



National Technical University of Athens  
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# The long experience of Greece addressing the question of Informal Settlements

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## Tools used

- Security of tenure, urban planning, building code
- Motives against urbanization (taxation, rural reforms / development, etc), raising awareness
- Land consolidation, Privatization of land
- Detailed regularization (environment / cultural heritage), responsibilities / formalization of private sector (developers / constructors)
- Urban regeneration, legalization or not?  
Criteria?
- Upgrading
- Penalties, sporadic demolition
- Resettlement
- Affordable housing / social housing



*Land registry office*

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# Basic Tools: security of tenure, planning

- **Land Registry** for the security of tenure and the support of real estate market (in Greece since early 1850's, 397 offices)
- Requirements & procedures for **urban planning & building code** (e.g., First Housing Law was enacted in Greece, in 1923 - refugees from Asia Minor, 1<sup>st</sup> building code 1929, revision in 1955 after WWII, "legalization")
- Construction is not permitted in non-planned areas in most European countries, however construction in areas outside the city plans **is permitted in Greece unless otherwise regulated**. Since 1923, requirements: **min parcel size:0.4 ha, & access to public-use land (e.g., road) (500m from settlement boundaries: 0.2 ha)**  
**LEGAL CONSTRUCTION in non-planned areas (current regulations):**

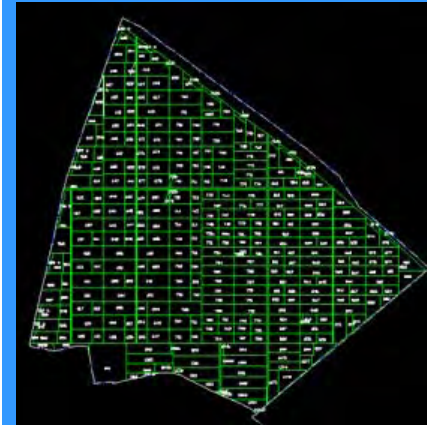
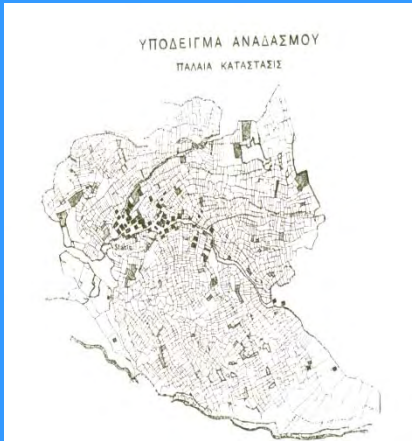
|                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| 2 he                     | building area: 280 m <sup>2</sup> (for Attika region) |
| 0.4 he pre-existing 1983 | building area: 200 m <sup>2</sup>                     |
| 0.2 he facing roads      | building area: 150 m <sup>2</sup>                     |

Those who get a permit to built in such areas **pay the network extension costs and the connection fees.**

**Subdivision of rural land was permitted.**

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# More legal tools...and combined methods



- **Rural land consolidation** projects (in Greece at early 1950s, to support the effort to keep the population in rural areas and to increase rural production)
- **Administrative reforms**
- **Motives** to eliminate urbanization (for the farmers e.g., **tax releases**, rental market, tourism promotion, schools / universities, etc, especially in the '80s, that made their stay in the rural areas / islands quite attractive)





# More legal tools...and combined methods

- **Privatization** of rural and urban land - **however, in Greece the state owned property is estimated to be >50% of the jurisdiction**
- **Regularization (cultural heritage, forests, public coastal zone)**
- first Law 3351/1932 “protection of **Archaeological** sites and cultural heritage”, 1940 first Law for public coastal areas in Greece, **continuously increasing regularization**



# More legal tools...

- **Pro-poor planning, urban densities and area/floor ratio**
- **Determination of Responsibilities** (1967-1974 the responsibility for construction and its supervision was transferred from the public authorities to the responsible private engineers and owners, with strict punishment in case of violation, in order to simplify the permitting procedure. After 1974 this was changed again, **revision of the building code in 1973**)



Athens, 1954



2000

- **Increased Market demand in the '70s** (for first residence, but also for secondary housing)-  
**Consistency in regularization** needed (45% population increase in Attika).
- **Subdivision was forbidden in 1979**, (min parcel size 0.4ha)





# More legal tools...

- **Emphasis on Environmental Protection**

Constitution 1975 (revised 2001): is based in Article 24. Series of Laws.

*“Any development of land which may damage the environment is not considered to be “sustainable development” & **is not permitted.**”*  
***special protection of forests, coastal zone, etc***

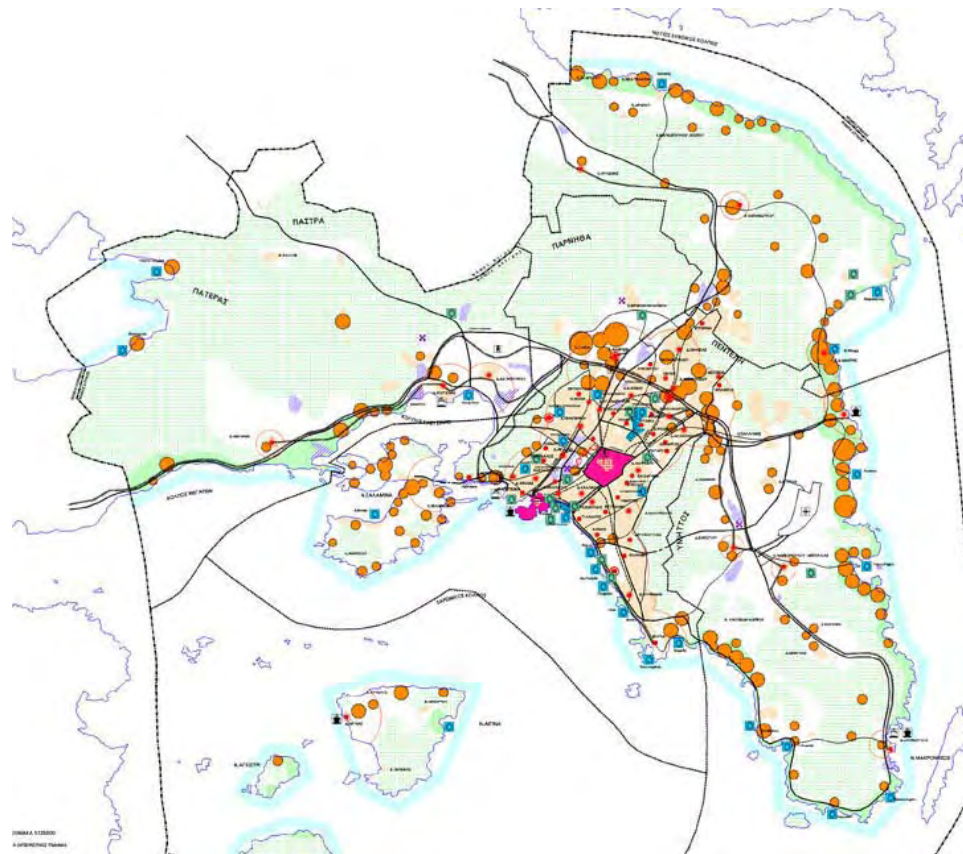
- **Cannot deregulate**



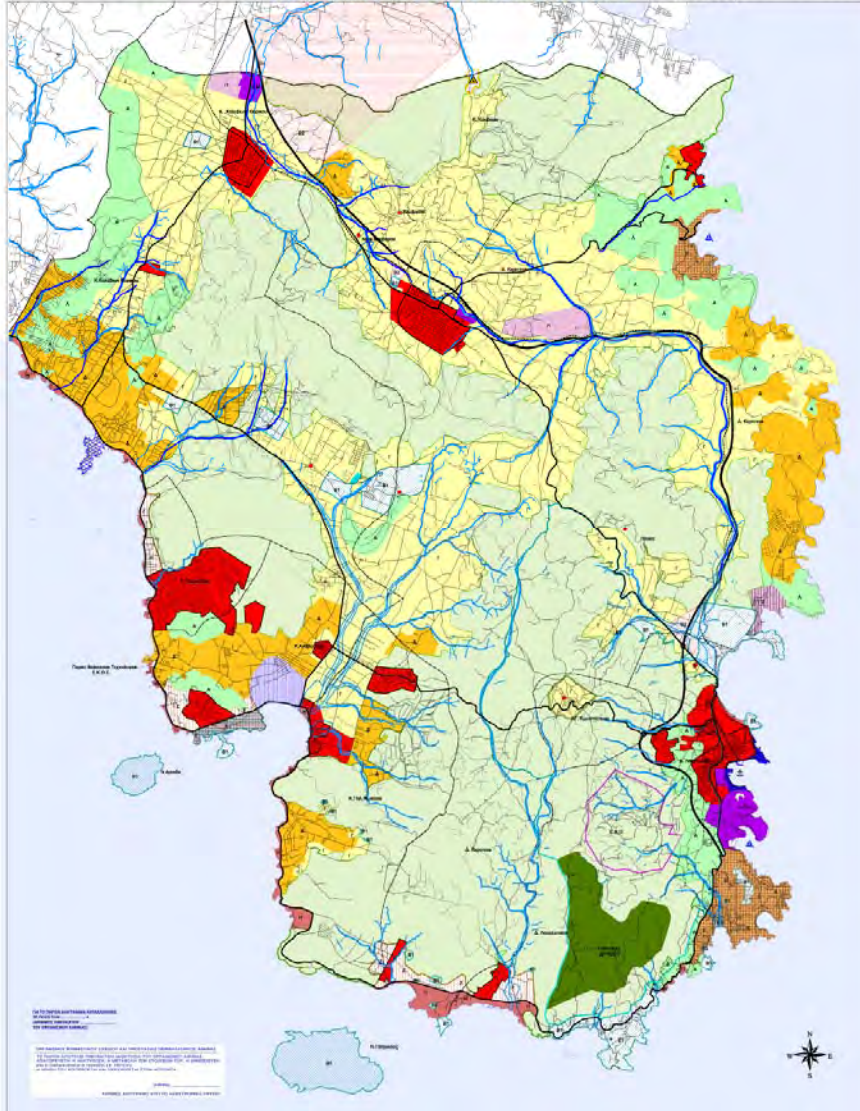
# Problems in applying the legal tools

- Lack of spatial data infrastructure
- **Planning and mapping is very expensive but necessary**
- Constitutional constraints in extension of city plans

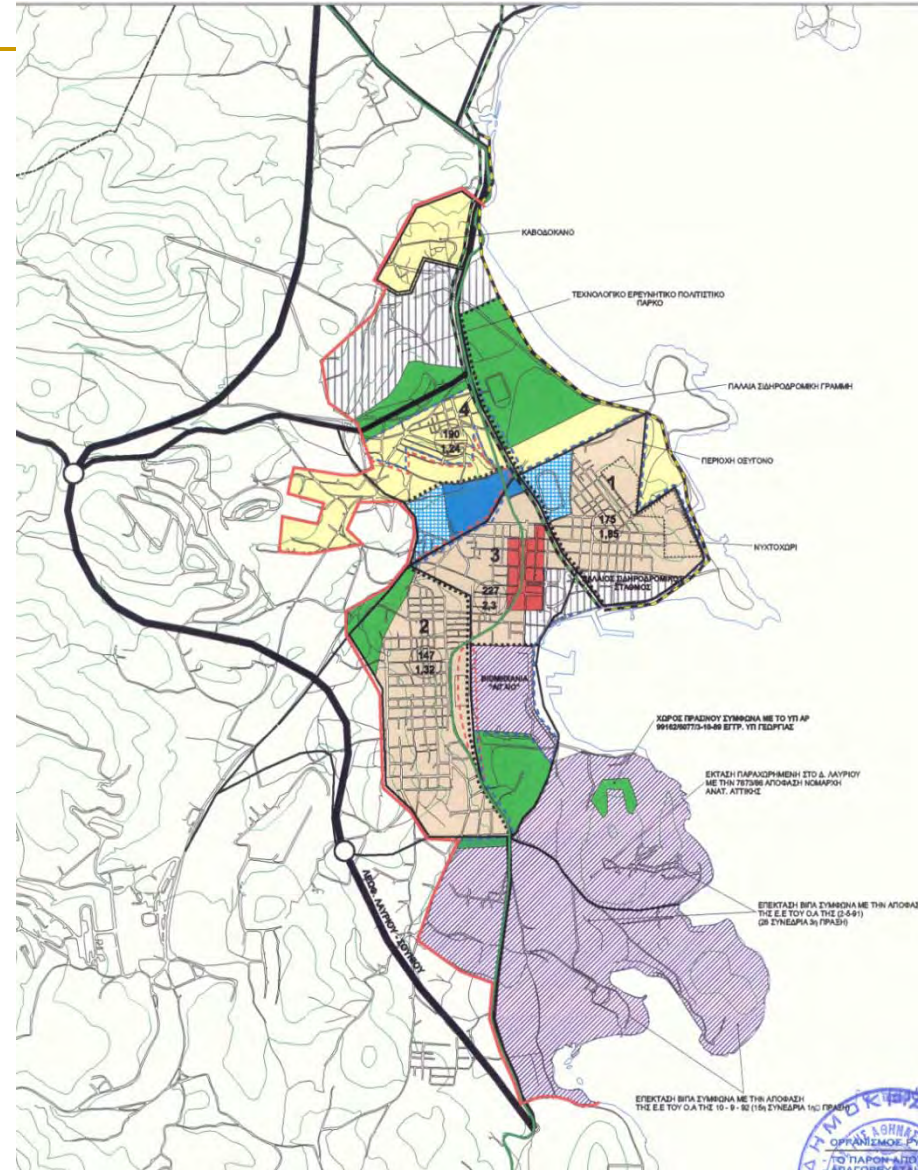
The Strategic Spatial Plan for the greater region of Athens, it includes the whole **Prefecture of Attika** Ratified in 1985, revised in 1999 & 2009







Zoning for Housing control of Lavreotiki,  
1998 (8 years compilation period)



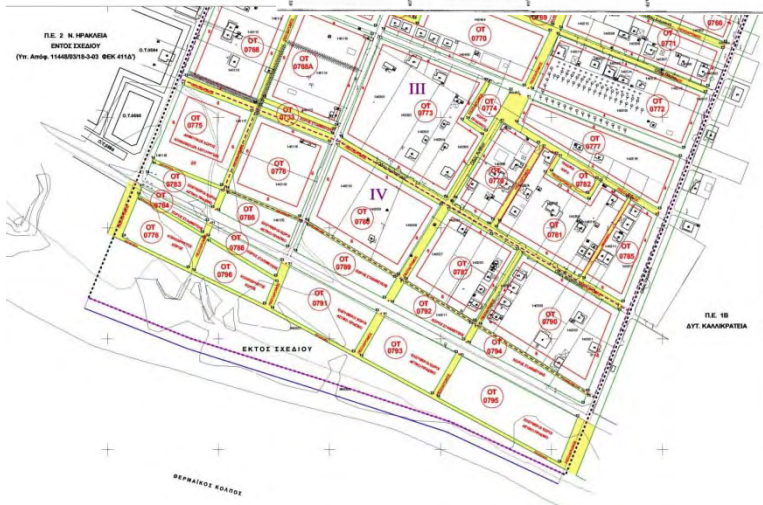
General Urban Plan of Lavrion



# More legal tools...



- **Urban regeneration projects** (cost and time consuming), well-accepted by the public
- **Formalization of existing IS** (not “legalized” but “may not be demolished”) only after integration into the city plan
- **Owners contribute land and money**



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# More tools...to control the current accelerated development trends in Europe

- **High Penalties**  
( > twice the value of the construction)
- **Upgrading** (in 2003, provision of electricity connections, municipal support: improvement of road networks, waste management, etc, all by fees)





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# More legal tools...

What can **never be legalized according to the Constitution** as causing serious environmental damage

Those that according to the city plan lie in:

- *Common use public areas (roads, squares, etc)*
- *Within the safety zone of the international, national, regional, municipal road network,*
- *Within the public coastal zone, as defined by the Law,*
- *Public lands,*
- *Forest lands (first statistics from the HC 48% of the declared is claimed by the state),*
- *Archaeological sites,*
- *Stream routes*

**Sporadic demolition (democratic procedures / private sector)**

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# Social housing - Resettlement

## Expensive

- Social housing, resettlement-costly, can only be applied for **specific groups**



### **Private sector's pro-poor construction?**

Example in Italy:

Construction in violation to zoning regulations to be sold to low-income families. Agreement with politicians for connections to services

Such policy needs to be formalized



# Affordable housing- alternative tenure

- Ministry for Health and Social Affairs used to target programmes for the worse-off and for victims of natural disasters (since 1985 not much activity)
- Workers Housing Organisation (OEK) provides social housing in settlements all over Greece, financed by contributions by workers and employees of the private sector (1% on salaries) and by their employers (0.75% of their wage bill). Houses are sold at 40% of the market value
- 1500 units/year
- The organization subsidizes rents and housing loans as well.





# Development of a cadastral system in Greece (started in 1995)

## The first generation of cadastral survey projects



They were widespread and covered selected clusters all over Greece

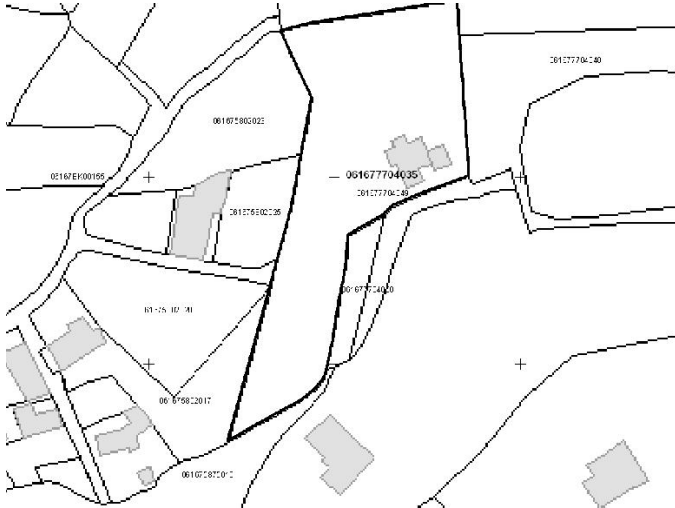
## Second generation of cadastral survey projects



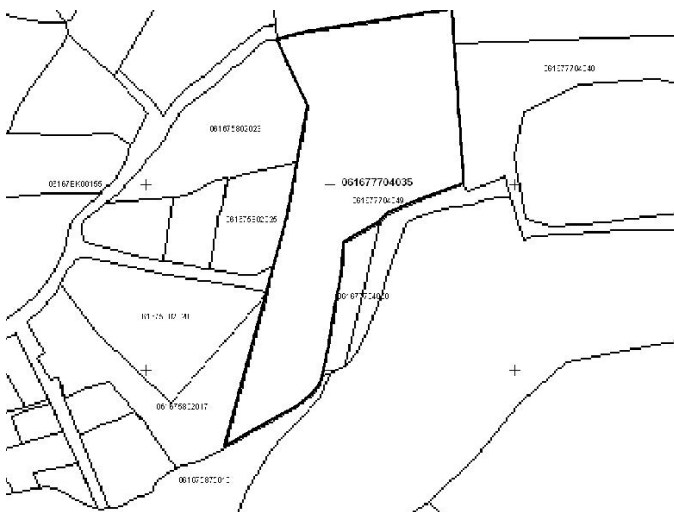
They were focused on major metropolitan and urban areas in Greece

# Treatment of informal land development situations during the operation of the cadastre

## A) Cadastral map with buildings



## B) Cadastral map with no buildings



- No field checks are made by the Hellenic Cadastre
- The cadastre does not issue certificates that may show buildings or other structures that have no permit or violate zoning regulations
- Properties that have buildings which have no permit or violate zoning regulations **are not allowed to be registered, transferred, mortgaged**. The check is made by the notary who is responsible for the compilation of the deed
- Uncertainty about the legal status of buildings in terms of regulations has led to the **removal of the footprints from official cadastral certificates**

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## Pessimistic view

*Urban Planning as a land tool aiming to create better living conditions, improving aesthetics, and balancing conflicting housing interests could be defined as the “Law of harmony”.*

*Unfortunately, the struggle between the private interests and the norms aiming to achieve the best possible living conditions and the sustainable productive development is endless and multiple. Reality is its fruit.*

*In housing reality the wounds of this struggle are still deep and bleeding.  
**Unfortunately informal development has been proved unbeatable.***

C. Horomidis  
Lawyer

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