

Urban renaissance on Athens southern coast: the case of Palaio Faliro

Stefanos Gerasimou, Anastásios Perdicoulis

Abstract— The city of Palaio Faliro is a suburb of Athens, around 9 km from the city centre of the Greek capital, located on the southern coast of the Athens Riviera with a population of nearly 65.000 inhabitants. The municipality of Palaio Faliro has recently achieved a regeneration of its urban profile and dynamics, which extends on an area of Athens southern costal zone combining historic baths, a marina, an urban park, an Olympic Sports Complex and the tramway. The final result promotes sustainable development and sustainable mobility on the Athens coastline taking into consideration the recent metropolisation of the Athens agglomeration. After a brief history of the municipality, we present the core of the new development. Behind the visible results, we highlight the main interactions among the principal actors that made this change possible, and constitute the main challenges for the future. With this case we learn that while the arrangement of space has its logistic difficulties regarding financial and engineering aspects, the deeper challenge is that of exercising democracy justly — and even more so, in its own birthplace.

Keywords— Athens southern coast, Palaio Faliro, Sustainable development, Urban renaissance, Olympic Games.

I. INTRODUCTION

In this article we present the recent development of the city of Palaio Faliro, a suburb on the waterfront of the metropolitan area of Athens, Greece. The particular case study is remarkable for having overcome complexities that have been causing delays for many years, but also for presenting a challenge in the practice of democracy — especially when the case study is situated in the wider area of the historic birthplace of democracy, namely in the Athenian metropolis. The feature presentation is set against a historic background (II) and followed by the recent development and perspectives for the future (III).

Manuscript received October 28, 2009. Stefanos Gerasimou is with the Department of Humanities, Social Sciences and Law, School of Applied Mathematical and Physical Science, National Technical University of Athens, Polytechnioupoli, 15772 Zografou, Athens Greece (phone: +30-210-772-1612; fax: +30-210-772-1618; e-mail: stefanosger@gmail.com).

Anastásios Perdicoulis is with the Oxford Institute for Sustainable Development, Oxford Brookes University, Oxford, UK and with the University of Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro, Vila Real, Portugal (e-mail: perdicoulis@brookes.ac.uk).

II. HISTORIC BACKGROUND

The city of Palaio Faliro is located on the southern coast of the Region of Attica, on the eastern part of the Faliro Delta, around 9 km from Athens city centre, 13 km from the port of Piraeus and 40 km from Athens International Airport. It extends on an area of nearly 457ha [1]. According to ancient Greek literature, cited in the official website of the city [2], Palaio Faliro was founded by Faliro, a local hero, and used to be the port of Athens before the creation of that of Piraeus.

Until 1920, Palaio Faliro was a small seaside village with few buildings, mainly fields where were cultivated wheat, barley and oats and many vineyards. Most inhabitants were farmers, stockbreeders, and some were fishermen. Between 1915 and 1920, some prosperous families started building the first villas by the sea modifying the visual character of the area. A few of these buildings can still be admired, for they are protected as listed buildings.

A rapid urban and administrative evolution of Palaio Faliro started in the 1920s under the general influence of the urban sprawl of the agglomeration of the Greek capital during the second decade of the twentieth century. Around 800.000 refugees mainly from Asia Minor and Eastern Thrace came to Greece due to the Balkan wars, World War I, the Soviet Revolution, the foundation of the Albanian State, the Italian occupation of the Dodecanese and most importantly the defeat of the Greek army in Asia Minor in 1922; 25% thereof settled in Athens. Thus, from 1922 to 1928 the population of the prefecture of Attica increased by 68%; the inhabitants of the municipality of Athens increased by 72% reaching 459.211 inhabitants, while those in Piraeus by 88%. Greek refugees within the Greek State represented 30% of the population in Attica, 28% of the inhabitants of Athens and 40% of the residents of Piraeus [3].

These events provoked a radical change on the Greek statutory urban framework. Thus, in 1923 was voted the basic urban law on planning (Legislative Decree of 17th July 1923), concerning the urban plans of cities, towns and communes. Its provisions were quite advanced for their time, some of which are still in force. The plot was considered as the basic unit of city planning in order to associate urban to social policy. The space was divided into a) areas provided with an urban plan; b) areas without one and c) settlements built ante 1923. The settlements of the first category should be regulated and developed in accordance to an urban plan subject to constraints regarding the ratios and dimensions, the site

coverage, the height of buildings, hygiene, security and the aesthetic aspect of buildings [4]. In addition, three methods of implementation of urban plans were provided for: a) the laying out of streets and squares by which properties falling, according to the plan, within areas intended for public use are taken away from their owners on payment of compensation (compulsory purchase); this usually occurs when new streets are to be opened or old ones widened; b) the rearrangement of plots through the exchange or the addition and subtraction of certain parts of them; and c) the concession, by which the administration confers the ownership of plots to owners of neighbouring sites according to a certain procedure provided by law; [5]. Furthermore, under social pressure to implement an affective housing policy the Greek legislator voted in 1928 a Legislative Degree on a) building in areas without urban plan; and b) industrial zones. One year later, in 1929, the Greek Parliament voted Law 3741/1929 regarding the horizontal division of immovables and separate ownership of apartments, with a direct impact on the visual character of the Greek city, since it created the legal frame for building blocks of flats. The same year the first General Building Regulation was voted, which provided different building systems, the maximum height of buildings and the insertion in the urban plan of provisions regarding industrial sites and archeological and historical monuments. Finally, the same period two special laws over the protection of cultural heritage were voted: Law 4212/1929 by which a part of the city centre of Athens was recognised as an archeological site and Law 5351/1932, which adopted measures in favour of the protection of ancient, Christian and Meadville monuments including peaces of all kind of arts [6].

In this context the community of Palaio Faliro was founded by presidential decree (1925) and nearly twenty years later, in 1942, it became a municipality. In 1976 Palaio Faliro was declared a 'tourist site' by presidential decree. Finally, in view of the Athens 2004 Olympics, Palaio Faliro was characterised as an 'Olympic Municipality', since it hosts an important Olympic venue — namely the Faliro Sports Pavilion.

Three major public works helped the city grow, two of which were in the transportation services. In 1883 the tramway was inaugurated, connecting Palaio Faliro to Athens. The tramway was operated by light vehicles with 16 seats, covered during the winter, and 20 open-type during the summer. The first trams were drawn by 3 horses, while in 1908 the first electrically powered trams were put in operation destined to gradually replace the horse drawn ones [7].



Figure 1 A picture of a similar European tramway

In addition to the tramway, a hydroplane line was established in 1926, serving three destinations: Brindisi (Italy)

— Faliro (Greece) — Istanbul (Turkey). The third service was regarding sanitation: in 1930 the community water supply system was connected with the one of Athens.

Following the above evolution, the population of Palaio Faliro has considerably risen: 8 302 in 1940, 12 894 in 1951, 22 157 in 1961, 35 066 in 1971, 53 273 in 1981, 61 371 in 1991 and 64 579 in 2001 [8]. According to the General Secretariat of National Statistical Service of Greece 2 426 are under 20, 18 386 are between 20 and 39, 18 457 are between 40 and 59 years old and 15 490 are over 60). Moreover, the population area from 10 655 km² in 1981 reached nearly 12 951 km² in 2001 [9].

Since 1955, and mainly after 1974, many Greek immigrants from Istanbul have chosen the city of Palaio Faliro as their new location of residence, after their expulsion by the Turkish government. In 1955 there were 110 000 Greeks living in Istanbul, while the population of the city was 1 543 000. In 1989 there were only a few hundreds Greeks left [10]. Nowadays, Greeks from Istanbul represent around 25% of the inhabitants of Palaio Faliro [11]. These facts reflect some important changes: housing policy was modified and the building coefficient in the central part of the suburb was fixed to 2.4. [12] Thus, in the nineteen seventies, most of the villas were demolished, while the majority of the the four storey buildings have been replaced by eight storey ones altering the visual character of the city [13]. Moreover, new restaurants and pastry shops with oriental flavours opened, as well as sports and cultural clubs bearing names of the wider Istanbul area, representing nearly 35% of the city shops. A similar influence was obvious in the commercial centre of the city, since many of the new inhabitants continued their commercial activity.

During the 1970s, the metropolitan area of Athens has altogether known an intense urbanisation, which led to serious environmental problems, such as the reduction of open public space, the increase of population density, the deterioration of the built environment due to high density, and severe pollution of the marine environment. Hence, the city expanded to the north towards the foot of the surrounding mountains, while its centre was neglected. This tendency provoked serious congestion problems, while in 30 years the situation remained crucial in terms of quality of life, for Athens was surrounded by some prosperous enclaves in the north, the south was saturated, the west was densely but mostly illegally built and the east was mainly a remote rural area. Furthermore, commuting had in general become time-consuming. As a result the central and local governments have started implementing projects of sustainable development aiming at improving the quality of life and protecting the natural, built and cultural environment [14].

Nowadays, the city of Palaio Faliro is mostly a residential suburb of the greater metropolitan area of Athens, with mainly eight-storey blocs of flats, some villas, a few listed buildings of the early 20th century, four disperse shopping streets, a remodelled coastal zone which includes beaches, a long

promenade, a local park, the Floisvos Marina, the G. Averoff battleship [15], and various sports facilities, including the Faliro Sports Pavilion.



Figure 2 A typical picture showing the visual character of Palaio Faliro



Figure 3 The G. Averoff battleship

Finally, one of the main attractions of the city is the Athens state-of-the-art Planetarium [16].

III. RECENT DEVELOPMENT

The 2004 Olympic Games in the Athens metropolitan area was the main event which activated the urban renaissance in the coastal zone of Palaio Faliro — among other areas of the metropolis. The urban renaissance project of Palaio Faliro comprised four main axes:

- the Faliro Coastal Zone Olympic Sports Complex
- the Faliro coastal zone concession
- the Floisvos marina
- the Athens tramway

This project, which was largely completed after the Olympic Games terminated, marked the re-valorisation of the southern coast of the Athens metropolitan area and the return of the metropolis towards its southern Riviera, which has always included Palaio Faliro.

The Athens 2004 Olympic Games was the catalytic factor for implementing most of Athens Master Plan provisions. Thus, In 1997 “Unification of Athens Archeological Sites S.A.” was created both by the Ministry of the Environment and Public Works and the Ministry of Culture. The above S.A. has undertaken the most important urban renovation of Athens; among its accomplishments should be outlined the creation of a pedestrian area unifying the most important monuments of the city and the removal of billboards from some of the main

streets and squares of Athens. During the same period the traditional commercial centre of Athens was declared as a historical area, land use was modified and a pedestrian commercial triangle was created.

Besides, in 2001 the Greek legislator voted Law 2947/2001 on Olympic works and infrastructure, which has both improved and shown off the physiognomy of the city of Athens according to the needs of the new role of the Greek capital as a multiracial metropolis of southeastern Europe. This law provided for: a) the reconstruction and reanimation of the Athens coast line; b) the urban renovation of the city centre; c) painting of the building facades; d) the illumination of monuments, of the most characteristic buildings and the main streets of Athens; e) the remodelling of the premises of Olympic venues; f) the extension of the Underground combined with a state-of-the-art suburban railway and a tramway connecting the city centre to the coast line; and g) the construction of the Athens ring road connecting the west to the east part of Attica. In fact, this law accelerated the realisation of the goals of both the Athens’ Master Plan and “Unification of Athens Archeological Sites S.A.” Finally, the airport has been transferred from the south to the east side of Attica, which was mainly an agricultural area. The aforementioned construction of the new tramway system connecting the Athens city centre to the southern suburbs marked the return of the city’s attention to the south after nearly thirty years. This comeback was followed by the construction of several Olympic venues along the coastline and the operation of a central sewage plant, reducing considerably marine pollution. As a result of the above radical measures, urban renaissance policies have been encouraged in many suburbs of the metropolitan area [17]. In this context, the urban regeneration of Palaio Faliro, as one of the most important suburbs on the Athens southern coast, was part of the general promotion of similar policies in the wider metropolitan area of Athens.

Besides, these policies have been encouraged and delimited by the institutional framework and the jurisprudence mainly of the Greek Council of State (Supreme Administrative Court). In fact, in the early 90’s, in the absence of constitutional or legal provisions concerning sustainable development the Council of State under the influence of international and European law introduced the above principle, which has become the main pillar of its jurisprudence concerning the protection of the environment and urban development. Greek jurisprudence has imposed sustainable development especially to control development in tourist resorts, where financial and tourist interests often damage the environment (50/1993, 2479/2003). On the city level the Council of State has divided sustainable development in more specific principles such as: a. “carrying capacity” and “urban sustainable environment”. a. carrying capacity, according to which the development of cities and tourist resorts as well as the exploitation of sensitive natural resorts must conform to the “natural potential” of the place (2844/1993). Besides the doctrine partly supports that cultural elements should also be

taken into account in defining the carrying capacity of a place. This jurisprudence applies mainly on insular towns and villages planning and constitutes a prerequisite for the protection of the urban landscape of the Cycladic islands (2479/2003); b. “urban sustainable environment”, which aims at reestablishing the quality of city life, mainly in big metropolis, by means of a balanced distribution of land use and economic and social activities, taking under consideration urban sustainable development (4207/1997). This principle imposes the conformity of various planning means, the rationalisation of city plans, the safeguarding of natural environment and sustainable mobility in the urban network [18];

Furthermore the Council of State’s jurisprudence has created two major constitutional principles: the preservation of the urban and environmental *acquis*. The “urban *acquis*” prohibits any further degradation of the urban environment, allowing only improving measures of the quality of life (585/1978, 1876/1980, 10/1988, 1159/1989, 150/1990, 106/1991, 2506/2002). Similarly the “environmental *acquis*” does not allow any degradation of the natural or cultural environment (10/1988). The aforementioned principles have considerably influenced both the Greek legislator, who adopted statutes promoting sustainability. In fact, the Greek Parliament, following the above jurisprudence and European prerequisites has voted two main laws on sustainability: Law 2508/1997 on sustainable development of towns and settlements and Law 2742/1999 on regional planning and sustainable development. Finally, the revision of the Greek Constitution in 2001 explicitly combined the protection of the environment with sustainability [19].

A. The Faliro Coastal Zone Olympic Sports Complex

The Faliro Coastal Zone Olympic Sports Complex occupies a wider area which belongs to various municipalities and consists of two indoor arenas and a beach volleyball stadium. The first arena, which is located within the district of the municipality of Palaio Faliro, known as Faliro Sports Pavilion, hosted Handball and Taekwondo, while the second one, the Stadium of Peace and Friendship (SEF), hosted indoor volleyball and volleyball events at the 2004 Summer Olympics [20].



Figure 4 The Faliro Sports Pavilion

B. Faliro coastal zone concession

In 2006, the municipality of Palaio Faliro was offered by the government’s Tourism Development Co., S.A. (ETA), a state-owned tourism property company [21], the administration and management for 70 years of the biggest part of the coastal

zone of Palaio Faliro (144 456 m²), which comprises the Park of Floisvos with its tourist facilities (café-restaurant, open air cinema) and the beaches. According to the concession agreement [22], the aims of the concession were defined as follows:

- to develop the Park of Floisvos as an urban park of the wider area
- to coordinate the development of the coastal zone and especially the historic baths of Batis and Eden
- to upgrade the leisure, cultural and recreational open air services
- to widen the cooperation between the municipality and ETA on topics of common interest

The municipality had the obligation to conduct the urban renaissance study, to realise the afferent works and to provide for the appropriate land uses according to the land use building restrictions of the wider coastal zone of the Athens metropolitan area [23]. Since then, the municipality of Palaio Faliro has realised most of its urban renaissance project.

The main goal of the concession was the creation of a seaside promenade on the aforementioned coastal zone with secure and easy access for the inhabitants and visitors. In the park, occupying about 1.3 ha, there were constructed two playgrounds, one for children between 2 and 7 years old and another one for those between 8 and 14 years old. The construction of the playgrounds within the park was financed by sponsors. So, in return they were given the right to organise 8 events per year as publicity.

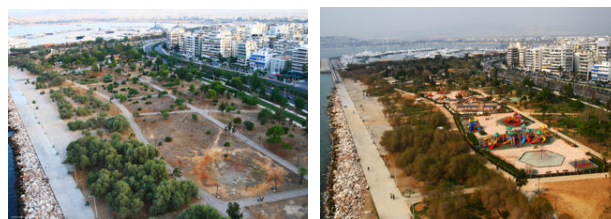


Figure 5 The construction of the playgrounds within the Park of Floisvos

Moreover, an extensive tree-planting project was initiated, with ca. one thousand mature trees planted to date. The cost of the tree planting project is 120 000 euros. Street furniture along the promenade has been changed, the beaches have been organised and equipped for the summer period, during which time they are regularly cleaned.



Figure 6 The reorganisation of the beaches

The Batis square, by the waterfront, where all the summer cultural municipal events take place, was remodelled on municipal expenses [24].



Figure 7 The Batis square

Furthermore, street furniture and pavements on both sides of the coastal avenue have been improved. Finally, the traditional building of Floisvos at the waterfront has been acquired by the municipality by compulsory purchase – i.e. the enforced acquisition of land for public purposes, by statutory authority and on payment of compensation, source [25]. The compensation paid by the municipality reached 5 400 000 euros. This building is the landmark of the municipality, and operates as a cultural centre hosting expositions and other cultural events.



Figure 8 The traditional building of Floisvos

C. The Floisvos Marina

The Floisvos Marina belongs to ETA. In 2002, LAMDA TechnOL Floisvos Marina S.A. (LTFM) was awarded a 40-year concession to develop, redesign, rebuild, upgrade and manage the marina in order to provide high-class facilities and services for yachts from around the world (LAMDA TechnOL Floisvos Marina is jointly owned by LAMDA TechnOL Floisvos Holding, S.A. (LTFH), 77.23%, and the government's Tourism Development Co., S.A. (ETA), 22.77%. Principal shareholders of LTFH are LAMDA Development, S.A., 51%, Zerlan, 30%, Island Global Yachting, 10%, and Alfa Ocean Developments, 9% [26]. The cost of the investment reaches 45 million euros and concerns both port and land facilities. Floisvos Marina is planned to become an upscale marina operating according to top international specifications and accommodate the special needs of mega-yachts. Nowadays, most of the project has finished: mooring places have passed from 150 to 250, while

50 more remain to be created, together with the construction of an outer harbour.

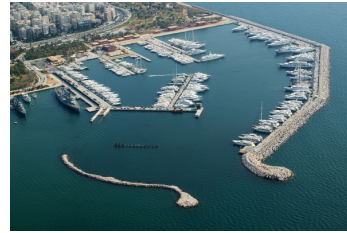


Figure 9 The Floisvos marina



Figure 10 A global view of the wider area

Moreover, a commercial complex across an area of 3 800 m² has been completed offering both yacht owners and visitors from all over Attica numerous dining, shopping, and recreational opportunities. The vision of the contractor, LAMDA TechnOL Floisvos Marina S.A. (LTFM), is to establish Floisvos Marina as the premier mega-yacht destination in the Eastern Mediterranean and a meeting point for recreation, shopping, and dining [27]. As an indication, at the Athens 2004 Olympic Games Floisvos Marina was selected as the 'VIP Olympic Marina' and hosted more than 35 VIP yachts and mega-yachts from around the globe [28].



Figure 11 The marina commercial complex – land facilities

The concession of the marina was approved by the Greek Parliament [29], but preceded the environmental impact study of the project due to the urgency created by the national commitment to have all Olympic infrastructures ready for the 2004 games. This delay of the environmental impact study was the major argument of the appeals that followed before the Greek Council of State: one on behalf of the citizens of Palaio Faliro, and another one on behalf of the municipality of Palaio Faliro; the former is still pending, while the latter was withdrawn after the aforementioned concession of the coastal area to the community.

D. The Athens tramway

In 1977, the tracks of the original tram of Athens had been torn up on purpose according to the government policy of modernising public transportation. Nearly thirty years later the new tramway was prepared to operate for the Athens 2004 Olympic Games. The Athens Coastal Tram (or, simply, the Athens tram) connects the city centre and Faliro Coastal Zone Olympic Sports Complex to the beaches of the southern coast of Attica all along Faliro coastal zone [30].

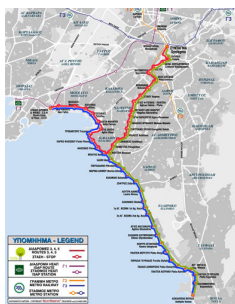


Figure 12 The Athens Coastal Tram

The Athens tram is an environment friendly transport means. TRAM, S.A. went ahead with the renovation and aesthetic upgrading of all areas where the tram goes through with particular emphasis in the creation of green areas and infrastructures which improve the quality of life. Thus 2 450 trees, 94 035 plants and 46 687 square meters of lawn along the 27 km of the network have been planted by TRAM S.A. Moreover, the latter has fully renovated the promenade along the coast, paved roads, installed lighting and developed playgrounds [31].

The General Final Design was conducted first, but the Detailed Final Design (including the urban renaissance study) was completed after the concession of the work to the contractor so as possible modifications could be taken into account. Hence, a series of compensatory works have been realised in collaboration with local governments, since the new tramway was an opportunity for urban regeneration in densely inhabited areas. In Palaio Faliro in particular these works comprised the following:

- paving of the promenade
- remodelling of the Eden playground
- planting lawn and trees between the tracks and the coastal promenade
- transferring of drains
- street furniture (lights, benches, bollards)
- pedestrianisation of a main commercial street



Figure 13 Paving of the promenade



Figure 14 Planting lawn and trees between the tracks and the coastal promenade

The maintenance of these works apart from the tramway belongs to the municipality [32].

IV DISCUSSION

Urban renaissance in Palaio Faliro has been the result of parallel interventions of four actors, whose interests were often contradictory: ETA, the municipality of Palaio Faliro, LAMDA TechnOL Floisvos Marina, S.A., and Tram, S.A.. As an example, according to the municipality of Palaio Faliro [33], the key factor of the success of the renaissance project was the concession of the use and management of most of the coastal zone to the municipality, while for LAMDA TechnOL Floisvos Marina, S.A. the key factor was the creation of a clean, safe and remodelled promenade by the sea, within the marina area, with restaurants, cafes and various shops. Each actor, with the exception of the local government, seemed to focus on its own field of competence, lacking a holistic approach. However, most of the interventions were stimulated mainly by the Athens 2004 Olympic Games, which activated the urban renaissance.

Strangely enough, the reactions of the residents of Palaio Faliro were not altogether positive. The main objections could be resumed to the following arguments. (a) The best part of the park is now hosting playgrounds, with four of them by the waterfront, while this does not correspond to the population structure [34]. (b) The material used in the playgrounds is mainly plastic, which does not match with the aesthetics of the park. (c) The transformation of the building of Floisvos from a café-restaurant to a cultural centre desolated the area (d) the creation of a unified walking area with mixed uses for all ages is impeded by the fencing of the marina area. (e) The prohibition for visitors' vehicles to enter the marina often causes intense traffic congestion, in particular during the summer. (f) The remodelling of the marina, despite the aesthetics improvement, has largely exceeded the carrying

capacity of the area: there is an excess of shops, which might provoke an economic crisis on a local scale. In fact, the shops in the marina compete the local ones mainly those of the central area of Palaio Faliro, since they sell similar goods: clothes, cafés-restaurants, a bookshop, with the exception of some orientated to yauhting. (g) Finally, the tramway does not serve the inhabitants of the coastal zone, since it follows a circular trajectory towards the city centre and it is more convenient to commute combining buses, or private cars and the subway. For the above reasons, the whole project appears to insist more on social extroversion ignoring local needs. Thus, nearly 50% of the inhabitants do not seem satisfied with the final outcome of the regeneration of Palaio Faliro coastal zone [35].

The next major intervention concerns the area of the former Faliro Horse Race Track in the neighbouring municipality of Kallithea. This area covers approximately 200.000 square metres and is connected to the Faliro Coastal Zone Olympic Sports Complex by the Esplanada, a pedestrian footbridge. In fact, after an agreement between the Greek government and the Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF), the latter is financing the planning, construction, and outfitting of the the SNF Cultural Center, which will include the new state-of-the-art facilities for the Greek National Opera and the National Library of Greece, set within an Educational and Cultural Park [36]. The SNF is an international philanthropic organisation which supports charitable activities in four primary areas: arts and culture, education, health and medicine, and social welfare. The Foundation makes grants to not-for-profit organisations throughout the world. In addition, the Foundation maintains a major commitment to supporting programs in Greece through the guidance of a locally based advisory committee [37].

Moreover, the Faliro Sports Pavillion is soon to be converted into the Metropolitan Convention Centre of the capital [38]. These interventions are in conformity with the most recent law regarding the permitted uses of the Olympic venues [39].

Furthermore, with the opportunity of the new expansion of the tramway towards Piraeus, Tram, S.A. will finance the construction of another playground in an area of around 1 ha between the marina and Faliro Sports Pavilion, next to a multiplex cinema, which already operates [40]. However, in accordance with the indications of the residents, the local government of Palaio Faliro is planning to construct a parking lot in the entrance of the park to decongest the area around the marina.

V CONCLUSION

During its most recent development boom, the city of Palaio Faliro has taken advantage of the dynamism of the 2004 Olympic Games to drive a series of improvements in its territory, as part of an urban renaissance project for the improvement of the quality of life of its citizens promoting sustainable development and sustainable mobility on the

coastline. Despite the distinct and remarkable developments, such as a number of Olympic venues, a marina, tramway, promenade, and waterfront public open spaces, there are still some issues of communication between the four main actors, on one side, and the residents on the other. As a general remark we could criticise the fact that the renaissance projects did not sufficiently provide for the cultural, social and physical interaction of the community represented by the inhabitants and their various organisations; this interaction is a key to the success of implementing sustainability though [41]. We should not neglect that sustainable development means a better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come. It is a vision of progress that links economic development, protection of the environment and social justice, and its values are recognised by democratic governments and political movements the world over. More specifically, according to the European Commission sustainable development is about:

- a) a balanced and equitable economic development;
- b) high levels of employment, social cohesion and inclusiveness;
- c) a high level of environmental protection and responsible use of natural resources;
- d) coherent policy making in an open, transparent and accountable political system;
- e) effective international co-operation to promote sustainable development globally [42]

So, in conclusion we could support the idea that the latest developments in Palaio Faliro may appear desirable from the point of view of activity in the city, but as long as the public is not fully participating in these developments, the spirit of democracy may be questioned. And for the birthplace of democracy - i.e. the Athens metropolitan area-, honouring democracy is an imperative that everything should be done right: the social basis of development needs to be worked out equally well as the visible structures: it *does* matter how development is being shaped. The social dynamics are perhaps the most important aspect of development, and must be considered seriously by all the parties involved in shaping the form and function of Palaio Faliro [43].

REFERENCES

- [1] *Palaio Faliro*. Available: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palaio_Faliro
- [2] *The history of our city*. Available: <http://www.palaiofaliro.gr>
- [3] *The land of Attica welcomes the refugees of 1922*. Athens, Foundation of the Parliament of Greece for Parliamentary system and Democracy, 2006, pp. 47, 103.
- [4] A. Hatzopoulou, *Urban Law*. Athens, NTUA, 2000, p. 19.
- [5] K. D. Kerameus, P. J. Kozyris, *Introduction to Greek Law*. Deventer, Boston, Kluwer/Sakkoulas, Deventer, Boston, 1993, p. 138.
- [6] A. Hatzopoulou, S. Gerasimou, E. Ntougia, "The evolution and the influence of Greek Urban law on the physiognomy of the Olympic city of Athens", in *Proc. Sustainable Building 2005*, Tokyo, 2005, ID 13-048.
- [7] *The history of the tram of Athens*. Available: <http://www.tramsa.gr/index.cfm? page id=191&category=learn&lang id=1>
- [8] *Contemporary history*. Available:

<http://www.palαιοfaliro.gr>

[9] idem [1]

[10] B. Sfyroeras. *Constantinople*. Available: <http://foss.math.aegean.gr/alex/P/km/Txt/Const.htm>

[11] P. Koustenis, editor of the local newspaper *Echo of Faliro*, www.echofaliro.gr, Personal communication (2008, October 10).

[12] Argyroupolis Town Planning Office; Presidential Decree, Government Gazette Issue No. 619/Δ/1978-08-24.

[13] N. Halamadaris, Civil Engineer, Personal communication (2008, October 10).

[14] A. Hatzopoulou, S. Gerasimou, "Sustainable development of Greek mountainous traditional settlements", *WSEAS Transactions on Environment and Development*, issue 9, vol. 2 pp. 1226-1229, Sept. 2006

[15] Battleship "G, Averof", *Sailing through history*. Available: <http://www.bsaverof.com/uk/history.htm>

[16] *The Planetarium*. Available: <http://www.athens-today.com/e-planetario.htm>

[17] A. Hatzopoulou, S. Gerasimou, "Sustainable mobility in Athens city centre", *WSEAS Transactions on Environment and Development*, issue 4, vol. 2 pp. 407-411, Apr. 2006.

[18] M. Dekleris, "The twelve environmental rules. The principles of sustainable development", *Nomos+Physis*, issue 2, pp. 282-347, 1995.

[19] A. Hatzopoulou, S. Gerasimou, E. Ntougia, "The influence of urban law on the physiognomy of the city", *WSEAS Transactions on Environment and Development*, issue 2, vol. 1 pp. 326-331, Nov. 2005.

[20] *Faliro Coastal Zone Sports Complex*, Available: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Faliro_Coastal_Zone_Olympic_Complex

[21] *Hellenic Tourist Development Co.* Available: <http://www.tourism-development.gr>

[22] Concession contract between the Municipality of Palaio Faliro and ETA, (2006 June 26).

[23] Presidential Decree, Government Gazette Issue No. 254/Δ/2004-03-05.

[24] D. Hatzidakis, Mayor of Palaio Faliro, Personal communication (2008 September 19).

[25] Oxford Dictionary of Law, Oxford university press, 1997.

[26] LAMDA development. Available: <http://www.lamda-development.net>

[27] K. Karatopouzi, Asset Manager in LAMDA development, S.A., Personal communication (2008 October 10)

[28] *Flisvos Marina*. Available: <http://www.flisvosmarina.com>

[29] Law 3207/2003, Government Gazette Issue No. 302/A/2003-12-24.

[30] M. Barrett. *Athens Tram, Athens Survival Guide*, Available: <http://www.athensguide.com/tram.htm>

[31] *Tram...way of life*. Available: http://www.tramsa.gr/index.cfm?page_id=184&lang_id=1

[32] K. Karaglani, Civil Engineer, Head of Development Department of Tram, S.A., Personal communication (2008 October 29).

[33] idem 24.

[34] idem 11.

[35] idem 11.

[36] Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Centre. Available: <http://www.snf.org/snfcc/EN/default.php>

[37] [Stavros Niarchos Foundation. Available: http://www.snf.org/index.php?ID=foundation_EN](http://www.snf.org/index.php?ID=foundation_EN)

[38] Hellenic Olympic Properties. Available: http://www.olympicproperties.gr/contents_en.asp?id=28

[39] Law 3342/2005, Government Gazette Issue No. 131/A/2005-06-06.

[40] idem 32.

[41] E. Esen Kaleli, "Sustainable urban environment and accessibility", *WSEAS Transactions on Environment and Development*, issue 4, vol. 2 pp. 341-346, Apr. 2006.

[42] European Commission, *Sustainable Development*. Available: <http://europa.eu.int/comm/sustainable/en.htm>

[43] A. Perdicoulis, "The urban planning school of system dynamics", *WSEAS Transactions on Environment and Development*, issue 2, vol. 1 pp. 173-179, Nov. 2005

cultural heritage and public works (institutional framework, implementation of the above policies)

Anastásios Perdicoulis is a Visiting Research Fellow at the Oxford Institute for Sustainable Development, Oxford Brookes University and an Assistant Professor at the University of Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro, Vila Real, Portugal. He researches in planning, with special interest in planning methodology and the process of development, as well as impact assessment methodology in the form of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

Stefanos Gerasimou is a Lecturer at the National Technical University of Athens. He researches in sustainable development, sustainable mobility,