
   * Methods
   * Theme
   * Type of resource (e.g., article, grey literature etc.)
   * Metadata

3. Initial evaluation of the availability of spatial data
   * Incorporated into Excel database

4. Prototype of website
   * Can be accessed on: https://sites.google.com/view/msparc/home
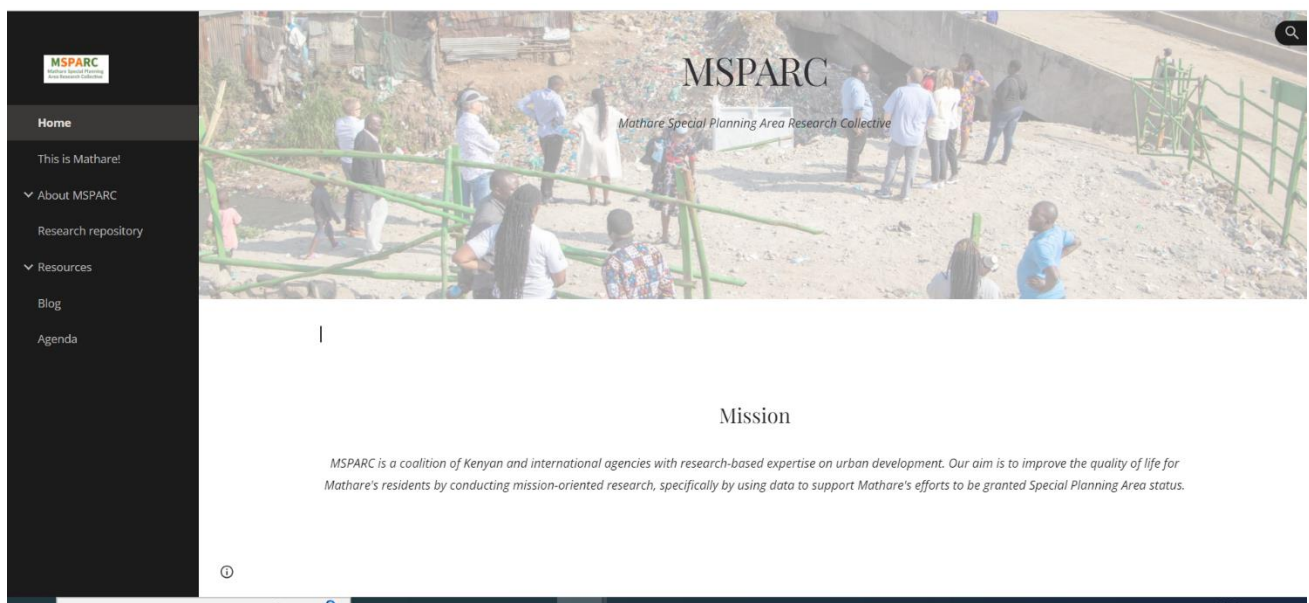
5. Initial discussions around data sharing with MSPARC partners

What's the vision? 10 years

- Output:
    - All data and research about Mathare is available in one place
    - Open access
    - Different types of knowledge are incorporated.
    - Different forms of presentation are incorporated e.g., non-technical, arts-based, etc.
    - Extended e.g., by date (further back than 2010)
- Use:
    - Regularly updated and (self-)sustainable
    - Used as a starting point for all new research (e.g., identify knowledge gaps, "re-mined" for the diamond(s))
    - Evidence-base for policy formation/implementation
    - A tool to measure change and impact over time.
- Results
    - Community empowerment
    - Raised awareness for heterogeneous user groups.

What's the vision? 1 year

- Evolution from prototype to actual product
    - Assessment of needs, protocols, sustainability – both website and repository
    - Determine ownership and management of the platform.
- Raise awareness about the repository:
    - Publicising existence
    - Advocating for contributions from MSPARC members (and others)
    - Exhibit or arts-based (community) dissemination
- SPA: Used as the foundation for the situational analysis report
- Set the agenda – for research and practice:
    - Identify urgency and quick wins.
    - Identify gaps.
    - Academic article e.g., systematic review

Short term outputs and action plan

- Make at least a basic version of the website available.
    - Share metadata
    - "About MSPARC" – increase visibility.

- Analysis of existing research
    - Academic article: "A research agenda for Mathare: What we already know and future directions."
    - Overview of possible student research topics

- Draft outline/contents for SPA situational analysis report

- Organise (community) awareness-raising event(s)
  - Community dialogues/MSPARC meetings
  - Coffee rounds
  - Art/photography competition

Longer-term outputs

- Data sharing agreement in place
- Database extended further into past and regularly updated.
- Interactive knowledge platform set up in the community.
  - Knowledge-sharing events
  - Research outputs
  - Linked to digital hubs.
  - Linked to existing initiatives e.g., solid waste management groups.
- Lessons from the knowledge platform:
  - Is this a tool for reducing research waste?
  - Does it facilitate open science?
  - Is the community more empowered to engage in/direct research?

How to do CBPR

"Less agonizing, more organizing" was the central theme for the group preparing CBPR guidelines, such that according to them it remains of utmost importance for researchers to go back to the "statement of intent", if any, as provided by the community.

According to the guidelines prepared, CBPR should serve following functions:
- Provide data for change
- Should be action based
- Should be ethical and moral
- Should support implementation
- Should expand community capacity

Narrowing the focus on Mathare, MSPARC needs to appropriate a few guidelines of CBPR as well, such as:

- Creating collectives/ Consortium

- Drafting shared goals and research agendas, where research agendas should come from Mathare
- Competencies and responsibilities of evert party involved in the research needs to be assessed.
- All research should be coordinated
- Community engagement should be maximized by MSPARC and its partners when conducting research in Mathare
- Planning and Actualization should be carried in consultation with the community.

Research Waste

The big question that begs to be asked when thinking about Research Waste is: *Why do we conduct research in isolation, and what happens when we do?*

Following is the visual representation of potential answers to this central question.

What is wasted?
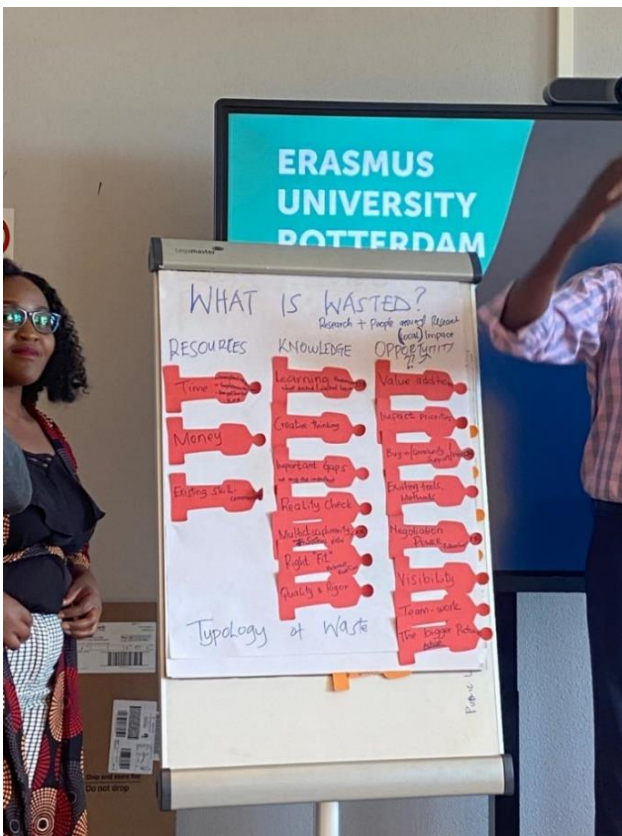
To think about research waste, it is very important to classify what is wasted often during the process of research.

1.   Resources
-Time
-Money
-Existing Skill

2.   Knowledge
-Learning
-Creative Thinking
-Quality and Rigor
-Multidisciplinarity

3.   Opportunity
-Value addition
-Visibility
-Team work
-Existing tools
-The bigger picture

Therefore, with so many facets at the risk of being wasted, it is important to further develop the concept and incorporate the cognizance of it in our research practice.

Why don't we work together?

There are several reasons why researchers both tend to and fail to work together, such as:

1.   Structural Organization and Requirements
❖   Structural limits in academia
❖   Funding protocols
❖   Data Protection

2.   Resource and management requirements
❖   Time limits
❖   Donor/ Government agendas
❖   Sector-based interests

3.   Geopolitics and Academia
❖   Research control
❖   Neo-colonization of knowledge
❖   Knowledge superiority
❖   Intellectual property tensions

4.   The researcher's persona
❖   Lack of knowledge
❖   Lack of networks
❖   Unmotivated actors

What are strategies to prevent Research Waste?

Following are the ways IHS, alongside MSPARC researchers, wishes to minimize research waste.

1. Generation of researchers: Different generations of researchers can tackle the issue of research waste differently.
-   Current researchers
    a. Enhanced awareness (avoid duplication)
    b. Link and expose academics to data
    c. Emphasis on community input
-   Future
    a. Replicating the research atelier set up in Chennai, India in Mathare
    b. Include Research Waste in the curriculum at IHS

2. Promote co-research culture
3. Co-produce data and research with government that can be made accessible to all

Outputs/ Action Plan

The workshop came to an end with a renewed sense of camaraderie between people who have tirelessly worked together in Mathare and the establishment of new friendships and networks. Following is a rough plan of action between all the participants and member organizations, and the delegation of responsibilities:

Repository
1. The MSCPARC Website needs to be further developed.
2. Awareness raising events need to be facilitated more often in Mathare
3. Streamlining data sharing among members
4. A more active management of the repository
5. Linking of the repository to digital hub – knowledge platform

Some questions regarding the repository remained unanswered, such as:
- Who will own and fund the repository?
- Will the repository survive after the completion of the SPA?
- What will the repository's link be to CBPR researchers?

MSPARC: Alice for research coordination, Kimani for planning and Samuel to coordinate community engagement.
Repository and database: Alice in charge, Marion Rono, Lucy Oates.

Less Research Waste
1. A guide on Research Waste can be curated for researchers
2. Research atelier for master students at IHS to conduct coordinated research in Mathare
3. Include research waste in curriculum
4. Make data accessible to Mathare - repository.
5. Develop a community of practice/ research consortium
6. A special publication on research waste with inputs from academics around the world.

Research Waste academic papers: Jan Fransen, Beatrice Hati, Dr. Mbathi
Research atelier: Maartje van Eerd, Jan Fransen, Dr. Mbathi.

Guidelines to do CBPR
1. Coordination of MSPARC (community engagement, planning, research)
   a. Agree on shared vision and rules for researchers
   b. Discuss actors and roles
   c. Support CBOs
2. Agree on a research agenda: insecurity drivers; education/ early parenthood
3. Guide for researchers
4. Research ateliers in LDE

Marion Rono to provide policy direction for research.

Some other important outputs from the discussion were the following action plans :
- Mapping Actors involved with MSPARC
- Building sub-committees within committees leading MSPARC
- Research co-ordination across institutes, in Kenya and Netherlands (and beyond)
- Facilitate co-ordination between sectors like health, education, etc.
- Possibility of a podcast