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RocktheBlock

**Integrated Participatory Roadmaps
for Affordable Co-Living**

Amaia Celaya Álvarez
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1.

The innovative solution in a nutshell

The *Rock the Block* project focuses on tackling the challenges of low-quality housing and weak community bonds through three pillars: **technical** (energy, greening and circular) transformations, **community-building** (public space, social infrastructure and community bonds)

actions, and **institutional** interventions (close to citizens, reliable and sustainable) for care and support. The solution uses the Polykatoikia (block of flats) as the intervention unit and employs participatory, neighborhood-based approaches to create sustainable and affordable co-living environments.

Full title of the IA project:
**Integrated
Participatory
Roadmaps for
Affordable Co-Living**

MUA:
**Municipality of
Egaleo (MoE)**



2. Main Urban Au- thority (MUA)'s vision of the innovative solution and underlying motivation

The MoE addresses housing affordability, particularly in a post-crisis urban context where social inequalities are stark.

Egaleo, located in Western Athens, faces high unemployment, ageing housing stock, and weakened community cohesion. By integrating housing affordability with green and digital transformations, the

municipality envisions creating sustainable, socially inclusive neighborhoods, enhancing social cohesion and community bonds, that offer mutual care and protection.

The project aims to develop affordable housing solutions that include both, physical upgrades and community reactivation.



Local Challenges

- **Housing Infrastructure:**

Ageing buildings, insufficient heating/cooling sources and high energy poverty (considering the current climate change situation).

- **Social Cohesion:**

Degradation of community bonds

- **Economic Strains:**

High unemployment and housing costs.



Local Needs

- **Addressing energy inefficiencies buildings**, and the need for better cooling and Nature-based Solutions.

- **Promoting mutual care systems for people** in vulnerable situations and enhancing community bonds thanks to public green spaces, among other strategies.

- **Tackling gentrification risks** tied to **green renovations**.



Desired Impact

- **Improving building quality through green and digital transitions** (e.g., energy-efficiency retrofitting).

- **Rebuilding community networks to foster social cohesion and skills sharing** (e.g., improving health, social equity, and ecological sustainability)

- **Establishing institutional support** (e.g., the Co-living Hub and Housing Office).



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Δήμος Αιγάλεω



ΔΕΛΦΟΚΡΙΤΟΣ



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3. Political Leadership at the MUA

The political support for the deployment of the Rock the Block project is firm, based on the active involvement of the MoE in housing and urban sustainability policies.





The project aligns with the Strategic Plan of the city of Egaleo and it is linked into broader frameworks such as the General Urban Plan MoE, the Metropolitan Athens Regulatory Plan, and the Integrated Urban Development Plan of West Athens among others.

Also, the municipality has expressed commitment by actively involving relevant policy actors at the project design and implementation stage. These include the Association for the Development of

West Athens (ASDA) and the Heinrich Böll Foundation (HBF). These efforts will, therefore, feed into the development of future strategies on housing and also help stimulate the various ongoing national debates about housing affordability.

This engagement level reflects existing political commitment and a structured approach to building further support. It will utilize participatory urban development processes to create innovative policy tools, such as the proposed Housing Office and Co-living Hub, that ensure long-term political and institutional backing.



4. Context

Egaleo is a densely populated urban area within Western Athens, known for its socio-economic challenges. Egaleo's urban web comprises residential, industrial, and commercial spaces with generally scarce proximity to natural greens and waterscapes. There are some open public areas and spaces within the municipality for communal use that will also be refurbished during this project.

The target intervention spot is the Polykatoikia (the apartment blocks dominating the housing landscape that are both, a challenge and an opportunity for transformation).

These spots are typical constructions of post-war Greek cities, with issues like energy inefficiency (insufficient heating sources for 3.65% of households), energy poverty ((35.6% struggle





5.

Stakeholder Ecosystems

Key stakeholders in the project represent the four-helix model:



• **Government:**

Municipality of Egaleo (MoE) leads policy and urban management.



• **Academia:**

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, National Centre of Scientific Research (NCSR) Demokritos, and Regional Development Institute – Panteion University (RDI) contribute technical expertise.



• **Civil Society:**

Innovative Communities Onwards (InCommON), Organization Earth, Urbana and Ohi Pezoume Performing Arts NPO (OP) contribute community building and social engagement initiatives.



• **Industry:**

Architecture Research Athens (AREA) and Symbolo GP offer technical and financial planning for housing transitions

Community engagement activities are facilitated by stakeholders to build mutual support networks and promote inclusive neighborhood initiatives. Participation and collaboration are nurtured through co-creation: residents will be grouped to co-design action plans with experts, securing tailored and inclusive solutions. Workshops and training on the skills needed for the implementation of the circular economy principles, social inclusion, and green practices are also provided, equipping participants with practical knowledge. Taken together, these activities form a participatory model for scaling innovation to achieve sustainable urban development.



6. Digital, green and just aspects of the IA

Rock the Block embeds green and digital solutions to advance climate neutrality, through energy-saving infrastructure, circular economy activities and digital monitoring systems. Other social justice features of the area include inclusion, and community-led decision-making.

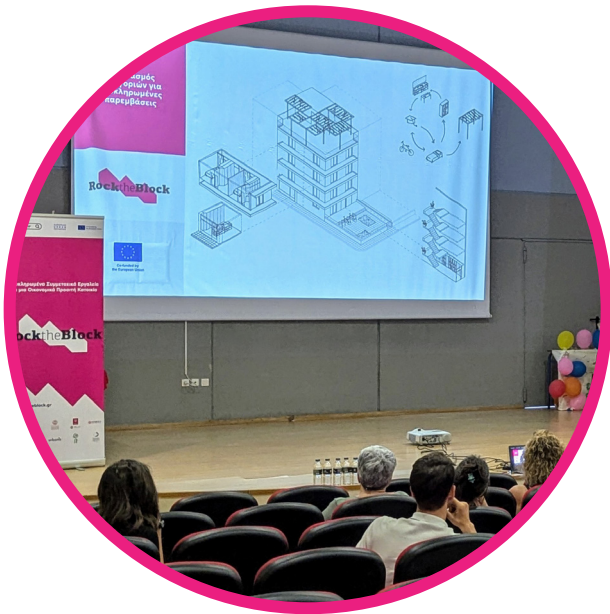


Green Aspects:

The project's main points focus on climate-resilient buildings (energy-efficient retrofitting, bioclimatic design, and circular economy). Interventions involve thermal insulation, passive solar, and water conservation systems (to reduce energy consumption and CO₂ emissions while introducing urban greening through refurbished communal spaces and nature-based solutions). Circularity would be enhanced by material reuse and fostering sustainable practices at the neighbourhood level.

Digital Aspects:

Smart technologies are deployed (e.g., digital monitoring systems for energy consumption, water use, and waste generation in real-time in pilot buildings). Such systems allow for proactive interventions, optimization of resource use, and data-driven decision-making by residents and policymakers. Digital twins and logbooks enable efficient retrofitting and lifecycle analysis, assuring long-term sustainability.



Just Aspects:

The project actively fosters social inclusion by engaging diverse groups, such as low-income families, women, the elderly, and migrants, in participatory processes. Creating the Co-living Hub and Housing Office offers easily accessible support for housing problems while enhancing mutual care and community resilience. Skill-building workshops and inclusive neighbourhood activities address inequalities, ensuring equitable access to affordable, sustainable living environments.

By integrating all these elements holistically, the project fast-tracks green, smart, and just transitions that align with the Municipality of Egaleo's vision for climate-neutral urban development.

7. Regulatory Frameworks

Compliance is necessary with the existing local land use, zoning, building, and environmental regulations. For interventions in Polykatoikia blocks, all relevant building permits and planning permissions will be acquired. In addition, the MoE must negotiate the urban policy in Greece related to energy efficiency and housing for the smooth operation of the proposed project.



Land Use and Zoning:

The project is in conformity with the General Urban Plan of the MoE that governs residential zones and supports interventions for housing upgrading. The conformity with the Regulatory Plan of Metropolitan Athens (4277 ΦΕΚ Α' 156/1.8.2014) will ensure coherence with general strategies of urban development, including green and sustainable infrastructure.



Planning and Building Permissions:

Retrofits of buildings and technical solutions need to be permitted under the National Building Codes (New Building Code, NOK) and Energy Efficiency Standards (Building Energy Performance Regulation, KENAK) of Greece. Certain interventions, such as elevator upgrades for accessibility, thermal insulation, or rooftop solar installations require special approval. There is the possibility to establish building-level energy communities following



the Law 4513/ 2018 - regulation 4685/2020, currently under improvement for local energy projects)



Technological Authorizations:

Deployment of digital enablers such as real-time monitoring systems and digital twins will be performed in conformance with the national data protection legislation, namely the GDPR, and legislation regarding the use of technologies in public and private spaces.



Innovative Circular Economy Schemes:

The Rock the Block project encompasses circular economy concepts that meet the Greek Action Plan for Circular Economy and related European Union directives; this may involve legal adjustments in the reuse of materials and waste management at a neighbourhood level.

By taking into consideration these regulatory and policy requirements, the project ensures a compliant and scalable model for its innovative technical and social interventions.

8. Management and governance of the innovative solution

The Rock the Block project is managed and governed using a mixed approach; directly by the MoE with specific tasks delegated to project partners and stakeholders with the aim of exploiting their specialized expertise. A mixed public-private governance model is adopted, mainly based on participatory governance through the Co-living Hub and Housing Office, involving residents, local experts, and civil society.

Management Model:

Overall coordination, the MoE ensures the direct management of the project, from the so-called project governance and public tenders to the set-up of Co-living Hub and Housing Office.



(a) The Housing Office, established under the Rock the Block project, is a dedicated resource centre aimed at supporting the housing needs of the beneficiaries of the project, but also of other residents of the Municipality of Egaleo. It serves as a multifaceted hub, providing a wide range of services and resources designed to address housing challenges, promote sustainable living, and enhance community well-being. The core management team is operating under the city's Planning and Development Department and consists of a manager, an engineer, a legal expert, a social scientist and student interns.



(b) The Co-Living Hub is envisioned as a dynamic and inclusive community space within the Housing Office designed to foster collaboration, sustainability, and a sense of belonging among its residents and the broader community. Though not part of the day-to-day operations, the project partners from Rock the Block will provide invaluable expertise, guidance, and oversight to ensure the Hub's success. Each partner will bring specialized knowledge in areas such as sustainability, housing policy, or community engagement, supporting the core team in the following ways: (1) Regular Advisory Sessions: Project partners will meet regularly with the core team to provide strategic advice, evaluate progress, and ensure the Co-Living Hub aligns with the broader goals of the Rock the Block project. (2) Workshops and Training: Project partners will contribute to the design and delivery of specialized workshops or training

programs for residents, community members, and interns, and (3) Evaluation and Feedback: Partners will help develop evaluation frameworks to measure the Hub's impact on the community, contributing expertise in data collection, analysis, and reporting.

Governance Model:

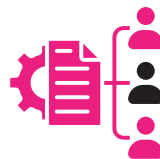
The mixed model of public-private governance is underpinned on participatory and collaborative mechanisms. Public governance is ensured through the leading role of MoE, while private and third sector partners contribute with expertise in architecture, circular economy, urban greening, participatory and inclusive design, and digital technology. A sound participatory governance framework is ensured, promoting bottom-up approaches and co-creation with inhabitants and local civil society organizations. For instance, residents will be involved in the co-design of building-specific action plans, while community organizations will lead mutual support networks and inclusion and cohesion's plans.

This form of inclusive governance system ensures accountability, transparency, and well-integrated expertise from all stakeholders and empowers local communities to drive sustainable urban transformation.

9.

Resources available

All administrative, technical, and human resources will be supplied by the MoE and its partners : (1) the financial resources shall include funding from ERDF (80%) and local contributions (20%), (2) technical expertise will come from academia and industry partners to civil society partners (3) legal, and urban planning support will be provided by MoE, along with communication resources for dissemination.



Administrative/Communication and Dissemination Resources:

The MoE contributes to project coordination, communication campaigns, and public outreach to engage stakeholders. It includes the establishment of the Co-living Hub and Housing Office as key dissemination points, supported by a dedicated communication team for public awareness, reporting, and stakeholder engagement.



Digital Infrastructures/ Equipment:

It represents large investments in digital tools (e.g., the installation of real-time energy monitoring systems, the implementation of digital twin technology, and building logbooks will allow easier proactive interventions for long-term sustainability).



Infrastructure/ Construction Resources:

Retrofitting works require resources for thermal insulation, green upgrades, and technical installations focused on moisture and humidity solutions for a better comfort and healthy indoor spaces, implemented in compliance with national building regulations.



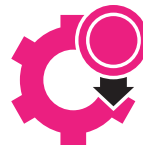
External Expertise:

Specialized external expertise is used in activities and design of innovative retrofitting solutions. Partners from academia and industry provide technical and financial expertise, while peer-to-peer learning initiatives with other municipalities enhance capacity building.



Human Resources:

Implementation is overseen by a multidisciplinary team comprising municipal officials, project managers, technical experts, and facilitators for civil society. In addition, an Advisory Board comprising external consultants has been established to ensure the project's quality and sustainability. The board oversees the implementation of the Rock the Block strategy and provides guidance on the overall development and progression of housing-related issues, suggesting potential changes and adjustments as needed. Additionally, the Advisory Board facilitates milestone reviews and disseminates the project's results through its networks.



Financial Resources:

The project is supported by a co-financed funding mechanism, covering retrofitting costs-up to €120,000 per building and digital/circular equipment - €160,000 in total - along with municipal investments for infrastructure and personnel.

10.

Sustainability of the innovative solution at the MUA

The MoE has prepared an overall sustainability plan for continuation beyond the initial funding phase of the Rock the Block initiative. It involves financial and personnel dimensions to sustain the project in the long run and enhance its impact:



Financial Sustainability:

The MoE will integrate the innovative solution into the Strategic Plan of the city of Egaleo to align with future municipal priorities. The financial resources will be drawn from various streams, such as:

- **EU Grants:**

Applications to cohesion policy funds, such as ERDF (European Regional Development Fund) and the Regional Operational Programme of Attica (ROP).

- **National Public Contributions:**

Resources related to the Greece 2.0 recovery plan and respective national funding mechanisms.

- **Local Public Funding:**

Allocations from the municipal budget to sustain structures like the Co-living Hub and Housing Office.

- **Private Contributions:**

Contributions from project partners and collaborations with private investors to support circular economy initiatives and digital technologies.





- **Public-Private Partnerships:**

Exploring co-financing models to support ongoing technical interventions and community programs. Embedded Financial Mechanisms: Utilizing potential revolving funds and introducing community-based revenue models, such as shared green infrastructure maintenance fees.



- **Personnel Sustainability:**

The MoE will include key positions, such as the managers of the Co-living

Hub and Housing Office, in its annual operational budget, thus making the positions permanent.

- **Capacity-building programs**

during the project will increase the skill level of municipal staff and reduce future dependence on external expertise.

- **Community volunteering**

to support the initiative and help create a self-sustaining ecosystem of collaboration and knowledge sharing, will be accompanied of educational schemes, such as internships.



11. Risks

Key risks include long-term political or financial changes, delayed procurement(s) by public bodies, and potential resistance of residents to collective decision-making. Appropriate counter measures would then be effective, such as political advocacy, continuous stakeholder process, and adaptive project management:



Strategy-Level Risks:

Legal and Regulatory Framework:

The MoE expects risks in the continuously changing legal and regulatory frameworks concerning housing schemes, circular economy policies. To address this, the MoE participates in the development of the Athens Housing Strategy, in which the city of Thessaloniki is also involved. Furthermore, the MoE has held a meeting with the General Secretary for Housing to advocate for changes and the creation of a supportive legal framework that aligns with the project's objectives.

The property owners will contract with the MoE consenting to mandatorily maintain rent prices at -15% lower than the prices of 2020 for 5 years. Legal advice will be sought to ensure compliance with the national legislative framework

Changing Financial and Political Conditions:

Fluctuations in national funding priorities or changed political circumstances may put such long-term support into question. In response, the MoE has diversified its funding streams through EU grants and local public-private partnerships for long-term financial security.

Lack of Commitment for a systemic change:

The political / resources may weaken over time, and the system could be difficult to maintain after the project period. In this regard, the MoE is embedding the project within its long-term Strategic Plan for the city (beyond the concrete number of Polykatoikias intervened now) and engaging the political leaders throughout the project to make sure that commitment will not fade away.



Lack of interest and engagement by residents:

There is a possibility of resistance and /or lack of interest from residents to keeping residential buildings and their communities on board on the long run. To mitigate such eventualities, the MoE continuously works on community engagement, co-design processes, and affordability plans development.

Lack of balance between more and less affluent residents:

On the one hand, the more affluent might contribute to project sustainability; on the other hand, the less affluent need more support because of the model's long-term sustainability and the embedded justice model. This matter is under reflection.



Project Management Risks:

Project Management Capacity: Risks related to management structures and capacity may arise. The MoE plans to ensure that skilled project managers are in place, supported by capacity-building programs for municipal staff.

Work Plan Implementation: Delays due to procurement issues or legal requirements could disrupt timelines. The MoE mitigates this by ensuring timely regulatory approvals and streamlined public procurement processes.

Potential delays due to public procedures:

The risk of obsolescence in technical solutions or delays in construction is mitigated by establishing clear timelines, securing expert consultation for up-to-date technologies, and implementing adaptive designs to future-proof solutions.



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