



CHAPTER 2
FYLI LANDFILL



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.

Fyli landfill and its surrounding facilities operate as the only official waste management infrastructure for the city of Athens and the broader Attica region. Thus, about half of the country's population rely on Fyli for the disposal and processing of their waste.

The landfill is located at the eastern part of West Attica (Fyli municipality) in great proximity to residential areas (Nea Zoi, Ano Liosia, Kamatero). Since the 90s Fyli landfill receives hundreds of tons of garbage annually. Through successive expansions and transformations this site has become an ever-growing artificial mountain of buried waste.

The continuous expansion of Fyli landfill since decades and the waste treatment practices applied in its surrounding infrastructural complex have been linked to severe environmental degradation of the area and raise health concerns. For the governance of the waste infrastructure in Fyli different levels of authorities - central, regional, local - are implicated and interrelated.

WEST ATTICA DEMONSTRATES SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL VULNERABILITIES, ACCOMPANIED BY MULTIPLE CONTRADICTIONS AND FIERCE CONFLICTS. AMONG THE MAJOR CONTESTED ISSUES IN THE AREA STANDS THE OPERATION OF FYLI LANDFILL AND ITS SOCIO-ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS.

'Fyli landfill' becomes the first topic of in-depth discussion, collective research and co-production. West Attica FV Lab goes to Fyli area and expands its network, by involving residents from Ano Liosia and other areas close to the landfill and members of the local socio-environmental group 'West Front'. Through a series of 'local workshops' in Ano Liosia (mostly hosted by "proastio art centre") local residents and

activists come in dialogue with further actors from West Attica and interested researchers, and exchange knowledge, thoughts and ideas about the waste management policies in the area. Aim is to collectively unravel the past and the present socio-political reality of Fyli landfill, to give visibility to this story and to take action towards addressing the associated environmental and social inequalities at the local context.

West Front ('Dytiko Metopo' in Greek) is a socio-environmental movement active in West Attica for more than 20 years now. Its members focus their actions against the current waste management policies. They demand for the immediate and final closure of Fyli landfill and the establishment of decentralized waste management in Athens Metropolitan Area, with emphasis on the minimization of disposals.

* 'Local workshops' are organised by the West Attica FV lab core team (commonsense together with key local actors) as successive cycles of discussions, participatory research and mapping activities that focus on specific contextualized environmental issues and inequalities.

The first 'local workshop' of West Attica FV Lab dedicated to Fyli landfill took place in Kamatero with residents and local activists. There initiated the discussion about the economic and political dimensions of waste management in Attica region, the longstanding history of Fyli landfill, and its social, environmental and health implications at the local level.

The narration of the landfill's development story by a local environmental activist (Thomas B.), was followed by a long conversation about the uneven waste management in Attica region, the associated social inequalities and the prospects for future solutions.

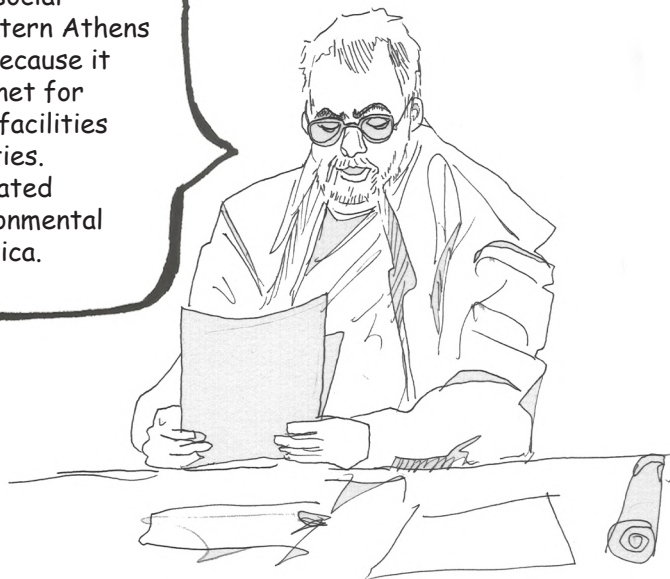
24/02/2024
Kamatero / West Athens
in proximity to Fyli landfill
Exact location:
available municipal space
(Open Care Center for the Elderly)
'Let's talk about waste'



* Glyfada is a wealthy suburb of Athens in south Attica

What we know as Fyli landfill is not just a landfill. It is a tremendous facility that has received over 150 million cubic meters of garbage. It includes the only hazardous medical waste incinerator in Greece, the only waste processing plant in Attica, leachate treatment units, a biogas processing plant, and an uncontrolled landfill site that has been operating like this for 25 years. It is by far the largest facility in Europe and one of the largest in the world. This facility has made a decisive contribution to the environmental and social degradation of western Athens and West Attica, because it has acted as a magnet for hundreds of other facilities with related activities. Fyli landfill has created conditions of environmental racism in West Attica.

The history of the landfill is very complex. It involves huge interests, intrigues, resistance, and unfortunately, a long future ahead.



Among the issues that dominated the dialogue at the first West Attica FV Lab 'local workshop' were the environmental harm of the landfill in the area, the health impacts (incl. odours) and the compensatory measures. Particular emphasis was given on the proposals and future scenarios: decentralized waste management, reduction of the generated waste volume, pressure and visibility in the media, class action against specific policies.

'Waste Governance'

The interplay and the agreements between the regional and local governance levels allow for the landfill's development and terms of operation. A regional entity - the Waste Management Authority of Attica (ESDNA) - is in charge of the respective management and planning across Attica, the environmental assessments, the distribution of compensatory money, whereas the Fyli municipality gives the permission for new expansions and is responsible for the implementation of countervailing measures.

The discussion about Fyli land-fill turns into a debate on the regional waste management in Attica ...



... Strong feelings of injustice and discrimination against West Attica and its inhabitants can be traced throughout the conversation. The meeting closes within an atmosphere of widespread concern.

10/03/2024
Ano Liosia // West Attica
Residential Area in Fyli Municipality
Exact Location:
proastio art centre
'Timemachine'

The northwest
landfill wall is
already filled with
garbage.



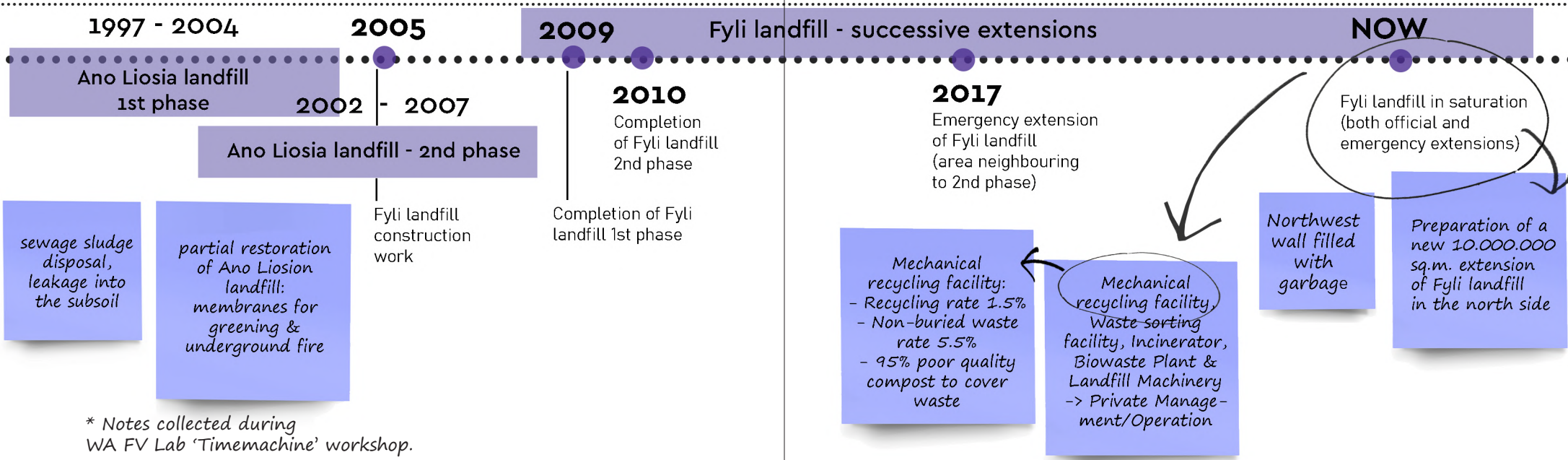
Here was the landslide of
800,000 cubic meters of
garbage in 2003. This accident
occurred on a holiday
and is not well known.



The second 'local workshop', in Ano Liosia this time, was a participatory process of collecting local knowledge insights about the landfill (historical evolution - current situation - future expectations). A timeline diagram with noted information from the previous meeting, combined with a base map of Fyli landfill were the background for adding notes. During the process we recorded historical facts blended with personal memories and narratives, and discussed about recent and upcoming developments.

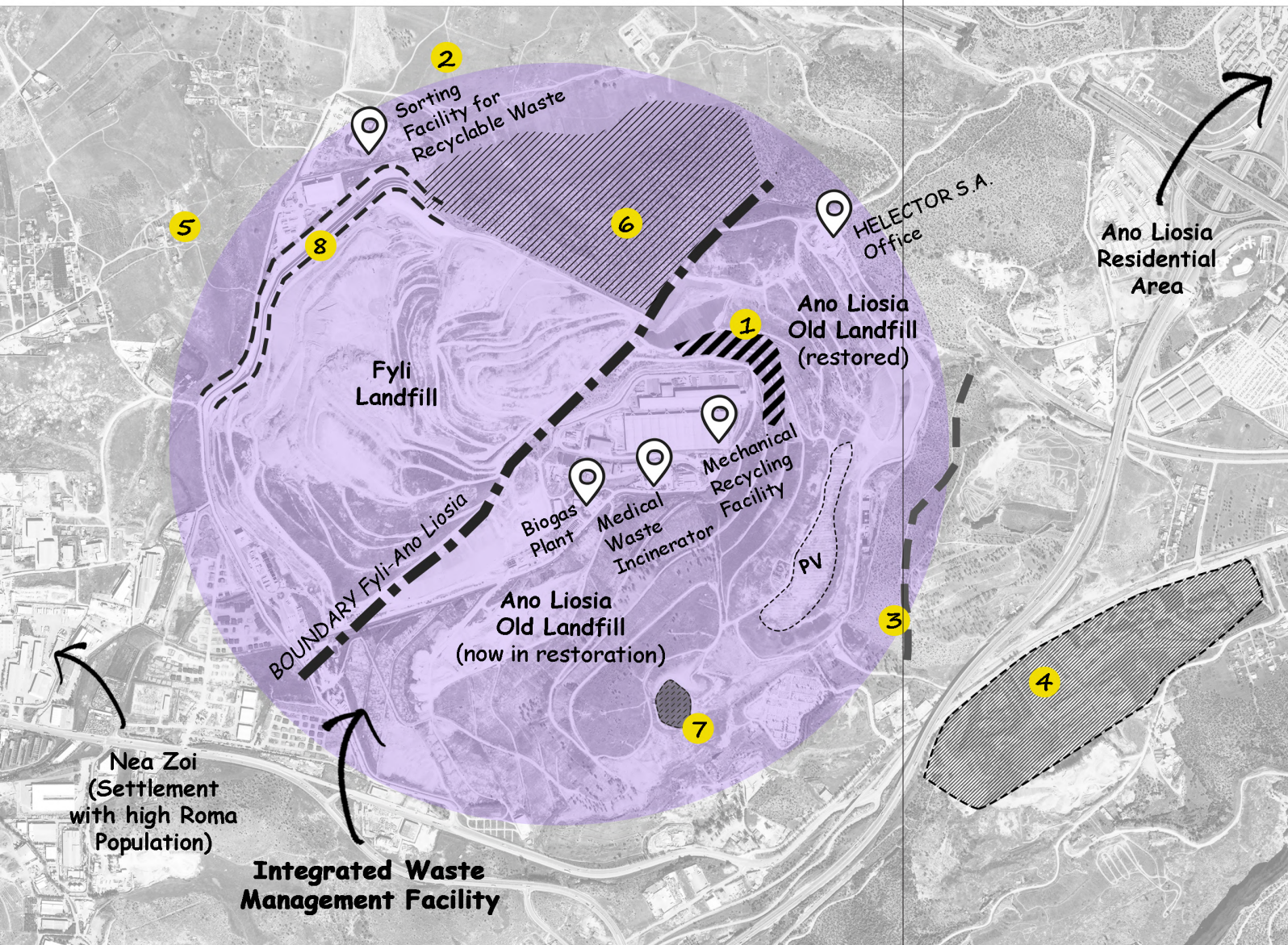
At first it was land.
 In the 1960s a local open dump was operating in the site.
 In 1991 it was transformed into the only formal landfill for the entire Attica region.
 Since then, and through multiple institutional and technical interventions, it has become an ever-growing waste management infrastructure.

SPATIAL EXPANTION OF FYLI LANDFILL OVER TIME (WORK IN PROGRESS)



MAPPING WASTE MANAGEMENT INFRASTRUCTURE IN FYLI

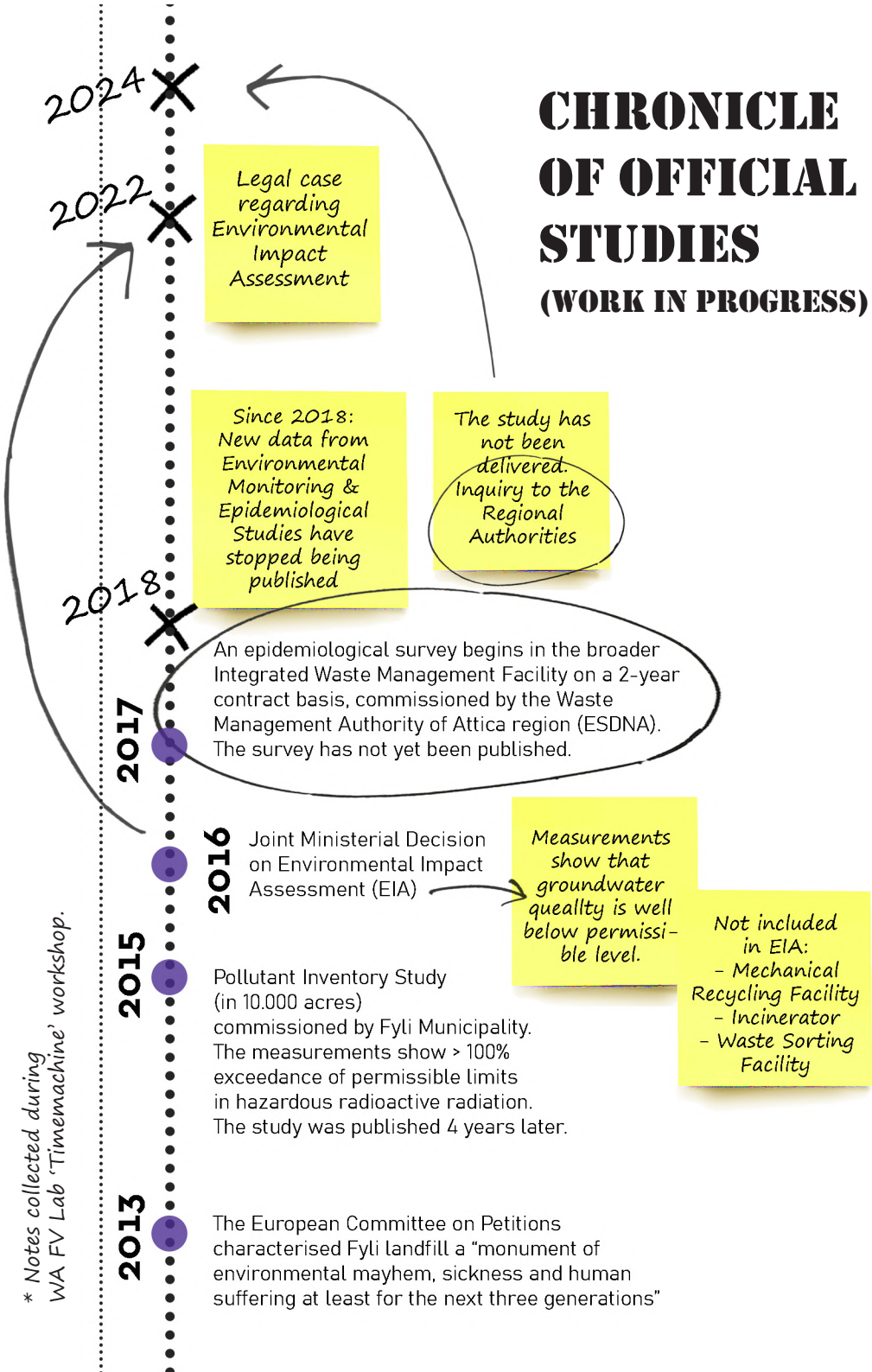
(WORK IN PROGRESS)



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 Landfille wall already filled with waste

CHRONICLE OF OFFICIAL STUDIES (WORK IN PROGRESS)



Fyli Landfill 'Timemachine'

The timeline co-created during the workshop was structured in 4 different layers of analysis:

- . Institutional Acts
- . Spatial Development with references on the landfill base map
- . Significant Events, related to environmental/health aspects and serving as a magnifying glass of inequalities and degradation
- . Bottom Up Initiatives

'Timemachine' workshop was at the same time a collective process of recording the landfill's story, an open seminar for participants that knew less by participants that remembered more, and a base for in-depth discussion about the recent and ongoing developments, as well as exchange of future aspirations.

Beyond the narration and perception of past events, the conversation turned 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 big part of the discussion revolved around the health issue and the urgent need for an accurate public epidemiological study.

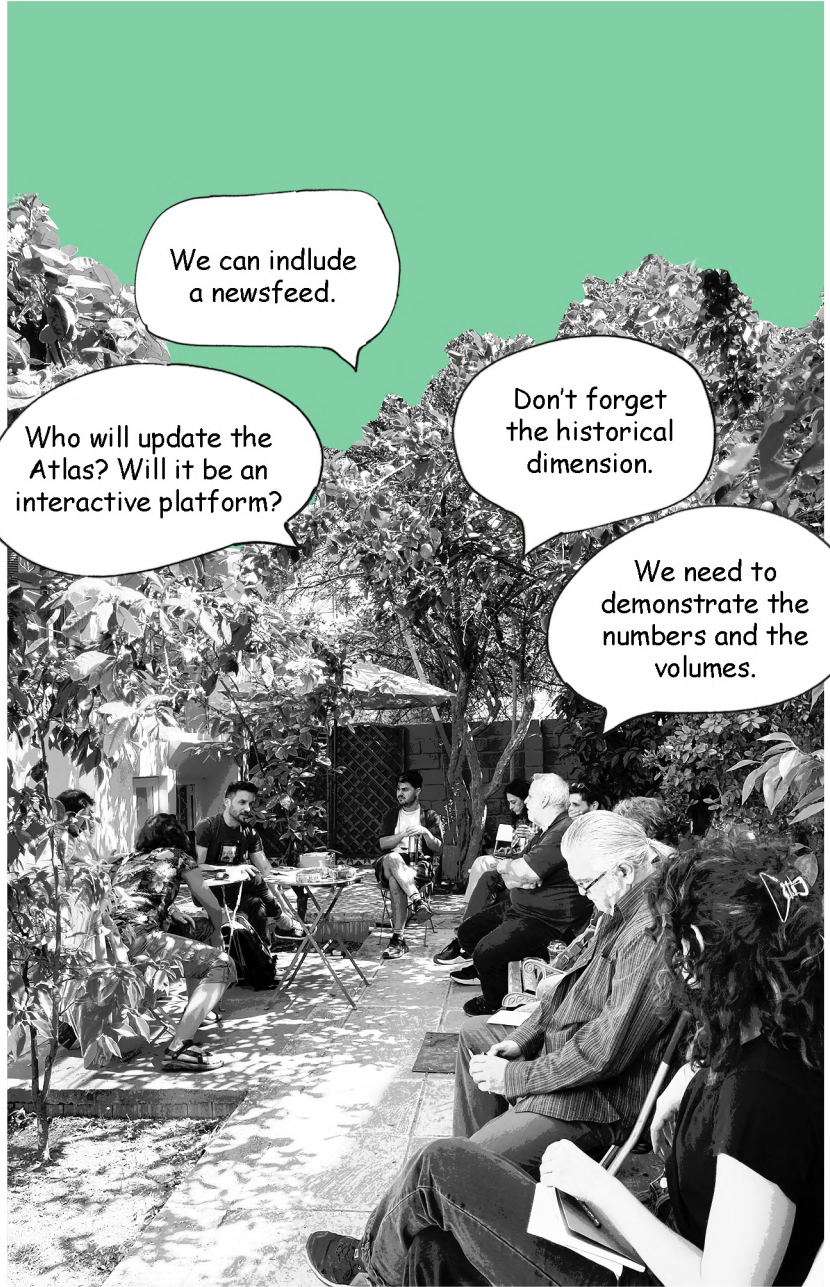
While talking about future scenarios, questions on reparation emerge ...

Are we gonna get compensation if the landfill closes? Doesn't the harm continue?

If the landfill closes down 700 people working for the municipality will be fired.

The fairy tale that people will lose their jobs if the municipality stops receiving compensation money due to the landfill is heard a lot.





Ano Liosia 14/04/2024
Residential Area in Fyli Municipality
Exact Location: proastio art centre
'landfill in the Atlas'

The next 'Local workshop' was a brainstorming session on the Atlas of environmental inequalities of West Attica, that will be gradually co-produced by West Attica FV Lab. This time at "proastio art centre" backyard we started the discussion about the scope, form and content of the Atlas: as a means to synthesize, and demonstrate the information collected and co-created by the Lab and as a tool to support its upcoming actions.

This first brainstorming session focused both on the general format of the Atlas, and on the documentation of the landfill case and waste management in the area.

**ATLAS CO-DESIGN
TO BE CONTINUED**



18/05/2024
 Ano Liosia // West Attica
 Residential Area in Fyli Municipality
 Exact Location: proastio art centre
 'protagonists of
 a documentary'

We watched this story among its protagonists in Ano Liosia at proastio art centre - one of the places where the filming took place. In this setting the images and concerns, that "Athenian Material" conveys in a sharp and poetic manner, became more intense and current.

In the discussion with the director (Laure Vermeersch)

that followed, the documentary participants talk about this experience. Referring to the residents' performance scene, Gogontina describes a manifestation of anger and an attempt to express the sense of stagnation through movement. The participants explain what it feels like to live close to the landfill and highlight the inaction in face of the ongoing "environmental catastrophe in Fyli". Their speech reveals indignation and disappointment, similar to what we see in the screen.

Today, seven years after the filming of "Athenian Material", the situation at Fyli landfill is deteriorating: the volume of garbage continues to grow, environmental degradation is spreading and demands for alternative solutions remain unanswered. One question dominates our discussion in Ano Liosia: how to reverse the situation and how to achieve environmental justice.

**THE DOCUMENTARY
 "ATHENIAN MATERIAL"
 IS A STORY ABOUT FYLI
 LANDFILL AND ABOUT
 THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE
 AROUND AND WITHIN IT.
 THE DIRECTOR, LAURE
 VERMEERSCH, DESCRIBES
 IT IS "A POETICAL ATTEMPT
 TO OPPOSE OUR BODIES AS
 PEOPLE - POOR, SCAVENGER,
 ARTIST, ENVIRONMENTALIST
 - TO A CATASTROPHE."**



*Gogontina,
Ano Liosia resident*

"The question is whether the fate of this place can now be changed. Most likely it cannot. However, the worst can be prevented. It ultimately depends on whether civil society will accept the worst.

As for the landfill in Fyli, we believe that it should be completely closed down and the area should be integrated in an environmental rehabilitation programme."

*Thomas B.,
West Front member*

This story is a product of collaborative work of about 45 people that took part in the West Attica FV Lab local workshops from February to May 2024.

Special thanks are given to Thomas B. and Gogontina for sharing valuable knowledge and contributing significantly in the organisation of the workshops.

Editorial Credits:

commonsspace

Artemis Koumparelou // text, graphic design, compilation
Sylvain Adam // sketches, pictures



WEST ATTICA FAIRVILLE LAB
June 2024