

Integrating Co-Creation and the Leave No One Behind (LNOB) Principle: A Framework for Inclusive Transformative Research

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Supplementary Material 1:

Articles identified by Rapid Evidence Assessment as identifying, defining or addressing principles of Leaving No One Behind and co-creation or co-production.

Citation	LNOB	Co-creation / co-production	Outlines guiding principles for co-creation / co-production
Borderon, M., Best, K. B., Bailey, K., Hopping, D. L., Dove, M., & Cervantes de Blois, C. L. (2021). The risks of invisibilization of populations and places in environment-migration research. <i>Humanities and Social Sciences Communications</i>, 8(1).	yes	yes	
Urbaniak, A. (2025). Participatory approaches with older adults: fostering inclusive research practices in the sociology of aging. <i>KZfSS Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie</i>, 1-27.	yes	yes	<i>(principles of inclusive participatory research)</i>
Dushkova, D., Ivlieva, O., Vandewalle, M., Carasco, A. R., Pontón-Cevallos, J., & Sieber, I. M. (2026). Just and inclusive enough? Designing inclusive NBS to support communities in their just transition towards sustainability and resilience. <i>Nature-Based Solutions</i>, 100306.	yes	yes	
Mumtaz, N. (2026). From Othering to Understanding: Participatory Design as a Practice of Critical Design Thinking. <i>Societies</i>, 16(1), 22.	yes	yes	

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Pearsall, H., Heck, S., Tablas, M., Pierce, J., Hinrichs, C., Roman, L. A., & Shabazz, J. (2022). Building knowledge infrastructure for diverse stakeholders to scale up co-production equitably. <i>Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability</i>, 54, 101156.	yes	yes
Chen, C. W. (2024). Who wins and who loses in global SDGs rankings? Clarifying the influence of the North-South divide and foreign direct investment on spillover effects. <i>Sustainable Development</i>, 32(3), 2653-2665.	yes	
Otsuki, K., Steel, G., & Panquene, C. (2022). Exploring synergies between the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development and involuntary resettlement guidelines: the case of Mozambique’s natural gas project. <i>Sustainability Science</i>, 17(4), 1663-1676.	yes	
Medupin, C. (2020). Women in environmental sciences (WiES) and the UN SDGs: A catalyst for achieving a sustainable future for all. <i>Sustainability</i>, 12(17), 7116.	yes	
Blunkell, C. T. (2024). Talking ‘bout a revolution: resilience and coastal policy in England. <i>Local Environment</i>, 29(5), 631-646.	yes	
de Jong, E., & Vijge, M. J. (2025). Institutionalizing leaving no one behind: operationalizing and analyzing worldwide national efforts. <i>Globalizations</i>, 22(4), 652-670.	yes	
Jansen, L. J. (2020). Improving governance of tenure in policy and practice: Monitoring in a space for multiple views. <i>Sustainability</i>, 12(23), 9896	yes	
Menton, M., Larrea, C., Latorre, S., Martinez-Alier, J., Peck, M., Temper, L., & Walter, M. (2020). Environmental justice and the SDGs: from synergies to gaps and contradictions. <i>Sustainability science</i>, 15(6), 1621-1636.	yes	
Puertas, J., & Bermudez, M. (2020). Development of a global SDG progress index aimed at “leaving no one behind”. <i>Sustainability</i>, 12(10), 4085.	yes	
Cañabate, D., Bubnys, R., Nogué, L., Martínez-Mínguez, L., Nieva, C., & Colomer, J. (2021). Cooperative learning to reduce inequalities: instructional approaches and dimensions. <i>Sustainability</i>, 13(18), 10234.	yes	

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Matsa, M. M., Mupepi, O., Hove, J., & Dzawanda, B. (2024). Binga's VaTonga communities involvement in Zambezi river fishery resource harvesting and management. <i>Scientific African</i>, 23, e02041.	yes
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Gannon, K. E., Crick, F., Atela, J., Babagaliyeva, Z., Batool, S., Bedelian, C., ... & Wade, C. T. (2020). Private adaptation in semi-arid lands: a tailored approach to 'leave no one behind'. <i>Global Sustainability</i>, 3, e6.	yes
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Bárcena-Martín, E., García-Pardo, F., Muñoz-Fernández, A., & Pérez-Moreno, S. (2024). Assessing Territorial Units' Contribution to Convergence Beyond Aggregate Measures: The Role of Neighbourhood. <i>Social Indicators Research</i>, 175(2), 715-739.	yes
Engen, S., Hausner, V. H., Gurney, G. G., Broderstad, E. G., Keller, R., Lundberg, A. K., ... & Fauchald, P. (2021). Blue justice: A survey for eliciting perceptions of environmental justice among coastal planners' and small-scale fishers in Northern-Norway. <i>PloS One</i>, 16(5), e0251467.	yes
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Sud, N. (2025). Unjust energy transition: Vignettes from the COPs, climate finance and a coal hotspot. <i>World Development</i>, 190, 106906.	yes	
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Reid, C., Calia, C., Guerra, C., Grant, L., Anderson, M., Chibwana, K., ... & Amos, A. (2021). Ethics in global research: Creating a toolkit to support integrity and ethical action throughout the research journey. <i>Research Ethics</i> , 17(3), 359-374.	yes
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MacGregor, S., & Cooper, A. (2022). A framework to combine mixed methods integration and developmental evaluation to study complex systems. <i>Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation</i> , 36(3), 262-286.	yes
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Monaco, L., & Herce, C. (2023). Impact of Maker Movement on the Urban Resilience Development: Assessment Methodology and Analysis of EU Research and Innovation Projects. <i>Sustainability</i> , 15(17), 12856.	yes
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Segers, R., Hannes, K., Heylighen, A., & Van den Broeck, P. (2021). Exploring embodied place attachment through co-creative art trajectories: the case of Mount Murals. <i>Social Inclusion</i> , 9(4), 116-129.	yes

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Asgari, A., & Asgari, R. (2023). Designing circular innovation ecosystems: insights from stakeholders, values, and investment policies. <i>Frontiers in Sustainability</i>, 4, 1197688.	yes	
Goodyear-Smith, F., Jackson, C., & Greenhalgh, T. (2015). Co-design and implementation research: challenges and solutions for ethics committees. <i>BMC medical ethics</i>, 16(1), 78.	yes	
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Mahajan, S., Mondardini, R., & Helbing, D. (2024). Democratizing air: A co-created citizen science approach to indoor air quality monitoring. <i>Sustainable Cities and Society</i>, 116, 105890.	yes	Co-creation framework of 3 dimensions (why, what and how) & 4 Value Sensitive Design principles
Liwång, H. (2022). Defense development: The role of co-creation in filling the gap between policy-makers and technology development. <i>Technology in Society</i>, 68, 101913.	yes	
Duncan, R., & Robson-Williams, M. (2024). Co-designing a research programme for impact: lessons learned from practice by Aotearoa New Zealand’s biological heritage national science challenge Ngā Koiora Tuku Iho. <i>Kōtuitui: New</i>	yes	Principles used to assess co-production processes

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Zealand Journal of Social Sciences Online, 19(2), 164-189.		
Mahmoud, I. H., Morello, E., Ludlow, D., & Salvia, G. (2021). Co-creation pathways to inform shared governance of urban living labs in practice: Lessons from three European projects. <i>Frontiers in sustainable cities</i>, 3, 690458.	yes	
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Atik, Ş., Aparisi, T. D., & Raslan, R. (2024). Mind the gap: Facilitating early design stage building life cycle assessment through a co-production approach. <i>Journal of Cleaner Production</i>, 464, 142803.	yes	Co-production principles identified and used

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Zurba, M., Petriello, M. A., Madge, C., McCarney, P., Bishop, B., McBeth, S., ... & Bailey, M. (2022). Learning from knowledge co-production research and practice in the twenty-first century: global lessons and what they mean for collaborative research in Nunatsiavut. <i>Sustainability Science</i> , 17(2), 449-467.	yes	
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MacLachlan, A., Pemmasani, P., Jamieson-Mackenzie, I., McMellon, C., Cunningham, E., Lewis, R., & Tisdall, E. K. M. (2024). Applying co-production principles in research: Reflections from young people and academics. <i>Childhood</i> , 31(3), 309-328.	yes	Co-production principles
Alvarez, I., Ayodele-Olajire, D., Burnside, G., Cooke, C., Ebubedike, M., Fox, A., ... & Willis, C. (2025). “Which Voices Are Heard? Who Is Silenced?”: Learning from Young People About the Climate Emergency Using Activism as a Sustainable Pedagogy. <i>Sustainability</i> , 17(21), 9825.	yes	
Chrifou, R., Focquaert, F., Banks, S., Raus, K., Longworth, G. R., Loisel, Q., ... & Verloigne, M. (2025). Ethical challenges, responses and reasoning in co-creation for health promotion: a scoping review. <i>BMC Medical Ethics</i> .	yes	
Robinson, J., Al-Shihabi, M., Bhattacharjee, U., Clement, B., Gloger, A., Kosciulek, D., ... & Vermezyari, S. (2025). Embracing emergence: reframing and reimagining the visionary communities project. <i>Local Environment</i> , 30(11), 1455-1473.	yes	(equity principles, used to co-create project specific co-production principles)
Stone, T. F., Alami, S., Bach, J. L., Bindelle, J., Busse, M., Ciaccia, C., ... & Berg, T. R. (2025). Agroecology Living Labs to transform food systems: a critical review at the science-policy-society nexus in Europe. <i>Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems</i> , 1-42.	yes	(principles of participatory action research)
Rastorgueva, N., Bassignana, C. F., Angarita, E., Fasso, A., Hassink, J., Goris, M., ... & Migliorini, P. (2026). Agroecological Living Labs as entry points for transition towards sustainable food systems: a novel framework for the evaluation of living labs at different scales. <i>Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems</i> , 50(1), 130-163.	yes	

Cudjoe, E., Frimpong-Manso, K., Abdullah, A., Dufie Akonu-Atta, A., & Appiah, Y. (2026). When practice and research meet: demonstration of a practice research methodology in co-producing an assessment tool. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 1-19.

yes

Supplementary Material 2:

The challenges of inclusive transdisciplinary projects

Methods: On April 9th 2024, the EU Horizon Projects EmpowerUs and PREP4BLUE collaborated with global projects funded by the Belmont Forum and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) to organise a Satellite event at UN Ocean Decade Conference entitled “Empowering science, policy and society through co-design for sustainable ocean development” (Whyte et al. 2024). As part of that event EmpowerUs organised a workshop: “How to ensure the inclusion of relevant stakeholders in co-designing/ co-production at the science-policy-society interface?”. Workshop participants from transdisciplinary projects (researchers and project participants from Universities, Research Institutes, environmental non-governmental organisations and informal education sector) were asked what challenges they had experienced when trying to implement or take part in co-design, and what ideas they had to overcome them. They were invited to submit their ideas online (Slido.com), on post it notes or during in person discussion. Reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2008) was undertaken to reveal key challenges to inclusivity in co-creation of sustainability solutions. This Supplementary Information provides a summary of the anonymised analysis and results from this workshop. The results were used to inform this paper, and the strategic inclusion of participants in PREP4BLUE pilot actions (Pelegrí et al. 2025).

Reflexive thematic analysis found three broad themes of ‘challenges to inclusivity’, those related to People; Process and External factors (Figure 1), many of which overlapped around the subthemes of valuing time, managing expectations and trust. A fourth theme explored ideas to improve inclusivity in transdisciplinary projects.

PEOPLE: Challenges related to people: Six sub-themes were related to *balancing differences* amongst participants (language, culture, power, accessibility and gender); *raising awareness of having a stake; engaging reluctant participants; finding and accessing relevant participants*; and *both intentional and unintentional exclusion*. These discussions were dominated by ‘balancing differences’, particularly in the challenges faced by use of inclusive language, cross-cultural facilitation styles and the accessibility of participation. Accessibility could be defined as the accessibility to all, including researchers from the Global South, early career researchers and indigenous voices, all of whom need consideration as they may require more financing to enable them to take part. There was also discussion of the need for a change in research culture, to ensure that co-design processes enable participation of researchers from Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and that processes do not fall into ‘stereotype traps’ of being led or dominated by researchers from the Global North or where the finances are provided from.

Challenges related to people were recognised in a Rapid Evidence Assessment, and translated into the SUBJECTIVE PILLAR of Leaving No One Behind (LNOB) in co-created transformative projects.

PROCESS: Challenges related to co-design process: Participants revealed three major challenges regarding the co-design process: ***Managing expectations, alienation due to complexity of projects*** and the need for ***valuing participant time***. The discussions here were dominated by valuing time, in that participants should not be assumed to be volunteers, and that project developers and funders need to recognize this to ensure inclusivity.

Challenges related to the co-design / co-creation process were recognised in a Rapid Evidence Assessment, and combined into the STRUCTURAL PILLAR of LNOB in co-created transformative projects.

EXTERNAL: Challenges related to external factors: When a co-design process starts, it sits in a landscape of what came before, and what is also happening simultaneously both locally and on a political landscape. The themes of ***trust, stakeholder fatigue*** and ***funding limitations*** were revealed as often things beyond the projects control that should be considered in the process design. Trust was a theme that was raised in many discussions, particularly ‘bad legacy’ from previous researchers (such as short-term student projects building hope and then leaving) and consultations can contribute to some skepticism amongst the target groups, where they have felt abandoned due to poor capacity or long-term planning. This legacy, together with the wider context, can lead to the perception that the project has already been pre-determined or pre-designed, and that participant input will not be listened to. Attendees were keen to note that ***stakeholder fatigue*** is not only something to consider within your project, but that often the keen participants in a co-design process will be invited to join many other projects, and this will add to their demand and project success.

Challenges related to factors beyond the control of the project were recognised in a Rapid Evidence Assessment, and combined into the STRUCTURAL PILLAR of LNOB in co-created transformative projects.

AIDING INCLUSION: Aiding Inclusion: Attendees suggested a variety of ways to address the challenges explored above. Reflexive thematic analysis of these discussions after the workshop, revealed that many of the suggestions were related to the need for projects to consider an ‘Inclusion Strategy’ that might provide best practice to aide inclusion in co-designed projects. Suggestions made fit into 13 themes: ***identify who has a stake; the barriers to be addressed; making participation possible; valuing time fairly; creating an appropriate dissemination plans*** for the target groups; planning relevant ***communications pathways; managing expectations; recognizing positionality; accounting for wider context; finding and pushing for appropriate flexible funding*** and ***legacy planning***. ‘Making participation possible’ and ‘valuing time fairly’ to ensure inclusion of the most relevant participants, and to redress the balance in the dialogues, dominated discussions. Overall, early use of a skilled, ***independent facilitator*** who will help design the process with a ***facilitation plan***, will be a key way of addressing many (but not all) of the inclusivity challenges. But it was noted that when building a team, social scientists are not automatically facilitators or co-design specialists. Good legacy planning of all teams should also help build trust for future co-design processes.

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Finally, in this paper this lived experiences to aide exclusion were recognised in a Rapid Evidence Assessment of LNOB and with cited evidence to become the ACTION PILLAR of LOB in co-created transformative projects.



EmpowerUs

Socio-Economic Empowerment of Coastal Communities

<https://empowerus-project.eu/>

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Figure 1. Challenges to inclusive co-design, and ideas of how to overcome them as part of strategies for inclusion. Themes were generated during reflexive thematic analysis of discussions with Ocean Decade participants who attended the ‘Empowering science, policy and society through co-design for sustainable ocean development’ Satellite event (Whyte et al. 2024). Themes in bold dominated discussions.

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