HIGH FLIGHTS AND HARD LANDINGS: 
THE ADVENTURES OF PLANNING FOR THE REGENERATION OF 
THESSALONIKI’S DERELICT WESTERN ENTRANCE

Pantoleon Skayannis and Angelos Kyrratzakos
University of Thessaly, Department of Planning & Regional Development, 
DPRD-RUITEPOD, Pedion Areos, Volos 38334, Greece

* leonska@uth.gr

Abstract
The aim of this paper is to highlight the several phases of the post-1985 planning 
endeavours of Thessaloniki, in the context of which the Lachanokipoi area of the 
‘Western Entrance’ of the city is particularly examined. Our underlying research 
has shown that one can distinguish three periods in the planning of the city which 
are characterised by three different major planning trends, all related to and 
reflecting major phases in the country’s development – especially its economic 
trajectory. The paper attempts to put the issue of the Lachanokipoi area in the 
context of potential urban renewal in the area; this would be as part of the general 
spatial plans for the city, considering the Lachanokipoi area as an urban 
brownfield, for which comprehensive integrated plans have to be made.

Keywords: urban planning; Thessaloniki; western entrance; Lachanokipoi; Greece

INTRODUCTION: a chain of problems leading to problematic city areas

It is no coincidence that the recent economic crisis is synchronous with the settlement of the 
majority of the global population in urban centres1. The unprecedented urbanisation of the last 
half of the 20th century, the abandonment of rural space, and the problems this has caused cities 
both combine to create high levels of complexity in urban socio-economic structures. This is more 
evident in mega-cities or urban areas of more than 10 million, such as Tokyo, Jakarta, Seoul, or 
Delhi and Shanghai; these mega-cities are increasing in number2. This produces complex, huge 
global restructuring, especially if combined with changes in the wider production processes and 
spatial division of labour. New phenomena are emerging, such as the rampant energy-consuming 
industrialisation of countries such as China and India. In parallel, climate change, desertification 
and the rise in ocean water levels, presumably to a large extent related to these developments 
due to the change of the production regimes, all serve to accentuate the problems. The threat to 
global population of ultimately living in slums and continuing impoverishment has to be seriously 
considered.

Given the above developments, to a large extent caused by production restructuring, 
industrial restructuring has consequently been an expected outcome. This is not really news. In 
the early 1970s, after the oil crisis, the economic crisis was felt around the globe. Yet this was not 
merely because of the oil crisis. It was also due to the completion of a whole cycle of post-war

---


2 By the middle of 2008, the number of people living in urban areas (3.42 billion) had surpassed the number living in rural areas (3.41 
   billion) and since then the world has become more urban than rural. However, major disparities in the level of urbanization remain 
among development groups. Thus, whereas the proportion urban in the more developed regions was already nearly 53 per cent in 
1950, it will still take another decade for half of the population of the less developed regions to live in urban areas (around 2020)”.

---
growth and development regimes, and had started earlier in various guises with challenges of the established post-war order, with urban and political movements, such as May '68. The changes that followed were expressed in the production structures and encompassed all aspects of social life; they marked changes in the mode of regulation of the accumulation regime. It was that period which signalled the departure from Fordism and the move towards post-Fordist, more flexible, accumulation regimes (see Piore and Sabel, 1984; Tolliday and Zeitlin, 1986; Roobeek, 1987). This could not leave urban and rural space unaffected. The gradual transition was accompanied by spatial restructuring that was made necessary in order to reflect production restructuring and new labour divisions, as is well documented in the very up-to-the-point discussions of the 80s (Lipietz, 1986 and 1987).

The revolution of standardisation/containerisation, which changed the specifications of sea vessels, led to the abandonment of traditional ports, such as the London Port; this in turn left behind vast derelict spaces, such as the London Docklands (Levinson, 2006). Similarly, the related crises in shipbuilding, and in the coal mining and steel industry, disorganised the production structure of cities such as Bremen (shipbuilding, cars), and Sheffield (steel and heavy engineering), Bilbao (heavy manufacturing, metal), Torino (cars), St Etienne (steel and engineering) (Power, Plöger, & Winkler, 2008), Newcastle (shipbuilding) and Malmö (engineering, shipping, textiles and cars), which had to adjust or to find new roles and specialisations, something which presupposed or resulted in new spatial governance. This transition period in several cities followed the general transition of the world economy, strongly influenced by the collapse of the centrally planned economies of Eastern Europe. The crisis of cities continued in various forms throughout the post-oil crisis (1974) period, and has continued virtually to the present day in various forms and with different focal points. This could not have happened otherwise, as cities are the engines of countries and in a way are the locations where the key problems of the economies are vibrantly manifested. Frequently, the response to the crisis of cities has taken the form of urban regeneration or renewal, leading to gentrification. In different cases, cities such as Dubai and Doha have literally emerged as global centres out of exactly this international conjuncture. Doha, in particular, was marked with passing to its second development phase with rapid urbanisation, starting a trajectory from a pre-oil settlement to become a globalised hub, pursuing to become part of the global knowledge economy in a setting of urban space diversity (Wiedmann and Salama, 2013 and Salama and Wiedmann and 2013).

The economic restructuring during the period from the oil crisis (1974) up to the now has by and large been based on the idea of neoliberalism involving deregulation, liberalisation and the privatisation of public entities along with globalisation. It is precisely the latter that allows for easy exportation of crises along with the exportation of goods.

Today’s crisis (post-2008) started with the housing issues in the US and reflected the response inability of a system that was globally challenged. Yet, in the case of countries in the ‘south’ of the developed world, such as Greece or Portugal, the situation was proven to be much harder, as these countries are in a sandwich situation: above them are those countries that over the years have become more competent and have managed to achieve high technology and quality production, whilst below them are countries that are still lagging behind, still attempting a transition from a rural ethos to urbanism and industrial production, and still offering very low cost production factors. In the middle are countries like Greece which cannot compete with the former but can also not dive to the level of the latter, thus having very small chances to survive, entangled in the tentacles of a complex – almost cutthroat – competition3. This is expressed in a fall of exports, in unemployment, in redundant spaces, in abandonment of spaces and

3 According to OECD data, in 2012, Greece, in terms of GDP per capita at current exchange rates, was 24 among the 34 OECD countries, while in close positions were Spain, (22), South Korea (23), Slovenia (25) Portugal (26). First was Luxembourg, (1) Norway (2), Switzerland (3) and Australia (4), while the last 4 positions featured Poland (31), Hungary (32), Turkey (33) and Mexico (34).

businesses in the centre of cities, and in the impoverishment of the urban population, as well as in the accentuation of social disparities. In Greece, combined with large numbers of illegal immigrants from poorer countries, the situation of urban living is made explosive and the urban space of the large metropolitan centres (especially Athens and Thessaloniki) is highly problematic.

Part of this problem is manifested in what have been called brownfields⁴. Yet brownfields are not something exclusively new. They are closely related to changes in the modes of production and technology. They are also related to the expansion of the territories of cities, especially in the cases of urban sprawl, where these are expanding in a non-programmed way in all possible directions. In this situation, they enclose spaces which become brownfields. So it is not only closures related to economic crises that cause brownfields, but also industrial relocation due to the cities' expansion, which in turn could be due to urban flourishing, and possibly related to new urban plans. However, in cases like Greece this is rather more seldom at the present time. If manufacturing industry itself migrates to lower-cost places, then the places that today host this industry are in danger. In the case of housing and tertiary sector activities, the centres of the city spaces are in danger of degradation, closures, and abandonment.

Various proposals have been put forward for such cases, ranging from purely architectural to entirely social; the former is based on the rationale that high aesthetics, urban design and management can mobilise social reflexes and lead to socio-spatial changes. Such has been the case of Barcelona “where the effectiveness of small-scale projects of urban reform were proposed as an alternative to the abstraction of conventional planning and large Master Plans, as a means of overcoming the limitations of planning through architecture” (Grichting, 2013). The latter follows the rationale that only social interventions are meaningful and that spatial restructuring can only be an outcome as a result of these. In either case, it is acknowledged that planning (with whichever meaning in each case) is a crucial factor for spatial change, while, as Wiedman and Salama argue, urban governance seeks development strategies based on social, economic and environmental aspects in order to guide urban growth (Wiedman and Salama, 2013).

The case of Thessaloniki’s ‘Western Entrance’ (WET)

It is therefore planning that we deal with in this paper, rather the attempts and prospects of planning for a brownfield area in the city of Thessaloniki, in Northern Greece (Figure 1). Methodologically, this is done by detailed document analysis of all plans carried out for the city and the wider area since 1985, by extensive informal discussions with the authors of the plans and by close observation of the area.

The phases of planning corresponded to different phases of the production structure throughout the country’s developmental phases, together with the relevant philosophies and visions that were projected at each time.

This is exactly the case with planning in Greece, and no less so with Thessaloniki, the second largest city in the country. Thessaloniki, since its annexation to Greece in 1912, for most of the 20th century has been an industrial city which has undergone all economic phases that Greece has gone through, including the post 1974 oil crisis shock and the progressive de-industrialization of the eighties and nineties. The gradual change of the economic profile of the city had spatial impacts among which the abandonment of industrial spaces.

The reason we deal with the post-1985 period, is that this was the year when the first regulatory plans were carried out in both Athens and Thessaloniki, and a year which signalled a new phase in spatial planning in Greece, including a relevant Law. The area, for which this

---

research was conducted, is the ‘western entrance’ of the city, specifically the part of it referred to as Lachanokipoi.

Western Thessaloniki (Figure 2) is densely populated and comprises expansions of older refugee settlements (Christodoulou, 2008:11). Immediately before the outbreak of the recent Greek crisis, in 2010, this part of the city was already characterised by higher unemployment rates (on average ~6.5%) compared to the central and eastern parts of the city (on average ~4.1%)\(^5\). Lachanokipoi (Figure 3) is not an exception to the western part of the city, but data is not currently available at this level. Social problems and spatial degradation are present. It is a 280 ha area belonging to the municipality of Menemeni. It includes 15 ha of the port and 435 ha comprising buildings, of which 190 are old industrial structures and 99 are abandoned (many of significant historical value). The dominant land uses are mixed, comprising light industry, commerce and transport, while on the northern side the area is to a certain extent residential (Stathakopoulos, et al, 2009: 229).

The area is dominant along the western entrance. Transport–wise it lies in a very privileged location, adjacent to the port and at the end of the major national motorway that leads from Athens to the northern borders. It is also adjacent to the railway network. Yet, its current image as a derelict space is degrading the image of the city in an era when image is all-important for inter-urban competition. Part of the problem is that on the western edge of the area, and also by the Dendropotamos River estuary (Figure 4), bordering the area on the west, the industries that are located there (oil reservoirs) fall under the SEVESO II\(^6\) EC directive regarding chemical accidents-hazards. The area is, to a large extent, abandoned and has gradually been converted into a brownfield. Yet, it has a small number of inhabitants and suffers from poverty, criminality,

---

\(^5\) Unemployment for the whole of Greece was in the 4\(^\text{th}\) quarter of 2010 14.2% while during the 3\(^\text{rd}\) quarter of 2014 it climbed to 25.5% (see http://www.statistics.gr/portal/page/portal/ESY).

\(^6\) For a full concise account regarding SEVESO, see http://ec.europa.eu/environment/seveso/
and prostitution. Indicatively of how the market reacts, it has in parallel shown signs of urban renewal, such as hotels, pockets of administration, and a museum; some businesses have appeared, literally next to the ‘degraded’ uses. The absence of solid planning, apart from certain top-down interventions such as the erection of certain buildings to host government and cultural activities, have not been enough to change the scenery, and are very topical and small interventions in a complex territory, which to a large extent comprises an urban brownfield.

Figure 2. The Urban Agglomeration of Thessaloniki and the Study Area
(Source: based on Kyratzakos, 2014)

A detailed study of the post-1985 numerous plans made for this area (originating either from the central state or from the municipalities, especially of Thessaloniki) has revealed a great diversity in terms of strategic conception, the scale in which plans are conceived (and hence the level of detail they reach) and the sectors they deal with. But yet, something which was also brought to the surface was the relation of the plans with the general ambience, with the economic and political environment within which they were carried out and the goals they set. It is important to note that the only plans resulting from the institutional framework were those of the Regulatory (Master) Plan, of the City Master Plan (see below) and those connected to European funding (Community Support Framework and its ‘successors’). The rest were conducted by various city agents in an effort to articulate a valid opinion on the future of the city. A deep study of the plans made for Thessaloniki⁷, and an effort to locate parts of them dealing with the area, revealed that the general plans for the city and the region say very little for the particular area; what is said are rather generalities. Of course, this is not the case for the special plans commissioned for the area. It is to these plans we turn now presenting them according to the three eras identified.

---

⁷ See in detail Skayannis and Kyratzakos, 2014.
Figure 3. The Study Area of Lachanokipoi (Source: based on Kyratzakos, 2014)

Figure 4. The Dendropotamos Estuary, Western Thessaloniki (Source: Authors)

1985-2000: The period of low expectations

This period was actually the period of impressive development in Greece, with two very important characteristics in terms of planning. The Community Support Frameworks (CSFs) were implemented for the first time (since 1988); their implementation met with a lack of

---

8 European Union co-finances of public investment projects. The name CSF has changed over the years.
experience in both the programming and materialisation phases, in priority setting, etc., notwithstanding mismanagement and lack of appropriate appraisal. The second important development that affected Thessaloniki was the transition of the ex-centrally planned economies of Eastern Europe into the free market. On one hand, this resulted in the opening of borders, migration flows and an influx of tourism in the neighbouring Chalkidiki. On the other hand, it raised the expectations for investment opportunities abroad, and supported a new national narrative on Thessaloniki being the ‘capital of the Balkans’. This idea characterised most conceptions for the development of the city for the next two decades, yet by and large has remained a vision (see Bakis and Skayannis, 2013).

However, the national planning and development priorities (channelling of European funds) and the lack of adequately organised structures did not make space for the city to develop as expected. It is not coincidental that the people in Thessaloniki refer to the Greek state as ‘Athinocentric’. This, despite the shallow popular enthusiasm, was expressed in the plans that were quite realistic when compared to what was to transpire later on. The plans for the Lachanokipoi area in particular were no exception.

From the beginning of the period\(^9\), and for some time since, plans for the Lachanokipoi area have moved into two directions: a) towards the residential development of the area, with consideration for green and open spaces and some supportive activities; and b) towards the conversion of the area into an entrepreneurial park.

The former had been proposed by “The Regulatory (Master) Plan (RMP) of Thessaloniki\(^{10}\)” (YPECHODE\(^{11}\), ORTH\(^{12}\), 1985) and “The City Master Plan” (CMP) (1993)\(^{13}\) (Municipality of Thessaloniki, 1993).

In the RMP there is no indication for any specific measures for the area under consideration apart from the general statements about the western and industrial parts of the city. From reading the proposals, it can be ascertained that the planning of the area consists essentially of regeneration and residential development. The CMP foresees residential land uses, open spaces, light industry and various uses for the city centre. In particular, the gradual relocation of wholesale uses from the urban fabric to the three city entrances (i.e. also to WET) is included in the general proposals of the CMP. In parallel, the plan calls for the cessation of disruptive uses and the designation of the space for residence, a local centre, green area, sports, parking and port installations.

The latter had been proposed by the Kafkalas et al study (Report for the Region of Central Macedonia) as early as 1993, entitled “Strategic Choices for the Development of Thessaloniki”, and the Papamichos et al study (1995) “Thessaloniki in the 21st Century” (commissioned by YPECHODE/ORTH). In Asimos et al, 2010a, it is mentioned that the Kafkalas 1993 study denotes the area as a pole for tertiary activity of a city scale; it also proposes the refurbishing of the urban morphology and symbolism, signposting an entrepreneurial city. Similarly, the Papamichos study proposes the locationing of a tertiary pole in precisely the same area (Asimos et al, 2010a).

It is interesting to note that the starting point for all studies was the residential land uses, and that while YPECHODE, via a new study, accepted a shift of this approach as manifested in the Papamichos study, the Municipality in the CMP remained committed to the residential idea, not influenced by the Kafkalas study that had run in parallel. This is indicative of the fact that the Ministry of National Economy (in charge of the proposals of the region of CM, for all practical

\(^9\) The beginning of our period is the first Regulatory (Master) Plan (1985).

\(^{10}\) Regulatory (Master) Plans [RMP] of Cities in Greece pass as Laws in the Parliament.

\(^{11}\) YPECHODE was the name of the Ministry of Environment & Planning during that period (later YPEKA).

\(^{12}\) ORTH: Organisation of Planning and Environmental Protection of Thessaloniki, responsible for the Regulatory (Master) Plan of Thessaloniki.

\(^{13}\) City Master Plans (CMP) are one level lower than the Regulatory (Master) Plans (RMP). They concern parts of the former, usually one municipality of the agglomeration, and are more detailed than RMPs. They have to observe and specify the guidelines of RMPs.
purposes), and the Municipality did not have a common strategy for the city during the same time period (1993). It also reflects the rigidity of spatial planning regulations and conceptions in Greece, as opposed to the more flexible approaches of the economic ministries (which deal with the structural funds of the EU).

This period of fairly modest ideas failed to see the opportunities for the place, only gradually becoming fully aware of the opportunities it potentially offered; it succumbs to traditional rigidities, indecisiveness, political manoeuvres (probably) and negligence of the Thessaloniki issues on the part of central government, notwithstanding the possible inefficiency of the local actors. In this sense, threats have translated into reality and the strong points of the area have not been utilised. It is not surprising that major plans were actually not materialised. An exception was the case of the ‘Thessaloniki cultural capital of Europe’ endeavour (very much debated in terms of its management), in the context of which several urban interventions were implemented, such as the conversion, restoration and use of storehouses in the port and of historical buildings (Giakoumakatos, 1998). A small number of buildings were restored and converted in the Lachanokipoi area during this period, such as the VILKA factory, the Nussias tannery, the Mylos factory (Figure 5), the Fix breweries, and the municipal slaughterhouses (Figure 6), all now operating as cultural and entertainment centres. Yet these interventions were topical, not reaching the scale required to meet either the goals of the plans nor the change of the city’s profile. It is however this atmosphere that had been created which perhaps paved the way for the subsequent period.

Figure 5. The Entrance of ‘Mylos’, Lachanokipoi, Western Thessaloniki
(Source: Authors)
2000-2010: The take-off of the phantasmagorical planning

The second period 2000-2010, reflects the indicators of the good development and growth experience in the previous period, the optimism related to the Olympic Games and the fantasy of continuing development in the post-Olympic era, the search for extroversion of the country and the special role Thessaloniki could have in this, especially in the search for a multidimensional entrepreneurial activity. Yet, the largest part of the pie still remained with Athens, especially before the Olympics (2004). Very special developments worthy of note were the adoption of the Euro (1st January, 2002) and the decline of the infrastructure investment around 2001 (when all Olympic projects were already running) while the GDP of the country was still rising. The period in terms of political discourse signalled a ‘revenge’ of Thessaloniki against Athens. Bypassing city planning, projects were announced, such as the subterranean motorway link of the gulf under the sea, the metro, several highways, etc., mostly related to infrastructure – the expenditure for which, as mentioned, was in decline.

The study “Strategic Planning for the Development of Western Thessaloniki: Physical-regional and entrepreneurial approach on the basis of transport infrastructure” (Prefectural Administration of Thessaloniki, 2000) in the euphoria of the period (forthcoming Olympics in 2004, Greece entering the Euro-zone and the Euro in 2000, economy growing, etc.) argued for the area (the wider area, in fact) to become the gateway to the globalised market, proposing all ideas that had been articulated thus far, such as the relocation of the International Fair, the bid for the EXPO, the relocation of the airport, the construction of the tunnel under the sea, and so forth. This maximalist approach carries the obvious underlying assumption that the phenomenal expense that such a project would require would be covered by the public sector with the assistance of European funds. The invocation by the authors Angelidis and Manos (2002) of some opportunities for Western Thessaloniki (not explicitly for Lachanokipoi), namely cheap land, the specialised but inactive (re: unemployed) human resources (re: labour force) that could trigger development processes, however, is not an adequate argument vis-à-vis the immense budget required.
The two studies that followed in 2002 did not (on the whole) deal with specific areas of the city, but were rather of a more general strategic nature. “The Strategic Sustainable Development Plan of the Wider Thessaloniki 2001-2010 – Action Plan” (Kafkalas et al, 2002) was commissioned by the Ministry of Macedonia and Thrace, the Region of Central Macedonia, and ORTH. This plan does not especially deal with geographical districts of the city, such as the western part or the western entrance. It provides strategic directions for the future of the city as a whole, along the following priority axes: a) international role and cohesion of national territory; b) competitiveness and innovation; c) social cohesion and equity; and d) ecological balance and quality of life.

Further on, the “Study for the Urban Control Zones beyond the lines of the Plan and external to the borders of the settlements of the peri-urban belt of Thessaloniki” (Michailidis et al, 2002; cf. Michailidis, 2003, pp. 166-182.), for ORTH, acknowledges problems for the development of the secondary and tertiary sectors, which are reflected in the area, such as the insignificant long-term development trends of industry, and the indications for de-industrialisation, or the traditionality of the service sector. It also emphasises the need for the restructuring of the tertiary sector so as to combine commerce administration, and exhibition activity. Regarding what might be relevant for Lachanokipoi, it concludes by proposing (amongst other things) a transport and network node.

The plans for the major transport infrastructure node (both at international, national and local level) gained pace, and the “Regional Frame of Physical Regional Planning and Sustainable Development of the Region of Central Macedonia” (Region of Central Macedonia, 2004), during the same period, focused on such prospects as incorporating the port into the overall picture and suggesting its opening up towards the city (and surrounding area). Nothing special appears among the proposals of the regional framework, apart from the fact that the area is considered as a transport hub on the basis of the development of the port. In parallel, the environmental issue is raised in a more decisive way (as climate change issues have come more and more to the fore in public debate). The complexity of the problems led to the suggestion of the integrative new tool of SOAP14 which, however, remained just a proposal. This euphoria reached its apogee just before the outbreak of the Greek economic crisis, with the Stathakopoulos et al (2009) study “The Investigation of the possibilities for the optimum urban development and utilisation of the area of Lachanokipoi (Phase E)” incorporating among its suggestions the creation of a land extension Dutch-style, and arguing, practically, that an entrepreneurial park should be the future of the area. The study aims at balancing east and west: it proposes a high standard tertiary sector – an entrepreneurial park of 41 ha (including the creation of a new space of 19.3 ha from land reclamation, gained by banking up towards the sea side), 75% private offices, 10% city-centre uses, negligible residence (400 inh.) and limited park and open spaces (8 ha). It also foresees new transport infrastructure projects and some urban regeneration undertakings. The study also argues that a new city plan and subsequent studies are required (see Asimos, 2010b, pp.182-189).

This study was backed by “The Single Strategic Transport Infrastructure Plan of Thessaloniki 2020” (Ministry of Infrastructure, Transport and Networks 2010), foreseeing fixed track line extensions to the west yet not necessarily up to the Lachanokipoi area, and the conversion of the ‘new railway station’ (adjacent to Lachanokipoi) into a multimodal transport hub.

Compatible with the above was a further Stathakopoulos study “The Structural Plan of Thessaloniki and its Wider Area” (Stathakopoulos, 2010), which gathers all the previous valuable and still-pertinent proposals, as well as including new ones. It also particularises binding issues of the RMP (idem, p.7), apart from the unrealistic ones that involved high budgets (idem, p.9). This study proposed that Lachanokipoi should be redesigned as an entrepreneurial park (idem, p.14) and includes proposals for the port, the metro and the tram.

14 SOAP: Integrated Urban Interventions Plan
During this period, it seems that threats (besides the very thorough examination of the SEVESO II issues) have not been calculated, as far as the macro level is concerned. The studies make an effort to capitalise on the strong points and take advantage of opportunities, but fall short in terms of correctly anticipating the economic pitfalls and threats. In a city that has suffered from ill-thought planning (early metro attempts, the bad pace of the on-going metro construction, and the failure of the ill-planned [town planning wise] tunnel under the sea), the creation of new land into the sea is rather an unrealistic prospect, and the same applies to a major bridging of the Gulf similar to the bridging of Copenhagen to Malmö, in the context of the highly problematic financial situation of the country. On the other hand, an effort to valorise construction capital after the Olympic works has been fairly inactive in Greece, and this faction of the capital has already tried to seek valorisation prospects abroad. In addition to funding complications, bureaucracy and inefficacy of programming have undermined the progress of the major projects (except some topical ones, such as the intercity bus station 'Macedonia' inaugurated in 2002 and the upgrade of the peripheral highway in 2005), and certainly did not leave space for the regeneration of the Lachanokipoi area during this period. In the wider area of Lachanokipoi, a new highway was created (2004) linking the PATHE motorway\textsuperscript{15} to the centre of the city, passing close to the intercity bus station, while the Georgiou tannery was converted to become in 2005 the Porto Palace Hotel (Figure 7), and the conversion of the old pump house of the Thessaloniki Water and Sewage Company, which from 2001 has operated as water supply museum.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{porto_palace_hotel_lachanokipoi}
\caption{Porto Palace Hotel, Lachanokipoi, Western Thessaloniki (Source: Authors)}
\end{figure}

\textbf{2010-today: The period after the crisis: a forced hard landing?}

The third period (post 2010), the period of the crisis, reflects a shrinking economy where the problems are looked at through a magnifying glass. Justifiably or not, the dream of Thessaloniki as a capital of the Balkans collapsed, and the optimism from the Olympic Games vaporised. In a context of shrinking GDP, unemployment has rocketed, business investments are still sought, political instability is present, and privatisations are on the daily agenda yet not particularly successful.

\textsuperscript{15} PATHE: Patras-Athens-Thessaloniki-Evzonoi; the north-south motorway of Greece.
After the outbreak of the Greek economic crisis, it seems that the expectations for the entrepreneurial phantasmagoria tend to have come back down to earth. The new RMP “The Study for the update of the Regulatory (Master) Plan (RMP) of Thessaloniki” (ORTH, 2012: draft Law) does not include the land extension of the previous study and seems more modest in regard to the entrepreneurial prospects, making some effort to include (for the wider west area) other industrial uses, such as manufacturing and wholesale businesses. Its follow-up, the “Thessaloniki 2012 Programme” (ORTH and YPEKA 162011) explicitly suggests, though, that the Lachanokipoi area should become an entrepreneurial park, as one of the seven major urban interventions. Obviously, the whole enterprise is left for future studies and for the lower planning levels to materialise, such as the on-going “New Master Plan of Thessaloniki, second Phase” (Municipality of Thessaloniki, 2014), which will prepare the ground as an institutional framework for all possible new land uses, relocation of conflicting land uses, and all possible necessary regulations, legislation, etc.

Finally, the remarkable “West Challenge” project (Aggelopoulou, and Bartziokas-Tsiombras, 2011) seems to be heading in the right direction, being quite balanced and realistic with a good grasp of the possibilities of the period. Its six clusters make sense, though it is questionable as to whether the rigid boundaries would be a realistic and desirable option. These clusters comprise an entrepreneurial park, culture and recreation, China Town, licentious neighbourhood, residence, and urban environmental garden. This plan has also been linked with ideas for the promotion of the city in terms of place marketing (Aggelopoulou et al, 2012).

In parallel, in the current, valid transport master plan for 2020, there are various proposals for the improvement of the western points of access to the city, but not for Lachanokipoi. The discussion about transport improvements limits itself to the improvement of the conditions of the internal ring of the city and the extension of the metro lines, yet not through Lachanokipoi but to the north of it. On the contrary, (some) of the proposals foresee a tram reaching the area of Menemeni, which is adjacent to the Lachanokipoi area. In addition, there is a proposal for one of the major parking lots to be located in the area.

The crisis seems to have brought a certain degree of realism. Strong points and weaknesses tend to have been taken into consideration in a more realistic way, judging by the more pluralistic attitude towards future land uses and by the pull-back from the most expensive plans, which carried a potentially precarious and high risk result. It is not yet apparent whether threats are being taken into account (though down to earth proposals incorporate a degree of threat mitigation), while opportunities seem to be being given serious consideration. It is encouraging in this context, though at a micro level, that in the very heart of Lachanokipoi the old gas factory has been converted into the new headquarters of the regional authorities of Central Macedonia (Figure 8), a complex of buildings currently (early 2015) under completion. Being a top level administrativ-governmental intervention, this might trigger a constellation of activities for the area, but most importantly it signals the interest of the administration in the area and possibly a mandate for future re-development.

---

16 YPEKA is the current name of the Ministry of Environment & Planning (previously YPECHODE).
CONCLUSION – Proposal for the strategy of interventions

As our analysis of the documents and plans has revealed, there have been interesting studies and planning proposals related to Thessaloniki and the problematic area of Lachanokipoi, some quite inspiring, all being placed in the historical context within which they were carried out. They have all tried to tackle the problems, suggesting a series of measures on several domains.

Planning as a process and the planning product itself, the plan, are products of social processes in the general sense. In many cases, planning is dictated by governments and the participation of the civil society in whichever way is iconic; in some other cases, social participation is more real. But even in the cases where the outcome of planning is top-down inscribed, these directions reflect (express) a particular crystallisation of controversial (to a certain extent) forces in society that create an ambience, show a will of key actors where do they want society (in spatial terms) to head. This is in spite of the role of planners themselves, who frequently indulge in over-planning, whether consciously or not. In the case of Thessaloniki, the dominant planning outcomes in the various periods reflect governmental choices which were made in support of economic interests yet rather reflected wishes for the future than realistic prospects, as well as also reflecting an atmosphere for the creation of which the political world was by and large responsible, or in certain periods, reflected what Rapoport would call the handicap principle of extravagant construction to communicate power and impress people (Rapoport, 2008).

Whichever the case, planning in Thessaloniki remained at the level of wishful thinking and has not reached the level of detail required to make substantial subversive changes that would have a real impact on the city’s development. This is except for big projects which, however, are now stalled because of bad programming, such as is the case of the metro. What is missing is the dialectics between a realistic strategic plan and the detailed area plans, yet not from the physical planning point of view but seriously taking into account the socio-economic aspects in order to make such a plan.

This reflects directly on the plans themselves: as evident from the analysis above, the planning of the area, at the very ‘planning’ level, has faced certain major problems: a) planning
tools were not adequate enough and planning was taking place whilst only partly facing the problems i.e. from a general land use planning perspective in combination with transport plans (in the best case scenario, with a certain compliance with each other)\textsuperscript{17}; b) though in some cases budgets were roughly calculated, the sources of the funds were by and large expected to be provided by external actors (such as the EU), while the idea of fund leverage by private investors was not embodied into the planning processes; c) questions of social concern, such as poverty, professions, etc., were not addressed under the understanding that ‘development’ will become a panacea and will solve the problems.

Consequently, the policies (if any) that have been so far rolled out over the area have not managed to revitalise/regenerate it. The ‘invisible hand’ of the free market, in the absence of a robustly articulated policy at the local level, has provided its own solutions, creating a mosaic of conflicting land uses and maintaining pockets of poverty and derelict spaces adjacent to red light services, two high class hotels and cultured recreation facilities.

Yet this is not what is required for the area. Most planners would agree that a regeneration scheme should exert an effort to make the area as safe and operative around the clock as possible, as well as making it ecologically sound and economically vibrant. A pragmatic plan for the area would be one that would take into account both social and physical dimensions of the problems and propose equally multidimensional, yet realistic, solutions in the context of a vision for the city’s future. This of course cannot be decided in the absence of an opinion from all interested parties, among which would be included the local population of the wider area as well as of the specific area of Lachanokipoi.

However, a deeper understanding of all these situations calls for a combined answer to the problems, a kind of multi-tasking exercise, an integrative plan which would be strong enough to set the rules even for the City Master Plans. This kind of opportunity was not present in Greek planning Law until the SOAP tool was devised, especially its guidelines in 2012\textsuperscript{18}. The first pilot SOAP study was carried out for the Centre of Athens by our team of the University of Thessaly (Economou, et al, 2014) and has already revealed its own possibilities. The relevant ministerial decision\textsuperscript{19} was signed early in 2015. Such a project would/should follow the SOAP logic of conducting a thorough analysis of the field, and is expected to make composite proposals that simultaneously tackle a multitude of problems beyond the classical town planning problematique. So, hypothetically, it is possible at the same time and under the same set of measures to propose a change of land use with economic regulations, incentives and education, while taking measures for the environment.

The planning trajectory that has to be followed should combine realism with vision. \textit{Realism} means abandonment of the maximalist dreams of the second period, and \textit{vision} means disentanglement from pessimism that nothing can be done. The later work of Aggelopoulou, and Bartziokas-Tsiombras (2011) (see above) and Kyratzakos (2014) as reviewed in Skayannis and Kyratzakos 2014, is along the lines we describe.

To this end, the strategic goals must incorporate economic and spatial regeneration and development, social cohesion, justice and equity for the improvement of quality of life, and for environmental protection along with aesthetic upgrading. All of these are essentially equal partners as constituents of sustainability and would combine to face the crisis from a ‘sustainable’ point of view.

According to the authors, in terms of goals and targets, the practical proposals towards sustainable planning should comprise gradual facing of the SEVESO II problem and targeting to

\textsuperscript{17} This has generally been the case in Greece. As Skayannis notes, there has been a multitude of proposals to face the problems of the crisis ridden Centre of Athens, yet almost all were partial, either purely ‘sociological’ or ‘economistic’ or of solely an urban design nature, seeming not to comprehend the complexity of the problems hence the requirement for composite solutions (Skayannis, 2013).

\textsuperscript{18} The SOAP guidelines were set by Ministerial Decision [MD] 18150 on 24-4-2012.

\textsuperscript{19} Government Gazette (16/01/2015).
host transitory (as opposed to permanent) population, a business park especially geared to logistics and innovative industrial and service activity, preferably in the area of shipping, finance, and maritime businesses. These activities, and the implicit land uses, should be complemented by a multitude of other uses, including pockets of cultural and hospitality uses (hotels already have picked up in the area, while certain sophisticated recreational establishments have been there for some time), and a pocket specialising in administration (supporting already existing projects, such as the relocation of the headquarters of the regional administration of Central Macedonia) (Skayannis & Kyratzakos (2014).

It is up to those political decision makers, be it the central state ones or in the regional or municipal administration, to undertake the responsibilities and play their role for the future of the city and the particular area. However, it has to be stressed that in today’s context the planning of the city and the area should only be conceived in the frame of metropolitan planning, as the kind of development and the complexity of the city and its wider area do not allow for any sort of compartmentalisation.

REFERENCES


Government Gazette (16/01/2015) vol.B/no.64, Ministerial Decision 1397 on the “Plan for Integrated Urban Intervention in the Centre of Athens”.


**Websites**


**AUTHORS**

**Pantoleon Skayannis, PhD.**
Professor of Infrastructure Policy, Dean of School of Engineering
University of Thessaly, Department of Planning & Regional Development
Director of the Research Unit for Infrastructure, Technology Policy and Development
leonska@uth.gr

**Angelos Kyratzakos**
Researcher, Urban and Regional Planner
University of Thessaly, Department of Planning & Regional Development
Research Unit for Infrastructure, Technology Policy and Development
angelos.kyr89@gmail.com