

Fairville Labs

WEST ATTICA

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 and democratic issues affecting seven urban areas in Europe, and two other mirror 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 co-production in our project tasks or go on the field in our Fairville Labs?

Contact us!

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CONTEXT

West Attica, situated at the western outskirts of the metropolitan area of Athens, serves as the “backyard” of the Greek capital. Its operational landscape, including a vast waste management infrastructure, heavy industries, logistics services, and a multitude of informal economic activities (e.g. illegal waste disposals), coupled with long-standing environmental degradation, goes along with multiple contradictions and fierce conflicts. Populated mainly by low-income social groups, industrial workers, immigrants, Roma communities in usually precarious and informal settlements, West Attica is the home of long-standing social and environmental vulnerabilities.

Problems and the existing inequalities?

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 employment opportunities, resulting in exorbitantly high unemployment rates in the municipalities of West Attica, particularly Aspropyrgos and Fyli.

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: The area has historically been shaped by "invisible socio-environmental inequalities," including: a) Landfill operations in Fyli, b) Industrial development and environmental impacts in Elefsina and Aspropyrgos, c) Informal settlements 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.

ACTORS INVOLVED

The following diagram provides a schematic representation of the on-going formation of the West Attica Fairville Lab Network (FVLab). The FVLab's core team consists of COMMONSPACE members and certain local actors (mostly members of local socio-environmental movements), who provide critical insights and information, co-organize the FVLab's 'Local Workshops' and assist with the dissemination the FVLab's activities locally. Groups of residents from different areas and some researchers active in the region are currently involved in the co-production processes, while the school community, and (hopefully) local authorities will get involved during the second year.

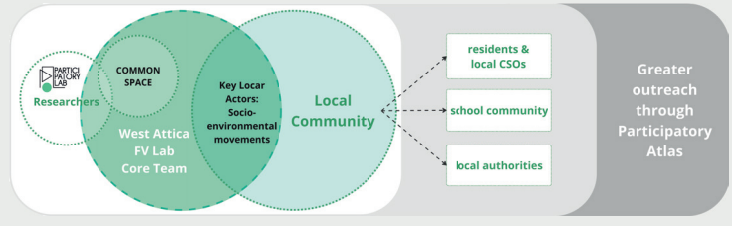


Figure 1: Diagram of West Attica FVLab Network Building and Communication Strategy, Source: Commonsplace.

At present West Attica FVLab activities are under the coordination of a broader core team (compared to the early stage), which is expected to expand further during the second year of the FVLab's operation and include additional local actors. While there have been no significant changes in the governance structure to date, the scaling up of the Lab's activities and specifically the future development and application of the co-produced Atlas might reveal a need for greater flexibility in governance.

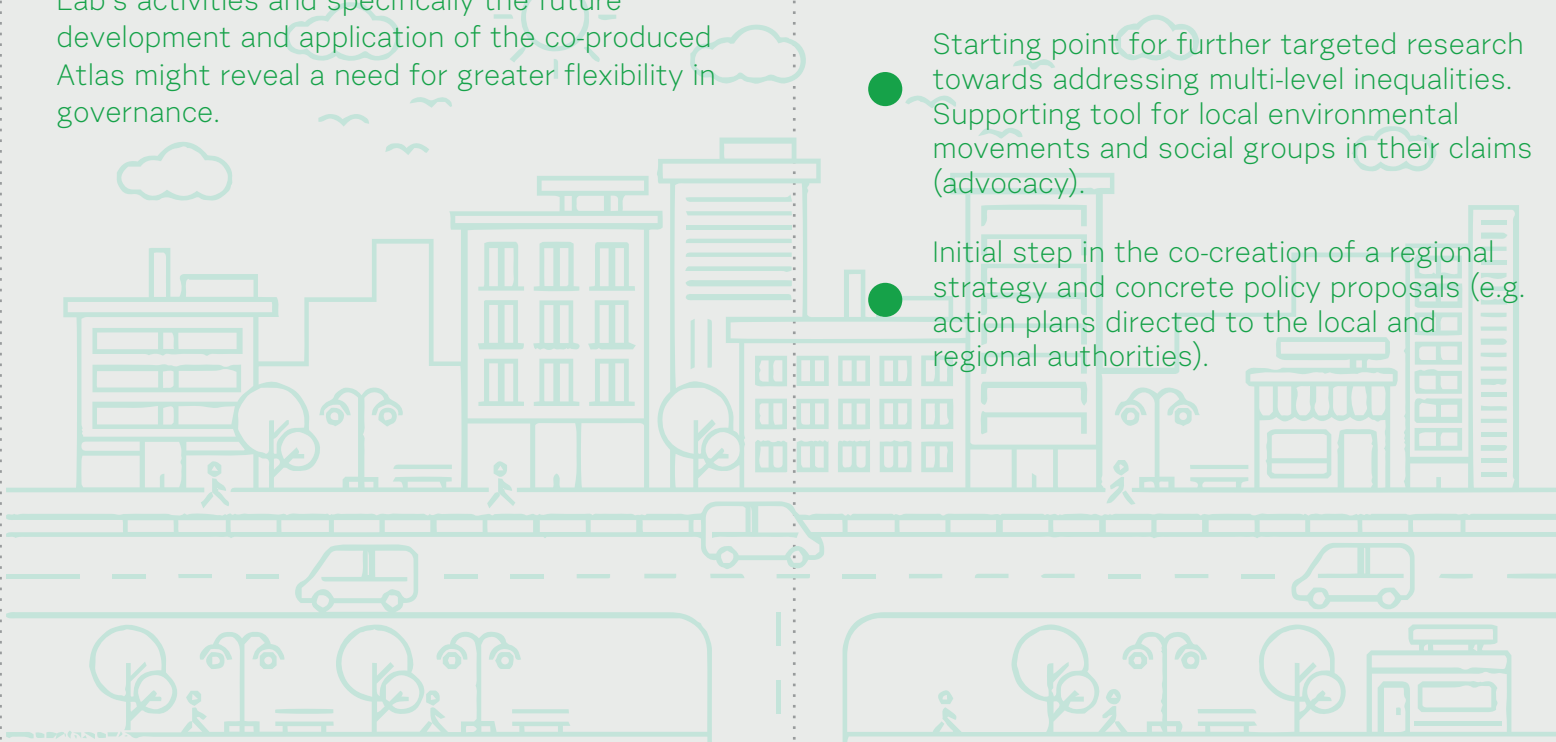
ACTIONS

West Attica Fairville Lab is co-producing a participatory Atlas of environmental and social inequalities in West Attica with key local actors, environmental activists, researchers, residents, local community organizations and school communities. The Atlas is being co-created through various participatory workshops and collective processes of data collection and mapping (“time machine”, collective storytelling, mental mapping, etc), aiming to include and amplify local perspectives and marginalized voices. With a particular focus on the 'temporal axis' (past - present - future), we collectively explore how and why these inequalities emerge, consolidate and reproduce historically and how they can be addressed and reversed.

The main aim of the co-produced Atlas is to showcase “where and why invisible inequalities exist in West Attica” and to shed light on hidden stories and links in an area that has been systematically developed as the operational landscape and the backyard of Athens. It will materialize on a digital platform that combines quantitative and qualitative data, including maps, personal narratives and oral history testimonies, photographs, podcasts, studies, articles, and possibly interactive tools.

The overarching goal of the Atlas is to serve as:

- Repository of critical information on the underreported environmental justice issues in the region of West Attica.
- Starting point for further targeted research towards addressing multi-level inequalities. Supporting tool for local environmental movements and social groups in their claims (advocacy).
- Initial step in the co-creation of a regional strategy and concrete policy proposals (e.g. action plans directed to the local and regional authorities).



TIME MACHINE: A Participatory Exploration of Our Shared History

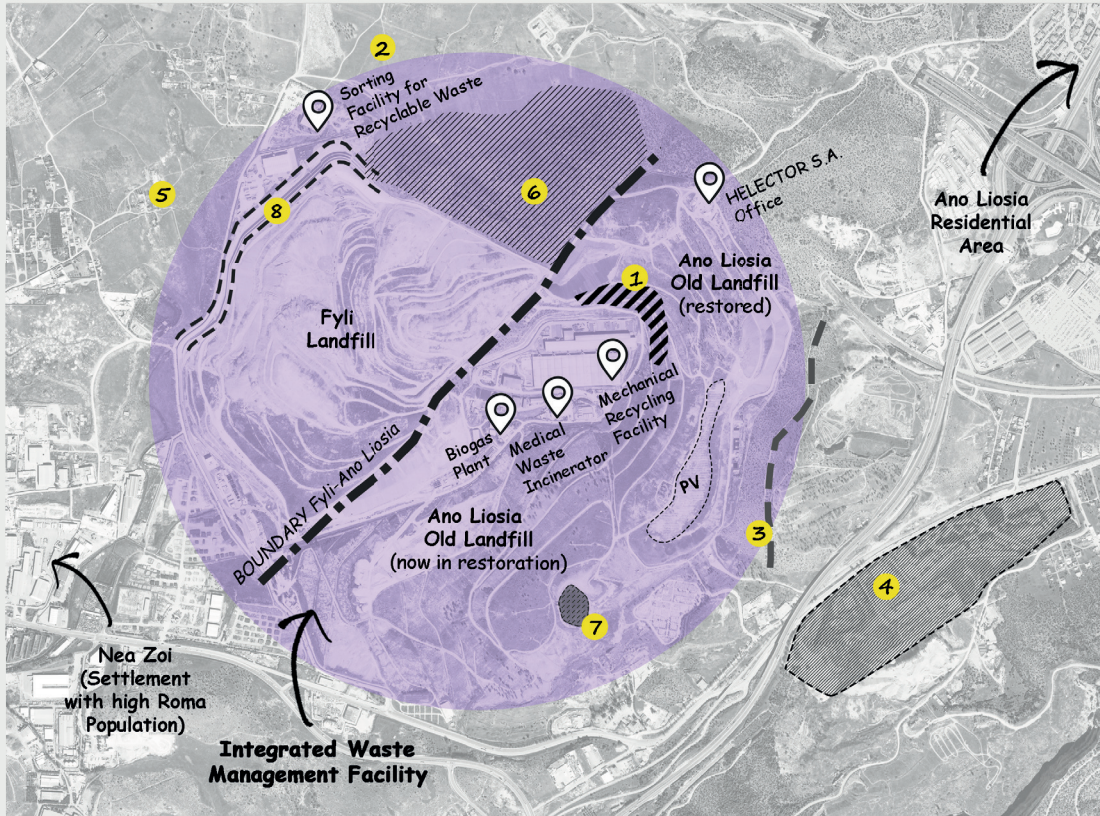


Figure 2: Map of Fyli Landfill, co-created along with a timeline of the landfill's history during the 'Time-Machine' workshop in Ano Liosia : Illustration and translation in English from the original hand-notes. Source: Commonsplace

“Time Machine” workshop was realised by West Attica FVLab as part of the Atlas co-production process. Inspired by collective storytelling methods, we collaborated with local communities in West Attica to create visual timelines that record, visualize, and discuss local history. These timelines, combined with maps, served as a canvas for participants to add notes, ideas, events, narratives, and sketches, organized by time period and thematic category.

This collaborative approach allowed us to delve into local history and specific development trajectories that have shaped the place and life in West Attica.

The workshop, held in March 2024, focused on the Fyli landfill. As a preliminary step, we conducted desk research to prepare a draft timeline with time periods and proposed thematic categories. We also developed guiding questions to facilitate the workshop discussions.

During the workshop we focused on the Fyli landfill. We collected local knowledge and insights into the historical evolution, current situation, and future expansions of the landfill.

The "story" co-created during the workshop was structured into four distinct layers of analysis:

- **Institutional Acts:** Government policies and regulations related to the landfill.
- **Spatial Development:** Changes in the physical landscape and infrastructure around the landfill.
- **Significant Events:** Environmental and health incidents associated with the landfill.
- **Bottom-Up Initiatives:** Community efforts and activism related to the landfill.

A timeline diagram, combined with a base map, provided the framework for participants to add notes and information. The process allowed us to record historical facts, blend them with personal memories and narratives, and discuss recent and upcoming developments in depth. By empowering local voices and fostering a sense of shared heritage, the participatory time machine contributed to a more informed, empowered, and engaged community within the FVLab.

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

The participatory time machine offers a unique approach to understanding and reconstructing the historical path of a place or development. By prioritizing experiential knowledge and the narratives of local community members, this method aims to collectively explore the past and empower local communities.

In the West Attica case, the workshop served as a collective platform for recording the landfill's history, an open forum for knowledge sharing, and a base for in-depth discussions about recent and ongoing developments, as well as future aspirations. Beyond the narration and perception of past events, the conversation evolved into a call for action and change in the present. Open questions were raised regarding the compensation funds provided to Fyli municipality and the absence of offsetting measures, while a significant portion of the discussion centered on health concerns and the urgent need for an accurate public epidemiological study.



Figure 3: West Attica FVLab “Time-Machine” Workshop at Proastio Art Centre in Ano Liosia, (Commonspace, 10 March 2024)

Throughout West Attica FVLab's co-production attempts several challenges and issues emerge:

- **Addressing Inequalities:** While West Attica's strategic location has facilitated infrastructure development, industrialization, and economic growth, it has also led to significant inequalities, including the presence of marginalized populations, infrastructure deficiencies, deindustrialized areas, polluting industries, and a diminished quality of life. The FVLab must move beyond mere documentation of these inequalities and prioritize critical cases to develop effective strategies for addressing them.
- **Scaling Up:** The scaling-up process requires further clarification and specification. Potential approaches include expanding the scope and impact of the FVLab's work, addressing a wider range of themes and issues within West Attica, and using the West Attica FVLab as a model for similar initiatives in other locations and communities. The FVLab must prioritize its goals to effectively implement the scaling-up process.
- **Community Networking:** Actively networking with different communities within the FVLab, such as the “ecoeleusis” local environmental network, West Front social movement, Roma communities, schools, and other local communities, including immigrants, is crucial for fostering collaboration and shared understanding.

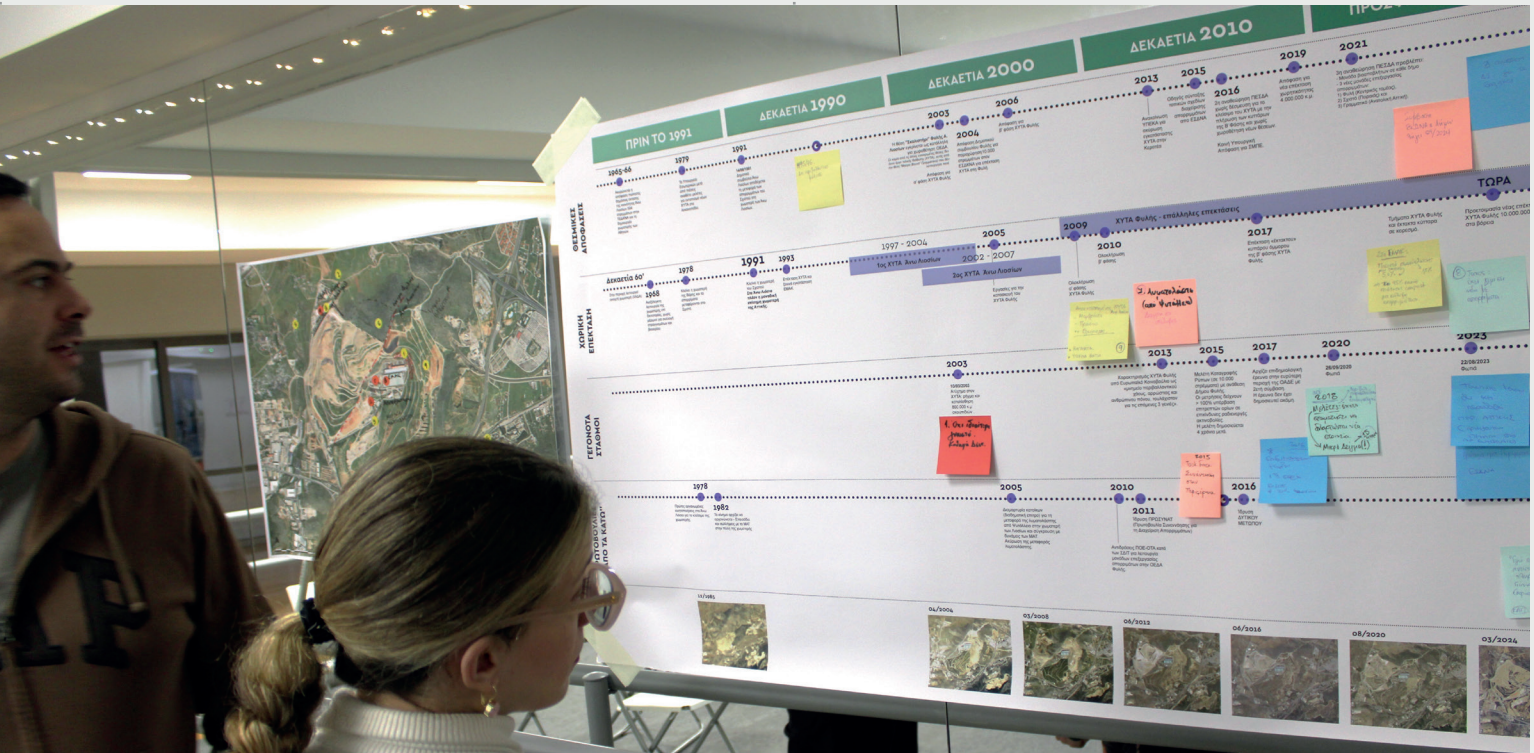


Figure 4: West Attica FVLab “Time-Machine” Workshop at Proastio Art Centre in Ano Liosia, (Commonspace, 10 March 2024)