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**Reforming Local Administration in Greece to achieve decentralization
and effective management of space: the failure of good intentions**

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Workshop 6 Territorial Governance in the Mediterranean: New Paradigms?

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1. Introduction.....	3
2. The European context and the tradition of foreign influence in Greece.....	4
3. Historic phases of evolution of Local Administration systems in Contemporary Greece.....	9
3.1. Period of I. Kapodistrias and the Bavarians (1828 – 1887).....	10
3.2. Period of Great Reforms by E. Venizelos and H. Trikoupis (1887 – 1927).....	12
3.3. Period of Relative Stagnation before and after World War II (1927 – 1974)...	14
4. Local Administration in Greece at the turn of the century (1974 – 2000).....	16
4.1. Legislation and policies introduced	16
4.2. What is currently planned	26
5. Conclusions	28
6. Bibliography.....	35

1. Introduction

One year before the next local elections in Greece (due in November 2006) the
Ever since Greece became a full member of the European Union, in the early 1980s, it
has continuously had to face the challenge of becoming “an equal partner” in Europe.
This challenge appears in many sectors: modernization of its administrative and civic
structures, harmonization of its legislative frameworks with the rest of the E.U.,
acceleration of its economic development with subsequent regard for the protection of
the environment, and more recently, participation in the European Monetary System and
the adoption of the Euro as its new currency.

Reforms in the system of local administration and upgrading of the rights,
responsibilities and jurisdiction of the local factor have been considered as crucial
elements of the effort towards “Europeanization”. A positive E.U. influence and
assistance has also fuelled this process: financing of programmes which boost local
development was provided for in the EEC Regulation dealing with the European Fund
for Regional Development. Within this framework, a restructuring of the whole system
of local administration has been attempted, with the introduction of regional policies
and successive legislative frameworks, originating from the Greek Ministries of
Planning and the Environment, and of Internal Affairs. Common objectives of all these
efforts were based on the assumption that the splintering of local administration up until
then had been the main obstacle to effective administration and harmonization with the
European perspective. So, emphasis was given to the perspective of uniting small units
of local administration into greater ones, supposed to be self-sufficient, effective in
governance, and with policies leading to sustainability and public participation.

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For an accurate assessment of the perspectives of the local administration system in Greece, though, one needs to take into consideration certain factors and characteristics that have marked the various phases of evolution of local administration during the country's recent history. These elements have been causal factors for developments in the past and still shape the political and social behaviour of many actors in the arena of local politics.

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2. The European context and the tradition of foreign influence in Greece

As mentioned above, European influence has been an important factor in the formulation of recent policies and developments in Greece in the sector of local administration. In fact, the adoption of policies and institutions has for a long time been - and still is - a global phenomenon, the analysis of which encapsulates great potential for interpreting historic developments. In related research in Europe, this analysis is based on the theory of "families of nations".

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Although Thornley (1996) recognizes great variety in the structures, the distribution of responsibilities and the systems of local administration, etc., in E.U. countries, nevertheless, he also identifies certain groupings of countries with distinct characteristics. At the focus of his analysis, he puts the balance between central and local government. Accordingly, he distinguishes four main "families of nations" with distinct characteristics to their legal, administrative and planning styles: the British, the Napoleonic, the German and the Scandinavian.

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The British family exhibits a considerable distinctiveness compared to the rest of

Europe. It has as characteristics that “the British legal style ...has evolved from the tradition of English Common Law; A system of case law that has gradually been built up, decision by decision. The mode of legal thinking is to consider the relationships between parties and their rights and duties. There is an empirical slant to this approach and an emphasis on past experience and precedent” (Thornley 1996:30). In this family, and particularly in the UK, there is no special protection extended by law to local government, and local authorities are seen as agents carrying out central government policies. Central government makes the regulations, laws, and controls, and has also great control of finances. The British approach embodies an element of conflict in the relationship between local authority and the individual/applicant, in which the two sides compete to win. However, there are often negotiations, particularly with larger schemes, where the concept of “planning gain” appears (Riziotis, 2001).

The Napoleonic family, originating in France, adopts a legal style that “has a tendency to use abstract legal norms... The aim is to think about matters in advance and prepare a complete system of rules based on the codification of the abstract principles.” (Thornley, 1996:32). Local administration is mainly based on the local commune and thus, local authorities at the lowest level, until recently, tended to be numerous. The degree of centralization has traditionally been high, and local authorities used to be branches of the central government, although the latter has been changing during the last few decades, for many members of this family. In the Napoleonic family there is a tendency to prepare a national code of planning regulations and to create a hierarchy of plans, starting at the higher levels where there is mostly just an expression of development policy, going down to more detailed plans on a smaller scale and with a zoning approach to land usage. The Napoleonic family is large and there are variations

in planning systems of the country-members. France and Holland present a more systematic approach where planning procedures and characteristics and the tasks of participants are clearly described, Belgium and Spain embody a federal element in their planning systems, because of pressures for regionalism, whereas in Italy and Greece, there are often phenomena of fragmentation and extreme complexity in structures and procedures.

The Germanic family, in its legal substance, can be considered as a distinctive branch of the Napoleonic family (Thornley, 1996). It has adopted an elaborated legal style, often abstract in concepts but particularly sophisticated, although clear about issues like the division of powers and the responsibilities between different levels of government. Another characteristic of the Germanic family is the federal approach taken in the Constitution and an often-complex system of allocations of responsibilities and powers between different levels of administration, which is less centralized than in the previous families. “The strong constitution and the federal system result in a strong regional level of planning with its own laws and plans and a set of arrangements for creating consensus between and within levels of hierarchy. This results in considerable variation in the planning process between regions but within a strong national framework.” (Thornley, 1996:72).

Finally, the Scandinavian family exhibits a legal style, which avoids the “scientification” of the Germanic family, being more pragmatic and clear in written form. It is characteristic that a complete legal code has never been formulated (Thornley, 1996:35). It is probably the most decentralized system in Europe, with a strong municipal level, a weaker regional level and a national level with minimal

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responsibilities for and involvement in planning. Members of this family exhibit a high degree of similarity in their planning systems.

Greece seems to have a dual identity as far as the above families are concerned. It is clearly a member of the Napoleonic family in its administrative system, but in legal style and planning systems, it has elements of both, the Napoleonic and the Germanic families. In fact, Greece appears to have a long tradition of “borrowing” policies, laws, institutions and practices in the public and private sector, from other countries.

However, this is a phenomenon, which most Greeks never admit to happening. Proud for “having taught democracy”, at least to the rest of Europe, they perceive imitating others in the ways of managing public and private affairs as a downgrading of their tradition as the “cradle of civilization”. History, though, and even today’s reality prove otherwise. Right after Greece became an independent country in 1828, the major European powers - England, France, and Russia - competed to gain control and influence in the new state. Characteristic of this is how the first political parties were named the Anglophiles, Francophiles and Russophiles (Lalenis, 2001:13). Later on, with the arrival of the first king, Otto, in Greece, the Bavarians also managed to gain a high degree of influence. The sectors in which institutional transplantations were usually observed were the three sectors according to which the “families of nations” are distinguished: the legal system, public administration (local much more than central) and spatial planning.

The Greek legal system - at least in its origins - has been significantly influenced by the German system. Right after the establishment of the new State in 1827, there had been much debate about which legal code should be adopted (Thornley, 1996:34). French

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influence had been great, due to the spirit of the revolution of 1789, which also inspired Greek revolution against the Ottoman Empire. There was, though, strong support too from part of the population for the law to be based on that of Roman Byzantium. This latter view prevailed leading to affinity with the German system, which was also close to the system of Roman Byzantium. Thus, German lawyers contributed to the formulation of the Greek Civic Code in 1846 and since then German laws have often influenced their equivalent ones in Greek legislation.

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Spatial planning is an example of the tradition of not planning in advance, but of trying to solve urgent problems by “muddling through”. Consequently, legal and institutional transplants from different origins (mainly French or German) were often adopted, with different styles, not always adaptable to Greek conditions and often leading to contradicting policies (Lalenis, 2001). This has resulted in excess in the number and types of plans and a scarcity in planning effectiveness and substance (Economou, 2000).

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It is characteristic that in the number of levels of urban plans, most European countries have one or two, with one often being on a voluntary basis, or partially urban and partially regional. Greece is the only country with three levels of urban planning (whenever *rithmistiko* is included). At the same time, it has the second lowest percentage of planned area in Europe (after Finland). One should add here that as a result of these inconsistencies, there is an unequal distribution of population, power and wealth in the country. Athens and Thessalonica account for half the Greek population, plus political and administrative power, and the biggest part of the job market. And this situation is expected to get worse with the Olympic Games of 2004, for obvious reasons.

Local administration has been the sector in which the most durable examples of trans-temporal institutional transplantation have been recorded, where the donor, the type of transplant, and the receiver remained the same for a little less than two centuries.

French influence has been great in Greece, not only in the ideological sphere but also in more pragmatic matters. There were forms of cooperation and financial relations between France and Greek patriots, who helped Napoleon by transferring supplies for his army with their ships. The traditional alliance and cooperation between the two countries and - most importantly - the fact that both had a very centralized administrative system, led the first government to adopt the French system of local administration in 1828. Since then, there have been periods of closer convergence or slight divergence in the two systems, around similar patterns of evolution of local administration. Since local administration is the main issue of this presentation, these historic periods will be presented and analysed further in the following chapters.

3. Historic phases in the evolution of Local Administration systems in contemporary Greece

Four distinct periods can be identified in the evolution of the systems of Local Administration in Greece (Beriatos, 1994):

- a. The period of Kapodistrias (the first Governor of the new State) and the succeeding administration of the Bavarian Court of the first king Otto (1828 – 1887).
- b. The period of great reforms of Prime Ministers Trikoupis and Venizelos (1887 – 1927).
- c. The period of relative stagnation before and after the second World War (1927 – 1974).

d. The period of recent reforms and efforts towards the modernization of administration.

3.1. Period of I. Kapodistrias and the Bavarians (1828 – 1887)

The roots of the contemporary local administration system in Greece can be traced back to the first quarter of the last century and the establishment of the new Greek State that emerged after the liberation from the Turkish occupation. During the Ottoman Empire, local administration had been largely decentralized. Greek territories were organized around local communities with a high degree of autonomy. This contributed a lot to the development of a strong community sentiment and to the preservation of a national identity, but also, in extreme cases, to local chauvinism and to the creation of very influential local authorities.

The first governor of Greece, Ioannis Kapodistrias, made it a high priority to organize an efficient system of public administration and eliminate the power of “local political bullies” (Chlepas, 1994:42). He organized Greece into three administrative levels: Prefectures with appointed prefects, Counties and Municipalities. He also adopted French administrative practices in Greece, by granting all male citizens (older than 25) the right to vote locally, but also by reserving the right to be elected for only some special categories of them (Vakalopoulos, 1988 & Kontogeorgis, 1983). He drastically reduced the authority of local officials and encouraged the greater involvement of central administration in local affairs. (This gradual weakening of local administration started by redirecting taxation from local sectors to the State Revenue Office). These changes provoked social unrest, which ended up with the assassination of Kapodistrias in 1831.

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~~The young King Otto, of German origin, succeeded Kapodistrias.~~ Due to his youth, the Bavarian Royal Court represented him for a short period. Political conflict characterized the political environment during this period and was exclusively concerned with the struggle between the upper class strata and the foreign Royal ~~Court, which~~ was largely in control of the State (Lagopoulos, 1984:128). Political fighting was not directly related to the position in the market of the conflicting social groups, as usually happens in capitalist societies, but the whole matter at stake was "political domination" (Tsoulouvis, 1987:501). This type of distortion of mainstream capitalism, as will be seen later, has been a permanent feature of the history of modern Greece, and has facilitated the phenomenon of over-centralization of the administration.

The first attempt by the Bavarian Court to organize local administration came with the Decrees of 6.4.1833 and 27.12.1833. According to these Decrees, the levels of local administration were kept to three, and the new State was divided in 10 Prefectures, 47 Counties (eparchia) and 750 Municipalities (demos). Municipalities became self-administered units with elected local councillors, and some jurisdiction in local issues. The king or the prefect appointed mayors by choosing from among three candidates elected by the municipal council. At the end of this period, and after unifications of many municipalities, the total number was reduced to 442 with an average population of more than 5,000, which was one of the largest in Europe (Beriatos, 1994). It was the intention of the Bavarian officials to create strong municipalities, able to support the then inadequate central administration. In this initiative one could easily distinguish the spirit of German Baron von Stein and his "Regulation about the Cities" (Stadteordnung), which was, in its turn, a German adaptation of the French prototype of

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Municipal Law of the *Constituante* (14.12.1789) (Chlepas, 1994:36). This 1st level of local administration was the only one to keep an autonomous structure from central administration through history, by gaining elected status for its representatives, and retaining it until today. Prefectures were also kept as a level of local administration, but with appointed officials and functioning as local branches of central government (Siouti, 2001). Counties were soon abolished and only some of them were reinstated much later (by Law 108/1975).

The Bavarian Court and King Otto were overthrown by public revolts. The prime concern of the new central ~~administration, which succeeded them~~, was to create a strong State with a new identity. Local mayors were perceived as obstacles to the goals of central government, because they were often involved in corruption and in efforts to control political parties for personal benefit. Thus, a long campaign was started aiming at their “neutralization”. Consequently, administrative changes were not targeted towards satisfying functional and developmental needs, but more towards imposing central authority on every local region and enabling the central State to intervene in and control local affairs.

3.2. Period of Great Reforms by E. Venizelos and H. Trikoupis (1887 – 1927)

The second period in the history of local administration is marked by a sequence of ~~wars, which had grave consequences on the life~~, and development of Greek society. The Balkan Wars (1912-1913) were followed by World War I, at the end of which, the national territory was doubled. Four years later (1922), there was the disaster of Asia Minor, which brought 1.5 million refugees to the country (already with a population of 5 million).

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Public administration, despite the efforts to transform it into something similar to the French model, was still inefficient (Bakogiannis, 1991). This was, though, expected, since in a country economically very weak, without a professional tradition of public administrators, and with very high levels of illiteracy, it was impossible to create a hierarchically structured, centralized and efficient administrative system, like the Napoleonic one (Simeonidis, 1985). Inevitably, continuous adaptations were attempted. The first one to mention is the reform in the electoral system of the municipalities. According to the Constitution of 1864, elections of local authorities had to be direct, secret, and with no exclusion of any Greek citizen. In this way, mayors were legitimised in the public mind, and became again crucial political players. This was not because of any upgrading of their responsibilities and official authority - that in general remained limited - but because of the centuries-long tradition of localism and their ability to influence processes in the political parties (N. Chlepas, 1994:76). The political power of the mayors was again perceived as destructive for most central political initiatives, and clientelism and corruption were believed to be widely practised.

This period is marked by the efforts of two great political figures, Harilaos Trikoupis and Eleftherios Venizelos, to reform the administrative system of the country and increase its effectiveness. The focus of their efforts was on the political aspect and their main aim was again to strengthen central administration. Trikoupis (1887) changed the boundaries of electoral districts, abolished counties (eparchias) and reorganized prefectures in such a way as to create a level of administration between the mayors and the central state, flexible in size, and yet effective in providing services. He aspired to create a prefectural administrative level, which would be able to play a strategic role in

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supervising municipal administration, and improve the ability of central government to impose and collect taxes at a local level.

Venizelos (1912) reduced the area of municipalities (demos) and created a network of 6,000 smaller communities/villages (koinotita) whose size was 12 times smaller than the previous municipalities. The argument that was used to justify Venizelos' reforms was basically about developing a strong national identity. He stressed the need to assimilate the new ~~territories, which~~ joined Greece after the Balkan Wars, as well as the need to get citizens closer to direct democracy at a local level and fight corruption in the political system. Being aware that communities of this size could not be financially viable, Venizelos provided for the possibility of creating associations of communities, formed on a voluntary basis. Consequently, he tried to organize prefectures in such a way as to be the intermediaries for subsidies from central government to the communities. Right after Venizelos, another "school of thought" became popular with the politicians of that period, one which supported decentralization and greater independence of local administration. A. Papanastasiou - who remains in history as a great democrat and reformist - represented them and succeeded in passing their beliefs in the new Constitution of 1927. The Constitution of 1927 secured Venizelos' reforms, by recognizing rural communities (koinotita) as the necessary 1st degree of local administration, but also put some limits on central intervention in local affairs and encouraged local societies to take initiatives and proceed to free action in the management of local affairs.

3.3. Period of relative stagnation before and after World War II (1927 - 1974)

For the inter-war period there are no in-depth studies examining the relationship

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between the socio-political power structure in Greece and the attempts of the State to formulate social policies. What can be said, though, is that capitalism and class struggle started and developed slowly, accompanied by a rise in the proportion of workers in the population (about 5% in 1928) (Lagopoulos, 1984:129). Political instability was also a feature of this period and afterwards, ending and culminating in the Civil War (1944-1950), which left the country destroyed and bitterly divided. The rising lower-middle class strata (petty landowners, self-employed professionals, public employees) were gradually becoming so utterly dependent on the State that their main interest "was not so much in increasing production and in planning the economy but in the strengthening of their position in the State apparatus for the purpose of directly appropriating the surplus" (Tsoulouvis, 1987). Under these circumstances, the struggle for political domination between the various factions of the right-wing ruling class ended up with the military dictatorship of 21-4-1967. This signified the end of the domination of the Throne and the rise of a far-right group, represented by the governing colonels and closely allied to circles within the American Pentagon and the CIA. The military dictatorship collapsed in 1974 after student revolts (Polytechnio) in Greek Universities and the Turkish occupation of Cyprus.

This period started with the abolishment of the progressive Constitution of 1927 and the reinstatement of the one of 1911, which was much more conservative and very hesitant on issues about independence of local administration. There was no legislation or reform in this field worth mentioning for another half century. The only exception to this stagnation was a short period (1941 - 1944) in the territories liberated from the German army by the National Liberation Front (EAM), where some types of genuine self-governance were recorded. Theoretical debates and academic initiatives did take

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place in the inter-war period, but they did not result in policy-making and implementation. In the post-war period, the situation was even worse: every initiative towards a change in administrative and territorial jurisdiction was met with suspicion, quite in accordance with the oppressive political system of the time. At that time, the democratic elements of local societies often rallied around local administration, as a counterbalance to the central government. Throughout this period, the pre-existing two levels of local administration remained intact.

Here it should be noted that around the end of this period, important changes had been developing in Europe. Most European nations were organizing new forms of local administration, either as unifications of urban administrative units of the 1st level, or as associations and inter-community cooperation. These changes were taking place all over Europe, with the group of northern European countries (Great Britain, Ireland, Holland, Belgium, Denmark, Norway and Sweden) proceeding with unifications and achieving sufficient degrees of homogeneity, and the southern European countries (France, Spain, Austria, Germany, Switzerland) proceeding more cautiously and at a slower pace with inter-community cooperation and associations, formed mostly on a voluntary basis (Table 1). These developments did not have any direct effect on the equivalent sectors in Greece, at that time, since Greece remained isolated from the rest of Europe, mainly for political reasons.

4. Local Administration in Greece at the turn of the Century (1974 - 2000)

4.1. Legislation and policies introduced

The beginning of this period is marked by the overthrow of the military dictatorship.

The re-establishment of democracy signified the beginning of a period during which Greece rejoined its European partners and started the process of modernizing its structures and functions. Reforms in local administration were perceived as imperative, since, according to the public feeling, independence from central administration was a prerequisite for stabilizing democracy. Strengthening municipalities was seen as a necessary measure requiring readjustment of their sizes and boundaries, and upgrading of their jurisdictions, rights and responsibilities. One could say that eighty years after Venizelos' reforms, there was a complete reversal in beliefs about the direction of necessary reforms towards a modern democracy: the centralized function of the State was perceived to be the cause of inefficiencies in most sectors of society. Furthermore, EEC directions were for new, enlarged and stronger municipalities that are independent from the State, and there were European programmes and funds available to assist such an effort. Things, though, were more complex than they initially appeared. Despite the rhetoric, central administration was not eager to give up part of its power so fast, and it was also doubtful whether local administration was ready to undertake any increased responsibilities. Here it has to be added that France, which was usually an example for Greece, did not reduce the - also very high - number of its municipalities, but proceeded with other important changes towards genuine independence of local administration. These changes included autonomy for all three degrees of local administration, elected representatives at all levels, adequacy of their funds and finances, and upgrading of their rights and responsibilities. Greece seemed neither ready nor eager to try the same. Instead, they adopted a "muddling through" approach and tried some "old wine in new bottles" measures, already recorded in France since the early '70s.

In this context of relative confusion, successive legislative frameworks were introduced

in Greece, often overlapping each other. It is worth mentioning that during this period, most reforms in local administration were attempting to adopt dimensions related to land usage, regional development and the organization of space. The first reform was attempted at the beginning of March 1984, when the Ministry of Urban, Regional Planning, the Environment, and Public Works (then YHOP, later YPEHODE), proposed a new organization of urban space (Lalenis, 1993). Urban settlements were classified as "urban compounds" (or "urban entities") of two kinds: a. 54 "urban domains" - Greek cities in the traditional sense of the term - with a total population of 6,294,105 and b. 494 "open cities" with a total population of 3,446,312. An "open city" was defined as a group of rural municipalities, where a transformation was attempted from the notion of "village" to the notion of "city", since every "open city" would have a sound internal transportation and communication network and the infrastructure of a real city in terms of services (social, cultural, etc). Thus, 10,000 rural municipalities were organized in the above 494 "open cities". It was believed that in this way, the phenomena of over-centralization of the cities would cease, rural Greece could revive, and development planning could be much more effective. "Open cities" were organized on a "federal" basis, deviating from the classic centralized French model and adopting some German elements.

At the same time, another law, L. 1416/84, brought forward by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, provided incentives for the unification of municipalities, while introducing the term "development conjunction" for the new formations (Lalenis, 2000). The spatial basis of each "development conjunction" was named a "geographic entity" and was supposed to be defined in each prefecture after a series of decrees, while development conjunctions were left to be formed on a voluntary basis. The main development tool of

this legislation was the “Local Development Plan”, supposed to cover one or more “development conjunctions”. It was the first time in a proposal of the Ministry of Internal Affairs that the development dimension surpassed the political one. In this law, French influence can be detected once more: L. 1416/84 is a transfer of the French SIVOM (conjunctions of multiple purpose). Obviously, L. 1416/84 could and should combine with the “open cities” programme of the Ministry of Planning (YPEHODE). Instead, the Ministry of the Internal Affairs defined “geographic entities” in each prefecture, without taking the "open cities" into consideration at all. Law 1416/84 had a relative success, since in half the “geographic entities”, “development conjunctions” were formed, but without all of them exhibiting activity. As far as the process towards unification was concerned, though, there was no equivalent response. Nevertheless, this law was soon replaced by another one, without even having a chance to function or be assessed in the long term.

Here it has to be remembered that up until 1986, there were still only two levels of local administration in Greece: the 1st level, which consisted of municipalities of two types (cities/demos and smaller rural communities/koinotita) and the 2nd level, which consisted of prefectures (nomarchia). Local administration of the 1st level had elected representatives (mayors, local councillors, etc.) while prefectures were administered by officials appointed by the central government and were considered its local representatives.

Law 1622/86, which replaced 1416/84, was a second attempt by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, for the same goal. “Development conjunctions” and “geographic entities” were considered as not existing and «enlarged municipalities» and «geographic regions»,

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with similar inter-relationships, replaced them (Lalenis, 2000). Since there was no evaluative research about the implementation of L. 1461 and furthermore, there was not even enough time to have it tested, it still remains unexplained why this replacement took place. It has, also, to be noted that the principle of the new law was the same as that of the "open cities", but there were a few vital differences: in the new scheme, each "enlarged municipality" was supposed to have a "capital" - usually the biggest village - and one administrative unit (local council) for the whole of it - in contrast to the form of federation that the "open cities" provided. On 4/3/1987, the Ministry of Planning made its last attempt to combine policies, by forwarding an urgent report to the Ministry of the Interior, trying to persuade them that the new policies of the latter could be in accordance with the "open cities". There was no response to this report and the "open cities" plan was ignored once more. Although the "open cities" were defined according to regional development criteria, there was some speculation that after a lengthy period of negotiations with local authorities, public bodies etc., they were ignored, because the Ministry of Internal Affairs had set other priorities: the allocation of communities in each "enlarged municipality" was manipulated in such a way as to ensure that the majority of councils of the new type would be politically affiliated with the central government. An interesting element of this law was the introduction of incentives - mainly financial - for groups of communities prepared to join in "enlarged municipalities". It appears, though, that these motivations were, once more, not sufficient, since only 2.7% (155/5700) of communities in 3.5% (40/1141) of geographic regions decided to unite.

With the same law, public administration was dealt with as "democratic planning" with four levels: national level, regional level, prefectural level and local or municipal level.

The regional level was first established with this law and it was an attempt to organize higher levels of administration in Greece in accordance with European directions (“Europe of Regions”). Greece was divided into 13 Regions (Periferia), each with an appointed administration and headed by the General Secretary of the Region and a Regional Council.

Eight years later, another law was introduced, in the sequence of attempts to modernize local administration. This was Law 2218/94, which introduced the notion of “District Councils” to the 1st level of local administration. These were equivalent to “Development Conjunctions” and “Enlarged municipalities”. The difference was, though, that they were provided straight by the law and they were not to be formed on a voluntary basis. With this law, there was an effort to promote intercommunity cooperation, which would gradually proceed to unifications of communities. Of course, once more, there was no adequate explanation about the abolishment of the previous forms and the introduction of new ones that were no different in size and location.

At the 2nd level, L. 2218.94 provided for the establishment of Prefectural Administration, headed by elected representatives (prefect and prefectural council). The boundaries of the existing prefectures remained the same, with the exception of three cases, where prefectures were unified in larger units (Attica, Drama – Kavala – Xanthi and Evros - Rodopi). Here, it has to be noted that after implementation of this law, many responsibilities of the previous (appointed) prefectural administration were taken away from the elected authorities and given to the central Ministries and the Regional Administration.

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The latest developments in the sector of local administration of the 1st level at the turn of the century happened to be the most drastic ones (Lalenis, 2000). Having accepted that the splintering of local administration was a serious obstacle to effective administration and harmonization with the European perspective, and having realized that provisions of the previous laws 1461/84, 1622/86 and 2218/94, towards unification of communities, were too slow and too weak as measures, the Ministry of Internal Affairs proceeded with more drastic policies: it introduced Law 2539/98 (the *Ioannis Kapodistriasis* Programme - named after the first governor of Greece who tried to reform local administration). According to this law, all existing municipalities (cities/demos) and communities (villages/koinotita), out of a total of 5,755 in 1997, were obliged to form new, enlarged municipalities. Thus, 900 enlarged municipalities and 133 communities - which remained as such because of their particular characteristics (historic towns etc.) - were established. The “centres” of the new “demos”, their new names and their boundaries were proposed by special local committees in each prefecture, they were evaluated by the General Secretary of each region and they were submitted to the Minister of Internal Affairs, which then issued a decree. Contrary to previous practices, there was a support mechanism that was established right away to support the function of the new formations. Personnel with the necessary specializations were hired, after being trained for almost a year. Financial arrangements - with most funding coming from European sources - were also made, in order to help them with the implementation of development policies. Modernization of services using information technology was planned and related research projects were encouraged. Seminars, cooperation activities and information networks were also organized between the new demos and the equivalent administrative units in other [E.U.](#) countries. Generally, there was an obvious difference in the way that the implementation of this policy was

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supported, in comparison to the inactivity that followed the previous laws (Loukakis, 1999). Some major points, though, that could raise questions about whether the government's intentions were indeed to broaden local democracy or just to increase efficiency of central administration, could be raised: the reforms were decided only by central administration and pushed forwards by laws and decrees, they were compulsory for local communities, and there was no upgrading of the financial status of new municipalities concerning their dependency from central government. (A comparison of European countries regarding sources of funds for local administration can be seen in Table 2). One could also question the objectives of the Programme Ioannis Kapodistrias with regards to direct democracy and public participation. With the unification of small communities in enlarged municipalities, «local councils» replaced municipal councils of the communities. These did not have decision-making responsibilities and thus could not trigger public participation. Furthermore, there was no provision of additional measures to encourage participation, which ran contrary to the broad objectives of the programme for sustainable development and direct democracy.

Here, another law should be also mentioned, Law 2508/97, although it is not directly related to local administration. It was brought forward by the Ministry of Planning - and not by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which is responsible for local administration (Lalenis 2001). According to this law, Urban Planning is conducted on two levels: the first level concerns plans of a strategic character and general directions about future development. The second level of plans is characterized by designs with greater detail of physical characteristics, larger scales of plans, building regulations, and indicating sites for specific uses (schools, nurseries, etc). Basic characteristics of studies at the first level are: 1. the inclusion of principles and programmes for sustainable development

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and environmental protection as necessary elements of urban planning and 2. the inter-relation attempted between spatial planning and local administration, with definition of the spatial basis of planning at this level, according to administrative boundaries. This was the first time that planning, in issues of planning substance, was not restricted to “scientific” criteria but was also taking local administration into account. (The involvement of local administration in planning up till then had been more procedural than substantial).

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Here it should be mentioned that confusion arose again because of the lack of coordination between ministries. Law 2508/97 was introduced by the Ministry of Planning, while Law 2118/94 - made by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and introducing “District Councils” (see page 16 above) - was about to change. Nevertheless, in L. 2508/97 there was reference to “open cities” and district councils. (The insistence of the Ministry of Planning on the use of the notion of “open cities”, despite the fact that it had been inactive since 1983, is also striking). Of course, since no cooperation existed between the two ministries, the Ministry of Internal Affairs introduced the Ioannis Kapodistrias Programme also in 1997; according to it, new enlarged municipalities (Demos) replaced district councils, and related definitions in Law 2508/97 became meaningless within four months.

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Besides the inconsistencies that characterized Greek legislation and policies concerning local administration, one could also detect a high degree of inflexibility (Lalenis, 2001). This was quite obvious in the case of the jurisdiction of local administration in spatial planning. In 1997, the Supreme Court ruled that responsibilities for spatial planning, granted by Law 2508/97 to the prefectural and municipal administration, were against

the Constitution. This was based on Article 24, Paragraph 2, which states that the responsibility for urban and regional planning for the whole of the Greek national territory belongs to the State, in order to achieve rational development of cities and villages and the best possible quality of life for citizens. During the period that prefectural officials were appointed and not elected, prefectures were considered as the regional part of the State and there was no problem in approving urban plans (Domiki Pliroforiki, 2000). Since there were direct elections for prefectural representatives, prefectures ceased to be part of the State and became independent legal and administrative entities, and as such, they no longer had the right to take responsibility for approving plans. Thus, after this decision, prefectures stopped approving urban and regional plans and all related matters were transferred to the services of the regions. A big mess was created, of course, since many spatial plans approved by elected prefects were nullified. The new constitution of 2001 attempts to solve these problems by stating that local issues come under the jurisdiction of local administration, the definition of local issues is made by the State, and spatial planning should be considered a local issue. However, these articles remain inactive because the related Presidential Decrees have still not been issued.

Right after the implementation of the Ioannis Kapodistrias Programme, the existing balance of power between the different levels of local administration was disrupted. With the strengthening of the municipalities, the creation of the regions, and the downgrading of prefectural resources and responsibilities, the prefectures found themselves in an increasingly impossible position. Inevitably, this seemed to unveil government's intentions for the function of practically two levels of local administration: politically strong but financially dependent municipalities, and strong

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regions functioning as the administrative arms of central government. The only optimistic perspective for the “salvation” of prefectures would be a programme of reorganization of their territorial jurisdiction, similar to the “I. Kapodistrias”. This should reduce the number and increase the area of jurisdiction of both prefectures and regions. Elected representatives and regional autonomy from the government for all administrative levels could complete the reform. Nevertheless, the latest developments show otherwise, since it seems that central government is not willing to grant powers to the enlarged regions. A new law, L. 2946/2001, goes in an opposite direction to the above “optimistic” scenario: it encourages further enlargement of administrative forms at the first level by proposing “Conjunctions of Municipal Cooperation” (KEDKE, 2001). These are prescribed on a voluntary basis, which, in some cases, becomes practically compulsory with the suggested process (Rizospastis, 2001). This, of course, might put the prefectural level under even more pressure. Since this law was only ratified very recently, there has not yet been much chance to implement it. Therefore, there are many reservations about whether it will really promote decentralization and democratic local administration, or whether it will simply be used to make the job of central administration easier.

4.2. What is currently planned

Besides the laws and policies that have already been introduced, there are two more proposals for local administration under discussion in special parliamentary committees (EETAA, 2002). The first proposal, under the name “Democratic Decentralization”, is complementary to Law 2946/2001. It seeks to define the organizational structure of “conjunctions of municipal cooperation” and describes the participants of their General Assemblies as well as proposing to abolish the local councils of small communities

(with populations less than 300). For their formation, no transfer of funds from the national budget is provided and all their decisions are supposed to be under the administrative control of the region.

The second proposal, named the “Greek Atlas of Local Administration”, is a rather extensive piece of legislation. It has just gone through a six-month period of discussion between the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the unions of local authorities of different levels. The deadline for its implementation has been set to four years. The basic elements of this proposal are:

- Officially, there will be two levels of local administration - which are not further specified.
- Emphasis is given to the European policies for regional development. Operational plans are prescribed for local administration and these plans are supposed to agree with the equivalent plans of the central government. Cooperation between local agents is encouraged and priority is given to the equal and well-balanced development of the different regions in the country.
- There is a description of the responsibilities of local administration with regard to public policy. Social policy is no longer an obligation of the State but it becomes a responsibility of the local administration
- There is a definition of the indicators for effectiveness, operational ability, and financial management. An executive committee is proposed to operate along with the councils of local administration in a managerial manner. There is provision for continuous education, training and evaluation of administrative personnel.

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- The government ceases to provide financial assistance to local authorities, but is obliged to secure their right to finance themselves through local taxation, loans, investments, etc.

The above are still proposals, but there are clear indications that the levels of local administration might practically be reduced to two, with a gradual weakening of prefectural administration. The electorability of the 3rd level of local administration, and its autonomy from central government, is still unclear.

5. Conclusions

From the above it is obvious that, for long periods of its modern history, Greece has tried to adopt the French system of local administration, either closely or with variations - the most striking example of this being the high number of municipalities in both countries up until 1997 (Georgoulis, 1997). The main reason for the above phenomenon was that both countries, for most of their modern history, shared the same main characteristics and belonged to the same “family of nations”. Both countries were very centralized, with a central administration that concentrated all power and responsibilities, and with a local administration that was mainly used to implement central policies (Debbasch, 1976). Furthermore, they also shared the same objectives of creating a strong national identity and a strong and efficient central administration. There were, though, some basic differences that caused the two systems to diverge: the French State had exhibited remarkable efficiency ever since the Napoleonic era, and the system of local administration was structured with clarity and decisiveness so as to serve the objectives of centralization. This was also one of the reasons why the local

administration system remained unchanged for a long period without losing much of its effectiveness. Greece, on the other hand, had the same orientations for a centralized efficient State, but this was not supported either by its poor resources in finances and manpower, or by the political culture that had elements of ambivalence, strong localism, and continuous efforts to secure political domination. An obvious example of the latter is the long lasting struggle between central government and the mayors, which often provoked reforms and shaped local administration systems. Within this framework, continuous changes in the local administration system were inevitable.

The end of the 20th century marked a more definite diversion of Greek local administrative systems from their French counterparts. In Greece the final reform that united groups of municipalities into Demos became compulsory, through legislation of central government - a sign of central domination. At the same time, as soon as prefectures could elect their own prefects and representatives, they were stripped of responsibilities, which were transferred to the ministries and regions. Furthermore, the relatively autonomous levels of local administration (municipalities and prefectures) remained financially weak and totally dependent on the central government. The above indicates that Greece was unwilling to grant relative autonomy to local administration and was only attempting to comply with E.U. regulations so as to absorb the European grants given for the purposes of decentralization.

Despite the efforts to increase effectiveness, there is still confusion in Greece caused by overlapping responsibilities among the various administrative levels. Interventions and arrangements on a municipal level are supposed to conform to the spatial policies of different ministries and organizations, often contradicting each other. This is the case

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mostly for E.U. programmes, targeted at specific geographic/administrative units. And since various departments of central ministries and organizations of public administration are still the ones that are primarily dealing with them, there is multiple involvement that often results in conflicts. It is indicative of this that there are nine main organizations and ministries involved in spatial planning with related and partly overlapping responsibilities.

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There is no indication of what is going to happen in the future with the autonomy of regional administration, since there have not yet been any official announcements or even any proposals put forward for discussion. Elected representatives and regions bigger in size and smaller in number could form a promising solution. Nevertheless, this seems unlikely to happen, since up until now central administration has proved quite unwilling to share its power.

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The level of local administration that right now is in decline is prefectural administration. With the strengthening of municipalities, the creation of the regions, and the reduction of prefectural resources and responsibilities, prefectures are in decline. The only optimistic perspective for prefectures could be a programme of reorganization, similar to the “I. Kapodistrias”, affecting both regions and prefectures. As all new developments and policies imply, though, there are currently official directions encouraging two levels of local administration: politically strong but financially dependent municipalities, and strong regions/local branches of the central government.

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At the 1st level of local administration, the attempted reform of the “I. Kapodistrias” programme was promising, apart from the problems and difficulties that arose. Local

administration of the 1st level was ineffective, weak and not viable. A comparison of the number of administrative units of the 1st level in countries in the E.U. (diagram 2) is very indicative of the equivalent situation in Europe. In general, though, almost four years after it was officially adopted, the reform in local administration still faces significant obstacles, the most important of them being:

1. Inadequacy of the pre-existing personnel of the municipalities in adjusting to the new requirements. Most of them were unwilling to cooperate with the newly trained personnel and tensions arose in their relations.
2. The new local authorities were also not prepared for their increased responsibilities. Most of them maintained the old approach to municipal management, characterized by clientelism, bureaucratic approaches, and often, corruption.
3. Central and regional services faced the new venture with suspicion and they were unwilling to share rights and responsibilities with the new authorities.
4. The State still needs to promote and protect these reforms, mainly by fostering positive new attitudes to replace the existing ones (Katsoulis, 1999).

The local authorities (mayors, prefects, councillors, etc.) seem to be the most significant starting-points for the upgrading of local administration (Matthews, 1954). Up to now, their involvement in urban planning was discouraged. Local authorities, being traditionally dependent on the central administration, did not have the chance to develop their administrative skills, but mostly acted as agents of the national political parties, extending clientelism to the local level. It should be also noted, that in many cases, local authorities treated with suspicion any initiatives for public participation that they could not keep under their control. Another characteristic, common to the majority of local representatives, was their unwillingness to take on responsibilities that could make them

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unpopular to groups of the public. Although they were very vocal in making demands for the improvement of local administration, they still preferred to let the departments of the prefecture - and through them, the central government - do their "dirty work". Finally, corruption is not unknown to a significant number of them. It is encouraging, though, that there is continuous renewal of people involved in local administration, and the new administrators now seem to be more aware of their responsibilities and better prepared to take them on. The fact that prefects do not have the right to serve for more than eight years in a row in this position, has had a positive effect on the renewal of office-holders - although the majority of prefects are still keen to get a third 4-year mandate. Possible extension of this to the mayors would achieve even better outcomes, although their reaction would be extremely negative.

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The last remark of this part is that local administration in Greece gets 58% of its finances from the central government, and yet the government only spends 2.5% of its national budget on local administration. If there is no reorganization of its finances, then local administration will not have any chance of significant upgrading.

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Table 1: Variation in number of Organisations of Local Administration of the first level (OLA) in E.U. countries (ranked by range of variation between 1950 and 1995).

Country	Area	Number of OLA		Variation	No of OLA/Area	
	x 1,000 m ²	1950	1995	%	1950	1995
Italy	301.3	7,781	8,066	3,7	25.8	26.8
Greece*	132.0	5,994	5,921	-1,2	45.4	44.9
France	541.1	38,814	36,433	-6,1	71.7	67.3
Luxembourg	2.6	127	118	-7,1	48.8	45.4
Spain	504.8	9,214	8,098	-12,1	18.2	16.0
Ireland	70.3	115	83	-27,8	1.6	1.2
Austria	83.8	3,999	2,347	-41,3	47.7	28.0
W. Germany*	248.5	24,272	8,077	-66,7	97.7	32.5
Un. Kingdom	244.1	2,028	482	-76,2	8.3	2.0
Belgium	30.5	2,669	589	-77,9	87.5	19.3
Denmark	43.1	1,387	275	-80,2	32.2	6.4
Sweden	412.0	2,500	288	-88,5	6.1	0.7
Netherlands	41.8	7,781	633	-91,9	186.1	15.1

*The figure for re-united Germany in 1996 is 16,068 OLA, an average of 45 OLA/1000 m².

*The figure for Greece in 1997 is 1,033 OLA, an average of 7.8 OLA/1000 m², and a variation of -82.8 compared to 1950; hereby scoring between Denmark and Sweden.

Sources: Tsatsos, 1999; CoR, 1997 from Loughlin *et al.*, 1999 in Mamadouh, 2001, p. 479.

Table 2: Sources of Finances of OLA in E.U (ranked by descending percentage of transfers).

Country	Ex. local taxes	Fees & changes	Transfers	Borrowing	Other
United Kingdom	11%	6%	77%	0%	6%
The Netherlands	5%	13%	60%	19%	3%
Greece	2%	22%	58%	6%	12%
Ireland	18%	10%	57%	2%	
Germany	19%	16%	45%	9%	11%
Belgium	32%	5%	40%	13%	10%
Italy	18%	11%	38%	9%	24%
Portugal	20%	19%	38%	6%	17%
Luxembourg	31%	29%	37%	3%	0%
Spain	31%	16%	37%	10%	6%
Austria	15%	19%	35%	8%	23%
Finland	34%	11%	31%	3%	21%
France	38%	2%	26%	10%	26%
Denmark	51%	22%	24%	2%	1%
Sweden	61%	8%	19%	1%	11%

Source: Council of Europe, in Papagiannis, 1998.

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