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Integrated territorial investments and the ‘Europeanization’ of spatial planning and territorial development in Greece: weakening institutional dualism?

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ABSTRACT

The paper explores the dynamics of the Europeanization of spatial planning and territorial development in Greece following the introduction of the integrated territorial investment (ITI) mechanism. These dynamics evolve in the context of so-called ‘development programming’ and ‘regulatory planning’ systems which mostly operate in parallel to each other – a case of institutional dualism. Based on the analysis of interviews with experts and institutional actors, and of relevant documentation (policies, strategies, laws, etc.), the paper argues that the introduction of the EU’s new territorial delivery mechanisms strengthen local capacity to implement territorial development plans and may potentially weaken institutional dualism.

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ITI; Greece; institutional dualism; Europeanization; SUD strategies

1. Introduction

The paper discusses how the first round of integrated territorial investment programmes (ITIs) based on sustainable urban development (SUD) strategies were implemented in Greece. The paper looks at this subject through the lens of ‘Europeanization’, understood as:

Processes of (a) construction, (b) diffusion, and (c) institutionalisation of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, “ways of doing things”, and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the making of EU public policy and politics and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse, identities, political structures, and public policies. (Radaelli, 2003, p. 30)

It seeks to discover how institutions in Greece have adapted to the introduction, via EU regulations on European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), of the ITI mechanism, an innovation which has the potential to re-configure Greek planning practice, at least at the local level. Therefore, the paper explores ‘the means by which member states seek to shape territorial development’ (ESPON COMPASS, 2018b, p. 1) in the context of EU territorial cohesion policy and associated instruments. It focuses on Greece as a case

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study, in order to understand ‘the relationship between territorial governance, spatial planning . . . and EU . . . Cohesion Policy’ (ESPON COMPASS, 2018b, p. 2) during the 2014–2020 Programme Period.

Europeanization is a process of significant institutional and cultural change. According to Gualini (2004), institutional bifurcations are rather typical in the Europeanization process. He argues that the usual responses of an administrative system at the receiving end of an externally introduced new way of doing things are:

- (1) adopt whatever is required by the funder,
- (2) integrate at the local level, for example in an intervention area,
- (3) fragmentation between levels of governance (local, regional, national), fragmentation within the planning system and divergence between territories.

In the case of Greece, it appears that all three responses have actually occurred simultaneously, but at different sections and levels of the Greek administration.

Europeanization of ‘territoriality’ (i.e. the control over territory) affects some EU member states, more than others. According to Havlik’s comparative study of Czechia, Slovakia, Germany and Italy (Havlik, 2023) some member states are ‘vetoing’ the Europeanization of their ‘territoriality’, while others engage in thorough re-organization of their territorial governance. Havlik (2023), argues that Europeanization of territoriality has a chance to advance faster in member states which receive comparatively large amounts of EU funding on a range of themes, and whose cities are less controlled by the regional tier of administration. Havlik (2023) as well as Carpenter *et al.* (2020) also highlight that the course of Europeanization in each member state is influenced by historical relations between actors and by local political culture. Using a framework similar to Cotella and Janin Rivolin’s (2011) and ESPON COMPASS’ (2018a), Carpenter *et al.*, (2020) analyze the process of Europeanization in France, Spain, Italy and the UK in terms of direction of transfer (download/top-down, upload/bottom-up, horizontal/circular), object of transfer (policy content, policy structure, policy style), and impacts of transfer (absorption/small impact, accommodation/medium impact, transformation/high impact). They conclude that ‘countries in an unstable economic position are more open to readily adopting the EU urban development model as a means of accessing funding’ (Carpenter *et al.*, 2020, p. 240).

The integrated territorial development approach currently underpins EU Territorial Cohesion Policy, but the integrated way of dealing with territorial development challenges has been practiced in some EU countries at least since the 1980s. Having said that, the principles of integrated territorial development have influenced EU policy at least since the URBAN Pilot Projects were launched, in 1989. The integrated approach to territorial development was formalized in EU territorial cohesion policy with the Territorial Agenda 2020 (Territorial Agenda 2020, 2011) and the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities in 2007. The Charter calls for member states to adopt integrated urban development policies, to be implemented via SUD strategies and programmes. Several years later, the New Leipzig Charter in 2020, put forward 5 key principles, to serve as cornerstones of the integrated territorial development approach.

The two Charters outline policy-led territorial development and point out that the integrated territorial development approach should be implemented with the use of SUD

strategies, plans and programmes, in order to deliver the urban policy of member states. The ITI mechanism was introduced with Regulations (EU) 1303/2013 (esp. Article 36) and 1301/2013 (esp. Article 7), a few years after the Leipzig Charter was published.

The early findings of an analysis of the implementation of SUD strategies drafted under Article 7 (European Commission, Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy *et al.*, 2017) showed, among other things, that in the majority of cases (88%) these strategies evolved out of pre-existing strategies and that the impact on planning and implementation was positive, mainly due to funds ring-fencing and the requirement to engage in long-term strategic planning. This paper's findings reflect these conclusions but also highlight the significant contextual parameters which affected the course of Europeanization of territoriality in the case of Greece.

Following the introduction, the paper discusses the methodology used for data collection and analysis. Subsequently, the analysis provides the historical background of how the division between the 'regulatory planning' system (i.e. the system dealing with the regulation of land use and the allocation of development rights) and 'development programming' system (i.e. the systems managing the process of allocation of territorial investment mainly via EU funds) evolved after Greece entered the EU. This historical division reinforces institutional dualism (Brinkerhoff & Goldsmith, 2005), from the period of EU accession and up to the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty. The paper then looks into how the operation of two parallel systems which overlap when it comes to managing territorial development has affected the effectiveness of local planning. In that context the paper explores how the integrated approach, and in particular, the ITI mechanism and the SUD strategies were adopted in the Greek system. The final section discusses the main findings and draws conclusions about territorial governance and spatial planning in Greece vis-à-vis the EU's ambitious territorial cohesion policy agenda.

2. Materials and methods

The paper uses a mixed methods approach. We reviewed relevant EU and national policy and legal documents (referred to in the text) to understand and describe the evolution of territorial development planning mechanisms in Greece and the role of the Europeanization process in the development of institutional dualism. We also reviewed 15 SUD strategies drafted for the period 2014–2020. They are the SUD strategies for urban authorities (UA) in Metropolitan Athens and Thessaloniki as well as for most Greek cities with a population over 50,000 inhabitants (Athens Municipality, Piraeus Municipality, Athens Western Sector, Athens Southern Sector, Thessaloniki, Patra, Larissa, Volos, Heraklion, Ioannina, Alexandroupolis, Kavala, Chania, Agrinio, Serres – we were not able to locate the strategies of 4 cities). We reviewed those SUD strategies in order to understand how they deal with vertical and horizontal coordination between the SUD strategies and the provisions of other regional and local strategies and plans. We then focused on cases where SUDs coexisted with other instruments at the local level, particularly Integrated Urban Intervention Plans (IUIPs). Following that, we carried out eight semi-structured interviews with central and local government officials and planning consultants. The purpose of the interviews has been to deepen our understanding of primary findings from the analysis of the strategies and getting more insight into the context of their preparation. The questions focused on analysing the interplay

Table 1. Interviewee details.

Name	Position	Sector
Interviewee A	High-ranking civil service official dealing with spatial planning	Central Government
Interviewee B	High ranking official dealing with project funding	Central Government
Interviewee C	Middle level civil servant dealing with spatial planning	Central Government
Interviewee D	Senior Consultant supporting ITI implementation	Private sector
Interviewee E	Senior staff supporting ITI implementation	Local government
Interviewee F	Senior staff supporting ITI implementation	Local government
Interviewee G	Senior staff supporting ITI implementation	Local government
Interviewee H	Senior Urban Planning Consultant, ITI specialist	Private sector

between ITIs and SUDs with Greek statutory planning instruments, the dynamics between central and local institutional actors, the difficulties to implement the planning process and to deal with assents and approvals. Last but not least, we wanted to understand more about the content of the strategies and how they responded to local aspirations and expectations. In order to get this feedback, we approached key figures involved in the preparation and approval of ITI-SUDs, namely the persons that have been responsible for administering the ITI, decision makers at the central level or experienced planning consultants who have drafted ITI-SUDs and special spatial planning instruments. Table 1 shows more information on the interviewees.

The discussion is based on the findings of the documentary analysis and the interviews.

3. Europeanization and institutional dualism in Greece

Institutional dualism, meaning the bifurcation of policies and administrative structures 'between intended new performance-enhancing institutions and unwanted old practices and institutions' (Brinkerhoff & Goldsmith, 2005) is a long-standing feature of Greek administrative culture. In the case of spatial planning, it has been argued that dualism leads to problems with the enforcement of property rights and undermines the rule of law (Karadimitriou & Pagonis, 2019), a foundational value of the EU (Article 2 TEU).

Dualist institutional structures in Greek spatial planning have evolved significantly since EU accession, in 1981. 'Europeanization' has resulted in the full adoption of new mechanisms like, most recently, the ITI (European Commission, Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy *et al.*, 2017). Crucially, the systems put in place to manage the Partnership Agreement (in Greek: ΕΣΠΑ) gave rise to an 'elite' administrative structure which was created in parallel to, and independently of, the administrative structure managing spatial planning. There are good reasons for this, starting with the need to quickly develop capacity to be able to appropriately manage substantial amounts of EU funding. However, EU legislation had a less pronounced structural reform effect on spatial planning systems and processes, which are arguably becoming more complicated (Karadimitriou & Pagonis, 2019). According to Article 24 of the Greek Constitution, spatial planning and the protection of the environment are the responsibility of the State, whose actions are controlled by the Council of State (in Greek: Συμβούλιο της Επικρατείας). The regulatory power of spatial plans, and the prominent role the Council of State plays in spatial planning, derives from the

plans' legal status: they are approved via Presidential Decrees, whose legal and constitutional compliance comes within the purview of the Council of State. A reflection of this logic can be found in ESPON COMPASS (2018b) which categorizes the legal understanding of the scope of planning in Greece as 'procedural' only, in contrast to the professional understanding which is both 'procedural' and 'substantive'. Greece is one of the few EU member states where this happens.

The concept of integrated territorial planning appeared in the Greek planning system in the late 1990s, when Law 2742/99 introduced the IUIPs (in Greek: ΣΟΑΠ). The IUIPs are statutory instruments which, typically, lack an implementation mechanism and require assents from several government ministers (a 'joint ministerial decision' process, in Greek: ΚΥΑ). According to Interviewee A, only two such joint ministerial decisions have ever been issued, for the IUIPs of the Municipalities of Athens and Heraklion. Two more decisions, for Piraeus' and Western Athens' IUIPs are pending, almost 3 years after the drafts were approved by the Ministry of Environment. This should be compared with 54 ITIs drafted, and approved, during the 2014–2020 Programming Period, of which 39 were ITI-SUD and 15 were non-SUD ITIs.

The paper therefore argues that in spite of the IUIP precedent, the concept of spatial planning for integrated territorial development, only really took hold in Greek local planning culture after the ITI mechanism was introduced. However, although the introduction and implementation of ITIs has caused significant changes in the way territorial development planning is practiced locally, the long-standing institutional divide between 'regulatory planning' and 'development programming' (Wassenhoven *et al.*, 2010; Wassenhoven, 2023), remained intact. In fact, a key finding of the research carried out for this paper is that an innovative way of doing things (the ITI mechanism) was 'slotted into' the existing institutional structure, reinforcing dualism (see Brinkerhoff & Goldsmith, 2005). An institutional 'patch' (the Special Urban Plans, in Greek: ΕΠΣ) was put in place to provide an instrument capable of addressing the 'special regulatory circumstances' (like conflicts or gaps) which have arisen as a result of the introduction of ITIs.

4. Evolution of the division between spatial planning and territorial development

4.1. The formative period

The first period covered in this paper extends from 1981, when Greece joined the EU, up to the mid-1990s. It can be called the 'formative period' because ground-setting legislation and institutions were established at the time. During this period, spatial planning and territorial development were treated as separate policy domains and fields of administrative responsibility.

The main priority of spatial planning during the formative period was to provide a regulatory response to spontaneous/informal urban expansion. The aim was to regulate the location and intensity of development locally, in order to facilitate individual investment decisions (CEC, 1997). A national-scale planning programme was launched in the early 1980s, whose main goal was to draft General Town Plans (in Greek: ΓΠΣ) for every settlement with a population of more than 10.000 inhabitants.

Other provisions were put in place to deal with development control in rural areas or smaller towns and villages. For Greater Athens and Thessaloniki, metropolitan plans (in Greek: Ρυθμιστικά Σχέδια) were drafted.

In parallel to all this, the field of territorial (regional) development was (re) shaped under the influence of EU programmes: the Integrated Mediterranean Programmes (IMP) and, soon after, the Community Support Frameworks (CSF). As a result, two parallel institutional structures for planning were in place at the end of the formative period: one for ‘regulatory’ spatial planning (which focused on the regulation of development rights) and one for ‘development programming’ (which focused on regional/territorial development and access to EU funding). Each structure had its own scope and geographical scale of implementation. To a certain extent, this bifurcation reflected the division of responsibilities between EU and member states on regional policy which, at the time, only referred to social and economic cohesion, leaving territorial management issues as a competence of member states.

4.2. The period of accelerating Europeanization

This period spans from the end of the 1990s up to 2009 (Giannakourou, 2012; Getimis & Giannakourou, 2014). The influence of EU policy and regulation increased during that period. Tentative efforts to coordinate spatial planning and territorial development programmes were mainly focused on policy goals and guiding principles.

Planning in Greece was influenced by the debates around European Spatial Planning, and by the adoption of the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) (Coccosis *et al.*, 2005). For example, the goals of General Town Plans, as stated in the relevant legislation of that time (Article 1, Law 2508/1997) echoed the principles of the ESDP. The specifications of the General Town Plans (Presidential Decree 209Δ/2000 and 153Α/2002) promoted the concept of the compact city and sustainable urban development. Beyond the alignment with EU policy directives at the level of guiding principles, the actual scope of the plans changed little from that of their predecessors. Their main preoccupation was the identification of areas for urban expansion and the specification of the parameters for their urbanization. There was little scope for a more strategic and integrated approach in their provisions, and no attempt was made to address severe implementation issues, especially when it came to integration with funding mechanisms. This was well documented at the time, and doubts were raised about the effectiveness of General Town Plans.

A significant step towards endorsing a strategic planning approach was the introduction, for the first time, of spatial planning instruments at the national and regional levels. This formalized a hierarchical relation between higher and lower-level plans in the Planning System. This structural transformation, however, did not address the implementation challenges faced locally, nor did it consider how those plans might co-ordinate with the investment programmes funded by the EU (via the Regional Operational Programmes, etc.), in the spirit of integrated territorial development.

During that time, EU Structural Funds became the main funding source for territorial development. National public investment programmes assumed a secondary and subsidiary role due to the significant size and wide scope of EU funding, and the

requirements for a national contribution to the Partnership Agreement. The corresponding management structures and institutional arrangements related to EU fund management were consolidated and expanded across all administrative levels.

There was concern, at the time, about poor horizontal and vertical coordination between spatial plans and territorial development programmes (ESPON, 2007). Efforts were made to ensure the harmonization of their provisions at least at the level of goals and directions. This, however, proved to be harder than expected, due to the different timings of plans, incompatibility of procedures etc. (Wassenhoven *et al.*, 2010). As a result, the relationship between spatial planning and territorial development frameworks remained loose.

5. The introduction of ITIs in an institutional landscape of increasing complexity

After 2009, Greek spatial planning faced important challenges related to the political and economic circumstances during and after the financial crisis. New opportunities arose from the emphasis which EU Policy placed on territorial cohesion, and the focus of policy implementation mechanisms on territorial cooperation and integrated territorial development.

5.1. Crisis and reform period

The period from 2009 and up to 2018 could be called the ‘crisis and reform’ era. In effect Greece went bankrupt and, as a result, its fiscal policy was under the control of the EU mechanism of fiscal supervision. The political and social turmoil which ensued had multiple impacts, which were distributed in a geographically and socially uneven way. Central Athens was hit hard, and as a result a lively public debate ensued about the suitability of planning instruments to deal with complex urban problems of underinvestment and social deprivation. The IUIPs were redefined and were given a detailed scope in 2012 in the hope that they would be used by local authorities to provide an integrated response to rapid urban decline. Although for Greek standards the IUIP is closer to an area-based intervention plan than a regulatory planning instrument (Asprogerakas, 2020), they do not have an investment programme tied to them and their approval procedures are extremely cumbersome.

Interviewee F was not pleased that the IUIP of his UA had not been approved ‘many years after it was drafted’ but said that they will update it in order to use it as an input to the SUD strategy and the ITI. Interviewee E also said that the IUIP of her UA has not been approved although several years have passed since it was drafted, but they will update it and use it for the ITI-SUD anyway because although it is not a ‘hard’ regulatory instrument, it does help with drafting the ITI-SUD in a way that is more compatible with the spatial planning provisions already in place. Interviewee G was clear that although his UA contemplated drafting an IUIP, they were dissuaded by the complexity of the approval process: ‘it is not so practical and easy to approve an IUIP, to obtain ... ministerial assents’. It should come as no surprise that Interviewee A said that he does not expect any more UA to draft new IUIPs in the foreseeable future.

The concept of integrated territorial development was introduced via the ITI and the Community Led Local Development (CLLD). These mechanisms reflect the territorialized approach to the Cohesion Policy's objectives, through area-based programmes in the spirit of the Barca (2009) (Asprogerakas & Preza, 2022).

The first calls for proposals for ITI-SUD and non-SUD were launched in 2016 by the Regional Operational Programme Managing Authorities and focused on targeting the crisis-ridden urban areas or areas with a special development dynamic. In practice, in a handful of cases where an IUIP existed already, the SUD strategy utilised it, otherwise the SUD strategy was drafted from scratch. UAs were asked to identify a designated urban zone according to specific criteria, and to apply a spatial development concept for that area. In the Metropolitan Region of Attica, a total of four ITIs were prepared in the period 2016–2018 for central Athens, Piraeus, the association of municipalities of Western Athens and a coalition of municipalities in Southern Athens.

Therefore, when the ITI mechanism was introduced, it was the first time in Greek planning history that UAs were asked to draft a policy-led strategic territorial development strategy with a clear action plan and a consistent investment programme that could, in principle, be implemented. Eventually, 39 UAs across the country drafted an ITI-SUD. In Athens, Piraeus, Western Attica, Iraklion and Thessaloniki the IUIPs were used as inputs in this process but, obviously, any regulatory dimensions of the IUIPs were lost, because the SUD strategies are not statutory planning instruments. In fact, the introduction and implementation of the ITI mechanism was done by the National Coordination Authority of ESPA (the Partnership Agreement), in the Ministry of Development and Investments.

5.2. ITI and dualist institutional structures

When asked whether the ITI-SUD could be considered as a spatial planning mechanism Interviewee H, was adamant that the ITI-SUD (as well as the ITI non-SUD) are 'clearly not' spatial planning instruments but were 'territorial development and funding mechanisms.' However, Interviewee H also noted that the ITI-SUD 'has an indirect effect' towards promoting an integrated approach in planning, because it 'forces you to think in an integrated way upon designing a project proposal'. Interviewees A and C concurred that ITI-SUD (and non-SUD) are not dealing with spatial planning but they are 'very light' by way of regulation and essentially 'a funding mechanism'. It is interesting to note that Interviewees D, E, F, G, who have worked on ITI-SUD, point out the spatial dimension of ITI-SUD, which allowed them to territorialize their investment programmes under a coherent spatial strategy for their UA.

This apparent dichotomy between central government and local level supports a key argument in this paper, namely that the division between 'regulatory planning' and 'development programming' facilitates dualist institutional structures. The local level, incentivized by the central and regional government administrative system managing the allocation of EU funding, chose to bring together spatial planning and territorial development functions under the umbrella of the ITI-SUD, an effort which is bound to generate a certain level of friction with the regulatory spatial framework covering their

administrative area. Meanwhile, another part of the central government considers the ITI-SUD as a purely funding mechanism because it has no regulatory dimension.

This divergence in understanding, which apparently permeates Greek planning culture (see ESPON COMPASS, 2018b), posed significant challenges to planning practice throughout the ‘crisis and reform’ period.

A few years prior to the introduction of the ITI, Greece’s Structural Adjustment Programme called for the privatization of state property assets and for speedy decisions on Strategic Investment proposals. Although the focus of this requirement was on speeding up planning and licencing timelines, the substance of the issue was the need to put in place a spatial planning process with a territorial development focus whose outputs (spatial plans focused on investment implementation) would be implementable within a timeframe aligned to the needs of the economy. The introduction in the Greek planning system of an instrument which would combine spatial planning with territorial development was not an easy task.

Initially, the government transferred all the relevant responsibilities to the Ministry of Development through special territorial planning instruments. The first such instruments were the Special Spatial Development Plans of Public Assets (SSDPPA, in Greek: ΕΞΧΑΔΑ) (L. 3986/2011) and the Special Spatial Development Plans for Strategic Investments (SSDPSI, in Greek: ΕΞΧΑΣΕ) (L.3894/2010). Eventually, new local planning instruments, the Special Spatial Plans (Law 4269/2014) were introduced, that would fall under the remit of the Ministry of Environment. These were renamed to Spatial Urban Plans (SUP) in planning laws 4447/2016 and 4759/2020 – around the time when the ITI mechanism was implemented too. SUP technical specifications were issued in 2022 (Ministerial Decision ΥΠΕΝ/ΔΠΟΛΣ/6015/136/2022, ΦΕΚ 510/Β/9-2-2022). The complete list of spatial planning and territorial development instruments available in the Greek system can be found in [Table 2](#).

The SUP remit covers the spatial organization and development of areas where projects and programmes of supra-local or strategic nature could be located, and there is a need to regulate land uses and development parameters. Specifically, SUPs can be drafted for:

- Urban regeneration areas, environmental protection areas or areas in need of post-disaster reconstruction
- Areas of intervention in programmes co-funded by the EU, such as the ITI-SUD
- Areas with critical spatial challenges where a plan has to be completed rapidly.

The SUPs do not follow administrative and planning boundaries and are binding for Local Urban Plans (LUPs). Although regulatory in scope, the SUP can be seen as a plan which enables strategic spatial planning because its goal is to facilitate projects and programmes of strategic importance. The SUP aimed to address the inability of (regulatory) spatial planning to keep up with relatively rapid changes in (local) socio-economic circumstances. In the case of the ITI, this structural characteristic is expressed as a potential for divergence between the regulatory provisions of statutory spatial plans and the policies, goals, actions and programmes of SUD and non-SUD strategies.

Due to their ‘ad hoc’ character, the SUPs were seen as tools undermining the mainstream spatial planning process (Papageorgiou, 2017; Gemenetzi, 2023). Other critics saw

Table 2. List of spatial planning (SP) and territorial development (TD) instruments.

Name	Acronym	Year	Origin and scope	Scale of intervention
Integrated Mediterranean Programmes	IMP [ΜΟΠ]	1986	EU/TD	National/Regional
URBAN Pilot Program	URBAN	1989	EU/TD	Local
European Spatial Development Perspective	ESDP [ΣΑΚΧ]	1999	EU/SP	EU
National Strategic Reference Framework	NSRF [ΕΣΠΑ]	2007	EU/TD	National/Regional
Sustainable Urban Development Strategy	SUD [ΣΒΑΑ]	2013	EU/TD	Local
Integrated Territorial Investment	ITI [ΟΧΕ]	2013	EU/TD	Local
Community Led Local Development	CLLD [ΤΑΠΤΟΚ]	2013	EU/TD	Local
Metropolitan Plans [Ρυθμιστικά Σχέδια]	MP [ΡΣ]	1983	GREECE/SP	Regional
General Urban Plans	GUP [ΓΠΣ]	1983	GREECE/SP	Local
Regional Spatial Plans	RSP [ΠΠΧΣΑΑ]	1999	GREECE/SP	Regional
Integrated Urban Intervention Plans	IUIP [ΣΟΑΠ]	1999	GREECE/SP	Local
Operational Programmes	OP [ΕΠ]	2007	GREECE/TD	Local
Special Spatial Development Plans of Strategic Investments	SSDPSI [ΕΣΧΑΣΕ]	2010	GREECE/SP	Local
Special Spatial Development Plans of Public Assets	SSDPPA [ΕΣΧΑΔΑ]	2011	GREECE/SP	Local
Special Urban Plans	SUP [ΕΠΣ]	2014 2020	GREECE/SP	Local
Local Urban Plans	LUP [ΤΠΣ]	2014 2020	GREECE/SP	Local
Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans	SUMP [ΣΒΑΚ]	2021	GREECE/SP	Local

the SUPs as the introduction in the Greek planning system of yet another process which aims to manage the allocation of development rights, and therefore is a missed opportunity for substantive structural reform (Karadimitriou & Pagonis, 2019).

In any case, the SUPs patch the institutional gap between regulatory planning and development programming, but reinforce institutional dualism in the process. They apply on a case-by-case basis within a clearly defined area, and therefore they address a localized problem but do not eliminate the cause of the problem – which is therefore bound to manifest itself again whenever there is a requirement to provide a spatial planning framework to a territorial development programme.

The analysis of the content of 15 approved ITI-SUD from the 2014–2020 Programming Period, shows that the harmonization with the spatial planning framework is dealt with both at the level of the program and at the level of individual projects and actions. It was actually a requirement of the NCA and consequently of Managing Authorities that ITIs should adhere to higher level regional spatial plans as well as other regional strategies (the Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialisation – RIS3 – and the Poverty and Inclusion Strategy, for example, see Karadimitriou & Maloutas, 2023). This compatibility, however, is not addressing the concern for integrated territorial development but solely the concern of compliance with approved land use and regulatory

provisions. In general, UAs make an effort to adjust their ITI-SUD to the provisions of the local plans, although it is a relatively cumbersome process. However, an SUP can be (and has been) drafted in case of strategic incompatibilities which would render the ITI-SUD implementation impossible from a regulatory point of view.

5.3. Operational programmes

In yet another parallel development, from 2007 onward, local authorities are required to prepare Operational Programmes (OPs) as part of their Capital Investment Planning procedure. The OPs served the purpose of facilitating the funding of municipal projects from the Regional Operational Program, but they do not have a spatial dimension. The OPs are effectively a master list of capital investment projects which the various sectoral departments of any local authority plan to implement. Because the ITI mechanism included an investment programme which required mature projects, the projects in the OPs which were located within the ITI intervention area were ordinarily used to populate the ITI investment programme. Thus, the ITI acted as a platform which brought together pre-existing strategic plans and investment programmes and territorialized them, under the umbrella of the EU Structural Funds management systems. The opinions of the interviewees are divided as to whether the ITI makes OPs redundant. The value of the OP for UAs is that it allows them to draft a Capital Investment Plan which is broader in scope than the investment programme of the ITI. However, in cases where the ITI intervention area is the entire municipality, this approach might lead to dilution of the resources available to the UA. As it was readily recognised by several local-level interviewees, the funding available for the ITI via ESIF is not enough to cover the needs of the UA. Therefore, in many cases they try to bring in additional funding from other sources.

6. Current dynamics

The current period starts in 2019. It can be called the ‘period of recovery’ not only referring to a period of rapid growth for the Greek economy but also to new initiatives taken by the EU to support the recovery of the EU economy from the pandemic through the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), which will fund Greece with 30 billion euro.

Greek central government announced a massive plan-making program in 2019, which envisages the preparation of more than 220 LUPs, (in Greek: ΤΠΣ) covering more than 70% of the national territory as well as a number of Special Urban Plans for selected areas, mainly coastal zones and islands. Additionally, the program will fund a number of background projects like the digital planning inventory, the digitalization of previous plans, the national inventory of local roads, the delineation of settlement boundaries and of Development Rights Transfer zones. This ambitious operation is planned to be completed by 2024–2025 and has a designated budget of 400 million euros, provided by the RRF.

The main focus of said LUPs, according to their technical specifications (ΦΕΚ Β 3545/2021), is regulatory and a lot of attention is paid to capturing and storing geospatial data. Also, it is striking that their scope is not very different from the previous version, although resilience and adaptation to climate change risks feature prominently. Hence, it can be said that the primary aim of the program is to restore the reliability of regulatory

planning and to bring the system of development control into the digital era. The components of strategic projects and territorial development (i.e. the more ‘substantive’ aspects linked to policy implementation) are entirely missing and no direct reference is made to how the new LUPs will be linked to integrated territorial development tools or any other implementation mechanism.

The need for updated strategic territorial frameworks to guide municipal investment became evident in the case of Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMP, in Greek: ΣΒΑΚ). They were made obligatory by law in 2021 (L.4784/2021) for certain Local Authority categories, and were acknowledged in the 2021 Technical Specifications of the LUPs. The SUMPs, though sectoral in nature, provide timelines, responsibilities and funding sources as well as approximate budgets, where relevant. Over 70 of these plans have been drafted since 2016, and their number should increase to more than 110 if the law is fully applied.

In addition, the Ministry of the Environment made available to Local Authorities in 2020, another 200 million euros for urban public space renewal projects (in Greek: αναπλάσεις). The main selection criterion of the call was the existence of ‘mature studies’ in order to be eligible for funding from the RRF. No reference is made to any other process or plan, which highlights the challenge of integration between various parallel processes and programmes.

In the field of planning for territorial development for the programming period 2021–2027 the ITIs were expanded and enhanced. In most cases, due to delays in project maturity, existing ITIs will be updated, and their funding will be carried forward and complemented by new resources. They are de facto becoming the main territorial development funding mechanism of UA because they can be customized to local needs and are under their direct control. Moreover, some additional ITIs will also be funded in this Programming Period.

Overall, in the current period, many UAs will draft or update their ITI-SUD and in many cases the strategies will cover their entire territory. These UAs will also have SUMPs, a handful will also have IUIPs and Special Urban Plans (SUPs) covering areas where ITI-SUD interventions require regulatory adjustments. In parallel, the preparation of new LUPs is underway for the majority of municipalities across the country.

It remains to be seen how complex urban investment programmes that adhere to the integrated territorial development approach will be delivered, given the proliferation of instruments (IUIPs, SUD, SUP and SUMP, Operational Programmes). Who will manage the risk of UAs funding disparate actions and projects with no relation to each other besides their reference to the same geographical area?

In recognition of this risk, the specifications issued by the NCA for the current round of ITI (Ministry of Development, Circular 124,143/21-12-2022) stipulate that when drafting an ITI-SUD, UAs should pay attention to:

... cohesion between the various strategies covering various levels, compatibility with Regional Spatial Frameworks, sectoral policies and priorities. SUD strategies in particular should be absolutely compatible with SUMP or be part of the SUMP.

It remains to be seen how this requirement will be implemented in practice, given the number of documents that SUDs will have to take into account and the fact that SUDs are territorial Strategies while SUMP are essentially sectoral plans. Interviewee E thinks that it

will be difficult to come up with a plan that will serve as the critical local planning document where an integrated territorial approach will be based. However, she expects the connection between LUPs, IUIPs and ITIs to be a significant but not impossible task. There is, however, no assurance that the problems with the implementation of LUPs, due to lack of connection to funding mechanisms, will not continue to plague Greek planning practice.

7. Assessing the evolution of institutional dualism

The examination of the Greek institutional set-up, with regard to the adoption of the ITI mechanism, has revealed a set of challenges directly related to institutional dualism and the structural dichotomy between the 'regulatory planning' system and the 'development programming' system. Eventually, such issues are to be expected when it comes to the adoption, by a state bureaucracy, of new ways of doing things, new mechanisms and new institutions. As demonstrated in this paper, the administration's response in Greece had elements of all three reactions identified by Gualini (2004). First, the EU legislation was adopted in full from the part of the administration tasked with EU fund management (the Ministry of Development's services as well as the Managing Authorities which are part of the Regional Administration). At the local level (UA), the adoption of the ITI mechanism motivated some UAs to re-thing territorial development and to create institutions tasked to plan and deliver territorial development programmes which utilized the spatial regulatory framework, or even modified it via SUPs where necessary. Anecdotally, this did not happen in all cases, and largely depended on the capacity of the UA.

Finally, notwithstanding the differences in integration between territories, there seems to be a clear difference between how the EU fund management system responded and how territorial development mechanisms are understood by the Ministry of the Environment.

In part, this is due to the absence of an explicit urban policy or a nationally derived territorial development policy to drive strategic planning. The bulk of public investment in territorial development is channelled through the Partnership Agreement (ESPA), and therefore is managed via the Ministry of Development and the Regions. This policy gap is filled by EU (Cohesion) Policy, which is somewhat reflected in the latest LUP specifications (drafted by the Ministry of the Environment). However, the EU policy cycle is shorter than the update cycle of Greek LUPs, which reinforces divergence between the two.

The other stumbling block is that, as mentioned, spatial planning in Greece is understood in law as a regulatory matter which revolves around land use planning and master planning (i.e. the regulation of land uses, the allocation of development rights and the regulation of building parameters). This is termed 'regulatory planning' in Greece and a key factor underpinning its significance is the Council of State's substantial and substantive involvement in the process.

Integrated territorial development, has a significant investment programme element (and therefore is 'substantive') but is premised on a non-regulatory spatial planning tool (the SUD Strategy). Therefore, in the Greek context, the ITI-SUD is interpreted by key actors as a funding mechanism which belongs to 'development programming'. However,

the integrated territorial development approach, and its delivery mechanisms, offered a potential solution to some of the chronic implementation issues faced by ‘regulatory planning’. As a result, UAs (especially those with more capacity) made an effort to combine the analysis and legal provisions of statutory instruments (IUIP, LUP) with the ITI-SUD. They are de facto using the ITI as a way to guide their investment with the use of a coherent spatial vision.

This is not to say that this effort has been unproblematic. The structural institutional dichotomy between ‘regulatory planning’ and ‘development programming’, posed a challenge to the delivery of integrated spatial development goals and complex urban projects. Arguably, the challenge to bridge these gaps remains in the current Programming Period.

In the ITIs drafted during the previous Programming Period (2014–2020), there was well-recognised practical need for coordination and harmonization between plans at different levels that are subject to different requirements and timings. Indeed, the Managing Authorities required the ITI-SUD to comply with higher-level spatial plans, as well as with regional innovation strategies and regional strategies on poverty and social exclusion. This was a necessary step, but at the same time it implied that the SUD strategy and the ITI de facto became an implementation mechanism of the LUP.

The (regulatory) local plan to which the ITI corresponds, is likely to diverge on the scientific and disciplinary perspectives it is based on, as well as, on the policy agendas it pursues. Because the LUPs are legally binding, the SUD Strategy was bound by their provisions. In effect, therefore, the SUD Strategy was bound by the flexibility of the land use designations and the development rights allocations of the LUP, whose policy directions, problematization, analysis and regulatory framework may or may not be aligned to those of the SUD Strategy. A special tool, the SUP, was put in place to allow ITIs to diverge from those provisions in selected territories.

8. Conclusions

The incentives provided by the European Commission to support the adoption of the ITI approach from member states have already had significant impact in the way territorial development is carried out at the local level: Greek UAs have begun to adopt a more policy-led, strategic, long-term, spatially aware approach to the way they plan and implement their investment programmes whereas the focus on sectoral integration and multi-level governance has in, many cases, supported trust-building and a culture of dialogue within and between UAs. Thirty-nine UAs in Greece developed SUD strategies during the previous Programming Period, and another 15 ITIs covering non-urban territories have been drafted, mostly by Regional Administrations. It seems that, at the local level, the ITI-SUD instrument has not only been embraced but it is becoming the main tool through which UAs organize, spatialize and implement significant parts of their capital investment programmes – even though more guidance would be useful as to how the Municipal Operational Programmes would fit into this approach.

On the other hand, the introduction of ITIs seems to have reinforced the pre-existing division between regulatory spatial planning and territorial development. In fact, it seems that the introduction of a significant innovation like the ITI, was successful in

introducing the integrated approach locally but also reinforced institutional dualism at the national level.

As explained, this phenomenon occurs partially due to historical reasons and institutional inertia (see Carpenter *et al.*, 2020; Havlik, 2023). It is also a phenomenon not unique to Greece, for example in Italy Cotella and Janin Rivolin (2011, p. 49) also note the ‘consolidation of a “programming culture” parallel to (rather than integrated with) traditional spatial planning’. In the case of Greece, what started as an administrative division due to pragmatic considerations, led to two clearly distinct domains of government policy and responsibility, which also have a different orientation (Wassenhoven *et al.*, 2010; Wassenhoven, 2023). The way that this siloing played out in operational terms until the ITI were introduced was that, on the one hand, spatial plans were poorly linked to the funding mechanisms required in order to implement their provisions while, on the other hand, territorial development programmes often failed to pursue meaningful spatial development objectives. It was not a particularly effective, nor a particularly efficient, way to plan for territorial development, but it echoes the ‘procedural’ understanding of the scope of planning in the local legal tradition. The introduction of the ITI mechanism seems to have provided a way forward at the UA level, although in many cases the intervention areas do not cover the entire UAs territory. However, a key issue for Greek planning is whether and how this novel way of doing things could influence the central government administration dealing with ‘regulatory’ spatial planning. The implementation of ITI-SUD in Greece is an interesting case of Europeanization advancing from two directions. One direction is the top-down ‘downloading’ of EU policies and instruments transmitted via the national EU fund management system. However, the second direction is the ‘upload’ from local level planning practice to the national ‘regulatory planning’ system. The impact of those pressures is still unclear, yet they create the conditions for re-thinking the conceptual dichotomies which underpin institutional dualism and the dichotomy between ‘procedural’ and ‘substantive’ planning practice in Greece.

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