

Case study ID

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YEITONIA+

CASE STUDY SHORT SUMMARY REPORT

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YEITONIA+

Case Study at a Glance

"Yeitonia+" (Neighborhood +) is a transformative initiative led by the Cyprus Energy Agency in collaboration with the Cyprus University of Technology and the Office of the Environment Commissioner, aimed at revitalizing neighborhoods by creating pedestrian-friendly spaces, increasing green areas, and improving infrastructure. Inspired by the success of similar projects abroad and insights from the COVID-19 lockdowns, the initiative seeks to reduce car dependency while enhancing social interactions and inclusivity. It addresses issues such as excessive car use, lack of recreational spaces, and the improper use of neighborhoods for parking or waste disposal. Through community workshops, mapping exercises, and active engagement, residents have provided crucial input on their needs and vision for a more livable environment. The project has fostered collaboration with local authorities and partners, with an emphasis on scaling up the initiative and implementing pilot projects. Despite challenges like previous distrust in local authorities and slow responses, the project aims to strengthen social cohesion, improve air quality, and boost neighborhood resilience. Key lessons highlight the importance of community involvement, trust-building, and ensuring local ownership in the transformation process.

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Case Study Profile

Topic

- ☐ Community Gardening & Urban Agriculture
- ☐ Community Hubs & Cultural Activities
- ☒ Urban Design & Planning Processes
- ☒ Public Space Development & Management
- ☐ Local Economic Development
- ☒ Urban Regeneration & Rehabilitation

Scale

- ☐ Metropolitan / city region
- ☒ City scale
- ☒ Neighbourhood scale
- ☐ Block scale
- ☐ Building scale

Resilience Challenge

- ☐ Environmental and ecological resilience
- ☐ social & cultural resilience
- ☐ Infrastructure and technological resilience
- ☐ Economic & livelihood resilience

Duration

- ☐ Immediate (less than 1 month)
- ☐ Project-Based (1–12 months)
- ☒ Programme-Based (1–3 years)
- ☒ Strategic (3–5 years)
- ☐ Structural / Transformative (more than 5 years)

Stakeholders

- ☒ Community members
- ☒ Local government
- ☒ Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)
- ☐ Private sector
- ☒ Academic and research institutions

Type of Civic Engagement Supporting Neighborhood Resilience

- ☐ Resident-led and grassroots initiatives
- ☒ Collaborative planning projects or processes
- ☐ Advocacy and capacity building
- ☐ Volunteer and community service projects
- ☒ Short-term, more flexible project-based engagement
- ☒ Long-term, more institutionalized engagement (development of stable structures, etc.)
- ☐ Protest and resistance mobilization
- ☐ Art-and culture-based civic Engagement

Level of Civic Participation

- ☐ Information
- ☒ Involvement or participation
- ☒ Collaboration or co-creation
- ☐ Empowerment
- ☐ Resistance and protest-based empowerment

Empirical Basis and Methodological Approach

The YEITONIA+ case study was examined through a combination of semi-structured interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. Empirical material included project reports, workshop documentation, mapping exercises, and public consultation outputs produced during the participatory planning process coordinated by the Cyprus Energy Agency and collaborating stakeholders. Additional insights were gathered through workshops involving SWOT analyses and community mapping activities, which helped identify residents' perceptions, spatial challenges, and priorities for neighborhood transformation. The methodological approach combined qualitative analysis of participatory planning practices with an assessment of civic engagement mechanisms and spatial resilience strategies implemented within the initiative.

Compendious Summary

The "Yeitonia+" project, led by the Cyprus Energy Agency in collaboration with the Cyprus University of Technology and the Municipality of Strovolos, is a relevant case study as it aligns with the principles of sustainable urbanism and participatory urban planning. The initiative focuses on transforming neighborhoods into more livable spaces by promoting pedestrian zones, green areas, and reducing car dependency. This case study is particularly significant as it directly addresses issues such as urban mobility, social cohesion, and environmental sustainability, topics central to urban resilience and sustainable urbanism. Additionally, the project's emphasis on community engagement, infrastructure upgrades, and improving the quality of life for residents makes it a valuable example of integrating public input into urban design processes.

Other research methods used for this case study included workshops with SWOT analysis and mapping exercises. These methods allowed residents to identify key issues and opportunities in their neighborhoods, providing valuable insights for urban transformation. The combination of these methods enabled a comprehensive understanding of the community's needs and priorities, ensuring that the final plans reflected local perspectives and aspirations.

Neighborhood challenge

The "Yeitonia+" project focuses on revitalizing neighborhoods in Cyprus, specifically targeting areas with a mix of residential, commercial, and public spaces. The selected area in Strovolos was chosen following a request from the residents. These neighborhoods exhibit typical urban characteristics, such as moderate urban density and a built environment where car usage is prioritized over pedestrian spaces. Housing patterns are diverse, with a combination of older residential buildings and newer developments. Land use is generally mixed, with significant allocation to private vehicles, which restricts the creation of public spaces and recreational areas. Green spaces and public areas are limited, contributing to the lack of social and recreational opportunities for residents.

One of the primary resilience-related challenges in these neighborhoods is the excessive use of space by cars, which not only diminishes opportunities for social interaction but also leads to air pollution and reduced walkability. The area was not pedestrian-friendly, with dense car traffic segregating public spaces and making it difficult for people to walk and enjoy the neighborhood. Additionally, inadequate infrastructure such as poor lighting and a lack of public amenities further contributed to an unwelcoming streetscape.

The "Yeitonia+" initiative seeks to address these issues by reimagining the use of space and promoting sustainable, people-centered urban design.

Response to the challenge

The Cyprus Energy Agency, as the initiator of the "Yeitonia+" project, played a central role in identifying and addressing the challenges faced by neighborhoods in Cyprus. The Municipality of Strovolos also played a significant role, providing technical and financial support in the planning phase. The Municipality aimed to enhance public spaces by improving pedestrian areas, increasing green spaces, and promoting sustainable mobility solutions.

The key spatial goals of the project included:

- Increasing pedestrian-friendly zones and connectivity
- Expanding green spaces and recreational areas
- Reducing car dependency and promoting sustainable mobility
- Enhancing public infrastructure, including lighting and seating areas

The project unfolded in multiple phases, beginning with public consultations and participatory workshops where residents contributed their concerns and ideas. The involvement of local authorities and universities helped facilitate discussions on sustainability, mobility, and community resilience.

The initiative is still in the planning phase, with funding expected from national or European sources for its full implementation.

Mechanisms of civic engagement

The "Yeitonia+" project incorporated various levels of public involvement, focusing on engaging residents and civic society in the identification, definition, and resolution of urban issues. The Municipality of Strovolos actively involved residents through public consultations and workshops, ensuring that the project reflected their needs and aspirations.

Key methods of engagement included:

- Public workshops, where residents participated in SWOT analysis and mapping exercises
- Community meetings to discuss priorities and concerns
- Collaboration with local stakeholders, including universities and NGOs

While there was no formal participatory budgeting process, the project encouraged community-led discussions on urban challenges and possible solutions. Inclusivity was a key concern, and efforts were made to encourage broad participation. However, barriers such as previous distrust of local authorities posed challenges to engagement. The presence of a municipal councillor, who was also a local resident, helped bridge these gaps and foster greater community involvement.

Case study findings and lessons learned

The "Yeitonia+" project highlights the significant impact of civic participation on social resilience by involving residents in the redesign of their neighborhoods. Through community engagement, the project aimed to transform public spaces into safer, more accessible areas that encourage social interaction and

improve overall neighborhood livability. While the pilot phase has not been fully implemented, the process laid the groundwork for increasing social cohesion, walkability, and public safety.

Key findings include:

- Participatory engagement led to a strong sense of ownership among residents.
- Public consultations enabled better alignment of the project with community needs.
- Challenges included bureaucratic resistance, resource constraints, and skepticism from residents.

Effective engagement methods included participatory workshops, SWOT analyses, and mapping activities. These approaches facilitated a co-design process that ensured local perspectives were central to urban planning efforts.

Expected innovative spatial outcomes include:

- Creation of more pedestrian-friendly streets
- Increased green spaces and improved infrastructure
- Reduction in car usage and enhanced sustainable mobility options

However, obstacles such as slow municipal responses, technical feasibility limitations, and financial constraints hindered implementation. Tensions also emerged between community aspirations and the practicalities of urban planning, requiring negotiation and adaptation in the planning process.

Conclusion

The "Yeitonía+" project demonstrates the powerful impact of civic engagement on urban planning and neighborhood resilience. The most successful forms of engagement were those that provided direct input from the community on spatial interventions, particularly in terms of pedestrian-friendly zones, green spaces, and reducing car dependence. These participatory activities have the potential to improve social cohesion, walkability, safety, and overall neighborhood livability, contributing to a more resilient urban environment.

This case study highlights important implications for urban planning and policy. It shows that community participation is essential in crafting urban environments that foster resilience, particularly in neighborhoods where social interaction and environmental quality are compromised. Urban planners and policymakers should consider integrating community engagement into resilience strategies, ensuring that local knowledge and desires are reflected in urban design.

For future civic engagement, it is recommended to strengthen collaboration between communities and urban planners, provide more resources for community-driven initiatives, and invest in training that empowers residents to participate in planning processes. Building these capacities will ensure that citizens are better equipped to advocate for their needs and contribute to resilience-building.

The approaches used in the "Yeitonia+" project are adaptable to other urban contexts, especially in terms of fostering civic engagement and promoting democratic urban governance. By replicating participatory workshops and collaborative design activities, urban areas can benefit from more inclusive and resilient urban planning strategies, empowering communities to shape their own future while addressing the challenges they face.

Attachments

References

<https://www.cea.org.cy/en/yeitonia/>

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Photos





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