

D6.8

Output Briefings 2

Fairville: updates on project advancements

RIA-CL2-DEMOCRACY FAIRVILLE
GA N°101094991

Work Package

WP6: Communication, Dissemination and Exploitation

Lead beneficiary

ULB

Due M: Month 30

Submission date: 22/07/2025

Revision history

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Dissemination

This report is part of the Work Package 6's deliverable series called Output Briefings. The aim of these deliverables is to disseminate the project's activities and progress to a wider targeted audience through the Fairville blog and the project's social media channels. Three deliverables have been planned in this series (D6.2 Output Briefings, D6.8 Output Briefings 2 and D6.9 Output Briefings 3). The first deliverable of the series D6.2 titled Output Briefings, was delivered on July 2023 (M7) which is also available as a blog post on the Fairville website ([link to blog post](#)) and this report will be followed by D6.9 towards the end of the project in month 48.

This deliverable will be published as a blog post on the Fairville website in September 2025 as part of the dissemination activities.

Table of contents

Revision history	2
Dissemination	3
Table of contents	4
Fairville project: where are we?	5
Building knowledge to understand the relations between inequalities, citizens' engagement and democratic quality	6
Nurturing academic debates and the building of a counter-manual of co-production for fairer cities	7
Experimenting co-production across different scales	8
Briefs from the Fairville Labs	10
The dual learning role of co-evaluating Fairville Labs' activities	19
Embedding and/or scaling co-production processes within the Fairville Labs and beyond	20
Communication and dissemination as collaborative efforts	22

Fairville project: where are we?

It has been almost two and a half years since the launch of the **Fairville project**, one of the Research and Innovation Action (RIA) under Cluster 2 – Democracy of Horizon Europe. During this time, Fairville has continued to experiment with co-production involving civil society actors, universities, and local authorities. The goal has been to foster multi-stakeholder engagement in addressing deep-rooted urban and environmental inequalities, together with affected residents and community groups. The broader ambition is to contribute to rethinking urban democracy through the co-production of knowledge and action-oriented programmes.

Following this approach, multiple activities have been carried out across the eight pilot cases (Fairville Labs) – Brussels, Berlin, London, West Attica, Marseille (Belle de Mai and Atelier 4-5), Giza, and Dakar – to explore the potential of co-production in tackling inequalities and reducing democratic gaps.

So far, the project has worked in multiple directions and across different scales, from building knowledge to understand the relations between inequalities, citizens' engagement and democratic quality¹ to nurturing key academic debates and starting building of a counter-manual of co-production for fairer cities². Still, Fairville has experimented co-production across different scales within the Fairville Labs³, while also taking the time to co-evaluate their activities⁴. Finally, it has focused on exploring pathways for embedding and/or scaling co-production processes⁵, while also developing collaborative communicative and dissemination outputs to support this endeavour⁶.

All the discussions that shaped these work directions were carried out in a spirit of openness and collaboration by the project partners and within the Fairville Labs. They were richly debated and thoughtfully developed together during Fairville meetings, such as the Open Citizens meeting in Brussels in November 2023 ([link to blog post](#)), the Fairville Mid-Term Meeting in Marseille in June 2024 ([link to blog post](#)), and the Intermediary Brussels Workshop in March 2025, as well as during public events, including the Fairville Mutual Learning Seminars ([link to blog post](#)) and the Dialogue in Co-production seminar series ([link to blog post](#)).

This blog post provides an update on the main advancements and ongoing key debates emerged in these fruitful years, as well as offers a summary of the project's main achievements.

¹ Work package WP1 – Data collection for inequalities' impact analysis on political participation and democratic quality

² Work package WP2 – Theoretical Framework for the project - Local democracy, participation and inequality

³ Work package WP3 – “Fairville Labs” / Co-production Pilots

⁴ Work package WP4 – Co-assessing co-production benefits to reduce inequalities

⁵ Work package WP5 – Scaling co-production practices in, to and beyond the city

⁶ Work package WP6 – Communication, Dissemination and Exploitation

Building knowledge to understand the relations between inequalities, citizens' engagement and democratic quality

A key work of Fairville within WP1 has focused on building an initial knowledge base to explore how multiple forms of inequality – such as socio-economic, gender, disability, spatial, and ethnic – affect political participation, the quality of democracy, and its stability. In addition to gathering existing information on these inequalities (both over time and across different regions), this knowledge base also aimed to identify the root causes of these inequalities, how they intersect, and how they relate to democratic quality.

First, an extensive literature review on the relationship between inequalities, civic engagement, and democratic quality – carried out over more than a year – led to the creation of a structured and annotated repository of resources. These resources provide relevant data for Fairville's themes at both global and local levels. The results are published in the “Report on Document Analysis” ([link to report](#)). The report is divided into two parts. Part One presents the sources collected on inequalities and political participation, the types of data they offer, key interpretations, and emerging trends on inequality and on quality of democracy. It also includes examples of grassroots initiatives that promote citizen involvement in areas such as social service management, urban regeneration, and climate crisis response. Part Two provides access to all the resources identified, making them searchable and usable for further analysis.

Second, Fairville launched a major campaign to collect “biographies of engagement” from citizens, activists, leaders of civil society organizations (CSOs), local authorities, volunteers, and association members within the Fairville Labs. In addition, a series of interviews were conducted with key informants – such as researchers, activists, and local leaders – who were involved in Labs' activities. These in-depth biographical interviews explored personal experiences and knowledge of different forms of inequality, forms of civic engagement and co-production. A shared interview framework was used to accommodate the wide differences between policy countries. It addressed both variations in democratic deficits at local or city levels, public policy design, and governance, as well as differences in how inequalities shape engagement paths, perceptions, and their impact on individual and collective lives. The interviews also helped to explore how the Fairville Labs are tackling issues related to democracy and inequality.

The overall analysis of the collected data led to the creation of a conceptual map showing the relationship between inequalities, engagement, and democratic quality. It also produced a map of how inequalities impact political participation and democracy – especially in terms of co-production – based on the information gathered from biographies and interviews in the Fairville Labs. The research documented both the rise in inequalities and signs of democratic backsliding. It also provided evidence of the complex relationship between inequality and the

crisis of democracy and citizen engagement, highlighting the enabling role that civic engagement can play. Four main patterns emerged in the relationship between engagement and inequality:

- Inequality can be a source and motivator for engagement.
- Inequality can also be a barrier, discouraging engagement.
- In some cases, engagement fails to reduce inequality, or may even reinforce or create new inequalities.
- Under certain conditions, engagement can effectively address inequalities, or at least help lay the foundation for doing so.

All these outputs are published in the report “Mapping of the impact of inequalities on political participation and democratic quality” ([link to report](#)).

Nurturing academic debates and the building of a counter-manual of co-production for fairer cities

A core component of Fairville has first focused on clarifying the theoretical debates around the project’s core concepts, that is co-production strategies to reduce inequalities and promote spatial and epistemic justice, and ways to broaden citizenship, participation, and democracy. Second, on producing a shared vocabulary (or glossary) for the entire team projects, along with an analytical framework to support comparative research.

This work, developed within WP2, began with a collective literature review on coproduction and urban contexts. It brought together researchers from different disciplines, backgrounds, and interests, allowing for rich exchanges. This process helped distinguish between community-led coproduction and institutional coproduction, laying the groundwork for the next phases of research ([link to report](#)).

Ongoing academic debates within Fairville are mostly grounded on a dialogue between different empirical stories of co-production for fairer cities emerging in the Fairville Labs, grounding on key questions:

- How are community-led and institutional coproduction connected? Are they part of a cycle? Does community-led co-production aim to evolve into institutional co-production, where communities collaborate with public actors on urban issues?
- How do civil society groups involved in co-production balance the goal of influencing urban policy with the risk of being co-opted or losing their grassroots connection? What mix of antagonism and cooperation, pressure and trust, do they use in working with local institutions?
- Why is it often difficult for public institutions to engage in co-production with civil society? What are the main challenges, and what benefits do local institutions see in these processes?

In parallel, another essential part of the scientific work of Fairville focused on renewing and strengthening collaboration with civil society partners – especially around how they define and use key terms in their own local actions – to partly overcome the academic/civil society gap around the building of a glossary to support comparative analysis.

After several working sessions – rich in both productive and conflicting views on what a glossary should be – it became clear that civil society needed a stronger voice in shaping the language of the project. To help bridge the gap between academic and civil society perspectives, Fairville took time to deeply debate single concepts (for example the concept of “institutionalisation” during the Marseille Mid-Term Meeting), and mostly launched the **Words in Action initiative**, supporting civil society partners in developing their own stories, uses, experiences, and reflections on the key terms that mattered most to them. This process led to a shift in the planned output – from a simple glossary and analytical grid to what we now call a “**Counter-manual for co-producing fairer cities**”.

What do we mean by a “counter-manual”? The term “manual” highlights that this is a practical tool, grounded in research but meant to guide and inspire real-world action. Unlike traditional manuals, it’s not a list of decontextualized recipes, but a collection of situated stories that pay close attention to local contexts. It doesn’t showcase “best practices” but it includes challenges, mistakes, and lessons learned, recognizing that we often learn more from failures than from overly polished success stories.

The full counter-manual of co-production will be available as the project continues to develop. It will be published online and include both thematic and non-thematic entries, with recurring sections like “Words in Action”, which will serve as an evolving version of the glossary.

Experimenting co-production across different scales

One of the core pillars of Fairville’s work has revolved around the activities of the eight Fairville Labs – spaces where the co-production of knowledge has been activated as a strategy to tackle urban inequalities and enhance democratic practices at the local level. These Labs have empowered local communities, especially marginalized and often overlooked groups, by recognizing their lived experiences as valid and valuable forms of expertise.

Spread across very different geographical and socio-political contexts – from informal neighbourhoods in Dakar to the outskirts of Cairo, from post-industrial areas in West Attica to working-class districts in Marseille, Brussels, Berlin, and London – Fairville has experimented with co-production at multiple scales. In each Lab, residents, civil society associations and researchers worked collaboratively: they ran surveys together (like in Marseille Belle de Mai), collected stories and testimonies (as in Brussels), and mapped their neighbourhoods (in Dakar, Giza, and West Attica). Inclusion was always at the heart of the process. Informal waste workers in Giza, Roma students in Aspropyrgos, women-led cooperatives in Diender /Greater Dakar), and market vendors in London were actively

engaged as co-producers. Through sustained activities such as field visits, training sessions, and iterative workshops, the Fairville Labs have therefore started fostering community cohesion and strengthening connections between civil society, researchers, and public institutions.

By employing community-based research, participatory mapping, mutual learning, and targeted workshops, the Labs have promoted inclusion, built trust, and supported collective ownership of urban transformation processes. They have also provided tools to address knowledge asymmetries –particularly where information is inaccessible or deliberately withheld – enabling communities to generate and disseminate their own data to support local advocacy efforts. In this context, an ongoing commitment of Fairville, within WP3 in particular, has been to foster dialogue and the exchange of experiences both within and beyond the Fairville Labs, through:

- Co-creating a toolbox to support the co-design of pilot actions ([link to report](#)).
- Sharing of key experiences in the form of “Fairville Labs’ Stories” (<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/4be4290485e247808974951a31a87cb1>)
- Capacity building via a series of Mutual Learning Seminars on topics such as the co-production of socio-spatial justice, scaling co-production, collaborative mapping of inequalities, and ethics in co-production.
- Peer-to-peer learning, including expert consultations on participatory video-making and collaborative mapping.
- The launch of various collective mapping campaigns across the Fairville Labs. Comparing mapping methods across contexts is intended as a way to highlight challenges, insights, and achievements, enabling cross-lab learning and storytelling, and building shared knowledge on the potential of participatory mapping to address inequalities.
- The storage and sharing of all documentation produced by single Labs or through inter-lab workshops in an open repository of learning materials (<https://repository.participatorylab.org/en/organization/fairville>), so that others can learn from and build on this work.

Being the experimentation of Fairville Labs rooted in everyday struggles related to housing, environmental degradation, and exposure to risk, Fairville reveals its core ambition to explore how co-production can lead to more inclusive urban governance and give local communities a stronger voice in shaping their future.

Fairville Mutual Learning Seminar

**Past & present experiences
of co-production
Methodology**

Facing inequalities
and democratic challenges
through co-production
in cities



The Fairville Mutual Seminar on collective mapping methodologies

Session 4

Collective mapping methodologies

Date : February 1, 2024

Time : 2:30 PM (CET)

Link :

<https://cnrs.zoom.us/j/97299410072?pwd=R0o3RWWhUSnV4SGJQY1FMdnVCUXRiQT09>

ID : 972 9941 0072

Code : 6SMxKh

Organized by CommonSpace,
with a participation from UrbaSen.

Briefs from the Fairville Labs

Theme: Environmental Inequalities

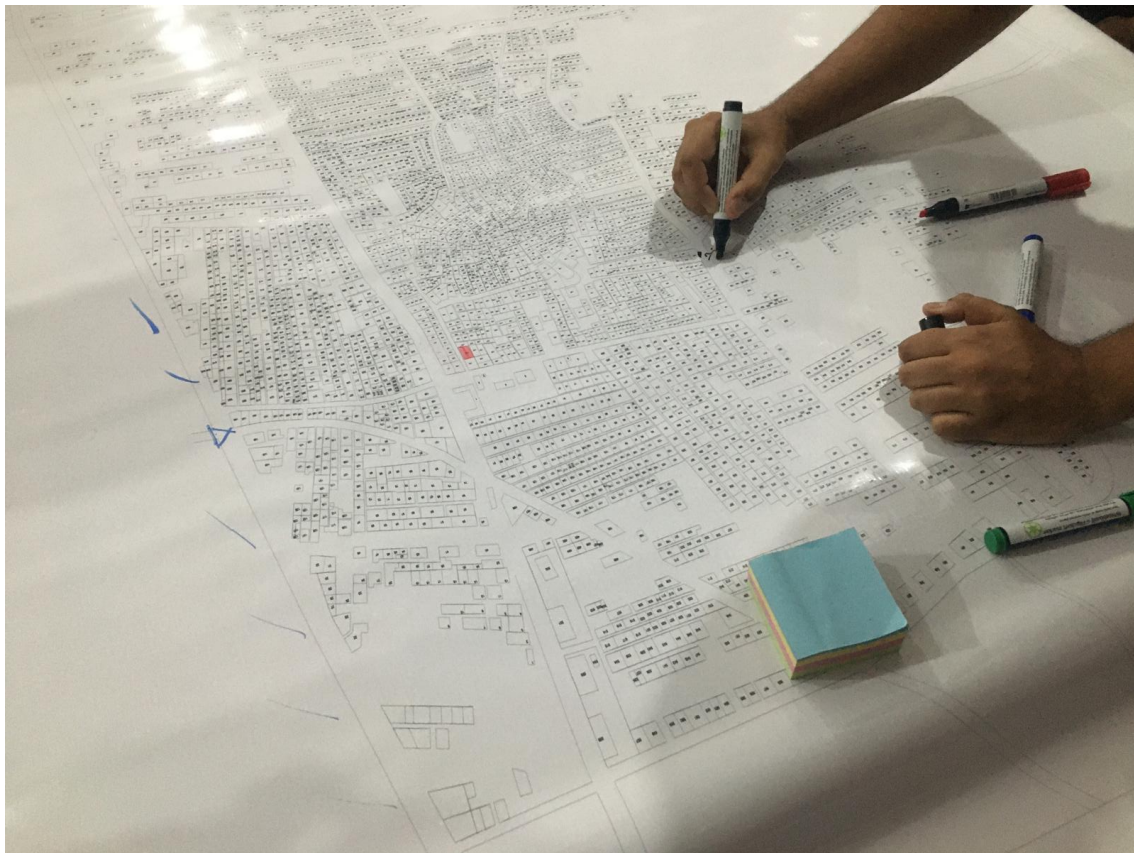
Giza Fairville Lab (Egypt)

Actors involved in the Lab: NSCE, with local CSOs (El Reyada, Dahshur Tourism Development) in addition of Cairo Waste collectors' association)

Enlarged Groups: Residents, informal waste pickers, women, youth, school communities, local CSOs

In Mansheyat Dahshur, the Giza Lab partnered with the community to tackle waste issues through co-creation. They supported informal waste pickers, reimaged a local dumpsite as a shared public space, and prioritized inclusion by involving women and youth. Activities ranged from mapping to workshops with youth parliament members, CSOs, and local officials. Despite poverty and weak institutions, the project showed how collaboration can lead to practical solutions and new partnerships.

More information: <https://www.fairville-eu.org/post/mapping-water-canals-in-mansheyat-dahshur>



Co-mapping activity in the Giza Fairville Lab (Paloma Anger, 2024)

Marseille 4–5 Fairville Lab (France)

Actors involved in the Lab: AMU-Department of Sociology, Ecole Nationale Supérieure du Paysage (ENSP), MESOPOLHIS (research institution AMU-CNRS-IEP), students, district and central municipalities of Marseille

Enlarged Groups: Municipal agents, local councillors, students, academics, civil society organisations, residents, school communities

This Marseille 4–5 Lab bridges local government and civil society to co-produce knowledge on spatial and environmental inequalities. It hosted exhibitions and feedback sessions on topics like river restoration and public bath access in underserved neighbourhoods, drawing 30–70 participants. The Lab also ran university seminars, supported student projects, and conducted interviews on urban education. While it maintains ties with central city officials, relations with the district municipality are strained due to political tensions. Despite this, the Lab fosters dialogue and enriches local debates on urban change.



Neighbours and users of the Public Bath House at the exhibition (Camille Floderer, 2023)

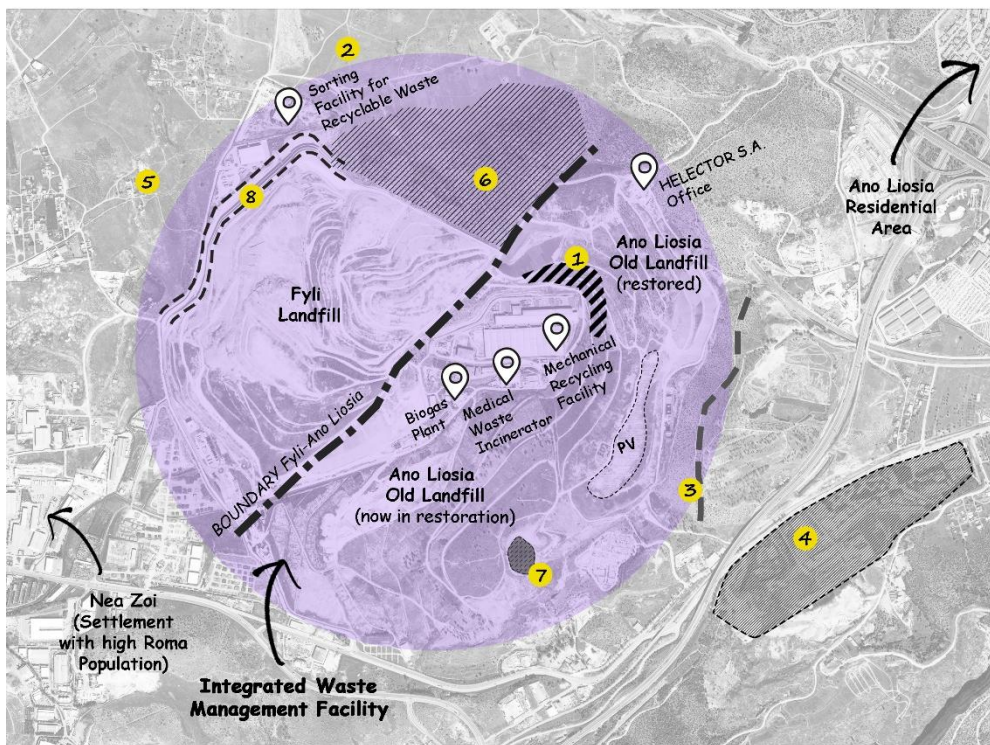
West Attica Fairville Lab (Greece)

Actors involved in the Lab: COMMONSPACE, local socio-environmental movements, groups of inhabitants, schools

Enlarged Groups: Residents, environmental activists, educators, Roma schoolchildren, researchers, local authorities

In Athens' industrial outskirts, the West Attica Lab is documenting environmental injustices through a Participatory Atlas – a mix of maps, stories, and media created with the community. Highlights include a landmark visit to the Fyli landfill, where 40 residents, students, and officials saw the environmental impact first hand. Workshops in Elefsina and the Thriassio Plain explored pollution, abandoned infrastructure, and redevelopment. A standout project, *From Home to School*, involved 19 Roma students in creative workshops to explore and reimagine their neighbourhood's environment. The Lab also took part in public events, including a 50-person conference and a municipal planning session with 80 attendees. Through interviews, meetings, and long-table discussions, the Lab connects community knowledge with policy, giving voice to some of Athens' most marginalised groups.

More information: <https://www.fairville-eu.org/post/inside-the-landfill-a-community-visit-to-the-waste-management-facilities-of-west-attica>



Notes during FVLab Workshop

- 1 Accident 2003: Fault and Landslide of 800,000 cubic meter of garbage
- 2 Future location of the largest logistics facility in SE Europe
- 3 Wall "Dema" declared archaeological site
- 4 Possible future site for vegetable wholesale center.
- 5 Possible future site for a large waste processing plant
- 6 Possible siting of an upcoming landfill extension
- 7 Sewage sludge disposal area with drainage leakage into the subsoil
- 8 Landfill wall already filled with waste

Map of Fyli Landfill, co-created in the West Attica FAirville Lab (Source: Commonsplace)

Theme: Planning and Housing Inequalities

Berlin Fairville Lab (Germany)

Actors involved in the Lab: University of Regensburg (RE), students from RE, TU Berlin and University of Biberach

Enlarged Groups: Local residents, Rathausblock activists, institutional stakeholders, students, researchers

In Berlin's Kreuzberg district, the Lab follows the Modellprojekt Rathausblock, exploring how urban space is shaped through participation, alliances, and institutional negotiation. Using ethnographic and spatial research, the team regularly engages in the Rathausblock process through observing forums, workshops, and informal gatherings. The Lab mapped stakeholder networks and hosted a three-day co-production workshop with 30 students and local actors. The work revealed barriers to participation – especially for marginalised groups

– and tensions between institutional goals and community needs. Despite these challenges, the Lab sheds light on inequalities and institutional apathy hindering inclusive governance.

More information: <https://www.fairville-eu.org/post/urban-co-production-the-case-of-berlin>



Working group during the Workshop “Urban Co-Production, The Case of Berlin” (Lorenza Manfredi, 2025)

Marseille La Belle de Mai Fairville Lab (France)

Actors involved in the Lab: initially CVPT, APPUI and CNRS; now it includes also residents' collective + CHO3 collective and the Institut Méditerranéen de la Ville et des Territoires
Enlarged Groups: Residents, housing activists, urban professionals, students, civil society organisations, local authorities, and public developer

The Marseille La Belle de Mai Lab works in a vulnerable urban renewal zone of the “Fringe of Euromed”, to explore whether current transformations reduce inequalities and to support local empowerment through co-produced knowledge and tools. A major achievement was a door-to-door housing survey, co-designed with residents, which reached 53 households and revealed issues like overcrowding and isolation. Results were shared at a public event and through multilingual leaflets during a local festival. The Lab also ran workshops, urban walks, and mapping sessions with residents and university partners. Lab’s activities, beyond data collection, helped residents access housing information, join urban debates, and connect with others, thus strengthening community participation, laying the ground for future advocacy efforts and ensuring local voices continue to play a key role in shaping urban policies.

More information: <https://www.fairville-eu.org/post/talkn-walk-in-la-belle-de-mai-marseille>



Working Group during a Fairville-Atelier of the Marseille Belle de Mai Fairville Lab (Gaia Plia, 2025)

Theme: Risk Inequalities

Brussels Fairville Lab (Belgium)

Actors involved in the Lab: EGEB, ULB, Ixelles municipality, network Delier les fils de l'eau, group of inhabitants

Enlarged Groups: Residents of Gray Street and surrounding areas, grassroots organisations, municipal stakeholders, researchers

The Brussels Lab tackles chronic flooding in the Gray Street valley, where risk exposure meets social vulnerability and fragmented governance. The Lab combines community-based co-production, driven by residents and civil society, with a more limited institutional co-production involving the municipality. In 2024, over 20 residents shared their experiences through a co-produced survey that documented the impacts of several flood events. This sparked the creation of residents working groups on flood co-diagnostic, civic advocacy, space and health. However, political instability have made the enlargement of the collaboration with local authorities challenging. The Lab acts as a living experiment in asymmetric co-production, community-based and institutional, revealing both barriers and opportunities for participatory governance.



**Inondations
rue Gray**

21 octobre 2024 - 18:00 > 20:30
Faculté d'architecture ULB, rue du Belvédère 21
Conférence & débat
Pourquoi les inondations dans le fonds de la vallée ?
Quelles solutions ?

26 octobre 2024 - 11:00 > 16:00
Maison de quartier Malibran, rue de la Digue 10
Promenade & cartographie collective
Imaginons des aménagements sur les pentes
de la vallée pour réduire les inondations

Créons une solidarité dans la vallée
Info : www.egeb-sgwb.be - 0498 59 15 50

Dakar Fairville Lab (Senegal)

Actors involved in the Lab: UrbaSEN, Senegalese Federation of Inhabitants (FSH) + recent partners, University Cheikh Anta Diop (UCAD), University Amadou Matar Mbow, local authorities, community organisations

Enlarged Groups: Residents of informal settlements, women's housing cooperatives, local authorities, grassroots organisations, university researchers, and students

The Dakar Lab is helping communities in disadvantaged flood-prone areas co-design solutions for safer and more inclusive urban development. Its specific focus was on Bayakh (Diender), where a new eco-affordable housing project – Cité FSH – is being developed with strong input from women's cooperatives. Activities included drone mapping, interviews, and workshops with residents and municipal actors, in collaboration with university students. Parallel work in Wakhinane and Ndiarème addressed post-flood housing rehabilitation. Key events included a participatory workshop and an Advocacy Day with 150 attendees. The Lab continues to build partnerships with municipalities and develop action plans, blending grassroots energy with technical expertise to influence urban policy in Senegal's fast-growing outskirts.



Cité FSH in Bayakh (Diender) (Ismaila Seye, 2025)

London Fairville Lab (UK)

Actors involved in the Lab: Just Space, Co Produce It CIC, UCL-DPU, Clapton Commons, Equal Care Co-operative (until 2023-2024), Spitalfields Housing Association, Save Brick Lane campaign, Friends of Queens Market, Future of London

Enlarged Groups: Street market traders, formal and informal carers and care recipients, community food and care activists and volunteers, grassroots planning networks and community groups, Local Boroughs, the Greater London Authority, planners and researchers.

The London Lab promotes community-led planning and co-production to address urban inequalities. In 2024–2025, the Lab launched Co-Produce IT CIC, a community interest company that delivers and develops 'impactful co-production projects that transform communities and foster social inclusion'.

The Lab focuses on three main areas: urban food systems and street markets, care systems, and the built environment, with key projects in Queens' Market in Newham, Brick Lane and Whitechapel markets in Tower Hamlets, and Clapton neighbourhood in Hackney. Activities include surveys, political petitioning, food hub development, and submitting representations to the London Plan Review process by advocating for more inclusive urban policies. Lab engagement activities span workshops, advocacy, community meetings and assemblies, as well as learning events.



Care in common outdoor engagement in in Hackney's Clapton neighbourhood (Resident, 2023)

The dual learning role of co-evaluating Fairville Labs' activities

One of Fairville's core areas of focus has been the co-evaluation of how co-production is practiced across different Labs, with the goal of keeping the process inclusive and transparent. To support this, within the framework of WP4, all Fairville Labs collaborated in designing a common evaluation framework ([link to report](#)), which they then used to reflect on their own activities. This included examining how participants collaborated during the process, whether responsibilities were fairly distributed, and whether any barriers limited participation of certain individuals and, more broadly, the overall impact of the initiative.

Between 2024 and 2025, the Labs carried out a first round of co-evaluation through individual interviews and group discussions, creating a physical and social space conducive to the expression of diverse perspective. Five key criteria were examined: (1) Inclusion and Inclusiveness in Co-production; (2) Participation, Democracy, and Shared Governance in Co-production; (3) Shared Knowledge in Co-production; (4) Effectiveness of Co-production; and (5) Empowerment and Shared Power in Co-production.

This process helped uncover both the opportunities and the challenges of co-production in real-world settings. It thus contributed to a better understanding of the institutional and political mechanisms that may facilitate or obstruct democratic participation, and potentially to enhancing Labs' capacity to influence on institutional practices and to advocate for change. For example, many Labs struggled to engage local authorities in a consistent and meaningful way, revealing how deeply rooted inequalities – whether related to adequate housing, environmental conditions, or risk mitigation – and opaque decision-making processes can limit the potential of co-production to bring about real change.

The co-evaluation served for a dual purpose: it helped Labs improve their own practices – providing insights on how their activities can become more inclusive, transparent, and accountable – and it also offered a method to analyse co-production itself. A key concern was making sure the process stayed relevant and accessible to local communities, avoiding, for instance, turning it overly rigid and scientific – while ensuring it remains applicable for research purposes. This was a central topic at the Fairville workshop in Brussels (March–April 2025), where participants shared feedbacks on the main challenges met by some in engaging participants, either institutional actors or activists, in the co-assessment format, as well as discussed how to make co-evaluation more meaningful.

Through the co-evaluation work, Fairville seeks to identify what enables or hinders co-production, and what that means for local inhabitants in terms of enabling or constraining emancipatory futures. This, in turn, can strengthen the Labs' ability to influence on institutional practices and to advocate for change.

Embedding and/or scaling co-production processes within the Fairville Labs and beyond

Another key area of work within Fairville, developed within WP5, has focused on exploring pathways for embedding and/or scaling co-production processes both within the Fairville Labs and beyond. The overarching aim is to deepen learning and advocacy around integrating co-production into urban planning and governance, ultimately fostering more equitable and democratic urban environments across Europe and beyond.

Over the past two years, this work has been guided by a central question: *How can co-production practices be meaningfully embedded and scaled in contexts marked by inequality and democratic deficits?* This question has been pursued through sustained engagement with the Fairville Labs, strategic scoping with allied networks, and a collective effort to identify key levers or "enablers" to support the scaling of co-production. Discussions within the consortium have increasingly focused on the strategic use of regulatory frameworks, the mobilisation of collaborative networks, and the forms of political education and knowledge recognition necessary to sustain co-production as an everyday governance practice.

First, a significant contribution of Fairville has been the analysis of the barriers and opportunities to scaling co-production practices, as well as the identification of key enablers to support these practices from the perspective of the Fairville Labs. The findings, published in the report "*Barriers and Emerging Pathways to Scaling Co-Production: A Perspective from the Fairville Labs*" ([link to report](#)), revealed that obstacles to both co-production and its scaling exist within the state (at various levels), within civil society and community groups, and at the interfaces between these actors. These barriers include institutional resistance, resource constraints, fragmented governance structures, and challenges in fostering collaboration among stakeholders with differing goals or organizational cultures. Conversely, opportunities for scaling are diverse and linked to various entry points, challenges, and tactical rationales for scaling identified within the Labs. Enabling conditions include, among others, strengthening community cohesion and addressing issues of misrecognition. Scaling is understood as a multi-dimensional concept, encompassing consolidation, expansion, replication, and ultimately institutionalization. The report outlines four emerging pathways to scale:

- Scaling through consolidation
- Scaling through growth, expansion, or replication
- Scaling through network-building
- Scaling through upscaling

Each pathway must be tailored to the specific contexts and challenges faced by the Labs, even though some cross-cutting strategies can be identified.

Second, Fairville has also focused on strengthening transnational learning networks, connecting with and supporting initiatives that promote co-production as a daily governance practice. A major achievement in this area has been the development and launch of the

Dialogues in Co-production (DiC) – a transnational public seminar series (both online and in-person) designed to foster exchange, collective inquiry, and advocacy. The DiC series curates case studies and dialogue-based exchanges through an iterative strategy informed by consortium-wide consultations and diagnostic insights. It aims to address jointly identified barriers and opportunities in co-production. Through this initiative, Fairville has moved from diagnostic analysis to a concrete, actionable programme that fosters co-learning across Labs and allied actors, advancing advocacy and capacity-building around co-production enablers across multiple scales. The design of the DiC platform reflects a commitment to unpacking co-production enablers and exploring their role in scaling co-production “in, out, up, and down.”

DIALOGUES IN CO-PRODUCTION N°1
FAIRVILLE PROJECT
www.fairville-eu.org/

Coproducing the just city: interrogating the civil society/academy interface

Barbara Lipietz (The Bartlett Development Planning Unit, University College London) and **Agnès Deboulet** (Paris 8 University-Lavue / Cnrs),
Introduction to the special issue
Planning theory, 2024, 23 (4).

Discussant: **Mona Fawaz**
(American University in Beirut).

Ana-Paula Pimentel (University of Michigan), **Activist Co-production for the Right to Occupy, Hold Ground, and Upgrade**

Ruchika Lall (Indian Institute for Human Settlements), **Malavika Narayan** (Cornell University) and **Rashee Mehra** (IHS), **Co-producing knowledge in action: Reflecting from the Main Bhi Dilli campaign for equitable planning in Delhi**



Tuesday 8th April
2-4 pm (CET)

Seminar in english with french translation

Link or contact for registration:



The in-person Dialogue and Networking Event held in Brussels in April 2025 marked a significant milestone in this work. Co-organised by EGEB, CNRS, DPU, ULB, and APPUII, the event brought together local and international collectives, researchers, and practitioners in a rich bilingual exchange (French and English). The session, with more than 60 participants, highlighted the value of co-produced dialogues in building solidarity, surfacing shared struggles, and advancing a rights-based, networked approach to co-production. It also generated momentum for further engagements, including a focused housing advocacy strand within Fairville, and consolidated Fairville's commitment to embedding co-production through multi-actor, situated and strategic modes of exchange.

Communication and dissemination as collaborative efforts

Finally, one of Fairville's key areas of work in the framework of WP6 has focused on communication, dissemination, and the broader use of a series of project outcomes. These outcomes not only represent newly co-produced knowledge aimed at fostering more democratic and equitable societies, but also serve as tools to strengthen and expand the networks of stakeholders involved in the Fairville Labs and beyond, while actively engaging local partners in co-production processes.

To support the project's overall goals, this work is grounded in the belief that communication and dissemination should be collaborative efforts – co-created by researchers and local actors. All Fairville communication and dissemination activities are tailored to the needs of specific audiences, made accessible in local languages when needed, and designed to raise awareness and advocate for co-production initiatives.

One of the main achievements in this area has been the creation of the “Cartes Blanches” series – a collection of co-produced articles and visual materials (like flyers, pamphlets, and posters) that combine text, graphics, maps, and illustrations ([link to the documents](#)). These materials serve three main purposes:

- to clearly and concisely present the Fairville project and the work of the Fairville Labs to the general public.
- to summarize key findings and support the project's impact strategies.
- to inform and advocate on core Fairville themes – such as co-production, inequality, and local democracy – by translating lessons learned into accessible language for a broader audience, potentially local stakeholders.

The Cartes Blanches outputs are both informative and advocacy-oriented. They aim to spark public interest in Fairville's core questions – like how co-production can help reduce inequalities and strengthen local democracy – while also supporting the co-production process itself. In fact, creating a local Carte Blanche was designed to be part of the co-production journey, with content and target audience selection made in collaboration with local actors. In this way, they contributed to democratizing knowledge and action at the local level.

Fairville Labs BERLIN

Facing inequalities and democratic challenges through Co-production in Cities (Fairville) is a Urban Co-Production Research Project Horizon Europe.

Fairville uses knowledge co-production as strategies to address urban inequalities affecting seven urban areas in Europe, and two other minor cases in Africa.

- ◆ Risk Inequalities
- ▲ Environmental Inequalities
- Planning and Housing Inequalities

Fairville experiments co-production with civil society actors, universities and local authorities to facilitate multi-engagement towards embracing entrenched urban and environmental inequalities with affected residents or community groups. Through coproduction of knowledge and actions-oriented programmes, it contributes to rethinking urban democracy.

Do you want to help? There are many ways to contribute to the project: would you like to participate in the coproduction in our project tasks or go on the field in our Fairville Labs?

Contact us!

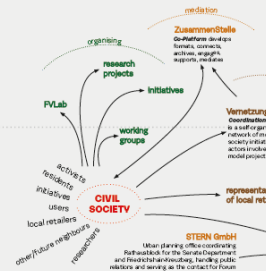
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This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under the grant agreement No. 101094991.

CONTEXT

The Fairville Lab (FVLab) is observing and exploring the Rathausblock, a mixed-use area of 4,7 hectares located in the middle of Berlin-Kreuzberg. It is a key urban regeneration area that draws in a lot of attention from activists, politicians, administration, real estate developers and investors, with very different agendas on what to do with the site. Movements against privatisation started in 2014, succeeding in avoiding the sale of the area to private investors and obtaining the transfer of ownership from the federal government to the city of Berlin, under the condition of developing a participatory process.



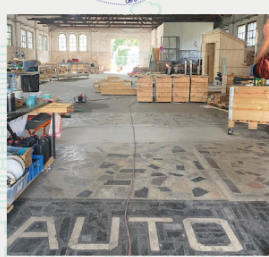
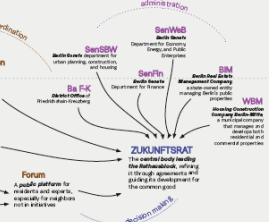
In 2019 a cooperation agreement (Koop 6) established a joint endeavour where different actors from civil society and right-to-the-city activists in particular collaborate with actors on the district and senate level. Thus, an innovative model of collaboration between the city administration and non-profit groups is pursued, aiming to create an inclusive urban quarter that maintains the current mix of uses while providing new affordable housing – pursuing the original reclaim of 100 % social housing and spaces oriented towards the common good.

The Rathausblock highlights the tensions between real estate interests and community-oriented development for affordable housing and social spaces. As this experimental collaboration develops, some critical issues of urban co-production processes emerge and are addressed by the Lab.

ACTORS INVOLVED

The FVLab Berlin as such started in 2022 based on previous collaborations with Rathausblock and extensive exploratory research since 2020. Anna Steigemann (Universität Regensburg/ TU Berlin, Lab coordinator) and her team of researchers (Mari Paz Agudiez, Lorenza Manfredi, Maria Tsakulova) observe and explore in close collaboration with local actors the interactions between real-estate, state- and municipal-level authorities, local neighbourhood NGOs, community-based initiatives and planners with collaborative qualitative methods. The research is designed as participatory action research and in this sense is also actively intervening in the co-production process and space production.

Figure 1: From civil society to urban coproduction. Cooperation structure in the Rathausblock model project. Edited by the Berlin FVLab.



ACTIONS

The FVLab Berlin critically accompanies and analyses the co-production of space and the development of a model urban project at the Rathausblock. This involves using ethnographic methods and methods between the spatial and the social sciences to understand how local stakeholders bring people together, the aims of these gatherings, the power relations involved, and the outcomes of these participatory planning processes.

We have conducted in-depth interviews and comprehensive mapping of the activities and actors connected to the co-production process. Grounded in qualitative methods, such as semi-structured interviews, participant and non-participant observations, and secondary and grey literature analysis, this investigation highlights in particular the difficulties and potentials of co-production when different power dynamics are involved in the evolution of the project.

In particular, the collaborative research shows the difficulties of involving and giving voice to the most marginalized communities in the participatory process, the complexity of cooperation between actors from civil society and those from institutions, and the struggle on the part of the senate to take initial agreements into account even in the long-term development of the project.

By documenting these dynamics, inviting stakeholders to share their different and personal perspectives and participating in public hearings and local events, the FV team highlighted systemic challenges and learnings in participatory urban planning, applicable to other urban contexts. This enables us to co-create knowledge about the project's power structures and progress. Furthermore, it has helped us unveil the relationship between space and decision-making and identify key elements that build people's participation and engagement within a space. The chosen method of power mapping and research was essential for documenting complex relationships, uncovering hidden imbalances, and identifying spaces that shape social participation dynamics.

Figure 2: Existing retail and workshop activities and listed buildings are to be kept on the site in order to preserve the richness of a complex and mixed-use urban environment. (Mari Paz Agudiez, July 2023)

OBSERVING CO-PRODUCTION: Insights from the Rathausblock Model Project

The Rathausblock project is a complex urban development initiative aimed at creating socially just spaces through participatory planning – but those aims are facing the difficulties inherent in a time-consuming process which involves the co-production, renovation and partial construction of an entire urban district in the city centre. By mapping the relationships among stakeholders, we sought to understand how power is distributed and negotiated in this process.



Figure 3: Map of actual and future spaces. Edited by the Berlin FVLab.

Our objective was to reveal how these dynamics affect inclusivity, decision-making, and the project's ability to address spatial and social inequalities on the long-term.

The search for strategies and practices that enable the creation and maintenance of a co-productive exchange between the different actors is showing first results within the Rathausblock. In addition to the success of keeping the entire area in public hands and preventing its privatisation, civil society and the administration are experimenting with structures which aim to equal, inclusive and sustainable long-term involvement of all parties. The Vernetzungstreffen, the Forum Rathausblock and the Zukunftsrat are some examples of platforms for exchange on the development of the area. Two mediating actors, ZusammenStelle and Stern, were created or included as a support structure meant to moderate the communication between the institutional actors and the civil society and coordinate decision-making meetings.



Figure 6: The StadtkiezSTATT is a common place, where citizens and the administration work together on projects. The hall is also available for external/non-commercial and cultural events. (Lan Kampffhorst, bauseit CAMPUS Sommer Schule, Bestand der Dinge, 2023)



Figure 4: Aerial view on the Rathausblock (Erik-Jan Quakenbush)



Figure 5: Cooking together in the StadtkiezSTATT as a practice of communing. (Lan Kampffhorst, bauseit CAMPUS Sommer Schule, Bestand der Dinge, 2023)

Despite the efforts, the interviewed actors still highlight that the main challenge in the co-production process has been communication between the different parties involved. The search for a shared practice that is able to include different working logics and goals, and that does not exclude the technicalities typical of administrative work, as well as flexibility and utopian visions from civil society, is still ongoing.

Over a decade of co-production in Berlin, engagement has also gradually declined. Decision-making is now largely dominated by aging, white Germans. Marginalized groups, often poorer and of non-German origin, remain excluded despite efforts like a transparency platform, a glossary, and public events in the Rathausblock's common spaces. Broadening participation to include younger, more diverse voices to meetings like the Rathausblock Forum is urgently needed. Moreover, as the implementation process is starting, the institutions are confronted with logistical construction and site management choices constrained by conventional regulations. This clashes with the demands and reclaims of an experimental co-produced process. The decisive choice, whether to set aside the imaginative efforts for a differently produced city in this area, or to force the existing regulations through a further effort for true co-production from the ideas production to the construction phase will be made in the next stages, determining the future and the success of the project.

Finally, the collaboration is highly based on personal involvement of individual actors – both in the civil society and in the administrative field. The current changes in Berlin's government bring new political directions in the urban production and risk therefore to overshadow previous taken unilateral decision and years of co-produced work. This shows the uncertainty of an experimental project that remains constrained as a unique, non-replicable model. Starting from the Rathausblock experience to develop a broader citywide approach as an established urban strategy would allow the local site-based co-production to be widely recognised and its goals to be secured.

The Carte Blanche of the Berlin Fairville Lab

Another major achievement for Fairville has been the initial design of the *Fairville Experimental Connection Centre*. This Centre is envisioned as a shared space – primarily virtual and then physical – where academics, civil society, and public authorities can come together to tackle the dual challenges of inequality and participation, with a special focus on co-production. Its mission is to promote knowledge exchange, build networks, and strengthen collaboration among researchers, citizens, facilitators, associations, and public institutions engaged in co-production across Europe and beyond. The Centre has four main goals:

- To bridge the gap between universities, civil society, and public institutions by grounding research in real-world challenges.
- To make scientific knowledge more accessible and relevant to a wider audience.
- To share and build on the insights and advocacy developed through Fairville, influencing the science-policy-society interface.
- To extend the project's impact beyond its official timeline.

To reach these goals, the Centre will focus on disseminating and building on Fairville's research, learning, and advocacy outputs, supporting the ongoing Fairville open seminar series and organizing new events that foster learning and collaboration, creating strong links with other Labs, platforms, and centres that share similar missions, potentially advancing Fairville's research and policy agenda into the future.

The Fairville Experimental Connection Centre will be soon launched in two phases: first as an online platform hosted on the project's website, and later as a physical shared space in Brussels and another city where a Fairville Lab is active. Stay tuned!

The following Fairville members contributed to the writing of this blog post: Giuseppe Faldi, Kavyashree Swamygowda, Agnès Deboulet, Philippe Urvoy, Alfonso Alfonsi, Maresa Berliri, Daniele Mezzana, Claire Bénit Gbaffou, Mathilde Jourdam-Boutin, Eleni Mouggiakou, Giorgos Velegrakis, Sylvain Adam, Loukia Batsi, Alima El Bajnoui, Barbara Lipietz, Alessio Koliulis, Tim Wickson and Luisa Moretto