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### Who is involved?

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Athens

## About our Innovation

## synAthina - supporting community activity to flourish and influence municipality thinking

### Challenge

There is a vibrant civil society in Athens, with a huge amount of activity going on at a community level. This activity is often restricted, either by government regulation or because there is not the infrastructure and support to enable these activities to flourish.

### Idea

synAthina is an online platform to engage members of the community in problem-solving and reform. Citizens and groups can submit activities they are undertaking and ideas on how to improve their city, and will be connected to the relevant government representatives, resulting in creative grassroots solutions and a mechanism to influence and update municipality services and procedures.

### Intended impact

- Increased momentum and energy, supporting enhanced activity amongst community groups.
- More supportive and collaborative ways of working between the municipality and the community.
- Reduced regulation, creating space for a greater contribution in city life from community groups.
- Increased understanding from the municipality of the contribution that community groups can make to improving the city.

## Our journey implementing our idea

# From the bottom up: How to build a collaborative, grassroots vision for change within a municipality

There has not typically been a strong relationship between the municipality and community groups in Athens. synAthina seeks to bridge that gap, showing government that there is a way of working more effectively with the community, supporting community activity as part of an agenda for change and connecting government to what is important to citizens.

### Building authentic and personal relationships through face to face engagement

### Demonstrating new ways of interacting

### Focusing on high impact activity

### Holding onto a living vision

"We are discovering new things through action" *Stelios Voulgaris*

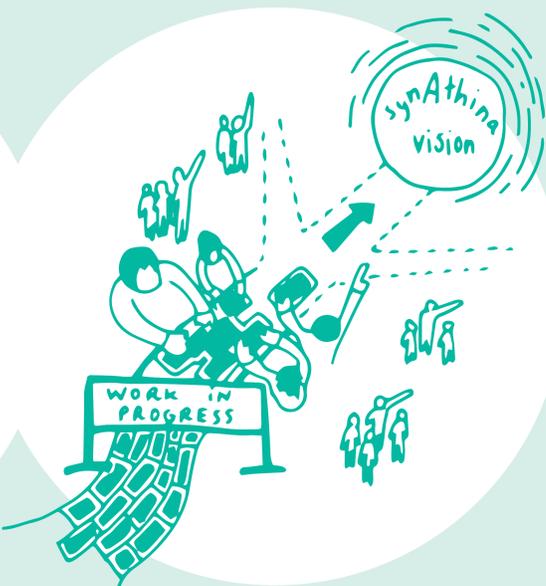
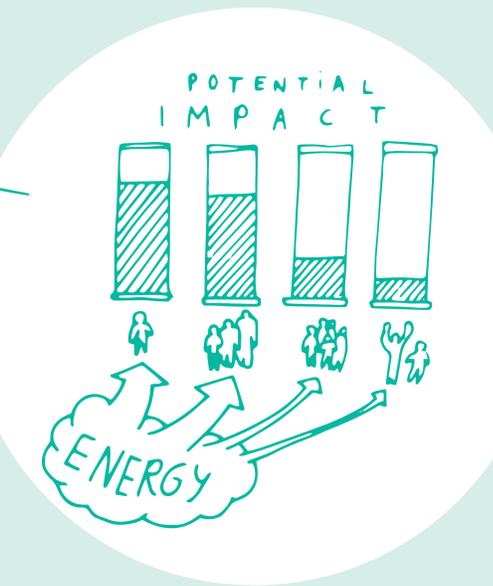
## Next steps

### Developing the platform

We are updating our platform so that it automates more of the data collection. It will also respond to the evolving intent of the project, for example enabling us to identify themes across community activities and analyse what citizens are most interested in.

### Codifying new approaches

Informed by synAthina, the Mayor is committed to supporting longer term change in the municipality. We are working with him to think about a declaration or set of principles which codify how the municipality should work with citizens.



What we have done

There is a history of mistrust between grassroots activists and the municipality. Our approach has been to attract interest and engagement by investing in face to face relationships. We have made use of our strong background in community activism to identify with and understand these groups.

We are modeling new ways of working between the municipality and community groups, and have undertaken a number of events which brings these groups together, gradually building the sense of ambition for change amongst municipality officials.

We have collected hundreds of community activities, and now need to focus our energy on supporting groups undertaking the most high impact activities to influence municipal decisions, and realise the potential impact of their activities for citizens.

Through trust and communication, we have developed a culture of reflection and debate within the team. We all feel supported to surface questions or uncertainty which helps us to agree the direction of the project.

Key activity

Holding a range of events, both regular meetings with community groups and unique events that facilitate interactions with municipality staff.

We held an 'Adhocracy (loves) Bureaucracy' event which supported the municipality and community to recognise their shared commitment to improving the city.

We are working with community groups with initiatives likely to have the greatest impact to distill their practice and develop toolkits so that others can apply the same methodology, and replicate the initiatives.

Through reflection on our activities we are continually refining our shared sense direction, for example in considering the contribution of synAthina to the redesign of a community market, as a team.

Key learning

Connecting with the community in an authentic way is key to building trust and their desire to be involved in a project.

Connecting people to tangible change helps them to see new ways of working in practice.

Energy is not an endless resource: prioritising is important for maximising impact.

Intentionally creating the conditions that enable effective team working support meaningful collaboration and shared ownership.