

Authors:

Seán Schmitz¹, Lorena Vega García¹, and Erika von Schneidemesser¹

¹Research Institute for Sustainability at GFZ

✉ sean.schmitz@rifs-potsdam.de



References:

- (1) Eckhardt, Jennifer & Kaletka, Christoph & Krüger, Daniel & Maldonado-Mariscal, Karina & Schulz, Ann. (2021). Ecosystems of Co-Creation. *Frontiers in Sociology*. 6. 10.3389/fsoc.2021.642289.
- (2) Perna A, O'Toole T, Baraldi E, Gregori GL (2022), "The value co-creation journey: a longitudinal process unfolding in a network through collaboration". *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, Vol. 37 No. 13 pp. 182–196, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1108/JBIM-09-2021-0439>
- (3) Mark G. Lawrence, Stephen Williams, Patrizia Nanz, Ortwin Renn, Characteristics, potentials, and challenges of transdisciplinary research, *One Earth*, Volume 5, Issue 1, 2022, Pages 44–61, ISSN 2590-3322, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.oneear.2021.12.010>.
- (4) Schmitz, S., Blyth, L., Harder-Clemens, A., Leitao, J., Lopez-Aparicio, S., von Schneidemesser, E. (2024). D1.1 Co-creation Guidelines. Horizon Europe Project Net4Cities.

Cover picture: "city" by [bamyz](#) is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND 2.0](#)

Co-Creation

Working together to create knowledge and solutions for complex societal challenges



This work is co-funded by the European Union under Project: 101138405 — Net4Cities, the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) under the UK government's Horizon Europe funding guarantee (grant no. 10107404), and the Swiss Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) (grant no. 23.00622). Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (CINEA). Neither the European Union nor CINEA can be held responsible for them.



Co-funded by
the European Union



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Federal Department of Economic Affairs,
Education and Research EAER
State Secretariat for Education,
Research and Innovation SERI



UK Research
and Innovation

Contact:

Erika von Schneidemesser
Research Institute for Sustainability (RIFS) at GFZ
evs@rifs-potsdam.de



Website



LinkedIn



Bluesky

What is co-creation?

Co-creation brings researchers, policymakers, practitioners, businesses, citizens, and other stakeholders together to jointly define problems and develop solutions. It draws on diverse knowledge and experience, enabling participants to contribute throughout the process^[1].

Co-creation in practice

+ Potential Benefits^[2]

FOR RESEARCH

- More relevant knowledge
- Improved innovation
- Enhanced legitimacy
- Increased impact

FOR SOCIETY

- Locally relevant solutions
- Stronger stakeholder ownership
- Greater trust and participation
- Better implementation outcomes

! Common Challenges and what helps^[3]

CHALLENGE

WHAT HELPS

Different expectations

Define roles and expectations together from the outset

Power imbalances

Create safe spaces and recognise different forms of expertise

Time and resources

Engage early and allocate sufficient time and resources

Communication

Use clear language, facilitation, and relationship-building

Long-term engagement

Seek feedback, communicate decisions, and adapt the process

🌀 Principles of effective co-creation^[3]

- 1 Inclusiveness
- 2 Mutual learning
- 3 Shared ownership
- 4 Transparency
- 5 Reflexivity

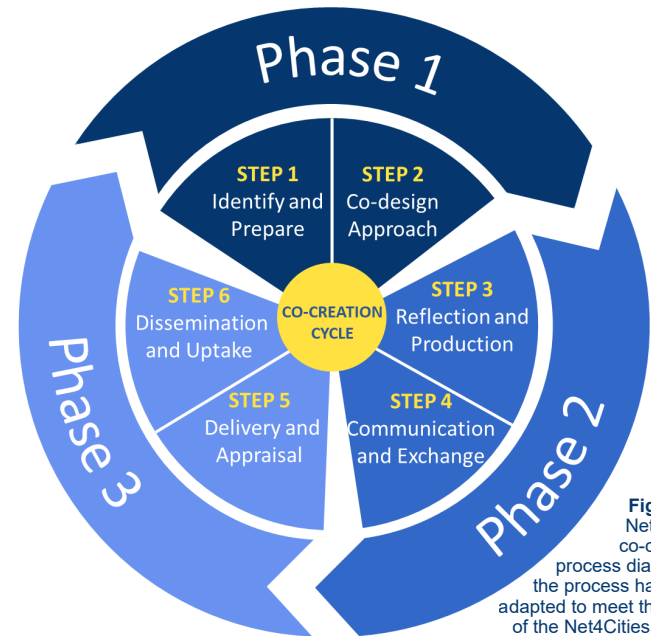


Figure 1. Net4Cities co-creation process diagram^[4], the process has been adapted to meet the need of the Net4Cities project.

Take-Home Messages^[2]

- Co-creation brings together diverse actors to jointly create knowledge and solutions.
- It improves relevance, legitimacy, and impact.
- Effective co-creation requires trust, inclusiveness, and mutual learning.
- Managing power dynamics and stakeholder expectations is critical.
- Co-creation is a cornerstone of successful transdisciplinary research and sustainability transformations.

Co-creation goes beyond consultation: stakeholders are active partners in defining problems, generating knowledge, and developing solutions throughout the process.