An aerial photograph of Athens, Greece, showing the city's dense urban layout and surrounding hills. The right side of the image is overlaid with a green-tinted, semi-transparent industrial or urban development plan, featuring various structures, roads, and green spaces. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

CHAPTER 1

WEST

ATTICA

‘BACKYARD’

OF ATHENS

WEST ATTICA
FV LAB



West Attica Fairville Lab

is a **community in the making**. It aims to map and address the **socio-environmental inequalities** in the 'backyard' areas of **Athens**, by giving voice to local actors and their aspirations.

The broader goals are to:

- 1) enhance the **visibility of local actors and initiatives**,
- 2) provide **local community support** and contribute to advocacy schemes, and
- 3) **co-produce a participatory Atlas** with citizens, environmental activists, researchers, local community organisations, school communities, local authorities officials and other key local actors, that will serve as a source of critical information on the poorly documented **environmental justice issues** in West Attica and will be used for the co-creation of concrete policy proposals.

**WEST ATTICA, LOCATED ON THE WESTERN
EDGE OF ATHENS, FUNCTIONS AS THE
SYMBOLIC AND MATERIAL “BACKYARD”
OF THE GREEK CAPITAL.**

The area has historically developed as a receptacle for the city's excesses, absorbing activities and infrastructures deemed undesirable for the metropolitan core. Oil refineries, heavy industries, waste management facilities, and sprawling logistics hubs dominate its physical landscape, alongside a multitude of informal and often illegal activities, such as unregulated waste disposal. These operations, vital for sustaining Athens' economy, are simultaneously destructive to West Attica's environment and communities. Severe underground water pollution, persistent air contamination, and visible degradation of the natural environment reveal the long-standing consequences of (de)industrialization pathways and waste accumulation. Thus, over decades, this region has been shaped as a dumping ground hidden from the city's gaze.



-BACKGROUND INFO-

West Attica Fairville Lab operates within the region of West Attica, and it focuses specifically on the plain of Thriasio, the municipalities of Fyli (Ano Liosia), Aspropyrgos and Elefsina. This area is sparsely populated and demonstrates significant environmen-

tal and social vulnerabilities. In terms of settlement patterns, beyond the three primary urban centers of the 3 municipalities, the Thriasio Plain includes several informal settlements, notably the Romani communities of Nea Zoi, Neoktista, and Sofo.

ECONOMIC INEQUALITIES

Due to the historical processes of industrialization and deindustrialization, West Attica has experienced a continuous flux of capital and people. The outflow of industry and capital has led to a decline in job opportunities, resulting in exorbitantly high unemployment rates in the municipalities of West Attica, particularly Aspropyrgos and Fyli.

FYLI IS THE POOREST MUNICIPALITY OF ATTICA REGION WHILE ASPROPYRGOS IS THE ONE WITH THE HIGHEST UNEMPLOYMENT RATES.

SOCIAL INEQUALITIES

The structural violence of (de)industrialization has created new spatial and temporal relations, including informal housing, slums, shantytowns, and limited or no access to social infrastructure. This has exacerbated social marginalization, with some of West Attica's population becoming increasingly marginalized (e.g., the Roma communities in the area, who often work as waste pickers).

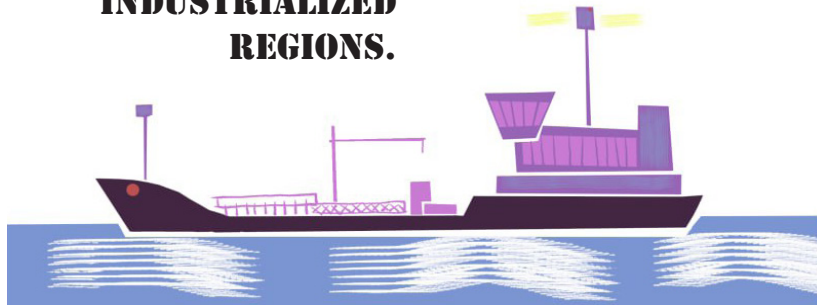
ENVIRONMENTAL INEQUALITIES

West Attica has historically been marked by "invisible socio-environmental inequalities," including: a) Landfill operations in Fyli, b) Industrial development with severe environmental impacts in Elefsina and Aspropyrgos, c) Informal settlements, logistic hubs and land use conflicts in Aspropyrgos. These inequalities continue to expand, perpetuating a socio-environmental injustice regime in the area. This is due to the interplay between regional and local governance levels and the lack of transparency regarding environmental assessments, epidemiological data, and countermeasures.

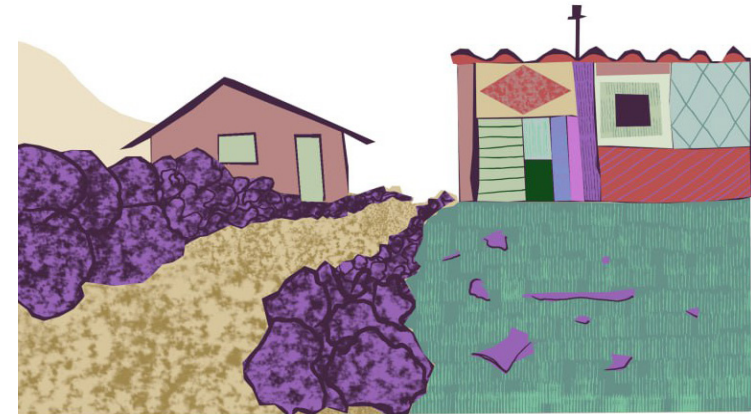


Thriasio Plain has for centuries been a fertile ground for agricultural activities, based on cereals, olives, and vineyards. Its strategic location, supported by the availability of land and labour, enabled rapid industrial expansion. Highways connecting Athens with the Peloponnese and western Greece, together with sea access through the commercial port of Elefsina, facilitated the

**HIDDEN BEHIND
MOUNT EGAEON
IN NORTHWEST
ATHENS, THRIASIO
PLAIN EVOLVED
FROM A FERTILE
AGRICULTURAL
LANDSCAPE INTO ONE
OF GREECE'S MOST
INDUSTRIALIZED
REGIONS.**



growth of heavy industry along the coastline from the late 19th century onward. During the 20th century, refineries, metallurgy, cement plants, and shipyards, supplemented by smaller industries, crafts, and warehouses, steadily eroded agricultural viability. At the same time, networked infrastructures and logistics hubs were expanded to serve production, and distribution. Elefsina is the main urban centre of the region, concentrating services, commerce, and leisure functions. Today, the connections between Elefsina and the surrounding smaller urban poles are fragmented, while most of the coastline is occupied by former industrial complexes and disused port facilities.



The region is home to communities largely composed of low-income groups, industrial workers, immigrants, and Romani populations, many of whom live in precarious and informal settlements. Excluded from formal employment, Romani residents are subjected to harmful forms of work, often around waste. Pushed into the informal economy and recycling, they become an integral part of the production chain while being exposed daily to toxic substances and environmental hazards. Job insecurity intersects with precarious housing conditions and lack of access to education and other basic services and goods. Environ-

**WEST ATTICA
EXHIBITS LOW
POPULATION
DENSITY, LOW CIVIC
COHESION, AND
ENDURING SOCIAL
VULNERABILITIES.**

mental degradation and social marginalization are sealed and intensified through systematic stigmatization and instances of institutional and police arbitrariness. In this way, a regime of permanent uncertainty and exclusion is entrenched, where the very notion of citizenship is put into question.

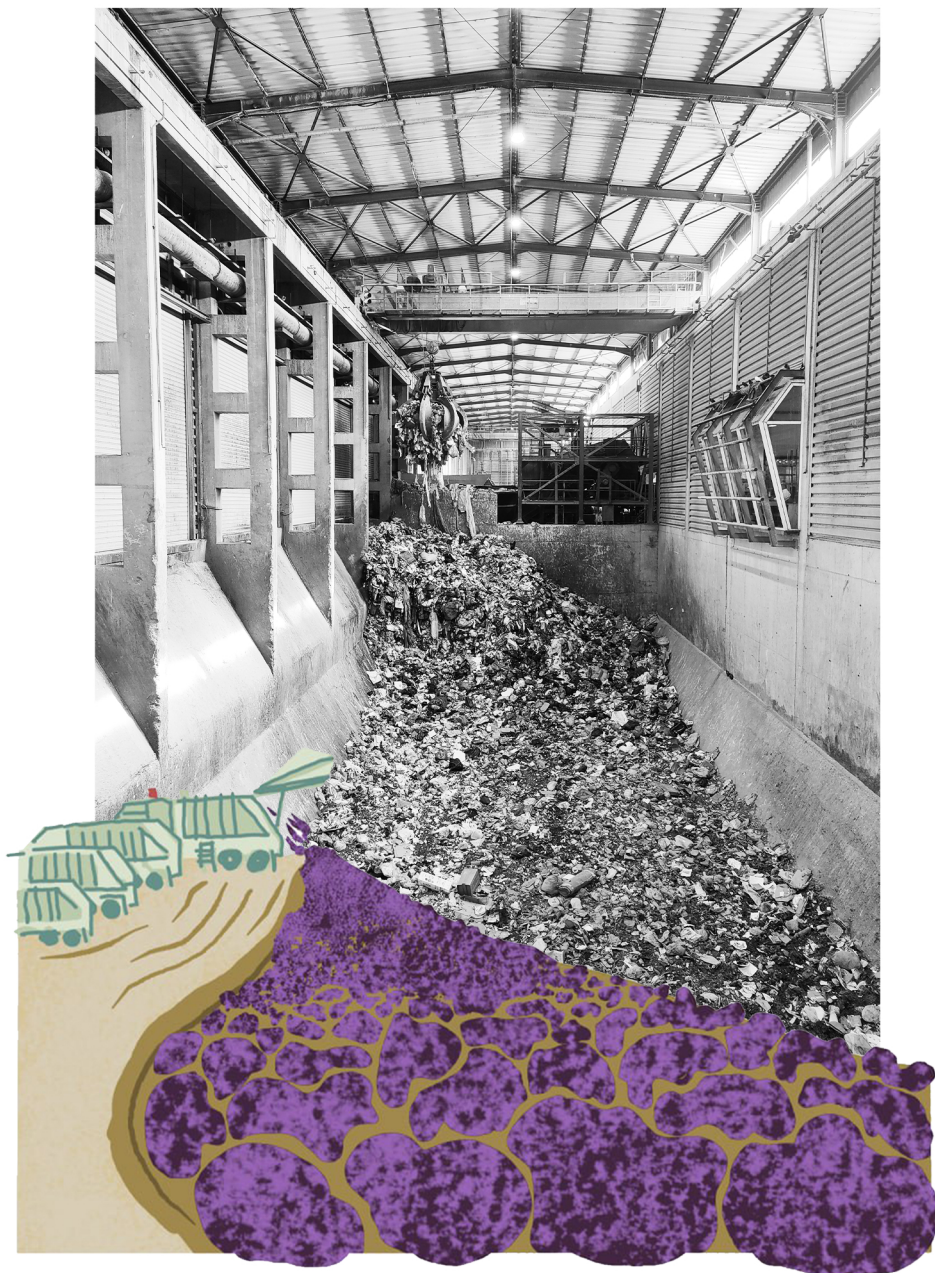
**PRONE TO
ECOLOGICAL
HAZARDS
AND CLIMATE
RISKS, SUCH
AS RECURRENT
FLOODING AND
WILDFIRES, WEST
ATTICA HAS BEEN
IDENTIFIED AS
ONE OF THE MOST
VULNERABLE AREAS
TO THE IMPACTS OF
CLIMATE CHANGE *.**

* Regional Plan of Attica for Climate Change Adaptation (RePACC, 2020)

**WEST ATTICA SERVES
AS THE WASTE HUB OF
THE GREEK CAPITAL.**

A vast waste infrastructure - the sole legal disposal site for the entire Attica region that receives the refuse of nearly half Greece's population, has been operating for decades in Fyli Municipality. This extensive waste management complex of 300 hectares includes one of the biggest landfills in Europe and several waste processing facilities, receiving 5,5 thousand tons of waste daily. Around the landfill, uncontrolled waste disposals, private-sector recycling plants and industrial waste operations, have become integral components of a broader waste landscape.

The combination of large-scale waste infrastructure, informal and illegal activities, and intensive industrial use has heavily degraded the local environment, increasing the area's exposure to ecological hazards and climate-related risks.



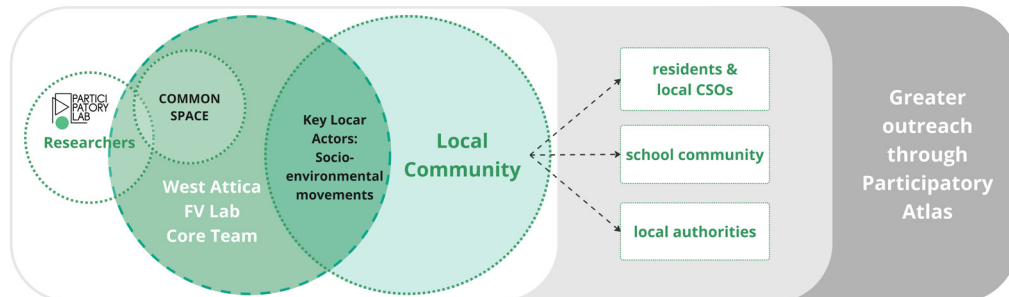
The first meeting of the West Attica FV Lab took place in Elefsina with 26 participants. After a round of introductions, the discussion focused on the Participatory Atlas idea, and on the ways we could map inequalities and support collective action in the region. Participants broadly supported setting the focus on the Thriasio Plain, and noted the challenges of measuring inequalities among various scales. Attention to three main dimensions was proposed: environment, housing, and vulnerability to climate change. In shaping the Atlas, participants stressed the need to go beyond environmental data, calling for mapping social inequalities, minority presence, and residents' perspectives through active engagement. Concerns were raised about reaching local communities, especially the most vulnerable ones, with schools mentioned as possible entry points. The Atlas was ultimately seen as both an observatory and a tool for mobilization.

WEST ATTICA FV LAB SEEKS TO BRING TOGETHER EXISTING COMMUNITIES, LOCAL SOCIO-ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENTS, CULTURAL GROUPS, AND RESEARCHERS TO MAP, ANALYSE AND HOPEFULLY OVERCOME PARTS OF THE HISTORICAL INEQUALITIES IN THE AREA.

The Fairville project in West Attica aims to foster the formation of an active network of local communities, with the goal of exploring and mapping spatial and social inequalities across different areas and neighborhoods,

and of taking collective action to address the region's multilevel environmental justice issues. To build the West Attica Fairville Lab network and to collectively shape its future actions and workshops, the first steps involved:

- (1) reaching out to key local actors, namely members of socio-environmental movements, and
- (2) launching an online open call addressed to those who live or work in the area, or who engage with West Attica through research, artistic, or activist initiatives.



13/01/2024
ELEFSINA, WEST ATTICA
(X-BOWLING ART CENTRE)
'WEST ATTICA FV LAB
KICK-OFF EVENT'



How do we understand environmental inequalities in West Attica? Which are the needs, the communities and the resources?

The Atlas of West Attica will look very different in two, three years from now, due to the new planned projects that will cause even broader environmental damage.

How can the call reach residents, especially vulnerable groups? Beyond data collection and mapping, concrete actions are needed to empower local communities.

-LAB FORMATION-

**FALL 2023 -
SPRING 2024
EXPLORING
WEST ATTICA
'A SERIES OF
FIELD VISITS'**

During the initial phase of FVLab's operation, we made several trips to West Attica, driving along the provincial roads that traverse the vast industrial landscapes of the Thriasio Plain and walking alongside local key actors in the informal settlements and urban neighbourhoods. These field visits offered valuable insights, allowing us to gain a deeper understanding of the area's social fabric and the pressing environmental challenges it faces.



Although the area is a crossing point for hundreds of commuters and travellers that move from Athens to Peloponnese and western Greece via Attiki Odos, it remains mostly unknown to those who don't live or work there.

Following the provincial roads, guided by the environmental inspector from the Regional Department, we came across numerous trucks, a few cars, and people either on foot or in light vehicles, engaged in waste collection or seemingly living nearby. In the sparsely populated settlements at the end of a dirt road, we felt that we stood out among the locals and were quickly noticed. If you don't "belong" there (in other words, if you have nothing to do with factories, logistics centres, or dumps) then you've probably taken the wrong road.

October 2023



-FIELD VISITS-





-FIELD VISITS-





Informal Settlement
Sofo, Aspropyrgos



24/10/2024 FYLI LANDFILL 'COMMUNITY VISIT'

On 24.10.2024, the West Attica Fairville Lab organized a guided community visit to the Waste Management Facility in Fyli. Despite its magnitude, the site remains hardly accessible to the public. By catching a glimpse behind the barbed-wire fence, the visit aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the waste management operations in West Attica. At the same time, it was an opportunity to bring the community in dialogue with employees working at the facility.



-FIELD VISITS-





As West Attica FVLab deepens its connections with local communities, the scope of its work is becoming more focused. The analysis of "invisible socio-environmental inequalities" in West Attica narrows down to specific contextualized issues, such as the Fyli Landfill operation and the broader waste management practices in Ano Liosia, the industrial development and its environmental impacts in Elefsina, and the informal Romani settlements in Aspropyrgos. These issues, identified as major "environmental injustice" concerns by local actors, will become the topics of dialogue and collective research and the thematic focus areas of the co-produced Atlas.

Editorial Credits:

commons/space

Artemis Koumparelou, Giorgos Velegrakis.

Illustrations by Sylvain Adam.

commonspace



FAIRVILLE



WEST ATTICA FAIRVILLE LAB
September 2025