

Governing and managing Metropolitan Areas: The case of Athens

1. Introduction

In this presentation a brief analysis is made of the possibilities and preconditions for establishing metropolitan government in the Athens metropolitan area. Initially, on the basis of certain criteria concerning both its international prestige and its internal organisation and functioning, there - is an attempt to evaluate Athens' place in the international context. This assessment is made with the aim of showing the type of planning and development strategy needed by the area of the capital, as well as the role of the bodies involved in this effort. Next, there is an attempt to investigate the basic principles and alternative possibilities of administrative restructuring and the creation of a metropolitan government based on the area's geographical, operational, social, political and other particularities. Finally, reference is made to the nature and role of the Environmental Protection and Planning Agency of Athens (ORSA) in the light also of the ten years of experience gained since it began operating, and always in relation to the prospect of creating a metropolitan authority for the area under examination.

In Greece the substantive debate (theoretical and non-theoretical) and the relevant controversy concerning metropolitan areas and their administration began only a few years ago (at the beginning of the 1990s)¹. Not coincidentally, the term "metropolitan area" is very seldom used in official administrative and legislative texts (specifically, it occurs only in the preambles to Laws 1622/86 and 2240/94).

2. The Present Situation in Athens and Attiki

It is common knowledge that the prevailing administrative situation in the greater Athens area and Attiki as a whole is chaotic, and this has been the subject of a relevant commentary.² In brief, the present territorial and administrative regime in this area includes a number of types or categories of units on various scales, which possess greater or lesser administrative substance (that is, they are either simple administrative divisions or they include some governing body). Specifically the main units, in order of size, are the following:

- One administrative region with four prefectural administrations (second-tier local government bodies) which originated from the corresponding state prefectural administrations with a parallel change of boundaries. The boundaries of these prefectural administrations do not correspond to the boundaries of prefectures, as is the case in the rest of the country, because Attiki as a whole still constitutes a single prefecture.
- Seven provinces (Attiki, Aigina, Megarida, Piraeus, Trizinia, Hydra, Kythira) which are the remnants of the two former prefectures and prefectural administrations of Attiki and Piraeus.
- Four dioceses (Athens, Attiki and Megarida, Nikea, Piraeus and Hydra) whose boundaries are completely different from those of the prefectures and prefectural administrations, as is also often the case in many other areas of the country.
- Five electoral districts (Athens A, Athens B, Piraeus A, Piraeus B, Rest of Attiki), the only ones in the country which do not coincide with the administrative boundaries of prefectures.

- Five planning units (the Athens basin along with Salamina, Western Attiki, Northern Attiki, Eastern Attiki and Insular Attiki) provided for by the law regarding the Master Plan for Athens (RSA), which of course have no relation to the four prefectural administrations.
- Sixteen (16) units under Law 1416/84 for the establishment of development associations and twenty (20) geographical areas under Law 1622/86 for the unification of first-tier local authorities, mainly communes in the less urbanised area of Attiki.
- One hundred fifty (150) first-tier local authorities, municipalities and communes which constitute the area's basic administrative network that supports nearly all administrative arrangements.
- There is also a final level of intra-municipal division of space into even smaller spatial units which possess a certain institutional-administrative character. Thus, in the case of the institutionalised urban planning space, i.e. the areas within the city plan, there are the so-called urban planning units of Law 1337/83 (neighbourhoods, quarters). As an indication, it can be mentioned that only in Athens Municipality, 129 such units have been demarcated, which are grouped into about 40 quarters, and there are also, as we know, the 7 municipal departments. Also on the same level are the parishes of the church. According to a study by the National Social Research Centre (EKKE) carried out in 1972, which is mentioned in the bibliography, there were 358 parishes in what was formerly known as the Greater Athens Area, which did not include all of Attiki.

It is evident that the situation described above in the greater Athens area, including all sorts of irrational administrative divisions (with parallel or overlapping competencies) has been a basic inhibitory factor in all attempts at planning. Every planning act and procedure requires the involvement of various administrative organisations and bodies which must decide in each case on the future of the sensitive Athenian space. In particular, works at the intermunicipal or interprefectural level require increased coordination between bodies, as well as the consent of society. What is required, therefore, is a new administrative structure that will essentially take charge of effective spatial and environmental management and help map out and implement a development policy for the area, as has been done in dozens of other large cities on our planet.

Given this situation, the creation of a metropolitan (self-) government could constitute a decisive step in the area's administrative and territorial rationalisation, which has essentially been outstanding ever since the Administration for the Area of the Capital was created (1936)³. From time to time, there have been certain infrequent ideas and recommendations⁴, but no studies have ever been carried out with a view to implementation, which would have allowed the broader area of the capital to acquire the structures of a modern metropolis.

3. The real dimensions, possibilities and perspectives of metropolitan Athens

Much has been written at different times about the problem of planning and administering the greater Athens area. However, one basic thing needs to be pointed out. The inefficacy of efforts to resolve the problems of this metropolitan area has created the impression that Athens is a city that cannot be rehabilitated, even to the point where 'desperate' solutions have been proposed, such as moving the capital or resettling its inhabitants, which for one thing are conducive of a fatalistic acceptance of the existing situation. But reality has never been as tragic as some people would like to make it appear. Athens is one of the smallest metropolises in the world and on the European continent (with a population of 3,500,000 in 1991) and its problems can be addressed, despite the difficulties which naturally exist in such cases. A particular feature of the case of Athens is on the one hand its internal disorganisation, and on the other hand the disproportionate size of its population and other magnitudes in relation to the rest of the country, and compared to other European metropolises.⁵ However, its relatively large specific gravity as regards Greece does not ensure it a comparable place on an international scale. According to all studies done to

date on sorting and classifying European cities, the Athens urban conglomeration is merely a “regional metropolis of small international importance”.⁶

Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that, despite all its weaknesses and its relatively disadvantaged position internationally, Athens is large enough, that is, it has the necessary critical mass from the standpoint of population and society to be able to compete with the big cities of Europe and even to successfully claim a place as one of the main (if not *the* main) metropolitan centres of the southeastern Mediterranean. Indeed, on both the European and the international levels Athens can improve its present image by exploiting its comparative advantages which also make up its particular physiognomy. In a part of the world where political balances are fragile, Athens can assume a leading role and show itself to be a decisive factor in promoting our country’s international relations as well as peace and stability more generally in the Balkan and the Mediterranean area. However, assuming such a role is conditional upon seeking to integrate Athens in the major international networks of cities, with the objective of its effective “networking” on the European and global scale, a favourable outcome and consequence of which would be its “internationalisation”.⁷

In order to achieve these objectives both internally (organisation of the city and improvement of the quality of life) and on the external “front” (networking and internationalisation) a new politico-administrative structure and organisation that will meet modern demands for governing the Athens urban conglomeration must be created. This option is not, of course, a panacea, especially in the present-day situation, where the creation of metropolitan governments in the developed Western European countries is not encouraged, particularly after the experience of the post-war period. This does not mean, of course, that in countries like Greece such an undertaking is not still expedient and necessary, for a number of reasons ranging from such countries’ degree of development, urbanisation and decentralisation to their organisational composition in general, as we will see further on.

4. The New Concepts of Planning and the Conditions for Sustainability of Metropolitan Governments in Greece

All the countries of the European Union (with the exception perhaps of Luxembourg and Greece) have experienced the institution of metropolitan governments at some stage during the post-war period. But, in the beginning of the ‘80s this institution’s existence came into serious question in Western Europe and for that reason it seems to have undergone a relative downturn and decline. By contrast, in the southern and the Mediterranean countries there are still some significant margins for its development, to the degree to which procedures of democratisation, transfer of competencies to the regions, decentralisation, etc. are still in progress. Recently some new, more general effort to promote relevant consideration of the issues of metropolitan areas seems to have begun, through conferences and other related events, with a view to also incorporating the international experience acquired to date.⁸

As we know, Greece’s metropolitan areas (Athens and Thessaloniki) lack an organisational scheme which could be termed even a rudimentary metropolitan government. For Athens in particular, one could contend that there is the so-called single or enlarged Athens-Piraeus prefectural administration, but this is just a “stitching together” of two simple prefectural administrations, which retain their essential competencies. In addition, certain territorial arrangements are needed to create overall, rational administrative units both on the level of the Athens basin and on the level of Attiki.

Given the above, the creation of a metropolitan government in Greece, particularly in the case of Athens–Attiki, will have a *raison d’être* as well as good sustainability only if unsuccessful formulas are avoided and advantage is taken of the post-war experience of

the European countries. Nowadays any sort of metropolitan government that is created will be called on, first of all, to summon up all its strength in the sector of urban management on the metropolitan level; this presents problems such as the ones referred to above, which are directly related to the quality of life of the broader social strata. The fact that these issues work to the benefit of the people creates the necessary foundation and consequently the political conditions on which the sustainability of the institution will be based. Planning alone appears to be insufficient (as an objective and as a competency) to bring about broad social and political support for a new administrative structure, apart from those already existing in the metropolitan area. Furthermore, strategic planning, despite the fact that it is among the main objectives of a metropolitan authority, cannot be considered its only competency. Cooperation and collaboration of the public with the private and social sectors are now indispensable for any kind of planning. The example of metropolitan Barcelona is fairly characteristic and constitutes a model both for the manner of designing a strategic plan, through processes of social participation and consent, and for involvement with problems of an operational nature such as waste disposal.

5. Principles and criteria for a metropolitan government in the Athens area

An initial approach to the matter shows that on the basis at least of the European experience⁹, some choices should be made with regard to certain decisive parameters-criteria. The first is the geographical scale, that is, the geographical unit that will be defined as the spatial competency of the metropolitan authority and which in our case has at least two solutions: the Athens basin and the Attiki area¹⁰. The question here is focused on which unit is more suitable, not in general, but also in conjunction with the other parameters of the problem¹¹. The second point concerns the administrative status which must be created both with regard to the type of political representation (government) and with regard to the form of organisation that will be considered most suitable among the alternatives (single authority, collaboration of first-tier authorities, higher-level authority). This scheme can either take the form of an “ordinary” authority on a corresponding level, or constitute an organisational structure “of a special type”. Of particular significance here is the appropriate interrelation with the whole administrative “structure” (levels of decision-making and planning in the country’s administrative pyramid) to avoid contradictory situations with the first criterion of the scale of the geographical unit. The third criterion concerns the manner of electing the basic - management bodies of the metropolitan authority by direct or indirect vote (usually the chairman, the commission, the council). The fourth criterion concerns the kind and extent of the competencies of the metropolitan authority, in relation both to central administration and to first-tier government. Here, too, the manner of internal distribution of competencies among the main management bodies is being examined. Finally, the fifth criterion concerns the manner of economic and technical support of metropolitan government so as to ensure that the institution functions smoothly from the start. Also related to this point is the policy on the Environmental Protection and Planning Agency of Athens (ORSA) which is responsible for the same area and which will be discussed further on.

It should be noted that the alternatives in every criterion or parameter do not automatically go together. Therefore the combinations of criteria which are compatible with each other should be found. In addition, the problem has certain generally accepted “constants”, such as the self-governing character and the creation of a higher level of administration. Therefore the possible solutions are much fewer than those anticipated in theory. With these data, we can envision two principal scenarios, depending on the chosen geographical and administrative level:

a) Metropolitan Government on the level of the Athens basin which presents two sub-cases:

a1) Selection of a higher-level authority of the “ordinary” type on the prefectural level (metropolitan prefectural government), by direct election of management bodies (chairman and council) and increased competencies in relation to central administration.

a2) Selection of a special-type higher-level authority, by direct election of a council and indirect election of a chairman, and increased competencies in relation to central administration, but distributed among the management bodies depending on their degree of political representation. (The case of indirect election of all management bodies with decreased but necessary coordinating competencies is also open to examination).

b) Metropolitan Government on the level of the region/Attiki prefecture, which will be a second-tier structure in relation to the first-tier government (second-tier local government body), which means that one of the other two existing higher levels should be abolished in this area.

DIAGRAM 2: CRITERIA FOR THE SELECTION OF THE FORM OF METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT - SCENARIO a2

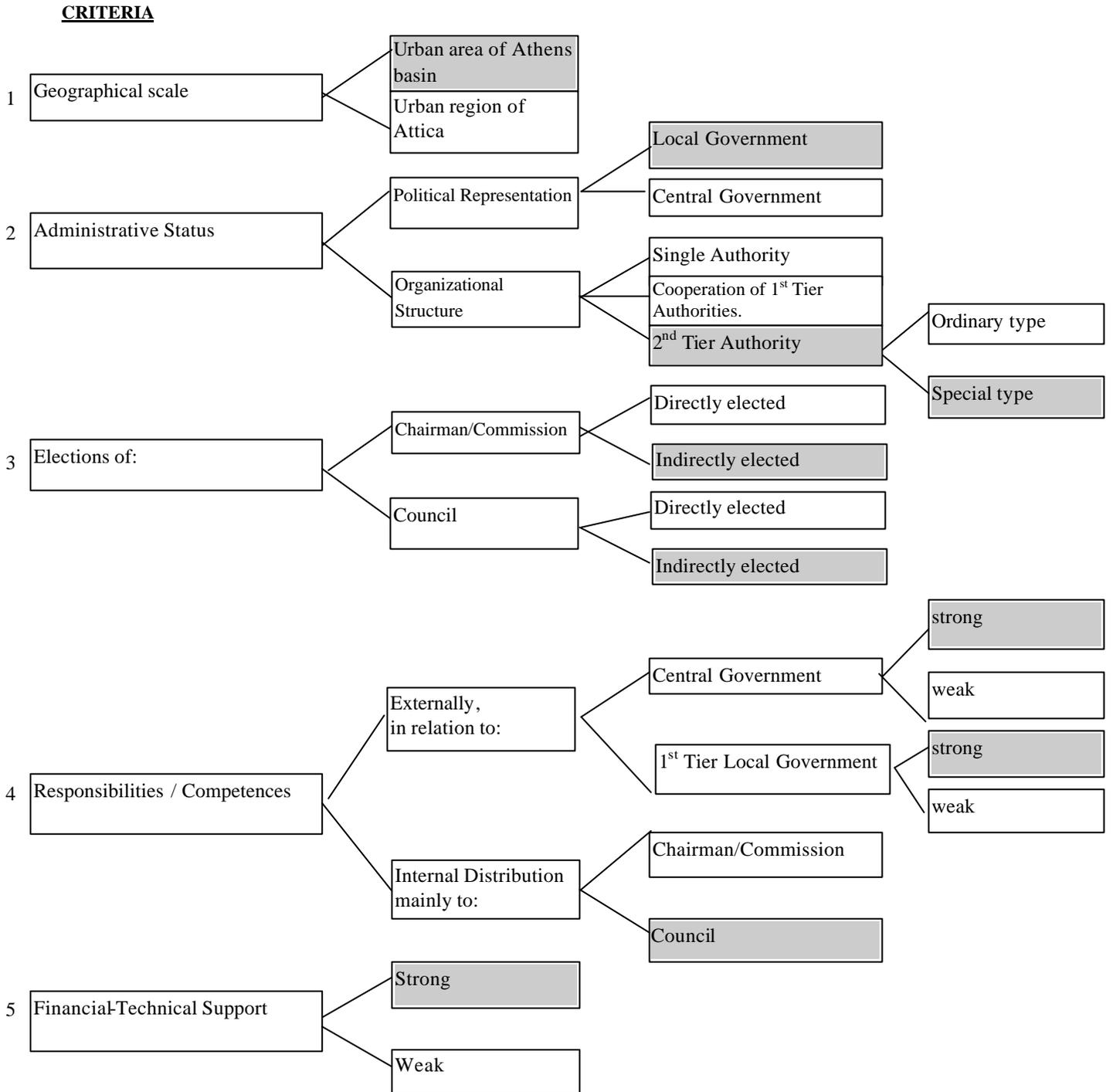
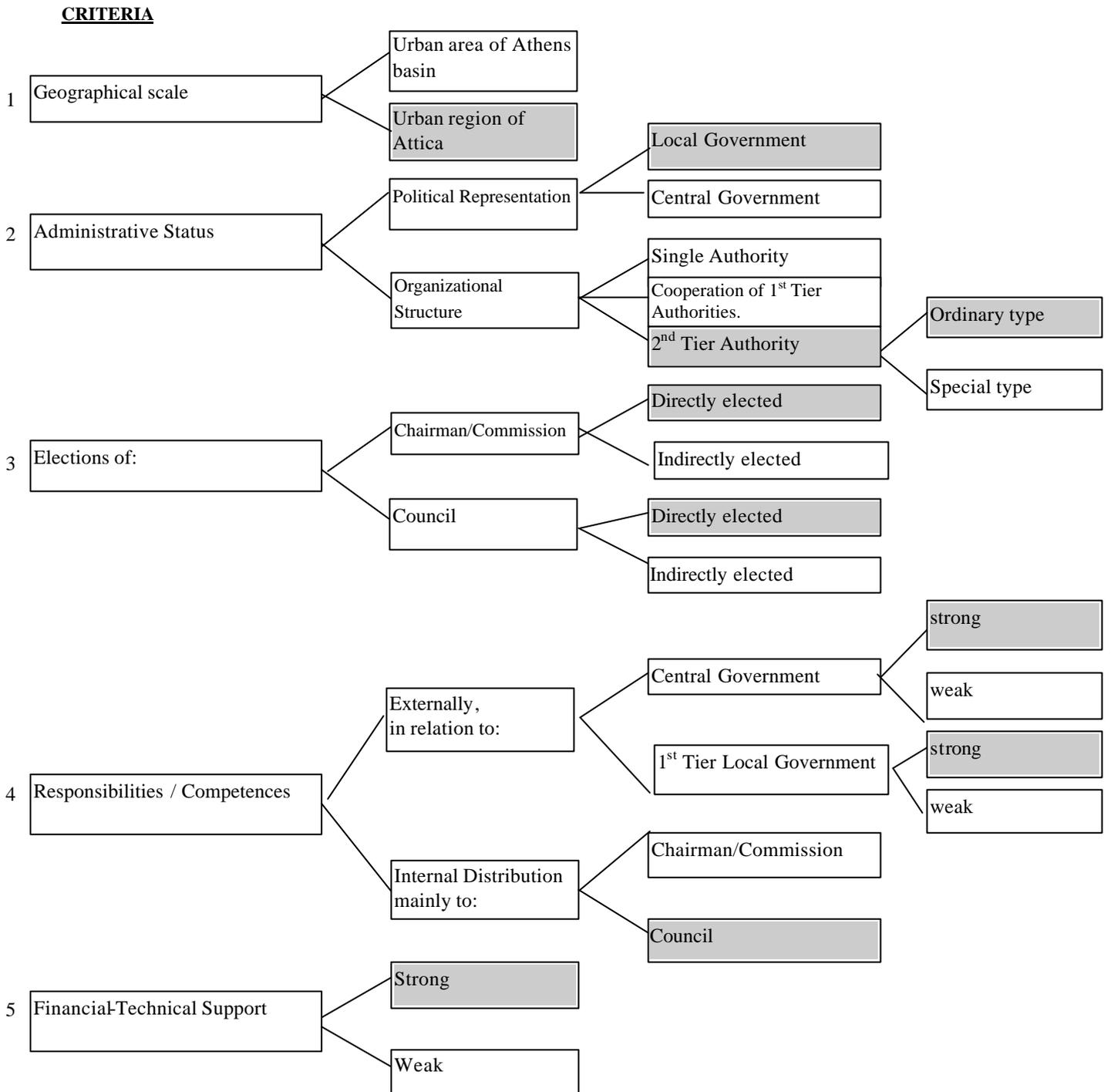


DIAGRAM 3: CRITERIA FOR THE SELECTION OF THE FORM OF METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT - SCENARIO b



It is obvious that the choice of one of these possible scenarios will depend on having considered many factors and political expediencies in the framework of the familiar rivalry and the correlation of forces which may be observed in such cases between the central administration and the local government¹². At any rate, the scenario that can be seen today as the least painful from a political standpoint and as the most directly applicable from a technical, operational and administrative point of view is obviously (a2). Unlike it, (a1) and mainly (b) require more and stronger “breaks” with the territorial and administrative status of the area under examination.

However, regardless of which solution will be chosen in the end, what in any case is considered to be particularly necessary and urgent and is usually glossed over in relevant discussions is a more general administrative and territorial rationalisation in the Attiki area. This rationalisation will concern all three levels of administration: local, prefectural and regional authorities. With regard to the regional and prefectural authorities (former prefectural administrations) there should be harmonisation with the provisions of the Master Plan for Athens. This means that the issue of including Kythira should be settled, and the boundaries of the prefectural authorities should be changed so that they coincide with the spatial units of the Master Plan for Athens.¹³ Thus the Athens basin will at the same time be a single residential and administrative unit, something which even the most recent relevant Law 2240/1994 failed to achieve. In fact, although this law created a wider/broader prefectural authority which is on the one hand purely ornamental since it is made up of the two simple prefectural authorities of Athens and Piraeus which retain their competencies, and on the other hand it leaves out (entirely unjustifiably) some local authorities within the Athens basin.¹⁴

As regards the level of local authorities, it should be stressed that there is need for a broader form of restructuring, that is, both positive and negative reorganisation at the cellular level. Thus some local authorities will be joined together, some will remain as they are, and finally some (the biggest municipalities) will need to be broken down into smaller local authorities. If this is understandable and expedient for the first two cases, there has been no such thought and no relevant report for breaking up the big municipalities. Specifically, the municipality of Athens and Piraeus must be divided into several local authorities.¹⁵ Athens municipality in particular can be divided on the basis of the seven municipal departments, the first of which (first in name only) will remain as the capital's central municipality, and the rest will be independent municipalities with suitable names. This choice will contribute, inter alia, to moderating the polarising climate created during municipal elections precisely because of the specific gravity of Athens Municipality, and to avoiding phenomena of dependence and hegemony to the detriment of the other local authorities of the Athens basin. This is because a basic objective must be to seek equality and equivalence on the level of the power and size of local authorities (which will be called on to cooperate in the framework of metropolitan government) and at the same time to seek to differentiate them as regards matters of culture, etc.

Relative to the issue of unification, the confusion caused by the existing legislation should be avoided and it should be sought to link and interrelate the units of the area councils (AC) with the unified municipalities. Unfortunately Law 2218/94 fails to make this interrelation and leaves the legislation regarding unification of much smaller geographical units unchanged. The only guideline provided during the process of defining and demarcating the area councils was that they constitute integral multiples of the units of unified municipalities, so that there is no overlapping. The main problem, however, is the desirable scale (size) of the new local government organisations and the purpose of the area councils, which thus remains different from that of the unified municipalities. This error has also been taken up in Attiki, where it has been proposed (by the TEDKNA –Local Union of Municipalities of Attika) “that the units of ACs not necessarily coincide with those arising from the unified municipalities”.¹⁶ The need for the units of the ACs to coincide with the units of unified

municipalities does not, of course, rule out the possibility of ad hoc creation of associations for some purpose, wherever considered to be necessary and expedient, on a voluntary basis by the new local authorities.

Finally, the issue of the boundaries of the electoral districts (of parliamentary elections) should at last be settled, as these have been left unchanged for many decades. These districts (Athens A and B, Piraeus A and B, and the rest of Attika) present a blatant inconsistency whenever any attempts are made at administrative modernisation. What is needed therefore is a bold policy in this area as well, without the inhibitions caused by (petty) political ulterior motives, so as to achieve harmonisation with the area's administrative structures, as is the case in the rest of the country.

6. The role of the ORSA and metropolitan government

A significant issue for the area is that of strategic planning and the design and implementation of a development policy for the Athens-Attiki area. As mentioned above, for metropolitan government to function effectively it has need of adequate financial and technical support. For economic self-sufficiency, special charges must be levied and there must also be funding from central independent resources. For technical support, there must be an inflow of specialised human resources already existing in the ORSA which cannot remain in existence, anyway, when the new authority is created. Therefore the issue of doing away with the ORSA and including it under the newly created metropolitan government will be an important step in achieving rationalisation and more effective planning of the system. The ORSA does not in fact constitute a step in the country's administrative pyramid, and therefore cannot be a genuine ("natural") planning agent like the other agents of political and administrative power at different decision-making levels. In this, therefore, it creates an "illegitimate" situation. The ORSA is merely a service in the form of a corporate body under public law, in other words it is essentially decentralised, with competencies similar to those of the central town and spatial planning services of the Ministry of the Environment, Planning and Public Works but with a specific territorial reference to the region of Attiki. What is more, its competencies (decisive and consultative) mainly refer to the specialisation of the Master Plan for Athens through normative regulations.¹⁷ It also has much more important (albeit advisory) competencies for implementation of the Master Plan for Athens through short-term and medium-term development programmes which are designed in accordance with current legislation.¹⁸ However, the ORSA has not exercised these crucial planning competencies during the ten years and more that it has been in operation. But even if it were to exercise them fully, its role is that of "researcher" and "technical advisor" mainly for the Attiki region but also for the Prefectural authorities falling under it. It is therefore shown de facto to provide technical support to the area's "natural" planning agents (regional and prefectural authorities) which are now replacing the metropolitan government.¹⁹

Table No. 1
ORSA and the functions/competences of different administrative levels in Athens- Attika

Functions Levels	Political representation	Administrative support	Financial management	Technical infrastructure
Central government	+	+	+	+
ORSA	-	?	?	+
Regional administration	-	-	+	-
Prefectural administration	+	+	?	?
Local authorities: Municipalities- Communes	+	?	?	?

Note : + (plus)= existing competence, - (minus)= missing competence , ? = partly present competence

The obvious dominance of the functions of administrative and technical support of the ORSA, in relation to the regional-level bodies, can be seen in Table No. 1 showing the levels of planning in Attiki. It can be inferred from the above that the existence of the ORSA creates more malfunctioning and problems than it is supposed to solve. If there were rationales for setting up such an organisation at the time it was established, they have now completely disappeared. Adaptation to developments (administrative and territorial) is a necessary precondition for the rationalisation being sought for.

Finally, with regard to the crucial issue of strategic planning of the area in relation to the Master Plan for Athens, which is supposed to be part of the nucleus of the ORSA's responsibilities, it must be pointed out that involvement in time-consuming and tortuous procedures for approval of natural planning projects has deprived the organisation of such an occupation and perspective. The organisation was not created to do in Attiki what the town-planning and spatial-planning services of the Ministry of the Environment, Planning and Public Works do in the rest of the country. If in fact we relate the slackness observed with the exercise of its planning competencies (see above) which are organically linked to strategic planning, we will understand why this sector has deteriorated. Due to this view, the Master Plan for Athens has often been seen as the sum of the General Town Plans, and for ten whole years not a thought was given to evaluating and updating it, when it should constitute the main planning dimension at this level and therefore be a basic concern and responsibility of the competent agencies.²⁰ By contrast, the ORSA expended more energy than was necessary in managing general and specific urban planning studies, implementations of the Zones of Controlled Settlement, and also renewal on all scales which could of course have come under the scope of local government, or at least those which are not of strategic importance. It is worth noting that this deficiency, i.e. the need to give consideration to strategic planning (methodology, content, etc.) was also evident in the indeed interesting and important international conference on Athens–Attiki organised by the ORSA last May.²¹

7. Conclusion

As mentioned at the beginning, metropolitan government is not a panacea for resolving the problems of metropolitan areas. However, it can make a decisive contribution, provided there exist the necessary social dynamics and the effective involvement (participation) of citizens, which is ultimately the most important condition for the undertaking. What is more, this has been the case in all countries which have developed such structures and provided solutions in accordance with the particular conditions of specific areas. There is a decade's-old tradition from which we may draw useful conclusions and obtain the relevant know-how.

New institutions and innovative practices (almost always imported from abroad) often reach Greece with a delay of some decades, when in fact in their places of origin they have already begun to be questioned (see the example of second-tier and third-tier local government). The same appears to be happening or rather is about to happen with the institution of metropolitan government. The dilemma that arises here is whether we want and primarily whether we can pursue practically the same course pursued by the other European countries, or if we will seek to make a leap aimed at closing the gap between the two sides. The question, of course, is not merely technical and/or administrative. It is first of all a question of economic and social structures and developments which at some stage of maturity cause the birth or the abandonment and inactivation of the relevant institutions. For this reason it is wiser and preferable to approach carefully the undertaking to create a metropolitan government in Athens, so as to avoid any negative ideologies arising from the question and to ensure that it is addressed realistically. Thus the moment in time and the (political and social) conditions as well as the correlation of forces between government and local government must be taken seriously into account when setting out the criteria and principles that will be used to bring about this genuinely crucial administrative reform.

In Athens in particular, with the creation of the new agency for managing and governing the Athens basin, the area will cease to have many "masters" and cease to be the object of daily controversy, and this will constitute significant progress. (See disagreements on flood-prevention works in the past between the Water Supply and Sewerage Systems Company of Athens (EYDAP) and the Prefectural administrations). However, the most crucial question posed today is whether and to what degree the state will heed the proposals which have been and continue to be made by local government, the social and scientific bodies, the universities and in general the experts on this matter. At any rate, the course the matter has taken so far has been a series of "lost opportunities" of introducing a metropolitan government for Athens.²² The creation of a new organisational structure in the Athens area, in harmony with residential and spatial reality, requires a good deal of knowledge and daring which we would like to believe exist in those who are responsible, whether due to their nature or to their office.

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ENDNOTES

¹ The first scientific colloquium on this question was held by the Association of Greek Town and Spatial Planners (SEPOX) and the Athens University School of Political Science and Public Administration in Athens on 8-9 December 1993 and was entitled "Systems of Administration of Metropolitan Areas". (The presentations made at the colloquium were published in a special volume by A.N. Sakkoulas Editors in 1994.) Following that, the Technical Chamber of Greece (TEE) held a major international conference whose theme was "A Vision for Athens – Perspectives and Administration of Metropolitan Areas" on 13-16 September 1994, in which there was broad participation by eminent scientists in various areas of expertise, as well as other contributors, from both Greece and abroad. It should also be noted that shortly before this conference, the Local Unions of Municipalities and Communes (TEDK) of Attiki Prefecture had held on 7 July 1994, a seminar on the more effective operation of the (then) institutional framework in the Attiki metropolitan area (Law 2218/1994). Later, the Environmental Protection and Planning Agency of Athens (ORSA) organised an international conference on the theme of "Athens-Attiki: Strategic Planning for a Sustainable Development" on 22-24 May 1996.

Finally, on 18-21 November 1996 the TEE and Athens Municipality organised a second international conference (continuing the one held in 1994) on the subject of "A Vision for Athens: the Continuation. The Charter".

² The following papers are cited as an indication: BERIATOS, E. "The Problem of Harmonising Planning and Administrative Structures in the Attiki Region" and MAKRYDIMITRIS, A. "Ungoverned City: The Problem of Governing Metropolitan Areas in Greece" in Papadimitriou, G. – Makrydimitris, A. (eds.) Systems of Governing Metropolitan Areas, Administration and the State, Studies-11, A.N. Sakkoulas Editions, Athens, 1994, pp. 173-186.

³ In this regard, see the then A.N.44 29/31-8-1936 regarding Administration of the Region of the Capital, as well as the National Social Research Centre (EKKE) study on the administrative structure of the greater Athens area (1973) which provides some data and commentary on that institution. It is worth noting that the boundaries of the area of the prefecture in 1936 covered the present area of the Athens basin.

⁴ We refer, as an indication, to the idea of creating a "secretariat for the region of the capital" which was examined by the competent ministry in 1993 (in this regard, see "To Vima" of 17.1.93).

⁵ In this regard, see the in-depth study "Urbanisation and the functions of cities in the European Community", European Institute of Urban Affairs, Liverpool John Moores University (Pr. M. Parkinson) DGXVI, 1992.

⁶ We refer to the studies by the French DATAR and the well-known RECLUS group which other authors have cited and referred to (as an indication, see Verhille, P., Leroy, D., Voirgard, J.L., "Atlas de la grande Europe", Ellipses, Paris 1995, pp. 122-125, the study mentioned in footnote 1, "Urbanisation and the functions of cities in the European Community", and the article by G. Polyzos, "Athens: a city on the margin of the Community", published in the Kathimerini newspaper on 17 July 1992).

⁷ We take this opportunity to mention here that, according to data of the Department of International Technical and Economic Cooperation of Athens Municipality, the International Organisations of which Athens Municipality is a member are the following: 1) IULA, International Union of Local Authorities, 2) UCCE, Union des Capitales de la Communauté Européene, 3) EC Eurocities, 4) METROPOLIS, World Association of Metropolises 5) ICLE, International Council of Local Environmental Initiatives, 6) CITELEC, European Association of Cities for the Promotion of Electric Vehicles, 7) ENERGY CITIES, European Association of Cities for Energy Saving and Environmental Protection, 8) FMVJ, Federation Mondiale des Villes Jumelées, 9) Quartiers en Crise, Network of Cities for the Revitalisation and Revival of Quarters in Crisis.

⁸ Worthy of particular note as regards this issue are the topics and conclusions of the international conference on “Governing Metropolitan Regions: Towards New Administrative Structures in Urban Europe” held in Eindhoven, the Netherlands on 1-4 April 1992.

⁹ See relevant references and comparisons in Beriatos, E. (1996) “The Role of Administration and Government in the organisation and Functioning of the Administrative Bodies of Metropolitan Areas”, International conference: Athens – Attiki: Strategic planning for a sustainable development, Athens 22-24 May 1996.

¹⁰ By the Attiki area is meant the administrative area of the region of Attiki, but of course not including the remote islands of Kythira and Antikythira, which are not included in the study area of the Master Plan for Athens either.

¹¹ From a geographical standpoint, the area of the Athens basin is more unified with regard to housing as well as socially and economically than the area of Attiki. Therefore if there is a “break” in the unified, total area of the prefecture/region of Attiki, this is more discernible between the Athens basin and the rest of Attiki than between Attiki and regions in adjacent prefectures/regions.

¹² It is common knowledge that one of the things that a definition of the administrative status of urban areas records is the balance of political power between the government and the cities, i.e. between central power and local government at a given moment. In the case of Athens, this is true for yet another reason, because Athens is the country’s capital and control by central power is even tighter. This may have been one of the reasons for the relative delay in creating a better administrative organisation in the area of the capital.

¹³ An exception to this rule may be made only in the case of eastern and northern Attiki which can constitute one unit instead of the two provided for in the Master Plan for Athens.

¹⁴ These are the municipalities of Ano Liossia, Zefiri, (western Attiki), Acharnes, Voula, Vouliagmeni and the commune of Thramakedones, (eastern Attiki). Here it should be noted that the Master Plan for Athens has included in the Athens basin unit two local authorities (communes of Fili and Vari) which are not considered to be an integral part (from a residential and physical geography standpoint) of the Athens basin.

¹⁵ Such an arrangement was proposed in Italy by Law 142/1990 (Article 20) for the “autonomie locali” (Law No. 142/8 June 1990, “Ordinamento delle Autonomie Locali”).

¹⁶ See the relevant TEDKNA report entitled “Proposals for more effective functioning of the new institutional framework in the Attiki metropolitan area”, p. 8, drawn up by a working group of experts and presented at a seminar on 7 July 1994.

¹⁷ Here are meant the competencies relating to the General Town Plans, the Zones of Controlled Settlement, the isolated instances of placement of activities outside the building plan, etc.

¹⁸ In this regard, see Articles 72, 73 and 74 of Law 1622/1986 concerning “Local government, regional development and democratic planning”, as well as Law 2052/1992. In our opinion, the most important of these competencies of the ORSA is the preparation and recommendation to the Attiki regional council of the annual and midyear regional programme for the region. It essentially acts as a technical service of the region of Attiki.

¹⁹ Of course, a question arises of whether and to what degree it is expedient to preserve its present administrative and operational status, rather than study its immediate inclusion in the Attiki region and/or the enlarged prefectural administration of Athens and Piraeus.

²⁰ It is characteristic that in 1995, ten years after the Master Plan for Athens was introduced by Law 1515/1985, Athens Municipality took the initiative to organise, together with the ORSA and the SEPOX, a two-day seminar on the theme of “Master Plan for Athens – Ten Years Later”, a sort of tenth anniversary celebration, as had been done with the historic albeit troubled Urban Rehabilitation Venture (EPA) in 1992

in a similar event held by the Technical Chamber of Greece. In (at least most of) the topics discussed during that seminar, the concept governing planning at the level of the Master Plan for Athens can be seen (see Technical Chamber of Greece Information Bulletin 1808/9.5.94).

²¹ Also indicative is the title of that conference: “Athens – Attiki Strategic Planning for a Sustainable Development”; it was held on 22-24 May 1996.

²² See Laws 1622/1986 regarding local government, regional development and democratic planning, 2218/1994 regarding the establishment of prefectural government, etc., and 2240/1994 regarding amendment of the provisions for prefectural administration.