EUROPEAN URBAN INITIATIVE

COOLING HAVENS

# Water-Powered Neighborhood Cooling and Engagement Stations

## 1st Site Visit in TPs

Budapest | 8, 9 September 2026

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Co-funded by the European Union

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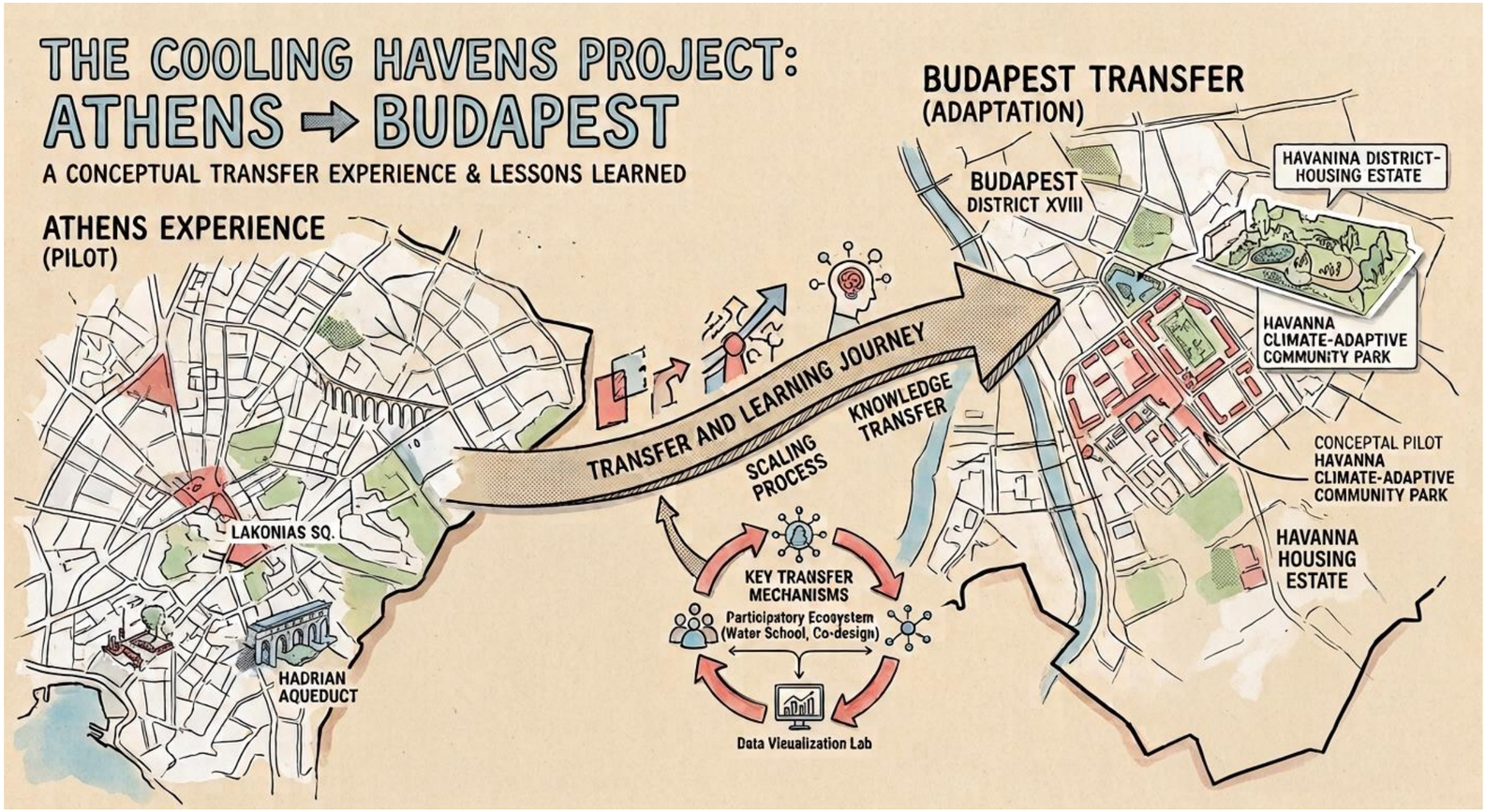
**Cooling Havens Project Manager**

# From Athens to Budapest




- 🌿 More shade
- 🌫️ Better urban air quality
- 💧 Smarter water use and greater water efficiency
- 🦋 Stronger biodiversity and ecological connectivity
- 🌆 More livable public spaces
- 🌍 Greater resilience to climate change

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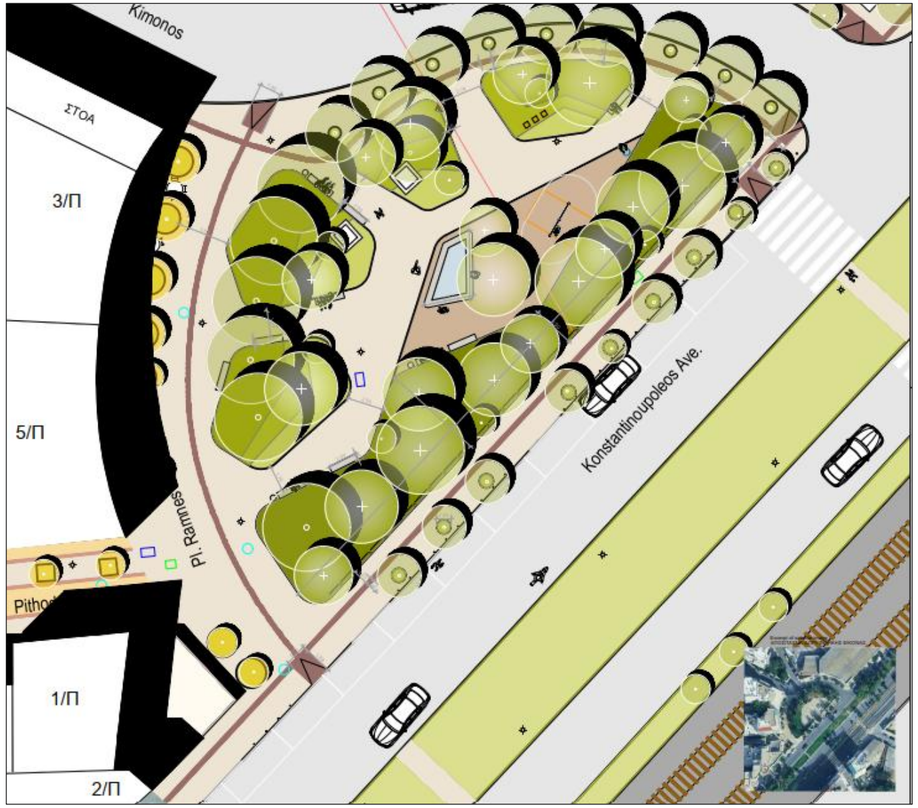
# Ramnes Square, Metaxourgio area




Proposed Intervention Plan

## PROPOSED DESIGN

- ❑ The square is redefined not simply as an open surface, but as:
  - Water management infrastructure
  - A space for social interaction
  - A microclimate regulator
  - A biodiversity hub

- ❑ Creation of Green Islets
  - Increased shading
  - Enhanced tree planting at strategic locations
  - Seating areas
  - Enhancement of biodiversity
  - Creation of cool resting areas
  - Planted islands
  - Infiltration areas

- ❑ The existing drainage basin is utilized as a key element of the design
  The proposal incorporates:
  - Rain gardens
  - Shaded areas
  - Seating areas

- ❑ Reconnecting Residents with the Water Cycle

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# Nature-based Solutions

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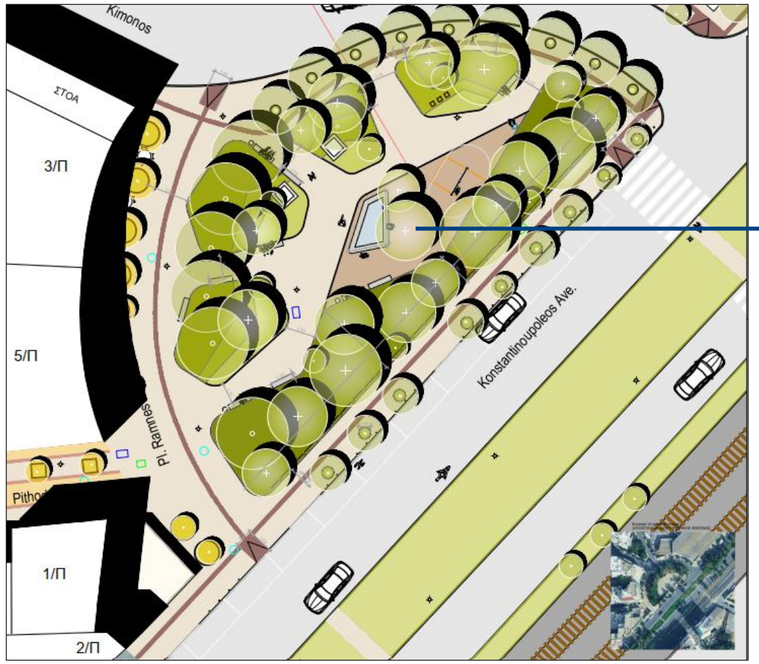


Ramnes Square,
Meatxourgio area



Rain garden



Agia Varvara Square,
Ano Patissia area



Grevillea robusta



Palatanus hispanica

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# Start from the site, not from the technology




Havanna utca 64-75, Budapest

**The question should not be:**

**“**Where can we install a rain garden, sensor or cooling system?”

**but:**

“What problem are we trying to solve at this exact location?”

**Combine blue and green infrastructure**

- Avoid treating planting and water management as separate systems.

**Check feasibility early**

- Utilities, permits, water, electricity, ownership, maintenance and procurement can change even a good design

**Combine technical evidence with citizen experience**

- Cooling Havens has shown the importance of bringing together:
  - environmental measurements
  - technical assessment
  - observation of public-space use
  - citizen feedback

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# Start from the site, not from the technology



Havanna utca 64-75, Budapest

**Ambitious design concepts can be significantly affected by:**

- ❑ underground infrastructure
- ❑ existing utilities
- ❑ ownership/responsibilities
- ❑ regulatory requirements
- ❑ municipal approvals
- ❑ technical feasibility
- ❑ procurement constraints

**Community acceptance is an implementation condition, not a communication activity**

- ➢ That is particularly relevant because Havanna already has a strong participatory foundation: 306 residents participated in the initial survey, 96% considered renovation necessary, and residents prioritised greenery and places for sitting/resting

**Design maintenance before designing innovation**

- ➢ A Nature-based Solution or a sensor that cannot be maintained will eventually become a liability

The Athens experience shows that the real challenge is making the idea technically feasible, socially accepted, administratively approvable, financially realistic and operationally maintainable.

Our recommendation to Havanna is therefore to design all five dimensions together from the beginning.

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*The future of cooler cities depends not only on smarter technology, but on designing cities that work with nature.*

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Dimitris Karapanos
Cooling Havens Project Manager

# Our Consortium

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