Chapter 81

A Scenario for the Future Athens Planning:
Seeking Its New International Role in the Globalized Era

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ABSTRACT

The chapter supports the aspect that a planning procedure is developed in Athens (Greece) the last years, aiming to undertake the role of a semi-regional node in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea. This node is needed for the integration of the globalization western system. The organization of the Olympic Games of 2004 was the initiative for the construction of the needed infrastructures and main urban works in the city. Legal measures regarding the administrative and labour issues were undertaken during the previous four years in conjunction with the acquisition of the needed urban land in the coastal area of the Athens plain, where a new CBD is under implementation. These developments are the main arguments for supporting the aspect that Athens is now re-organized and upgraded with new urban equipment, which will facilitate the settling of the headquarters of various multinational organizations and other private enterprises in the Eastern Mediterranean region.

THE GLOBALIZATION

Contemporary scientific approaches support the aspect that the urban space, in its widest geographical sense, is considered to attract and return influences (Newman & Thornley, 1996: 12; Marmaras, 2002: 23). As a result, a city contains positive energy on the one hand and on the other, constitutes a source of negative influences. In the first case, the term 'world city' is used and in the second, the term 'global city'. In any case, however, such a city radiates out of the spatial context of the nation-state in which it belongs and contributes to the global economy (Pacione, 2001: 277; Sassen, 2001/ 12).

This chapter is based on the hypothesis of the 'globalization' phenomenon that can be considered as the means of world governance. This is a worldwide development advanced by the Western World powers as well as China and Russia. In accordance with this idea, the establishment of a world network of leading and secondary cities-nodes is pursued as well as the creation of semi-peripheral principal and secondary cities adequately linked. This system is meant to gradually substitute the existence of nation-states.

A first attempt to define the term 'world' or 'global' city came from Peter Hall in 1966. He called by this way the cities which concentrated great political power, were seats of large national or international organizations, possessed important ports or airports, were centers of monetary bodies and, lastly, were cities with intensive cultural performance. Examples of this kind of cities were New York, London, Tokyo, Paris, Randstand, Rhine-Ruhr and Moscow (Hall, 1966: 7; Pacione, 2001: 276; Leontidou, 2002: 182). In 1986, J. Friedmann identified thirty world or global cities. He marked them in accordance with their significance and taking into account political, economic, geographical and demographic criteria. He placed in the first category the cities: New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Tokyo, London, Paris, Frankfurt, Rotterdam, and Zurich. While, in a second category were: Brussels, Milan, Wien, Madrid, Toronto, Miami, Huston, San Francisco and Sidney (Friedmann, 1986; Pacione, 2001: 276-8). In 1989, N. Trift improving even more the system of criteria in defining the categories of the 'world' or 'global' cities identified three cases: the 'truly global centers', the 'zonal centers' and the 'regional centers'. In the first case were located, only the mega-cities New York, London and Tokyo, in the second such cities as Paris, Los Angeles, Singapore and Hong Kong, and in the third one cities like Sidney, Chicago, Dallas, Miami, Honolulu and San Francisco (Trift, 1989; Pacione, 2001: 276-9). It becomes clear that all relative scientific approaches on the subject (Hall, 1966: 7; Friedmann, 1986; Trift, 1989; Sassen, 1991: 171; Pacione, 2001: 276-8) place the cities of New York, London and Tokyo at the top of the globalized network, where the 80% of the world capital was concentrated in the period 1986-89 (Sassen, 1991: 171). Nevertheless, there is a need for smaller local urban centers for the completion and operational adequacy of this network. This latter network of smaller city-nodes will connect with the higher level ones and is intended to host the headquarters of multinational organizations, such as monetary institutions, important enterprises and large hotel chains, which operate in the specific region.

In the above literature of globalization, S. Kratke proposed in 1993 a triple layered urban network for Europe. In the first category fell, the obvious executive world cities; in the second one, the traditional metropolis among which were Rome, Munich and Barcelona. Finally, in the third one were the most important urban regions at the national level, including Athens. More recently, in 2010, a map showing the distribution of the established Globalization and World Cities Network (GaWC) was published in *GaWC Research Bulletin 5* by Jon Beaverstock, Richard G. Smith and Peter J. Taylor in 2010 (Figure 1).

ATHENS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION

In the Eastern Mediterranean region the lack of a peripheral center is manifest, obviously due to the geopolitical tensions and the instability there, not allowing the development of an urban node in the evolving global network (Figure 2). It had been supported that the real reason for Athens being chosen to undertake the 'Olympic Games 2004', was the aim to advertise or to make known the Greek capital in a wider level and to establish it as such a center (Marmaras, 2003), a fact noted also by other Greek colleagues as early as 2001 (Ekonomou et.al., 2001: 123-33). In this line of thinking, one cannot re-

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