

# 3. Co-creation

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Co-creation aims to solve physical or social issues that affect people's lives (e.g. unsafe roads, lack of greenspace) by actively involving the public in the identification of the problem, designing and evaluating solutions, and then implementing them. It refers to forms of public participation where there is a high-level of citizen involvement rather than just informing or consulting them after solutions have been designed by experts. It can be implemented as part of a research-led 'Living Lab', or to support planning processes led by local authorities, civil organisations or private entities.



## CO-CREATION AT-A-GLANCE

- Improves the outcomes of design and planning processes through a high level of citizen participation.
- Requires organisational, workshop facilitation, consensus building and negotiation skills, as well as expertise in supporting citizens to test their ideas.



## Benefits

- Improves the outcomes of design and planning processes by involving end-users.
- Empowers communities and builds community capacity to facilitate bottom-up innovation.
- Builds consensus around solving concrete problems by considering the needs and ideas of all stakeholders.
- Supports the democratisation of planning by involving citizens in developing solutions rather than just informing them.
- Develops shared ownership of problems and solutions.



## Challenges and limitations

- Longer timeframe** than traditional planning approaches.
- Decision deadlock** if there are too many conflicting ideas without consensus.
- Requires significant investment** in resources as the process is recommended to be led by an experienced facilitator.

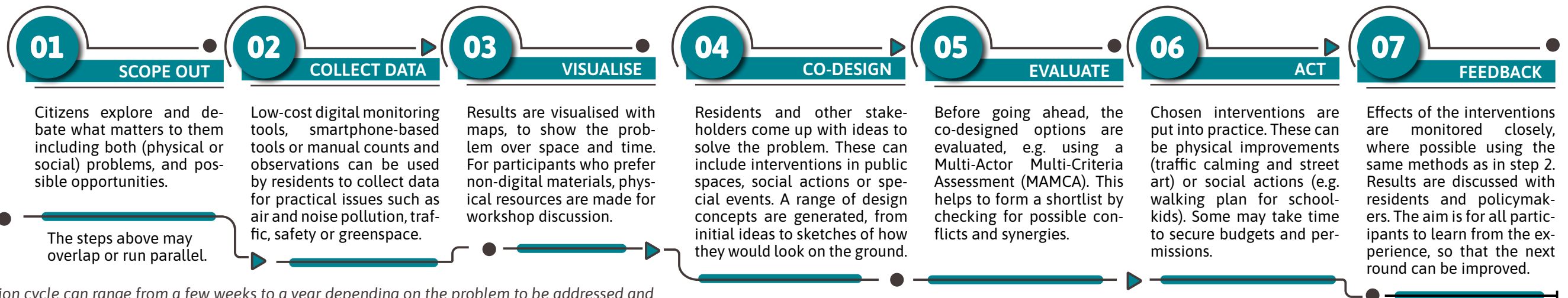


## Participants

Co-creation should ideally involve all relevant stakeholders who are affected by or have a significant influence on the project, policy, or service being considered – including citizens, businesses, policy makers and researchers. Co-creation can be adapted to the needs of specific stakeholder groups. **Those implementing co-creation usually aim to engage all parts of the community, particularly those who are often excluded in some way.**

## STEPS

This example co-creation process was developed by the [Looper project](#) – see 'Real Life Example' for further details:



**Timeframe:** A co-creation cycle can range from a few weeks to a year depending on the problem to be addressed and the number of people involved. It is, however, advisable to keep activities compact in time in order to avoid losing participants due to long breaks between different stages.

**OUTCOMES AND IMPACT**

Co-creation generally results in policies, services, products, or new designs for public or private space (e.g. transforming roads to pedestrian areas). It can help to support: democratic decision making; behavioral change by co-creating strategies for the reduction of carbon emissions; and the emergence of new ideas through bottom-up innovation

**ONLINE/OFFLINE**

Co-creation can take place online and/or offline. One of the advantages of online co-creation is that it can allow the participation of a wider range of people at a time that suits them. There is, however, a requirement of internet access and a suitable device. Offline, i.e. physical co-creation can be implemented through workshops and events, where the number of participants may be reduced, but the interaction between them may be more intensive

**RESOURCES NEEDED**

Experienced facilitation is essential in order to support citizens through the complex co-design steps outlined above. Several steps may require specific software or design tools

LEARN MORE

<https://civitas.eu/resources/big-messages-lessons-for-co-creative-mobility-initiatives-in-neighbourhoods> - Lessons from four projects: Cities-4-People, METAMORPHOSIS, CIVITAS SUNRISE, and LOOPER

<https://cities4people.eu/en/citizen-mobility-kit/index.html> - Citizen mobility kit with links to tools and methods for each stage

Pappers, J., Keserü, I., and Macharis, C., 2020. *Co-creation or public participation 2.0? An assessment of co-creation in transport and mobility research*. Towards User-Centric Transport in Europe 2: Enablers of Inclusive, Seamless and Sustainable Mobility, pp.3-15.

Tatum, K., Cekic, T., Landwehr, A., Noennig, J., Knieling, J., and Schroeter, B., 2020. *Co-creation of local mobility solutions: Lessons from the mobility lab in Hamburg-Altona. Towards User-Centric Transport in Europe 2: Enablers of Inclusive, Seamless and Sustainable Mobility*, pp.16-27.

Pappers, J., Keserü, I., and Macharis, C., 2021. *Participatory evaluation in transport planning: the application of Multi-Actor Multi-Criteria Analysis in co-creation to solve mobility problems in Brussels*. In *Transport in Human Scale Cities* (pp. 216-230). Edward Elgar Publishing.

Puerari, E., De Koning, J. I., Von Wirth, T., Karré, P. M., Mulder, I. J., and Loorbach, D. A., 2018. *Co-creation dynamics in urban living labs*. *Sustainability*, 10(6), p.1893.

**REAL LIFE EXAMPLE: LOOPER**

The Learning Loops in the Public Realm (LOOPER) project developed a co-creation toolkit (accessible at [www.looperproject.eu](http://www.looperproject.eu)) and provides practical advice on how to implement the different stages of the co-creation process with examples from Manchester, Brussels and Verona. They also produced a [brief overview document](#).