



# The impact of Large - Scale Events for Greek Medium Sized Cities development. The case studies of Thessaloniki, Patras and Ioannina and comparisons with the German experience

**Dr. Evangelos Asprogerakas, Dimitrios Sofianopoulos, Triantafyllos Michailidis,**

Department of Urban & Regional Planning, School of Architecture, National Technical University of Athens, vaspro@central.ntua.gr, dsolianopoulos@gmail.com, triantafyllos@yahoo.com, Tel: +30-210-7721125, Fax: +30-210-7723819

**Athanasios Papaioannou**

Institute of Urban, Regional and Environmental Planning, HafenCity University Hamburg, athanasios.papaioannou@hcu-hamburg.de Tel.:040-42878-2576, Fax.: 040-42878-2580

**Keywords:** Large – Scale Events; Medium Sized Cities; Urban Development; Culture; Greek Cities

## Abstract

In the world - wide contest developed, the prize of which is the chance to host a large scale event, Cities of Medium Size (CIMES) try to obtain a role and secure investments and development prospects. The main subject which is being questioned is whether and to what extent a medium size city has the ability to host and exploit a large-scale event. Initially, the main special characteristics of CIMES are going to be presented as well as the general impacts of large-scale events. Further research will be based on three case studies from Greece. Thessaloniki and Patras were designated to be the European Capital of Culture for the years of 1997 and 2006 respectively and Ioannina has repeatedly organised smaller events such as the international rowing games. Moreover, the peripheral effects caused by Athens 2004 Olympic Games to these cities will be explored. The main issues raised are the impact on spatial planning, infrastructure development and city image. More specifically, the research will focus on the policy applied, the main projects and infrastructure facilities developed both in order to host the events and to improve city's services and on how these interventions change the economic function and everyday life of the city. In this attempt, examples from German cities' experience will be used.

## 1. Cities of Medium Size (CIMES). Definition and Characteristics



Figure 1: Case study cities

CIMES bear some special features in terms of their morphology, function and governance as a result of their size and their intermediate position in administrative pyramid. Their role as regional centres which provides their inland with urban services is significant and they are basically characterised by social and cultural coherence. Their overall environment is considered to be superior of the metropolitan centres' one. However, CIMES have limited functional potential and they cannot compete metro areas. Their development can be based on the most efficient use of their comparative advantages in order to attract economic activities and mainly services (Asprogerakas, 2004).

In relation to the determination of CIMES, the criteria referred to in bibliography are related to both population (100,000-500,000 according to Lavergne & Mollet, 1991; Petrakos & Ekonomou 1999; Henderson 1997) and intermediate functions (Mega 2000; Salom 2000; EF 1997). On balance it should be mentioned that the determination of

the limits is the result of both the aspects of any specific categorisation and its peculiarities. According to Petrakos & Ekonomou (1999), in Europe there are no really big cities due to the fact that none of the 20 biggest cities in the world are European. European metropolitan centres could be considered of being of medium size universally speaking.

In the present paper the following cities have been chosen as case studies (fig.1):

- Thessaloniki, a medium sized city in terms of its functions for Europe but with great potential of improving its role. It has a population of 750,000 inhabitants,
- Patras, a medium sized city in terms of population and functions on a European level with a population of 250,000 inhabitants and
- Ioannina (population 70,000), an intermediate city with a regional role in the Greek urban net.

Thessaloniki and Athens are the only urban centers in Greece able to have a role of distinction in the European urban net. They have basic economic functions and they are also decision making centres of the public and private sector. Athens, is the only Greek city included in research concerning the determination of “world cities” (Beaverstock et.al. 1999) while the rest of them are either absent from any relevant classification or they are very low in rank (Deffner & Labrianidis 2005). Even in the case of Patras, which is the second biggest regional centre, its “radiation” seems to be limited within its region’s boundaries and this is also the case with the role of Ioannina. As a whole, the role of the Greek urban centres seems to be degraded mainly because of the uninspired Greek economy and the distance of the country from the development core of Europe (Economou, 2000).

## 2. Large – Scale Events

### 2.1 Definition and impact

Starting from local festivals by small communities and reaching great commercial and technological exhibitions (e.g. EXPO) and sports events (e.g. Olympic Games) Large Scale Events (LSE) are used by policy makers and planners as means of promotion and change. Still, are all the organisations of such events identical? In the bibliography there are various names, definitions and classifications with Getz’s one (Getz, 1991) being quoted by most (Stokes, 2003; Hall, 1997; Jago & Shaw, 1998; Deffner & Labrianidis, 2005):

*A special event is a one time or infrequently occurring event outside the normal program or activities of the sponsoring or organising body. To the customer, a special event is an opportunity for a leisure, social, or cultural experience outside the normal range of choices or beyond everyday experience.*

The size of such an event and its demands is always relative, as an action in a big city may result in light changes, while an equivalent one in a medium sized city may result in significantly greater and more effective changes. The events can last from some days or weeks to one year. In the present paper both of these extreme cases are examined. One time occurrence, though stressed by Getz (1991), is not an absolute feature as to some major urban centres the repetition of hosting such great events is quite probable in the future (e.g. London hosted 2 Olympiads in the past - 1908, 1948 - and it has also taken on hosting the Olympics of 2012).

It is accepted that large-scale events provide a vital stimulus for urban development (Asprogerakas 2007; Shoval, 2002; Andranovich *et al*, 2001; Essex & Chalkley, 1998; Bramwell, 1997). The main goals cited are the infrastructure development, the mobilisation of endogenous potential, the improvement of the city’s image and the identification of the inhabitants with their city. Through taking advantage of this process, the city can acquire the main components of attractiveness and competitiveness (Borja, 1996): quality of life, human resources, accessibility, telecommunications and information systems and the economic support infrastructures.

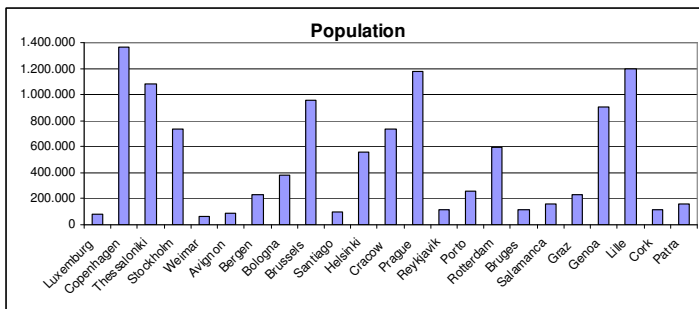
At the same time, the organisation of a LSE causes changes in the governance and the decision making processes. All of a sudden the planners and the public actors become the focal point and they are given the chance to bring into action the great projects they have scheduled for years. Any probable problems are mostly related to the fact that the LSE projects are inflexible (Selle, 2005:230). Any mistakes made related to planning cannot be reconsidered due to the strict timetables not to mention the fact that they can cause local economic shortcomings (e.g. the Hanover EXPO where, among others reasons, the small number of visitors - 18 millions instead of the predicted 40 millions - left the managers with a 2,000 million € debt) (Müller & Selle, 2000; Selle, 2005). Moreover, the rule of using great projects as catalysts of enhancement and change is not always confirmed while the organisations of management usually function without the approval of all the inhabitants. That is why there is lots of scepticism over these policies and many talk about a planning for projects and not a planning with projects (Selle, 2005:262) along with a festivalisation of the whole policy (Häußermann & Siebel, 1993).

### 2.2 Cultural Capitals of Europe

Cultural Capital of Europe (CCOE) was established as an event in 1985 by the Council of Ministers of the EC (Resolution 85/C/153/02), after the initiative of the Greek Minister of Culture, Melina Merkouri. The main objectives were to promote the culture of the host city and gather artists and cultural happenings from all the

member states of the EU. As T.S. Eliot said, “the cultural health of Europe depends on two conditions: the maintenance of the cultural identity of each country and simultaneously the recognition of common codes among the European cultures”.

Figure 2: Population of CCOE  
Source: Authors' illustration based on EC (2004).



consequences on the host cities were not significant during that period (Richards, 2001:160-1). The second period (1997-today) is characterised by the intense willingness of the cities to host the event and higher budgets are used both for cultural events and investments in technical infrastructure (EC, 2004).

### 2.3 Olympic Games - “Greece 2004”

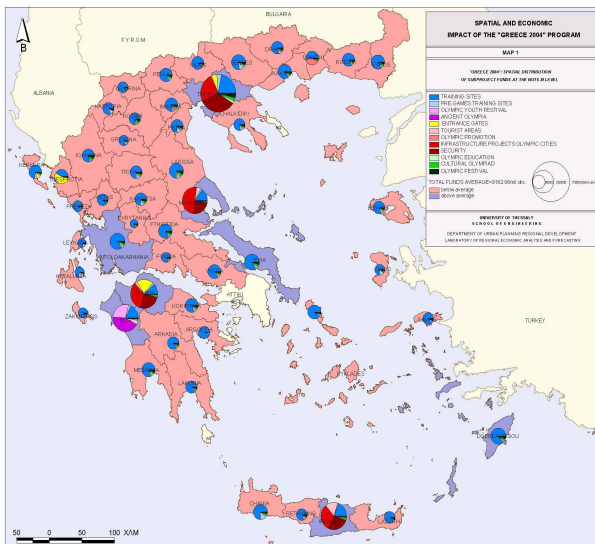


Figure 3: Spatial distribution of funds at NUTS IV level. An important share of the invested funds concerns the “Security Programme” of the games. Source: University of Thessaly

2004” of the Ministry of Culture with a budget of 1,344 million € targeted at the creation of athletic and other infrastructures in all the regions of Greece and mainly in the Olympic Cities and in the entries of the country.

## 3. Greek case studies

### 3.1 Thessaloniki Cultural Capital of Europe 1997



Historically, Thessaloniki has been a significant urban centre not only for Greece but also for the Balkans and the wider South-eastern Europe. During the past years, an upgrading of both the role and the form of the city can be noticed, as activities of both international and national level are being attracted (Papaioannou, 2004). These processes are amplified by the location of various international organisations (e.g. European Agency for Reconstruction, Black Sea Trade and Development Bank) (EKEPP, 2003) and the various events the city organises in order to promote itself (e.g. the Film Festival, the International Fair of Thessaloniki, the Biennale and the EU Summit in 2003).

In this framework and with the active support from the central government, regarding the lobbying in Brussels and the financing (99.95% of the budget), Thessaloniki managed to be nominated as the Cultural Capital of Europe for the year 1997. For the planning of the event, the city created the Organisation for the Cultural Capital

of Europe, Thessaloniki 1997 (OCCE 97) which had at its disposal a relatively high budget (290 m. € / EC 2004:54). Only Lille and Copenhagen had larger budgets by that time. The organisation was an autonomous structure, however, members of the initial board were all local political authorities as well as members of three state ministries. In contrast, the financing and the managing in the case of Weimar (CCOE in 1999) was done by the regional government of Thüringen (75%) and only by 25% from the central federal government (EC 2004).

The motto of the OCCE97 was to promote Thessaloniki as a European and simultaneously a Balkan city, a city in the crossroads of North to South and East to West. However, organisational difficulties obscured the decision making procedures but also frequent changes in the members of the board and the personnel, lack of cooperation and coordination between the involved authorities, and negative attitude of the press and the citizens towards the organisation damaged the image of the event long before it started.

The cultural programme of the event (which is not part of this research) was financed by the Ministry of Culture with 67 m. €. The technical programme which represented the 81.4% of the total budget (232.6 m. €) was financed by the Ministry of Planning, Environment and Public Works (table I) and its objectives were the development of the cultural infrastructure and the regeneration of the urban environment. The main goals were the promotion of the local architecture and the urban landscape of the city through the restoration of historical buildings as well as the change in the uses of abandoned sites (e.g. former military campus Kodras, warehouses etc.). Further goals were the upgrading of the cultural infrastructure through the construction and the renovation of museums and the concert hall, as well as the redesigning of the public space through an extensive programme of pedestrianisation (Loizos, 2001).

The five priorities of the programme can be summarised as follows:

- 1) Extension of the metropolitan space – mainly to the eastern and to the western suburbs of the city by reusing major public installations. Among the plans was also the creation of a metropolitan park in a former military site, but the interventions were limited to reusing the military bunkers as cultural spaces.
- 2) The gates of the city – restoration and reconstruction of the airport, the main railroad station and the road axes leading to the city. The proposed plans were not fully implemented.
- 3) Major urban interventions – the main goal of the programme was the recapture of the free urban space through extended pedestrianisation and restoration of the buildings’ facades in major roads. Due to lack of time most of the plans remained unimplemented or with questionable qualitative results.
- 4) Historical landscape of the city – pilot programmes in order to promote the historical and archaeological legacy of the city.
- 5) Cultural infrastructure – includes smaller scale projects throughout the urban agglomeration with main focus on theatres, museums and galleries.

| <i>Projects</i>                                      | <i>Cost (€)</i>    | <i>Percentage</i> |
|--|--------------------|-------------------|
| Large New Buildings                                  | 56,096,920         | 24.1%             |
| Extension or restoration of existing urban buildings | 59,106,480         | 25.4%             |
| Outdoors and public spaces                           | 54,444,600         | 23.4%             |
| Listed monuments                                     | 9,462,220          | 4.1%              |
| Cultural infrastructures for municipalities          | 18,469,895         | 7.9%              |
| Other (harbour restoration, airport etc)             | 35,059,694         | 15.1%             |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   | <b>232,639,809</b> | <b>100%</b>       |

The strategy chosen for the technical programme was the financing of a large number of projects (383 in total) scattered mostly at the edges of the city but also around it (e.g. in neighbouring municipalities, Mountain Athos etc). This project-oriented strategy that was supposed to act as an integrated programme of cohesive urban enhancement, redefinition of the image of the city and improvement of the quality of life, failed to deliver the expected results.

Construction cost overruns, inadequate management but also huge delays in the delivery of the few constructions actually chosen to be implemented were some of the negative characteristics that influenced the final result. In parallel with that, political pressure from various groups as well as anachronistic perceptions of urban planning and regeneration by all municipalities involved, in order to fulfill local interests in a clientalistic relationship between politicians, developers and citizens downgraded the outcomes. As Deffner & Lambrianidis (2005) mention, the final programme was just a list of projects without hierarchy and basically without a flagship project that could become an eclectic construction and would therefore put Thessaloniki on the map as a modern international city attractive to high quality cultural activities.

In the period after the Cultural Capital of Europe, inadequate planning of the city’s future needs in cultural spaces, constituted them financially unsustainable (Chatzimichalis, 2001:66), mostly because the necessary circumstances for a competitive high quality cultural market had not been guaranteed. On another level, the correlation of the objectives of the technical programme with those stated in the strategic plan of the city, that

was published during the same period, was a product of orthological management and cooperation, but it was based on the personal engagement of specific persons that managed to implement some thoughts (Chatzimichalis, 2001:66).

### 3.2 Patras Cultural Capital of Europe 2006



Patras is the capital of the region of Western Greece and the administrative, educational, economic and commercial centre of the region of the Peloponnese and Western Greece. The de-industrialisation during the decade of 1980 had as a consequence a great increase of unemployment and shrinkage of the city's income. It is an important transport node for the countries of central and western Europe. Apart from being an Olympic city (2004) and a Cultural Capital of Europe (2006) it was also a candidate for the undertaking of the Mediterranean Games of 2009.

The developmental actions within the framework of the CCOE had a long-lasting horizon in order for the city to establish collaboration networks with other cities or regions of Europe, to support creativity and cultural avant-garde, the long-term local cultural growth, the mobilisation of citizens and the attraction of visitors both from Greece and abroad. The organisation and management of the Institution were assigned to the Organisation "Cultural Capital of Europe, Patras 2006" (OCCOE-March 2005). There was an effort made so that the Organisation would constitute a flexible legal group that would be excluded from all the bureaucratic processes that are related with the management of public funds ([www.patra2006.gr](http://www.patra2006.gr)).

The institution of the Cultural Capital for the city of Patras had two parts, with two separate institutions of implementation: (1) The part of the organisation and support of events and formation and operation of the areas of hospitality, implemented by the Organisation "Patras 2006" with a budget of 30 m. €, which was mainly given by the ministry of Culture and a smaller part by the European Committee and by local and national sponsors. (2) The part of work, infrastructures and urban renewals of a bigger scale. This work was financed by the Government with 100 m. € and implemented by the Municipality of Patras<sup>1</sup>.



Figures 4,5: The Old Arsakeio School built in 1933 (left) and the Art Factory (right).  
Source: Organisation CCOE Patras 2006

The Organisation organised 300 events, moved forward to publications, advertising programmes, covered functional expenses, and also realised several renewals in buildings (renewal of the warehouse of Barry, shaping of the exhibition area of "Ladopoulos", renewal of the Old Workhouse into theatre, the creation of a "Factory of Art", transformation of the Old Arsakeio into a multifunctional building for events, etc) which, apart from their historical value, they were shaped into distinguished areas of hosting artistic and cultural events. Certain reformations in pavements and facades of buildings in the centre of the city took place with the responsibility of the municipal Authority. The aid of existing cultural Institutions (the Orchestra of Night String Instruments, the Orchestra of Patras), but also the creation of new ones (Festival of Children's Art, New Scene of Ancient Drama) are considered to be important.

However, it seems that the opportunity (it is indicative that this opportunity was characterised by the Prime Minister as the greatest post Olympic bet of the country) for the shaping of infrastructures with an important effect on the land growth went by to its greater extent unexploited. Due to the delays in the relative management procedures, designed projects with a budget of 100 mil. € financed by the Ministry of Culture were not materialised. The losses concerned both big projects (e.g., the closed theatre, worth of 21.5 mil. €), as well as relatively small and easy in their management projects, like an outdoor cinema or the purchase of a theatre

<sup>1</sup> Press conference (07/08/2006): <http://patras2006.gr/el/modules/news/article.php?storyid=186>

(Epicentre) as well as several from the forecasted renewals of squares and symbolic parts of Patras (e.g. the four staircases that connect the old city with the new one<sup>2</sup>).

On the whole, the objectives and the content of the programme of infrastructures, both in the case of Patras as well as in the case of Thessaloniki, were particularly ambitious. In Weimar (EC, 2004) the relative effort was characterised by more concrete and limited attempts (tourist projection with exploitation of the cultural tradition). The number of projects was also big (370), with a much bigger budget (411 m. €) having although the city's population was of the level the population of Ioannina (63,000). The investments were placed mainly in the centre of the city.

### 3.3 The impact of the Programme «Greece 2004»

The projects that were realised in Thessaloniki due to the programme «Greece 2004» involved:

- Projects of Infrastructure: renewals in the direct environment of the Olympic Facilities, upgrading and shaping of the entrance gates of the city and mainly the airport and the related road axes. The implementation of these projects was up to a great extent ensured by the Operational Programme of Central Macedonia. Their declaration as Olympic Projects legalised them in the eyes of the residents but also to those organisations that reacted and helped towards the acceleration of its development.
- Projects of Athletic Infrastructure: projects of direct priority connected to athletic events including the renovation and reconstruction stadiums in and around the city and the development of cultural areas linked to the Olympic Games (e.g. Sports Museum).
- Administrative and organisational projects: the administrative plans of the Police and Fire Department were developed.

In Patras, in a similar way to Thessaloniki, the projects that were materialised concerned mainly sports infrastructures and more specifically the reconstruction of stadiums, the reformation of the surrounding area and certain transport projects. Non - sport interventions included the renewal of Georgiou square (the central square of the city), the renewals of pavements of Gounari street (central commercial street) and small scale renewal interventions in the port. The programme renewals of the buildings' facades (of a quite large extent) also began as an Olympic project and continued as a responsibility of the OCCOE. Other non Olympic facilities that were predicted according to the business plan for the O.G. concerned land areas and creation of new units in the hospital of Rio and important renewal interventions in the port of Patras.

The immediate tourist benefits for the city the year of the Games were limited with the exception of the athletes' teams. Responsible for this were the directly involved institutions that missed out on a very good opportunity for projection of the comparative advantages of the region, promotion and post Olympic exploitation of whichever brand name (Lambros, 2007)

### 3.4 Ioannina Rowing Games

Ioannina is a medium sized city in the North West Greece. According to the State Census in 2001, the city has almost 70,000 habitants. The leading sector of the local economy is the tertiary one, including branches such as tourism, commerce, health, education and administration (HYPERCO, 2007). A domestic natural element of the city is the lake of Pamvotis. It was once neglected by the urban planning and municipal authorities and degraded by pollution deriving from the city and the agricultural activities. During the last two decades, there were made many efforts to prevent further pollution and degrading of Pamvotis. As a result, the rowing games took place on it during the 1990's, when the lake was clear enough to host such an event.

The rowing games can take place on certain levels, such as local, national even international. The local Naval Club has created a team that has been crowned as champion in the National Championship for several times ([www.kopilasia.gr](http://www.kopilasia.gr)). The combination of favourable natural conditions and the strengthened position of Naval Club due to his success have led into the association of the World Cup of Nations, although the city lacks a Rowing Centre.

The World Cup of Nations lasted only a few days and it was organised without any problem. The Games were considered as a mega - event for Ioannina - basically due to the small scale of the city -and caused a flow of visitors and sports journalists. It also raised the profile of the city, especially to specific target groups, such as the younger people. The Games did not cause the construction of permanent facilities. One reason for this fact was the tough fiscal policies that were implemented on national level during this period as the Greek Government was trying to fulfill the criteria of the European Committee and become a member of the euro -zone. Another reason could be the low profile of the rowing games in Greece, in contrast with sports as football or basketball. Last but not least, the facilities could not serve a great deal of population because Ioannina is a long distance away from the great cities of Greece.

In conclusion, the urban planning of Ioannina was favoured by rowing games. The new use of the lake -sports -helped the public opinion to realise how important Pamvotis is for the amelioration of the quality of life.

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<sup>2</sup> [www.patra2006.gr](http://www.patra2006.gr) and from the article «They have lost 100 mil. €. The projects that never happened», in the webpage <http://www.simerini.gr/?category=1&newsid35=5476&section=32>, 19/1/2007

Furthermore, land –uses such as recreation, culture or sportive and social clubs became then dense because the public got used to the idea of the lake as a place of fun. In addition, the Games helped Pamvotis to become a prestigious place of the city, very desirable for services and housing.

In contrast, urban competitiveness was favoured up to a point but not decisively. Although the Games created a brand –name in specific target groups of visitors, this was not enough to increase the rate of Foreign Direct Investments in the city determinedly. Tourism is a strong branch of the Third Sector, but its expansion has little to do with Rowing Games and more with natural and cultural tourist sources.

## 4. Conclusions

The research on the subject revealed the existence of insufficiency of relative bibliography on the organisation of LSE in medium and small sized cities. This can be regarded as an indication that the LSE are a cause of competition mainly among metropolitan centres and big cities. Small urban centres have a limited capacity to organise LSE and definitely, in any case, their size determines the significance of the events to a great extent. Due to this size of the events is limited capacity for infrastructure development which can be determinant for the spatial development of the city. Still, even the small scale events can be accompanied by significant interventions and they can contribute to the formation of a specific culture of the city especially when it is of small size.

In the case of Greek cities, the support offered by the central government is a major factor both in the success of a candidacy and also in the actual materialisation of the projects. Interventions by the central government are also necessary in the process of promoting the organisations as tools of regional development. The German experience presented a more local profile in the LSE organisation, a fact that can be attributed to the decentralised mechanisms of administration and to the generally intense cultural orientation towards self-administration of the local communities.

How the size of a city influences the organisational mechanisms of the events and the materialisation of the relevant projects cannot become really obvious but, specifically in the case studies, the mechanisms prove to be insufficient. The local organisational committees though supported by remarkable work force did not manage to be successful with the total of their responsibilities, something that contrasts the, by general consent, successful organisation of the Olympic 2004 by Athens. The committees' function is characterised by great aspirations but with limited results.

In relation to the spatial development of the cities, the events have been mainly used in interventions in specific spots of high promotional profile as well as sports and culture infrastructure. As a whole, most of the interventions concern confined spaces aiming at the aesthetic upgrading and restoration of historical sites of the city rather than at solving problems of covering basic functional needs and deficiencies. Most of the exceptions were projects that had been scheduled long before the specific event and the process of their materialisation was just forwarded. The initial plans shrank due to lack of time and ineffective materialisation planning. As a result, infrastructure was limited only to the absolutely necessary projects and there were no key investments that could have changed the process of spatial development for the cities. The consequences of the tourist profile promotion of the cities were also limited.

Conclusively, the special feature that turned up concerning the LSE of the present research has to do with their use as a tool of regional development policy by the central government. The lack of know-how by the local authorities and management problems have proved to be serious barriers to the effective exploitation of the chance given and the enhanced return on the relative investment concerning the city profile and the everyday life of the residents.

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## Acknowledgements

This paper was prepared in the framework of the collective Greek-German research programme IKYDA 2007 "The impact of Large-Scale events on the spatial structure of metropolitan regions" funded by IKY and DAAD. Greek research team: K. Serraios (Project Leader), E. Asprogerakas, B. Ioannou, T. Michailidis, D. Sofianopoulos. German team: Jörg Knieling (Project Leader), A. Matern, S. von Löwis, A. Papaioannou, F. Othengrafen.