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Spatial planning in transition in Greece: a critical overview

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ABSTRACT

Greece is a country undergoing major changes in its course towards recovering from the recession and meeting the desirable economic standards. Over the past years, a series of legislative acts have reformed not only the sectoral policies and guidelines for the development of the main economic sectors of the country, but also the spatial planning policy and system, which in the period of just two years (between 2014 and 2016) underwent a double reform (Laws 4269 and 4447). Planning procedures became more 'favourable' to investments and the market's needs. However, despite this early shift towards a more flexible and neoliberal approach, competitiveness and economic growth have not yet been achieved, whilst spatial planning is still 'on hold', leading to further entrepreneurial hesitancy and to a further delay in meeting the State's requisite economic goals. The paper aims to contribute to the ongoing discussion regarding the future of spatial planning in Greece, in view of achieving economic stability and prosperity. The paper concludes that a suitable spatial planning model for Greece should prioritize public interest and territorial justice, in a way that it will not asphyxiate or discourage private sector initiatives that are so needed for the economic recovery.

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Introduction: new trends and approaches in spatial planning

In most European countries, spatial planning and legislation were introduced in the early twentieth century (Albrechts, 2004). Although Allmendinger and Haughton (2010) argue that spatial planning is associated with a variety of definitions, up to the 1980s, most planning practices concerned land-use regulations and urban projects (Healey, 2004; Motte, 1996). However, by the 1990s, a more strategic approach to spatial planning became apparent and prevalent (Albrechts, 2004), resulting in the consolidation of an integrated and holistic planning system for the organization of space at all levels (local, regional and national) in most countries worldwide.

During this long period, the importance of spatial planning was recognized and stressed by many policy documents, coming from different international bodies/entities and institutions, among them: (a) the Vancouver Declaration on Human Settlements (known as the Habitat I), adopted in 1976 at the United Nations Conference, (b) the Torremolinos Charter, adopted in 1983 by the Conférence Européenne des Ministres responsables de

l'Aménagement du Territoire (CEMAT), (c) the Agenda 21, adopted in 1992 at the UNCED (United Nations Conference on Environment and Development) in Rio de Janeiro, (d) the ESDP (European Spatial Development Perspective), which was agreed at the Informal Council of Ministers responsible for spatial planning in 1999, (e) the CEMAT guiding principles for spatial planning, agreed in 2000 by the Council of Europe, and (f) the Integrated Maritime Policy adopted in 2007 by the European Union (EU) member-countries, proposing the extension of spatial planning to the marine space, in order to combine blue growth and sustainability in marine ecosystems.

According to the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), spatial planning is considered to be the number one instrument to create a long- and medium term framework for a more rational territorial organization of land uses. At the same time, it is the most appropriate tool to ensure socio-economic development, preventing environmental impacts and protecting the natural and the cultural heritage of an area, as well as its limited natural and territorial resources (UNECE, 2008). Moreover, according to the European Compendium for Spatial Planning, it is the only procedure to ensure coordination among competing sectoral policies and a more even distribution of economic development between regions than would otherwise be guided by forces of the market (Commission of the European Communities [CEC], 1997). Therefore, it is the only tool to ensure sustainable balance between the private and the public interests (UNECE, 2008), by being a completely public-sector-driven procedure (Kunzmann, 2000) and by involving multiple stakeholders in the process.

Lately, however, when a growing number of countries (even in the EU) have shifted towards more neoliberal policies (Faludi, 2010; Harrison, 2012; Vanolo, 2010) in search of 'economic nirvana' (Begg, 1999, 2002), new approaches in spatial planning have emerged. In fact, the role of spatial planning is now in question (Allmendinger & Haughton, 2010), both in terms of its service to the public interest and in terms of its connection to the public sector. At the same time, initial emphasis of spatial planning put on 'sustainable/balanced development', 'social justice' and 'environmental protection' (Jackson, 2009) has now shifted towards a more neoliberal orientation, in which priorities such as 'competitiveness' and 'economic growth' prevail (Allmendinger & Haughton, 2010; Brenner & Theodore, 2002; Lovering, 2007).

According to these approaches, spatial planning is more and more seen as both the object and the subject of neoliberalism, as well as a tool offering legitimacy and support to the markets (Allmendinger & Haughton, 2013). And when not acting as an enabler and a facilitator for achieving competitiveness, spatial planning is usually accused of serving as an obstacle and a brake, providing opportunities for resistance to development (Parker and Doak, 2012). Besides, as Boland (2014) argues, in neoliberal planning approaches 'there is an unfettered faith in the market to allocate resources within the economy and a (rhetorical) hostility towards state intervention'. Therefore, most of the private investors are strongly opposed to both too general and too binding spatial plans and rules (Krajewska, Żróbek, & Šubic-Kovač, 2014; Parker and Doak, 2012).

However, despite being so hegemonic and deeply embedded in most policies (Harrison, 2012), neoliberal approaches are not exclusively considered to be a one-way path (Allmendinger & Haughton, 2010; Boland 2014). In fact, discussion on whether neoliberal approaches equal anti-planning (Allmendinger & Haughton, 2013) or whether competitiveness in spatial planning constitutes a 'dangerous obsession' (Boland, 2014;

Krugman, 1996) is still on the discussion agenda of planners, giving rise to a wide variety of scientific literature and debates amongst experienced professionals and analysts.

Given the above context and approaches, the present paper deals with the spatial planning policy in Greece that is under transition, in an effort to redefine its role and contribution to the desirable recovery of the country's economy, especially after 2008 when the fiscal crisis began. The paper begins with key information on the currently problematic economic profile of the country and proceeds with the presentation of the changes made in most sectoral policies (in an effort to achieve economic competitiveness and economic growth). The paper continues with a brief and critical presentation of the planning history of Greece and of the spatial planning reforms made in the aftermath of the economic crisis (aiming to increase competitiveness and economic growth and to facilitate projects and investments in the country). The ultimate scope of the paper is to contribute to the ongoing discussion regarding the future and 'orientation' that spatial planning has (or should have) in view of the economic recovery and the future development process of the country.

Greece: a state facing challenges and undergoing changes affecting the economy and planning

Considering geographical factors, Greece is a country located in the south of the European Continent and in the eastern part of the Mediterranean Basin, characterized by an 'isolation' from the rest of the EU member states. The country is also characterized by long-term inter-regional imbalances (Petraikos, 2009; Petraikos, Tsiapa, & Kallioras, 2016), considering that development is mainly concentrated in the two metropolitan areas of Athens and Thessaloniki, which together account for almost 60% of the domestic product and almost 50% of the population of the country (2011 census).

Greece has been totally affected by the recent economic crisis that started in 2008, resulting in an important distortion of all major economic indicators of the country. According to the Hellenic Statistical Authority ('The Greek Economy Report'), in 2015 the General Domestic Product (GDP) of Greece was 175.7 million €, that is, approximately a quarter lower than before the crisis started. During all these years, all economic sectors and activities have been affected, both in terms of productivity as well as in terms of employment offered. Among all sectors, however, the Greek industry and secondary sector were the ones to undergo the most serious degradation. The unemployment rate climbed to 27.5% in 2013 (24.9% in 2015), due to the significant shrinking of the economy and the unprecedented loss of job positions. Private investments in all sectors decreased by a third, between 2010 and 2015.

Given the above facts, it becomes evident that ever since the economic crisis began, Greece has entered a difficult and challenging period (Douzinas, 2013; Lyrantzis, 2011), demanding drastic changes and reforms in its developmental and productive model. To this end, a series of (ongoing) reforms were initiated, in an effort to overcome the difficulties and achieve the necessary standards and competitiveness. Being a public-sector-led policy, spatial planning too underwent a series of direct and indirect reforms, along with the public and private sectors.

Among the most important reforms (with significant impacts on spatial planning) were those to facilitate the 'giga' private investments, that is, the most promising ones, in terms

of financial importance for the country and in terms of job opportunities offered to the locals.¹ Following that, efforts and reforms have focused on the development (and/or privatization) of public property and assets (real estate property,² natural resources, public infrastructure, etc.)³ found in all parts of the country, whilst other important (and ongoing) legislative reforms made since the beginning of the crisis have focused on the facilitation of private projects and investments regarding the most competitive economic activities of the country,⁴ such as tourism, RES, aquaculture, industrial activities, etc.

Undoubtedly, most of the above reforms have had a spatial 'flavour' and impacts. In other words, most of the legislation amended or produced during the crisis time have included a series of regulations and adjustments, changing previously existing conditions and rules for the spatial development and organization of the most competitive activities of the country, as well as the building permission rights for investments of all kinds (including those for private urban developments, mainly for tourism facilities and second homes⁵) (Klabatsea, 2012). However, none of the above reforms made in the economic and spatial model would have been successful without the essential amendment and adjustment of the environmental legislation as well as the specifications and regulations regarding the protection of the most fragile and unique ecosystems of the country (Beriatis, 2005; Papageorgiou, 2012). Indeed, apart from the amendment of the Institutional Law for the Environment 1650 of 1986 (amended by Law 3937 of 2011), another legislation that was amended in order to facilitate private investments regarded the forests, the coastal zone as well as the Protected Areas.⁶

To conclude, it is evident that the ultimate goal of all the above reforms in sectoral policies – that were given an extremely high priority, leaving almost no time for reaction via participatory procedures (Klabatsea, 2012) – was the facilitation of developmental projects and investments in all major and important economic activities in Greece that have lately undergone severe shrinking and degradation. However, facilitation of the development of projects and investments in Greece initiated a clear shift of the economic model towards a more neoliberal orientation, which in turn resulted in an indirect intervention in the spatial planning policy of the country. This shift in the planning policy as well as in the spatial planning system of Greece (so that it better serves 'competitiveness' and 'economic growth') is critically discussed and presented in the following sections.

Spatial planning in transition in Greece

A brief overview of the spatial planning policy in Greece

The history of spatial planning in Greece can be divided into four main periods, according to the legislation and plans produced.

First period: up to 1975: The first important milestone in the recent spatial planning history of Greece dates back to 1923 when the first Urban Planning Act came into force, imposing the elaboration of a great number of town and settlement Plans in the country. Although the Act of 1923 was often criticized for not incorporating economic and social aspects in the Town Plans (Beriatis, 2002), it was not replaced for several decades, until the 1970s.

Second period: 1975–1990: In 1975, the ratification of the Greek Constitution set a new era for spatial planning in Greece. Spatial planning was placed under the regulatory

authority of the State (Art.24 of the Constitution), in an effort to ensure functionality and spatial justice in the development of Greek settlements (Giannakourou, 1999).

During that period, a series of legislative documents were produced, setting a primary framework for the development of spatial planning in Greece (Kourliouros, Korres, & Kokkinou, 2015; Wassenhoven, 1993) (see Table 1). These Acts produced a series of City Plans for the most important urban centres of Greece, the Master Plans for the Metropolitan Areas of Athens and Thessaloniki, and a series of Special Spatial Plans (SSPs) for environmentally sensitive areas (Beriatos, 2002).

Third period: 1990–2014: In the 1990s, spatial planning in Greece entered a new era (Economou, 1997, 2000; Getimis & Giannakourou, 2014; Giannakourou, 2005; Koutoupa – Rengakos, 2004). Legislation produced during that time established a holistic and integrated spatial planning system for the country and also contributed to the production of

Table 1. The history of spatial planning in Greece.

First period: up to 1975	
Main legislative acts produced:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presidential Decree of 1923: Urban Planning Act came into force • Decrees of 1923, for social housing • Law 3875 of 1929, for the establishment of Housing Associations • Law 3741 of 1929 with the General Building Code • Law 5204 of 1931 for public housing 	Main spatial plans produced: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A great number of town and settlement Plans in the country • For a series of settlements (permanent or second homes) with the assistance of the Housing Associations' Act • Master Plans for Athens and Thessaloniki (elaborated in the 1960s – never approved) • National Spatial Plan (elaborated in the 1970s – never approved)
Second period: 1975–1990	
Main legislative acts produced:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Law 360 of 1976 for the implementation of regional and environmental planning in Greece • Laws 947 of 1979 and 1337 of 1983 for the organization of settlements in Greece • Law 1577 (with the Building Code of Greece, supplemented in 1988 by Law 1772) • Law 1650 of 1986 for environmental planning 	Main spatial plans produced: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City Plans for the most important urban centres of Greece • the Master Plans for the Metropolitan Areas of Athens and Thessaloniki • Spatial Plans per Prefecture (never approved) • SSPs for environmentally sensitive areas
Third period: 1990–2014	
Main legislative acts produced:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Law 2508/1997 for the sustainable development of cities and settlements, which extended the planning area covered by Local Plans to the Municipal limits • Law 2742/1999 for sustainable spatial planning, which launched the Spatial Plans at the national and regional levels • Laws 2831/2000 and 4067/2012, which constituted reforms of the former Building Code (of 1985) • A series of statutes providing building regulations for special categories of areas, such as rural settlements, second home areas, tourist development areas, industrial parks, etc. 	Main spatial plans produced: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Structure Plans (for approximately 15% of the Greek Municipalities) • Regional Spatial Plans for all Regions of Greece (except for Attica) approved between 2003 and 2004 • General National Spatial Plan (ratified in 2008) • Special/Sectoral National Spatial Plans, for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The Renewable Energy Sources (approved in 2008) – The industrial sector (approved in 2009) – The tourism sector (approved in 2009, amended in 2013, abolished in 2017) – The aquaculture sector (approved in 2011) • Revised Regional Spatial Plans (ready since 2014, to be approved in 2017) • Revised Master Plan of Athens and Attica Region (ratified in 2014 by Law 4277).
Fourth period: 2014 to the present	
Main legislative acts produced:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Law 4269 of 2014 for the reformation of urban and regional planning (replacing Law 2742 of 1999) • Law 4447 for spatial planning and sustainable development (replacing Law 4269 of 2014) 	Spatial plans produced: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • -

Source: Processed by the author.

the new generation of Plans in Greece at all levels (local, regional and national). Innovative amendments in the planning legislation during that period included: (a) the extension of the geographical area covered by Local Plans to the Municipal limits instead of the city limits that had been the practice until then (by Law 2508/1997) and (b) the launching of Spatial Plans at the national and regional levels (by Law 2742/1999).

Plans produced during that period mostly covered the regional and national levels, whilst local planning moved at a very slow pace (see also Table 1).

Fourth period: 2014 to the present: After Greece entered the (ongoing) period of fiscal crisis, spatial planning system and policy underwent a double reform, in less than three years' time. These reforms were initiated as part of an overall change regarding all sectoral policies and guidelines for the main economic sectors of the country, in an effort to further facilitate the desirable – regional and economic – development of Greece.

Given this end, institutional Law for spatial planning 2742/1999 was initially replaced by Law 4269 in June 2014 ('for the reformation of urban and regional planning') and two years later (in December 2016) Law 4447 ('for spatial planning and sustainable development') replaced the latter. The ultimate scope of both reforms, as justified by the competent Authorities, was twofold: (a) to form a spatial planning system that would encourage the development of economic projects and investments, and (b) to accelerate planning procedures (from the assignment of a Plan to its final approval), as well as to improve control and other related mechanisms.

In the following section, a brief and critical presentation of the initial spatial planning system of Greece is given, so that recent reforms (made after the start of the economic crisis) are better understood, both in terms of planning amendments and in terms of philosophical re-orientation.

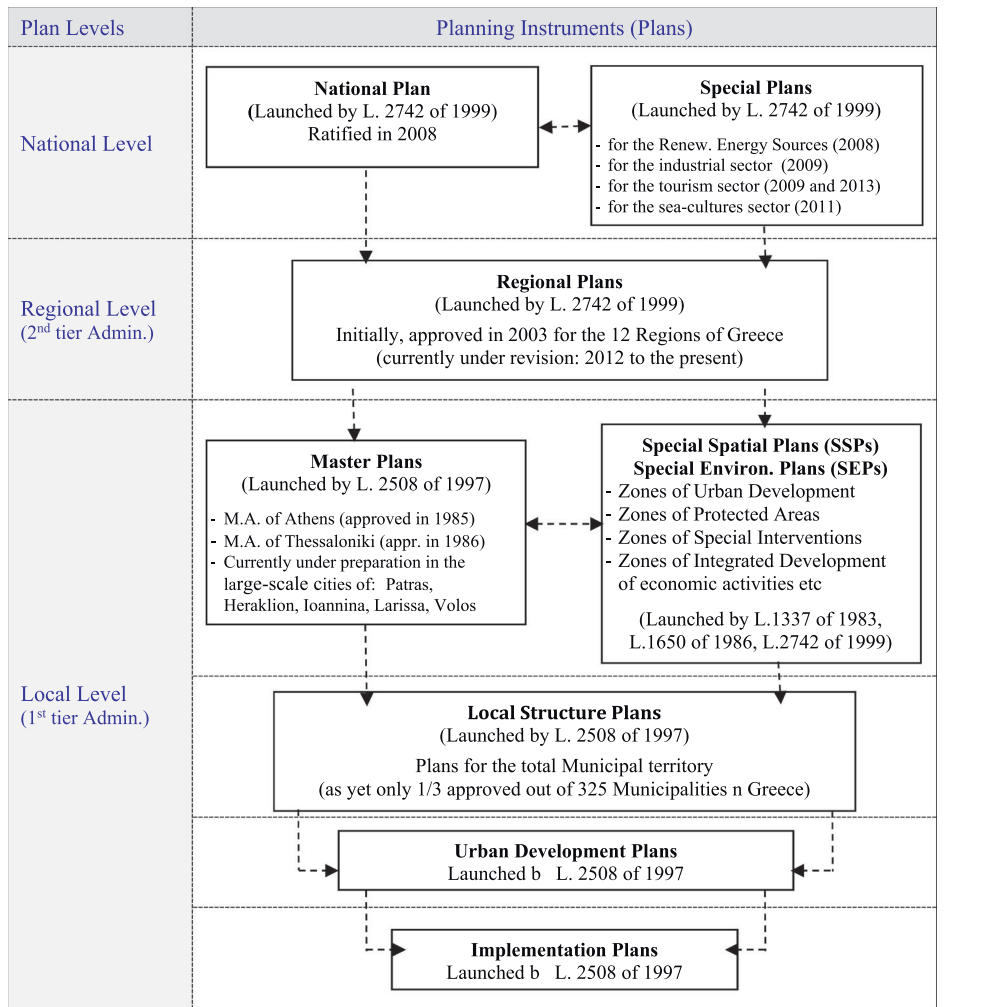
The latest reforms in the spatial planning policy and practice (third and fourth periods)

For a long time in the past, Greece had an 'urban' flavour and orientation in spatial planning, with an emphasis on architecture, urban design issues and building regulations (CEC, 2000). However, in the 1990s, an integrated and holistic planning system was formed for the first time, articulating Spatial Plans at all levels and for all (sectoral, economic or environmental) cases and reasons (Beriatis, 2005). This section begins with the presentation of the planning system of the 1990s, followed by descriptions of its double reform in just two years' time (between 2014 and 2016).

The spatial planning system of Greece (as formed in the 1990s)

The Greek planning system as formed in the 1990s included different types of Plans at all levels, ranging from strategic and framework plans to regulatory urban plans and zones. These bind with each other, with the higher level plans being binding on the plans of the lower levels (Beriatis, 2002) (see Table 2).

In this first integrated planning system of Greece, all kinds of plans at all levels (apart from the Urban Plans and the Implementation Plans) had a validity of 15 years and were accompanied by detailed Action Plans, which designated actions required, as well as means of funding. Regarding the development and implementation control of the Plans, this was mainly accomplished through the building permit system (Giannakourou,

Table 2. Overview of the planning system and types of plans in Greece (as formed in the 1990s).

Source: Beriatos, 2002 (updated by the author).

1999), that is, at the local scale only. Every work or construction made (no matter the level of the spatial plan dictating it) required a special permit from the competent Urban Control Offices (of the relevant Municipalities). These Urban Control Offices were responsible for implementing a combined system of planning and building control, as well as supervising land-use changes in their Municipal territory. Extra permissions were needed only in the following cases: (a) when the construction took place in the proximity of an archaeological or historical monument/site and (b) when a project (public or private) was expected to have significant impact on the environment.

Regarding the philosophy of the planning system that was formed in the 1990s, it was totally based on the sustainable development approach, embedding all related principles, such as 'social justice', 'environmental protection' and 'economic growth'. Indeed, all types of spatial plans that were elaborated according to that planning system had a direct connection to the public sector and set the public interest into the spotlight. It is unknown if

the fact of keeping the public interest as a high priority played a role, but most of the suggestions and proposals of the Plans produced and approved according to the planning system of the 1990s were partly implemented, whilst especially at the local scale, most Plans that were elaborated were either never approved or they were approved with a significant delay (of 10 years average). In fact, according to research conducted by the Technical Chamber of Greece (TEE, 2004, 2009) and the University of Thessaly (Vezyrgiannidou, 2014), Local Spatial Plans approved up to 2014 represented 16% of the total Municipalities in Greece, whilst the pending ones represented 31% (Table 3).

The reform of 2014 (Law 4269)

Discussion in the Ministry for the Environment (and Planning) regarding the reform of the spatial planning system of Greece began well before the enactment of Law 4269 which took place in July of 2014. Indeed, starting in 2012, a series of formal and informal Committees (gathering together the competent services/bodies of the Ministry for the Environment, academics and professionals in spatial planning) were engaged in endless discussions on how to overcome inefficiencies of the past (that resulted in a problematic implementation of planning at all levels) and on what should be the role of spatial planning in contributing to the desirable recovery of the country's economy.

Without reaching full consensus, the final version of the spatial planning reform was included in Law 4269 of 2014. The main changes that were introduced via this reform

Table 3. Governance issues in spatial planning (as formed in the 1990s).

Planning levels	Type of plans	Procedures/competent authorities			
		Elaboration	Consultation	Approval	Ratification
National level	National plan	Ministry for the Environment	National Council for Spatial Planning	CM decision Ministerial Committee	Parliament /National Assembly
	Special national plans	Ministry for the Environment	National Council for Spatial Planning	CM decision Ministerial Committee	No
Regional level	Regional plans	Ministry for the Environment or Administrative Region	National Council for Spatial Planning Regional Council	Minister for the Environment	No
Local level	Master plans (with the exception of Athens and Thessaloniki MAs)	Ministry for the Environment	Regional Council Relevant Municipal Councils	Presidential Decree	No
	Local spatial plans	Municipality or Region or Decentralized Administration	Region Municipal Council	Secretary General of the Decentralized Administration	No
	Urban development plans	Municipality or Region or Decentralized Administration	Region Municipal Council	Minister for the Environment or Presidential Decree	No
	Implementation plans	Municipality		Head of the Regional Authority	

Source: Processed by the author.

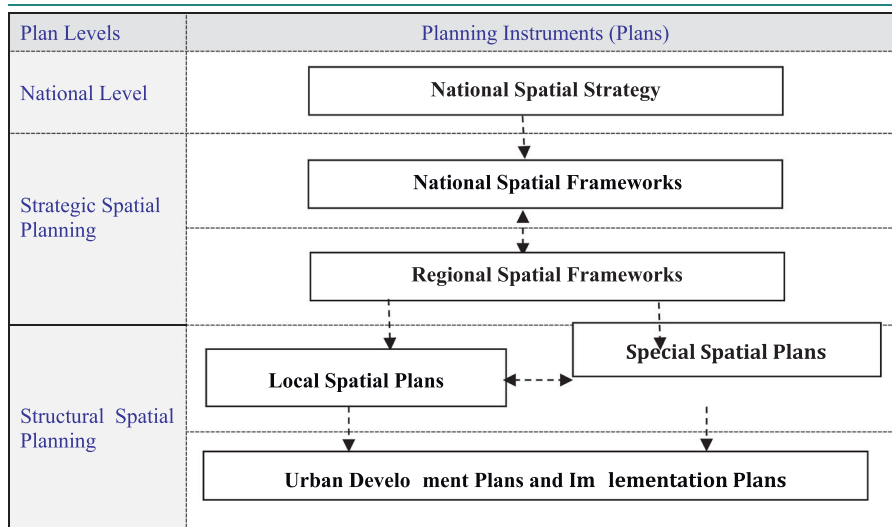
of 2014 included: (a) the delimitation of the number of Plans per level (see Table 4), by excluding Master Plans at the metropolitan level and by unifying plans at the lowest levels, (b) the reform of land-use categories (both for urban and rural space) to be used especially in plans at the local levels⁷, and (c) the delimitation of the power of consultation and governance bodies (such as ‘The National Council for Spatial Planning’), so that participatory procedures ‘consume’ less time and the whole planning process is accelerated.

Regarding the structure of the planning system introduced in 2014, the previously existing National Plan was replaced by the National Spatial Strategy, that is, a Policy Document providing guiding (planning) principles for the whole country. This downgrade of the National Plan to a Policy Document worked in favour of the National Spatial Frameworks which were upgraded and enriched in thematic context, in order to cover a wide variety of sectoral policies (concerning the most important economic activities of the country).

At this strategic planning level, apart from National Spatial Frameworks, Regional Spatial Frameworks are also found. Although dealing with different scales (national and regional respectively), both Frameworks were addressed by Law 4269 as of equivalent importance, being binding on each other, that is, both types of the Frameworks could initiate changes and alterations to each other at any time.

Below this strategic planning level, local planning was named as ‘structural’. At this level, initially foreseen Master Plans (for metropolitan areas) were repealed, whilst the other types of Plans remained the same, although with a restructured hierarchy: Local Spatial Plans and SSPs became of equivalent status and importance, whilst Urban Development Plans as well as Implementation Plans were unified in terms of preparation and ratification. The SSPs (which are market-led Plans, used for the development of private investments and projects) could initiate changes and/or ‘detour’ the Local Spatial Plans (that are public-led Plans defining the spatial structure of Municipalities). This latter provision raised intense controversy and reaction between experts and the competent

Table 4. Overview of the current planning system of Greece (as formed by Law 4269 of 2014).



Source: Processed by the author.

Ministry for the Environment, for introducing an anti-planning philosophy and an indirect downgrading of the role of planning in the country.

To conclude, Law 4269 of 2014 (having as subject title ‘reform of the spatial planning system and sustainable development’ of Greece) was launched approximately 15 years after the previously existing Institutional Acts for spatial planning (Law 2508 of 1997 and Law 2742 of 1999), that is, at a time when implementation and essential assessment of these Acts had not yet been completed. The reform mainly focused on the ‘speeding up’ of the planning process, by simplifying processes and by cutting down the number of plans per level, so that spatial planning could become more favourable and ‘friendly’ to investments and economic projects. However, despite the enactment of the reformative Law 4269 and the clear turn towards a neoliberal and a more flexible planning approach, initial expectations for achieving ‘competitiveness’ and ‘economic growth’ in the country have still not been met (Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2017). At the same time, preparation of plans (at all levels) was severely delayed, raising more concerns amongst planners regarding the future of spatial planning in Greece. As a result of these concerns, it was only a matter of time before the second reform of the Planning Act, which is presented in the following section.

The reform of 2016 (Law 4447)

Consultations and discussions on how to overcome and handle the inefficiencies of Law 4269 began very soon after its enactment in June 2014. After all, consensus initially reached with Law 4269 was minimum. As in the first reform, in this second reform too, formal and informal Committees were created (either under the jurisdiction of the Ministry for the Environment or under the initiative of stakeholders), in order to suggest amendments and/or new ideas for an integrated planning system, which would meet the current circumstances.

However, despite the long preparations, the new Law that came into force in December of 2016 could hardly be considered as a reformative Act of the former Law 4269 of 2014. All types of Frameworks and Plans, as well as the planning levels, remained the same, as in Law 4269 (see Table 4). Interaction among Frameworks and Plans, binding issues and jurisdictions too, remained the same (see Table 5), except for the case of the National Council for Spatial Planning (a consultation body of national importance) that regained its important role, especially at the structural planning level.

Critiques by stakeholders and especially by scientific boards and associations (which can be found in open access in the e-governance site of the State of Greece) regarding this new reform were once more intense and focused on: (a) the extremely short period of official public participation (after the release of the bill), (b) the clear orientation of the spatial planning system towards promoting private investments, (c) the clear tendency towards an intense sectoral approach in spatial planning instead of a more area-based approach, (d) the lack of regulations regarding the land-use categories (initially included in Law 4267, but then abolished in 2016) and (e) the non-regulation of more procedural issues that would delimitate existing severe delays in the ratification of Plans. On the other hand, as a positive aspect of the latest reformative Law (4447 of 2016), the National Council for Spatial Planning regained its power and role in acting as a major Consultation body in participatory procedures and in the course of the preparation of Frameworks at the national and regional levels.

Table 5. Governance issues in spatial planning (according to Law 4447 of 2016).

Planning levels	Type of plans	Procedures/competent authorities			
		Elaboration	Consultation	Approval	Ratification
National level	National spatial strategy	Ministry for the Environment	National Council for Spatial Planning	Ministerial Committee	No (the strategy is announced at the National Assembly)
Strategic spatial planning	Special (national) spatial frameworks	Ministry for the Environment	National Council for Spatial Planning	Ministerial Committee	-No
	Regional plans	Ministry for the Environment	National Council for Spatial Planning Regional Council	Minister for the Environment	-No
Structural spatial Planning	Local spatial plans	Municipality or Ministry for the Environment	Central Council for Planning Issues	Presidential Decree	-No
	SSPs	Municipality or Region or Ministry for the Environment, or Private Investor	Central Council for Planning Issues	Presidential decree	-No
	Urban development plans (and implementation plans)	Municipality, or Decentralized administration	Central Council for Planning Issues Regional Authority	Head of the region	-No

Source: Processed by the author.

However, to date (i.e. a few months after the enactment of Law 4447), preparation of Plans at all levels is still 'on hold', despite the fact that all reforms were launched in the name of 'speeding up' the planning process. At the same time, although this reform maintains the flexibility and the market-friendly orientation in the planning policy of the country, entrepreneurial initiatives are still being sought (The Greek Economy Report, 2015).

Parallel marine spatial planning (MSP) initiatives in Greece

Greece is a country with both a peculiar coastal, marine and insular nature and with a long tradition in maritime economic activities. As a result, the country has long carried out planning implementations in the marine space, taking full advantage of its coastal, insular and marine morphology and resources (Beriatos, 2013).

Regarding planning implementations in the Greek marine space, so far they have concerned a series of sectoral plans, for the most important maritime economic sectors of the country, such as the maritime transportation and ports system, the fishery and aquaculture sector and the exploitation of non-living resources (hydrocarbon extractions, etc.). However, the fact that among all the above sectors, only aquaculture and sea farms have an approved National Spatial Plan (adopted in 2011) is due both to the importance of the sector to the Greek economy and due to the recent growing demand for new investments in the Greek seas. All other sectors and activities are regulated by National Policies and Strategic/Policy Documents, approved by the competent Ministries separately, having few spatial planning references and guidelines (Papageorgiou, 2016).

Given the above facts, the latest trend regarding the extension of spatial planning in the marine space (Marine Spatial Planning) has found Greece with an already significant experience. However, after the adoption of the EU Directive 2014/89 regarding MSP (during the Hellenic Presidency of the EU), a new era for Greece⁸ and the rest of the member states began, putting emphasis on achieving the so-called blue growth (i.e. sustainable management of the marine ecosystems and resources), given the growing demand for new investments in the marine space (Coccosis & Beriatos, 2016).

Considering the need for economic recovery in Greece, inclusion of the marine space in planning regulations is of paramount (and geostrategic) importance (Kyvelou, 2016; Kyvelou, Marava, & Chiotinis, 2014). To date, mainland territory (including islands) extends to 131,957 km², whilst water territories account for another 246,464 km². However, if Greece's Exclusive Economic Zone is proclaimed, the total jurisdiction area will quadruple and reach 505,572 km² resulting in a great augmentation of the territorial capital and resources of the country (Beriatos, 2013), and consequently significant space for the development of economic activities and (public or private) investments.

Discussion and conclusions

Spatial planning, having a long tradition (of more than one century) in many countries worldwide, has reached a critical point lately. Contemporary social and economic challenges, as well as a turn towards a neoliberal orientation in the policies adopted in many countries (in the EU too), call for reconsideration and critique in the role of spatial planning. Will it only be a public-led procedure, or should the private sector play a more determinant role in the decision-making and the elaboration of Plans? Will it primarily serve the public interest, or would it be wiser to let market interests lead the way and decide on the allocation of territorial resources? Ultimately, should spatial planning be the subject or the object of neoliberalism or of whatever the political orientation happens to be? And what would then be the guiding principles? Economic growth and competitiveness, or will there be any room left for social justice and environmental planning?

In Greece, even though tradition in spatial planning goes back to the 1920s, an integrated spatial planning system was only formed in the 1990s, that is, approximately three decades ago. During this period, spatial planning has always been a public-led procedure keeping public interest as a high priority. Indeed, social justice, environmental protection as well as economic growth (i.e. the three pillars of sustainable development) have always been the guiding principles in all plans produced to date in Greece. This context however is under reconsideration lately, as a result of the challenges faced in the aftermath of the continuing fiscal crisis, which began in 2008. Indeed, inefficiencies of the past (resulting in a rather slow implementation of spatial planning in the country thus far) have raised reasonable concerns regarding the suitability of the existing planning system and policy, especially in the currently unstable and challenging economic environment. As a result, arguments in Greece saying that spatial planning should have a more neoliberal orientation are constantly growing. Besides, the current agenda regarding most of the sectoral policies of the country has already shifted towards a more neoliberal direction.

In spatial planning, this recent turn in the philosophy and orientation has already been expressed through the double reform that was attempted (between 2014 and 2016) in the

Planning Acts. Indeed, both reforms had a clear twofold objective: (a) the acceleration of the planning process, by simplifying the planning procedures, and (b) the facilitation of private investments and economic projects; two evident and predictable objectives, especially after the fiscal crisis and especially after the clear orientation of most of the sectoral policies of the country to a more market-friendly and neoliberal path/orientation. To date however, regardless of the reforms made, economic growth and competitiveness are still being sought, whilst spatial planning at all levels is 'on hold' for an indefinite period, despite the need for spatial regulations that would mainly facilitate private investments and projects.

There is no doubt that Greece, after the start of the crisis, is at a critical crossroad needing a different developmental model in order to reverse degradation and meet the desirable economic standards for prosperity. At the same time, apart from re-inventing its economic/productive model to proceed, it is also important to define a new planning model that will tackle inefficiencies of the past and that will contribute to the so needed economic recovery of the country.

This planning model is not evident, nor it is easy to be defined. On the one hand, providing a flexible planning system in order to encourage entrepreneurship and investments to take place in the country is a sine-qua-non for economic growth; on the other hand, letting the market lead and decide on the allocation of territorial resources may result in severe societal and territorial inequalities. However, high prioritization of the public interest should be non-negotiable, provided that it does not asphyxiate and discourage private sector initiatives that are so necessary for the economic recovery.

In this light, the most suitable planning model for Greece should make certain that economic development and growth will take place in a sustainable way, that is, ensuring that territorial capital and assets will be wisely managed for future generations. At the same time, apart from achieving social and territorial justice, the planning model should also channelize and encourage entrepreneurship in a mutually beneficial way for all sides. If this balance between the private and public interest is not achieved, spatial and social inequalities in Greece will continue to amplify, whilst entrepreneurship benefits will have a very low impact on the national (and local) economy and society.

Notes

1. Law 3894 of 2010 Acceleration and Transparency of Strategic (i.e. of state importance) Investments (ΕΣΧΑΣΕ).
2. Law 3986 of 2011 'Urgent Application Measures for mid-term Memorandum of Fiscal Strategy 2012–2015 (ΕΣΧΑΔΑ)', including also provisions for the development of the public property.
3. In 2011, a special Authority (TAIPED – Hellenic Republic Asset Development Fund) was launched, for the management and/or privatization of the most competitive and valuable assets of the country.
4. Law 3982 of 2011: simplifying licencing of professional, technical and manufacturing activities and business parks, and other legislative provisions (including regulations for industrial sector investments). Law 4179 of 2013: Simplifying procedures for strengthening entrepreneurship in tourism and restructuring of the Greek Tourism and other legislative provisions. Law 4203 of 2013: Regulations for Renewable Energy Sources and other legislative provisions.
5. Law 4280 of 2014: Environmental upgrading and private urbanization – sustainable settlements development – forest law regulations and other provisions.

6. Law 3937 of 2011: conservation of biodiversity and other legislative provisions. Law 4281 of 2014 Multi-legislation of the Ministry of Finance (including provisions for the use of foreshore and beach zones of Greece). Law 4280 of 2014: Environmental upgrading and private urbanization – sustainable settlements development – forest law regulations and other provisions.
7. The provisions of Law 4269 concerning the land-use categories were abolished very soon after the enactment of the Law, due to severe criticism from several stakeholders for mixing irrelevant and/or polluting uses with residential use. To date, efforts to form a typology for the appropriate land-use categories are still pending (despite the attempts of the competent Ministry for the Environment to fill this gap).
8. Harmonization of this Directive to the national legislative system is only a matter of time, since the consultation period on the bill for MSP has already expired and the Ministry for the Environment is very close to bringing the final version of the bill to the National Parliament for enactment.

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