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*Approach to the effects of Greek regional universities on development of the country
regions*

0. Introduction

Although the start of the debate on the contribution of universities to the local and regional development dates back to several decades ago, it is only in the past 25 years that it has been intensified and seen from a new angle of investigation and consideration. It is therefore imperative that the “*higher education – development*” relationship be reviewed and placed on different basis. The causes for this are the major change in the content of “*development*” and the concept of “*university*” [mainly in terms of its role in the society and economy], the new policies and socio-economic conditions globally, the contemporary weight attributed to new technologies and knowledge dissemination as a “*development factor*”, as well as the large number of unsuccessful attempts to use the universities a “*means*” for development.

In the international arena, knowledge [especially higher education level] has started being acknowledged as a key development for national and regional factor, and awareness on the issue “*university and local / regional development*” is constantly on the rise¹. In Greece, the expansion of university education, despite all the efforts in recent years, is still treated in a unidimensional and fragmentary manner². It is true though that, following the country’s accession to the European Union, a new context of reflection has been shaped regarding the investigation of the relationship “*university – regional / local development*”.

Greece is a country the higher education system operated exclusively by the state. For more than four decades, governmental policies have been bringing out the decentralization of university education as a “*means*” to improve the quality of education nation-wide and

¹ Conferences are organized; increasingly more articles are written; many governments promote projects for the encouragement of cooperation between universities – local communities and local productive sectors. On the other hand increasingly more universities have started recognizing their development role in the broader areas where they are located {Theodora, Y., 2004}.

² Unidimensional, because it is not addressed in the framework of multiple roles and different levels of spatial reference, and fragmentary because it is not put into the perspective of broader policies on development and education [Cf. Section 4 below].

resolve the "*regional problem*". At the same time, local societies have requested, one after the other, the establishment of at least one university department, in the belief that they would thus ensure the upgrading of the quality and economy standards in their respective areas. Therefore, it would be interesting, to investigate under the new conditions – as they emerge at international, European and national levels- and while decentralization is under way in our country : if *regional universities*³ - as they have been created, distributed, organized and operating – have played – and may play - some part in the development of Greece's regions.

The approach to this question is based on the grounds of two principal pursuits. First, it is studied whether and how the expansion of university education has been used as a "means of development" at the principal stages of the country's "*regional development*" [1946-1999]. Therefore, it is investigated whether the policy on regional universities planning and establishment was integrated in the broader framework of policies on development and education, also taking into account the regional and local specificities, needs and capabilities. Second, it is studied which are the main "*operational factors*" that seem to have influenced the development role of *regional universities* and the relationship of the latter with local societies. The implementation of the study was based on the investigation of the relevant international and Greek bibliography, and on a series of surveys focusing on : a) the Greek planning system for "*development*", "spatial", "regional policies" and their association with "higher education" and b) the entirety of *regional universities* [8 universities, 1999] and cities - prefecture capitals of Greece [53], placing special emphasis on the seventeen university-cities [2003]⁴.

This study is part of a broader research effort on the relationship between Greek *regional universities* and local societies; the first one ever attempted in Greece⁵. Thus many of the data, which have emerged from surveys conducted, are the "*product of primary research*" intended to fill the – anyway established - gap in Greek bibliography and experience. Although there may have been occasional scientific surveys, studies and papers on the development role of *regional universities*, they have been isolated and case-specific⁶. In this case, the investigation is based on a more systematic consideration of all *regional universities* [8 Highest Education Institutes, 1999] and Greek cities of prefectures [2003].

³ "*Regional universities*": universities located and operating in cities of the Greek regions. "*Central universities*": universities operating in the two Metropolises of the country [Athens & Thessalonica]. An unofficially established distinction and adopted by the writer.

⁴ Cf. p. 8.

⁵ Theodora, Y., *Regional universities and city. Incorporation processes and perspectives*, (in Greek) *PhD Thesis*, School of Architect Engineers, Section 2 : City and Regional Planning, NTUA, Athens 2004.

⁶ e.g. *University of Thessaly*.

The time horizon of reference is the period spanning from the start of higher education decentralisation in Greece [mid 60's] until 1999 [end of 2nd millennium]⁷. It is possible that, in the time that elapsed from the completion of the study [2004] until the presentation of its findings [2006], changes have occurred in the kind and amount of “*regional-scale services and infrastructures*”⁸ in Greek cities [especially “*medium-size*” ones], as well as in the number and spatial distribution of *regional universities*. Such changes are not taken into consideration for purely methodological purposes. Besides it is far too early to evaluate the effects of universities that started operating only five year ago, give or take, and have not reached their full growth yet⁹ - to the extent it has been planned.

The paper is structure in five sections. In the first section, it is attempted to give a concise illustration of the principal “*milestones*” that signalled a change in the perception of the role that universities played in development of their broader areas in the international arena from the 19th century to contemporary time. The second section presents the spatial distribution of *regional universities* at national level, and some conclusions are given, on the basis of findings from “*special surveys*”¹⁰, regarding the kind of *regional universities* [internal academic structure / spatial development model], and weight of their university-cities in the urban network of Greece. Thus, it is attempted to get a first glimpse of the Greek reality. Then, in the third section, the quality of Greek *regional universities*' contribution to the development of the country's regions is presented through a critical approach. The fourth section investigates the main causes that seem to have restricted efficient utilization of *regional universities* as a “*means*” for the development of the country and its regions. Finally, in the fifth section – considering Greek reality on the basis of international experience and practice - some proposals are formulated in order for *regional universities* to be essential “*catalysts*” for the development of Greece's regions.

⁷ The data on *regional scale* infrastructure in cities of the country date back to 2003.

⁸ a) *Regional-scale services* [these are administrative and social services intended for the population of the broader area of the city, as well; possibly in other areas of the country], b) *production infrastructure* [national- or regional-scale production units (Industrial Areas, Industrial Parks, Scientific or Technological Parks), or major services for the operation of public utilities (PPC, OTE) which need qualified personnel and high standard scientific and technological assistance, and whose products are available beyond their area of operation], c) *research / technological infrastructure* [research and technological bodies that may cooperate with universities, but are supervised by extra-academic organisations], d) *higher education* [universities and technological educational institutes], and f) *transport infrastructure* [it is related to *accessibility* [SK1 (when two transport systems are combined), SK2 (when three or four transport systems are combined)].

⁹ A multitude of scientific fields, research orientation, size of academic communities, etc.

¹⁰ Cf. p. 2; 8.

1. Change in the view of university contribution to the development of broader areas based on international experience and practice

In many developed countries, the contribution of universities to the development of the broader areas around them and the relations they build with local societies are two questions that started gaining interest as early as in the first decades of the 20th century [or even earlier in some cases, e.g. the U.S.A., 19th century]. The relevant considerations had been increasingly intensified since the mid 60's but mainly after the 80's. It is true that, from the 19th century, when universities were “*elite institutes*” showing relatively little interest in the social and economic problems of the extra-academic societies, until modern time, when the higher education level is increasingly acknowledged as one the main measures of “*contemporary means*”¹¹ of development and a principal source of “*local development*”, perceptions of the role of universities in the development of regions and their respective local societies have changed considerably.

During that long period, universities and local societies deliberated and fought, in an effort to co-exist and cooperate for the purpose of mutual benefit. There are multiple, varied and even conflicting views on the relationship between them. The reason lies with the dramatic changes in the historical circumstances and the different perceptions about the content of the notions “*development*”, “*space*”, “*society*”, and “*university*”- notions directly or indirectly related with the investigated subject¹².

Below there is a concise description of the principal “*milestones*” that signalled changes in the perception of universities contribution to the development of countries and regions, from the 19th century to date, according to international bibliography / experience¹³. The “*milestones*” are limits or turning points which – on the occasion of major political, social and economic events and international and national conjunctures- express change in the perception. This does not mean that it would be impossible to have different prevalent perceptions in the same time period or that a change in a perception would necessarily imply the abolition of older views.

¹¹ The most representative “*new means*” of “*regional policy*” are considered: “*local development*”, “*small- and medium-sized enterprises*”, “*new technology*”, “*technopolises*” {Konsolas, N., 1997 (in Greek); Papadaskalopoulos, Ath., 1995 (in Greek)}.

¹² The direct or indirect dependence of this phenomenon on the specific notions dictates its investigation within the broader multi-variable context defined thereby. Thus, changes may be understood, and the potential generating causes identified.

¹³ The conclusions are the product of systematic research conducted for the purpose of investigating the change in perception, mainly on the basis of the American and British bibliography and the experience.

- a) establishment of “*land-grant universities*” / U.S.A., mid 19th century: a state initiative with reference to the agricultural and industrial U.S. society, which soon came to include actions for the support of the entire labour class and population groups that had been kept away from university education for decades [e.g. women, minorities, etc.] {*Bonnen, J. T.; Spanier, G. B., Crowe, M. B., in Lerner, R. M., Simon, L A, K., (eds.), 1998*}. Their differentiation at the level of rendered services from the so-called “*traditional universities*” of the time was something unprecedented at a time when Europe remained bound to rigid education and development models.
- b) the 30’s when, on the occasion of major economic and social-cultural changes at global level, universities were forced to readjust their policy so as to contribute to the development of their respective countries in many ways, mainly aiming at economic growth. It was the time when some universities in the USA started taking the first timid steps to be involved in the local / regional development [it was when the “*urban universities*” were established and located in large cities, and “*community universities*”, with the aim to reinforce the local communities, retain population and attract industries, businesses and cultural infrastructures].
- c) the 60’s when the intense political-economic events / conjunctures signalled the turn of universities to the local and regional scale. The expansion of higher education was promoted not only as a “*means*” to stimulate social-economic development but also as a “*means of development*” in specific regions, areas, or cities. The interest was thus shifted from the agricultural-industrial areas to cities of the “*centre*” and “*region*” where the majority of population and production sectors were assembled [“*urban universities*” (located in large cities), “*regional universities*” (located in medium - or small-size cities in the regions)¹⁴. Many countries, including Greece proceeded to the establishment of new universities or expansion of existing ones at regional level. The new model that was promoted was: “*university- servant*”, namely a university ready to provide solutions to any problem preoccupying the local society.
- d) the 80’s : a “*landmark era*” as it was then that universities truly turned to local and regional scale in the western world. The new prevalent perception calls for a university acting as a “*catalyst*” rather than a “*servant*”. In other words, it should stimulate the development process rather than simply provide solutions to

¹⁴ Names may differ from one country to another, but the main concept is similar.

perplexing situations preoccupying local communities, among others. The first attempts were also made to appraise the university contribution to the development of countries and their regions. Questions of concern included the limits of cooperation between universities and local communities in order to preserve their primary purpose [namely education, research and social role], and balance between “*global*” and “*local*”. The change in perception was signalled by the creation of a university model: the “*outreach - interactive university*”: in other words a university which is “*open*” to the broader local community, sensitive to the issues of daily interest, in a way though that would ensure the mutual benefit for the academic and local communities, without universities losing their autonomy nor having their main purpose threatened [education, research and social role]. It widely believed that this model is the third most significant change in the perception of the development role played by higher education, after “*land-grant universities*”, “*urban universities*”, and “*regional universities*”.

- e) the 90’s when in an effort to re-define the development role of universities, there was a sharp turn to “*localism*” expressed at local and regional levels. The regional scale acquired a new weight. The new perception was “*think globally act locally*” {*Duke, C., 1999: 19-23*}. The challenge is now for universities to contribute to the re-establishment of their local communities and be gradually restructured through them {*The Corporation for National & Community Service, 1994 : 3-14*}.

Thus, there was a gradual - yet not smooth - passage from a time when universities addressed the development of their areas a natural effect of their progress to a time when universities started comprehending that their sensitivity to issues of “*local scale*”, not would it not deprive them of their prestige, but it would also help in the development of the same and their local communities. In the former case, the development of the region is taken for granted and directly linked with the presence of the university; in the latter case, development may be ensure only if appropriate action is taken by universities, local communities and central governments¹⁵. It is true anyhow that the contribution of universities to local / regional development has been attempted in the framework of two principal “*viewpoints*” which are based, in effect, on two totally opposed perceptions. In the first “*viewpoint*” local

¹⁵ Even at this level though, there are different views about the best use of a university as a *means of development*. The most typical ones are among others: The “*university-servant*” model, whereby the university may only contribute to the development of its area by serving the needs of the local community, and the “*university-partner*” model, whereby the university acts as a “*catalyst*” of development in its area, when it co-operates with the local community to resolve its problems. Namely, when the former provides the knowledge for the latter to realize its needs, but mainly to resolve the problems it encounters and use its available resources in the best possible way.

/ regional development will ensue from the cooperation established between universities and international [or national] community; in the second “viewpoint” it will result from cooperation between universities and local [or regional] communities.

Regardless of the prevalent perceptions of higher education role in local / regional development though, international experience and practice have proved that universities can – under certain conditions¹⁶ - be principal economic, political, social, cultural and spatial entities through their educational, research and social action. What is more, their contribution to the development process in general, may be multidimensional - i.e. pertaining to different levels [e.g.: country, region, city, district] and multifaceted - i.e. pertaining to one or more fields of human activity [politics, economy, society, culture, space, etc.] It is, therefore, important to recognize the uniqueness of higher education as an “entity”, “function”, and “investment”, because this is the only way for universities to be able to act as development “catalysts” in their respective areas [district, city, region, country] {Theodora, Y., 2004}.

2. The decentralization of university education in Greece : Regional Universities.

Until the mid 60's the only universities in Greece were located in *Athens* and *Thessaloniki*, where Greece's largest population masses are assembled, and all types of political, social-economic and cultural activities are undertaken. The policy on the expansion of higher education first appeared in the 60's when the first universities in cities of the “region” were instituted. In phase A [the 60's] universities are instituted and established in major cities of the country and named after them: *University of Patras* [Patras] and *University of Ioannina* [Ioannina]. From the 70's onwards a new decentralization phase was embarked upon; the prevalent concept was the dispersion of the academic function over different cities and towns in the regions. The new universities then were named after the region where they belonged, rather the city where they operated. During that period the following universities were established: *University of Thrace* [Xanthi, Komotini, Alexandroupoli], *University of Crete* [Heraklio, Rethymno] and *Technical University of Crete* [Chania], *University of Thessaly* [Volos, Larissa, Trikala, Karditsa], *Aegean University* [Mytilene, Chios, Karlovassi/ Vathi, Rhodes] and *Ionian University* [Corfu] {Theodora, Y., 2004}. The decentralization of higher education is still in progress. Many of the existing regional

¹⁶ There has long been a lot of reflection globally regarding the issue of factors that may influence the interaction between universities and cities / university communities and local communities. Cf. section 5 below. For more details, see *Theodora, Y., 2004 : 588-664*.

universities obtained new Departments, and the decision had already been made to institute and gradually put in operation three more new *regional universities*: *Peloponnesus*, *Western Macedonia* and *Stereia Hellas* (see *Map I : Distribution of Greek regional universities at national level: 1960-1999*).

Based on the study of the policies on the establishment and distribution of *regional universities*, and of the models of internal academic organization and development of facilities in space, one may draw significant conclusion about the universities' educational / research orientation, social / cultural activity and the type of problems they are faced with¹⁷. Similarly, the systematic recording and evaluation of the *regional level* infrastructure in all the cities of the country reveals the weight of *regional university cities* in the urban network of the country¹⁸. It is deemed necessary to get acquainted with the reviewed universities and respective cities in order to better understand and evaluate the relations among universities, local communities and production sectors, and be able to make a more reliable estimate of the *regional universities'* impact on the development of the country's regions. The picture of the *regional universities* and their cities may be drawn as follows:

- The establishment of Greek *regional universities* is decided, more or less, in order to serve similar purposes¹⁹. The problem is that there have been occasions where the decision was based on political intentions and under the pressure of local bodies, failing to take into account the actual needs of the “*labour market*” and “*active demand*”.
- Many *regional universities* adopt the paradigm of the *central institutes* in terms of the models of internal academic organization and development of facilities in space at city level [inside or outside the urban fabric]. What is more, the cognitive fields are selected on the basis of meeting the demand at national level, and of the need to “decongest” the “*central*” universities of *Athens* and *Thessalonica*. On the contrary, meeting local and regional specificities and matching the potential of the respective

¹⁷ A survey comprising all the *regional universities* with the objective to record/ evaluate the following: scientific fields [Schools/ Departments], size of academic communities, research infrastructure / social activity, spatial planning at country and city level [inside or outside the urban fabric], building facilities, residence, research activities [e.g. research programs, bodies, etc.], social action [e.g. events, population reference groups, associations, etc.], problems, etc. The survey was conducted with the aid of a questionnaire and interviews. {*Theodora, Y., 2004*}.

¹⁸ Cf. footnote No 8.

¹⁹ The main reasons that supported higher education expansion in Greece - which is still evolving - were: a) to meet national aims and achieve “*regional development*” [“*balanced development*” of the country, strengthening of regional border areas, avoidance of further expansion of the *Capital*, securing political stability, strengthening average or small cities with limited infrastructure, satisfying historic / traditional reasons, cultural upgrading of certain “*regions*” / areas, etc.], b) to upgrade the quality of higher education, c) to restore a “*fair equal distribution*” and introduce equal opportunities, d) to meet “*labour market*” needs, but especially e) to increase the number of students accepted in university institutions and relieve *central universities*.

cities is taken much less into account. As a result, *regional universities* are often “copies” of the *central ones* showing little originality. It is only the most recently established ones - during the study period - that sought some differentiation; mainly terms of their cognitive disciplines²⁰.

- planning of *regional universities* does not appear to be addresses within the framework of the planning of the cities where they are located, nor included in the planning for the expansion of their boundaries, thus creating problems in the universities’ integration within the cities’ lives

The crucial and exclusive – it seems - duty of Greek universities is to offer free education to as large a population part as possible. Consequently, their “research”, “business” and “social” roles²¹ become a lower priority. Thus, *regional universities* are treated mostly as “education premises”, without making any particular efforts to be networked with the research and production sectors, and to develop partnerships between the respective academic communities and the local actors, or members of the extra-academic community. Despite the efforts made mainly in the past 15 years:

- University research in most *regional universities* is limited, and its subject-matter rarely deals with local production / business activities. The *Universities of Patras, Crete, Ioannina* and the *Crete Technical University* are exceptions to this rule. So it seems that there is a certain degree of correlation between the intensity and kind of research activity, with the city size and university type as regards its scientific disciplines,
- There is still a very limited connection between *regional universities* and production sectors. Although they encounter problems, the most active *regional universities* are the ones operating in cities of a certain size, with *region-wide* infrastructure, and high accessibility index; such cities are usually the ones located on, or near, the major “development axes” [*Patras, Volos, Heraklion, Chania*],
- the *regional universities’ “social role”* - in the sense of their participation in dealing with problems of the greater extra-academic community - is rather limited and does not appear connected with the city or university size

At any rate, the first complete *regional universities* with regard to the quality of scientific specialities and academic services are the ones established during the first expansion period

²⁰ The *Technical University of Crete [Chania]*, *University of Thessaly* [partly], *Aegean and Ionian Universities*.

²¹ In the sense of university-local community co-operation in order to address their common problems.

['60s], namely those that were originally planned to operate in a specific city and have been operating for a long period of time [*University of Patras (Patras)* and *University of Ioannina (Ioannina)*].

Regional universities operate in 17 cities that differ as to their level of development within the national urban network²². Specifically, most *regional universities* are located in cities that, within the framework of the state's development policies, were intended to have certain dynamics to satisfy purely national reasons, or to provide solutions to issues such as : the resolution of the "*regional problem*", securing the "*regional development*", or increasing "*active demand*". However, there have been cases in which university location selection was performed so as to serve political conveniences and compromise or soften local controversies as to the "*dispersion*" of new Departments. It is quite typical that, when concepts changed and there was a transition from the *regional universities of cities* to *regional universities of regions* more and more small cities, even cities with infrastructure problems, claimed and were ultimately selected to host some university department [*Trikala, Karditsa, Chios, Vathi / Karlovassi*] (see Map I).

3. The effect of *regional universities* on the development of Greek regions

In this section, we attempt to address the effects of *regional universities* on the development of the country's regions. The findings though have to be evaluated in the town planning scale, too, with the aid of "*case studies*". Based on the above findings of the "*specific surveys*" conducted in the framework of this work for the total of *regional universities* and cities of the country, the following seem to be true:

In the cases of *Patras, Heraklio, Volos* and *Larissa*, the operation of the *regional universities*, or certain departments thereof, may have assisted in boosting their role but has not managed to be a veritable "*boosting function*" in essence. This is particularly true for *Patras* and *Volos*, where the problems in the economic sectors remain pronounced {*NTUA, 1996 : 7.7-7.13 (in Greek)*}. In *Ioannina*, on the other hand, it seems that the operation of the *University of Ioannina* has succeeded in playing a leading part in the improvement of the city's image. This is mainly attributed to the culture of the local population, the

²²*Patras, Heraklio, Volos, Larissa: interregional importance cities; Ioannina, Komotini, Xanthi, Chania, Mytilini, Rhodos: Regional importance cities; Alexandroupoli, Trikala, Karditsa, Rethymno, Corfu, Agrinio: interprefectural importance cities.*

integrity of the university, the kind of scientific disciplines it offers, and its long-standing operation, which allows, to a large extent, an evaluation of its activity so far.

The situation in *Alexandroupolis*, *Komotini*, and *Xanthi* is different. Despite the “boost” given by the establishment of D.U.T. departments - and certain special measures with a view to strengthening local economy²³ - the image of the cities has not changed dramatically in terms of development, as the intended dynamics has not been attained by the cities yet. The absence of appropriate research / technological infrastructure, or any other form of higher or highest education, and the limited, close to non-existent, cooperation between the university and local productive forces are the main two reasons why the academic function is not utilized in the broader area of *Thrace*. However, the case of *Xanthi* appears to be better than the other two cities of the Region.

The situation in *Mytilene* is similar; the operation of the university has not managed –to date- to reverse the negative image. The assistance for the development of services and activities related with the scientific education and research could enhance the university’s contribution to the broader local community. In *Chania* and *Rhodes* - which are anyway major centres of services radiating over the entire Eastern Mediterranean area - the operation of the universities has not been utilised to the extent that had been forecast. The situation is similar in both *Corfu* and *Rethymno*. They are two cities attracting tourism and hosting *regional level* administration services, however they lack the necessary productive and research / technological infrastructure to support the academic function.

In insular cities, which are tourist destinations, university seems to have been treated mostly as a “*complementary function*” - namely a function, which is called to fill in the “*gaps*” created in low tourist seasons. It is quite characteristic that, the more tourism is developed in an area, the more difficulties are faced by the members of university communities [mainly students], such as housing and generally higher living costs. These problems are often the reason for tensions between the academic and local communities. Such tensions can often shake the relationship between the parties making it more difficult for the university to be incorporated into the city.

²³ Measures with a view to strengthening local economy though: incentives for the development of country’s border areas; grants to businesses depending on the sector they belong to; credit incentives and special programmes [e.g. for Evros]; infrastructure programmes [Industrial Areas, airports, etc.], etc.

On the other hand, in insular and inland cities, where the infrastructure and accessibility problems are acute, such as *Agrinio*, *Trikala*, *Karditsa*, *Chios*, and *Vathi/ Karlovassi* on Samos island, the operation of university departments seems to be unable, at least individually, to support their development role - even when their cognitive subjects may be considered related with local productive structure [e.g. *Veterinary Department* in *Karditsa*: a prefecture oriented to livestock breeding; *Shipping and Business Services Department* on *Chios* island which a long shipping tradition]. In the case of *Agrinio* in particular, the operation of the *Economic Sciences Department, University of Patras*, for a decade [1985-1996] contributed slightly to the growth of the services sector and failed to give a major boost to the overall development of the city. Since 1998, the *Farm Organisation & Management Department, University of Ioannina*, has been operating there. However, it is still far too early to assess its impact on the development of the city and broader area.

Thus, it seems that the establishment and operation of a university are not certain to have a positive impact - on their own- on the living standard quality and development of the broader area. There are even cases of regions where, despite the existence of a university, the situation may deteriorate or remain unchanged²⁴. For example - according to official data for the period 1961-1991 - in the *Epirus* and *Aegean Islands* “regions” the situation has been constantly deteriorating, while in the *Ionian Islands* and *Crete* “regions” there has been almost consistent²⁵ - for different reasons depending on the case. The case of *Thessaly* has shown some improvement trend. It seems though that this is irrelevant to the start of operation of the *University of Thessaly*, as well as to the geographical position [at the centre of Greece’s main “S”-shaped development axis] and structure of the local productive system [primary & secondary sectors, tourism]. *Eastern Macedonia - Thrace*, despite the strong economy strengthening measures, still experiences major development problems²⁶.

In conclusion, it could be maintained that:

²⁴ This is not a simple issue. There are multiple factors involved and, therefore, special research is required, which is beyond the scope of this work. However, it is true that a city’s development is not always followed by the development of the respective region. Often there are polarisation problems with adverse effects on the development of an entire region or other areas and/or towns within its boundaries [e.g. *Ioannina* and *Epirus* Region].

²⁵ *Epirus Region* [1961 : 8th place, 1971 : 10th place, 1981 : 10th place, 1991 : 9th place], *Aegean Islands Region* [1961 : 3rd place, 1971 : 3rd place, 1981 : 2nd place, 1991 : 5th place], *Ionian Islands Region* [1961 : 4th place, 1971 : 4th place, 1981 : 5th place, 1991 : 4th place], *Crete Region* [1961 : 2nd place, 1971 : 2nd place, 1981 : 3rd place, 1991 : 2nd place].

²⁶ Cf. survey on the development standard of all Greek regions (in Greek) {*Giannas, D., Liargovas, P., Manolas, G., (47-61), in Topos, 13/97 : 49-56*}.

In Greece it seems that the operation of “*regional universities*” did not manage to create all the necessary conditions that would allow them to act as catalysts in the integrated development of their areas and become a part of the city life, even if in some cases there was population or services increase, or contribution to improved financial figures in the areas of establishment²⁷. In other words, they did not succeed in becoming a vital local resource of greater regional, national, international range. Within the framework of the policy for the establishment and location selection of universities - which, in any case, is internationally original²⁸ - *regional universities* are treated more like a “*primary factor*” for the immediate economic growth of specific areas, that supports the principal production sectors, rather than an essential “*promotional function*” [island cities with tourist traffic (e.g. Lesbos, Chios, Samos, Rhodos, etc) are striking examples]. This policy - irrespective of whether it is being implemented in the framework of strengthening “*development poles*” [‘60s and ‘70s], or regions [‘70s and ‘80s] - mainly serves political conveniences. Thus, the operation of universities does not seem to improve the quality of education, nor does it contribute to the resolution of the “*regional problem*” to the desired, at least, degree.

According to the experience gathered so far, it seems that universities in cities with *regional significance* can easily strengthen the existing production / development system [Patras, Heraklion, Volos, Larissa, Ioannina]. On the other hand, universities in cities with low *regional importance* and without the required development, production, education / research / technological infrastructure, cannot, by themselves, become catalysts, a fact that also needs to be investigated on the city level [Alexandroupoli, Komotini, Xanthi, Mytilini, Chania, Rhodos, Corfu, Agrinio, Trikala, Karditsa, Chios, Vathy / Karlovassi]. So it is important to study the cities’ *regionality*, so as to set more informed location selection criteria.

4. Determinants of regional universities’ effect on the development of Greek regions

Through the different roles they can act [i.e. “*educator*”, “*researcher*”, “*advisor*”, “*partner*”], universities can be a real “*source*” of entertainment, dispute, pride, political unrest and/or rearrangements, or even low-cost labour, for their respective broader areas. They can thus

²⁷ Strengthening of local markets, building activity increase, etc.

²⁸ Various departments of the same university institution distributed in various cities and often in various parts of the same city.

turn into essential “*sources of progress*”, and their neighbourhoods places worthwhile to live in. However there are occasions where this is not the case - not to the desired extent, anyway. Greek *regional universities* are such an occasion. What might be the reasons, though, for such unsuccessful use of higher education as a “*means*” for the development of areas and regions?

The study shows that : there are certain *political, social, economic, cultural, spatial and operational factors* that can - irrespective of the university’s location – have a positive or negative effect on its *development role* in the area, and determine the relations between the university and the local community. Such factors emerge from the greater framework set-up by the basic reference levels of the *university-city* relationship, namely: the *state*, the *university*, and the *city*. [see *Chart 1: Axes of investigating the functional university-city interaction factors*].

In the case of Greece, the limited use of *regional universities* as a “*means*” to achieve national development and limit interregional and intraregional inequalities is owed to the inconsistency between the centrally planned decentralization of higher education and the way in which local authorities and communities used the regional planning of universities to their benefit.

Specifically : The major causes that led to the ineffective utilisation of university operation as a “*development means*” in Greece, can be identified in: a) the absence of a long-term consistent policy for education, which resulted in a failure to define the appropriate, each time, *development mode*, and education style, that would contribute to the implementation of the model’s aims, b) the non-inclusion of the higher education expansion policy in the greater framework set forth by state development and education policies, and by local socio-economic components, as a result of which *regional universities* are being considered as a *means* of achieving direct economic results rather than creating the proper conditions for ensuring global, long-term development.

A systematic review of the evolution of the Greek *planning and regional policy system* reveals that during the time horizon of reference: the university education expansion policy followed a general trend of fragmented treatment, and preserved a relevant autonomy against

the other policies on development and education²⁹, and the local socio-economic components as well. Despite this fragmented character, university education decentralisation was not attempted completely independently of the “*regional development*” policy. Hence, in the ‘60s, within the framework of the policy for the creation of strong “*development poles*” in the regions, a decision was made to establish the first *regional universities* [in *Patras & Ioannina*] in the ‘70s, in the framework of the regional strengthening policy, with special emphasis on *border areas* [both mainland and insular], the decision was made to establish the universities of *Thrace, Crete* and the *Crete Technical University in Chania*. In the ‘80’s, within the framework of satisfying the increasing needs for university education, and pursuing the regional strengthening policy, a suggestion was made for the expansion of the existing *regional universities* on the one hand, and for the establishment of new ones and the spreading of disciplines in various cities of the same Region. [*Thessaly, the Aegean, the Ionian*] {*Theodora, Y., 2004*}.

The following factors are deemed equally important: c) failure to take into account the university diversity as “*entity*”, “*function*”, “*investment*”³⁰, d) failure to take into account the “*city*” factor [namely, the “*hosting environment*” of universities³¹], and f) lack of information among the involved parties with regard to their roles; this leads to confusion about the type and boundaries of mutual relations and partnerships. Local societies thus seem to rather view universities as “*premises*” bringing mainly direct economic benefits³². Universities, on the other hand, seem to fail to understand yet the potential significance of the broader urban environment quality³³ -i.e. the principal “*space*” to derive resources and distribute of their produced goods [knowledge, research, social role]- for the development of the same and their respective areas.

In any case, general realignment in the *European Union* and in Greece, put a new role for our country on the table, and gave its regions new significance that should also affect choices regarding the education policy. Maybe these trends and our country’s obligation to take active part in the greater *European Union area*, created new parameters that did not assume the required dimensions as regards development and “*spatial planning*”, nor were they

²⁹ Development policies relevant with: industry, services, research /technology /innovation, etc. Education policies relevant with various degrees of education, vocational training, etc.

³⁰ Universities have specific features and needs and the outcomes of their location planning in an area are long-term and multidimensional. Therefore they should be assessed on different terms than other forms of investments, e.g. production infrastructures [tourist or industrial functions].

³¹ Mainly in terms of: size of the city, social-economic structure of the population, infrastructure, city weight in the national residential system.

³² Rents, daily expenses, entertainment, etc.

³³ I.e.: urban space, services, infrastructures, local population standard, etc.

taken into account in higher education distribution. The non-existence of clearly worded location selection criteria for *regional universities*, as well as the direct or indirect pressures exerted by local communities that eventually affected the policy for their establishment, seem to have resulted in the use of the establishment and location selection of *regional universities* as a means to cause an immediate increase in “*active demand*” in specific areas, and to satisfy a more general “*labour market*” demand on national level, rather than a “*means*” of creating the proper environment that would ensure integrated development on both national and regional/local level. Thus, we reached a point where there is extensive dispersal of university education in the regions - a dispersal that is still evolving and that, according to indications, requires a review of the university’s role, not only in higher education, but in economy and society as well.

5. Proposals for improved use of *regional universities* in the country’s regional development

Regional universities and local societies need one another in order to grow. But to limit the chances of developing friction, and to facilitate the establishment of permanent two-way discussions between university and local societies, the policy on *higher education* should no longer be one-dimensional, and should be founded on the basis of an equal study of both “*university*” and “*city*”.

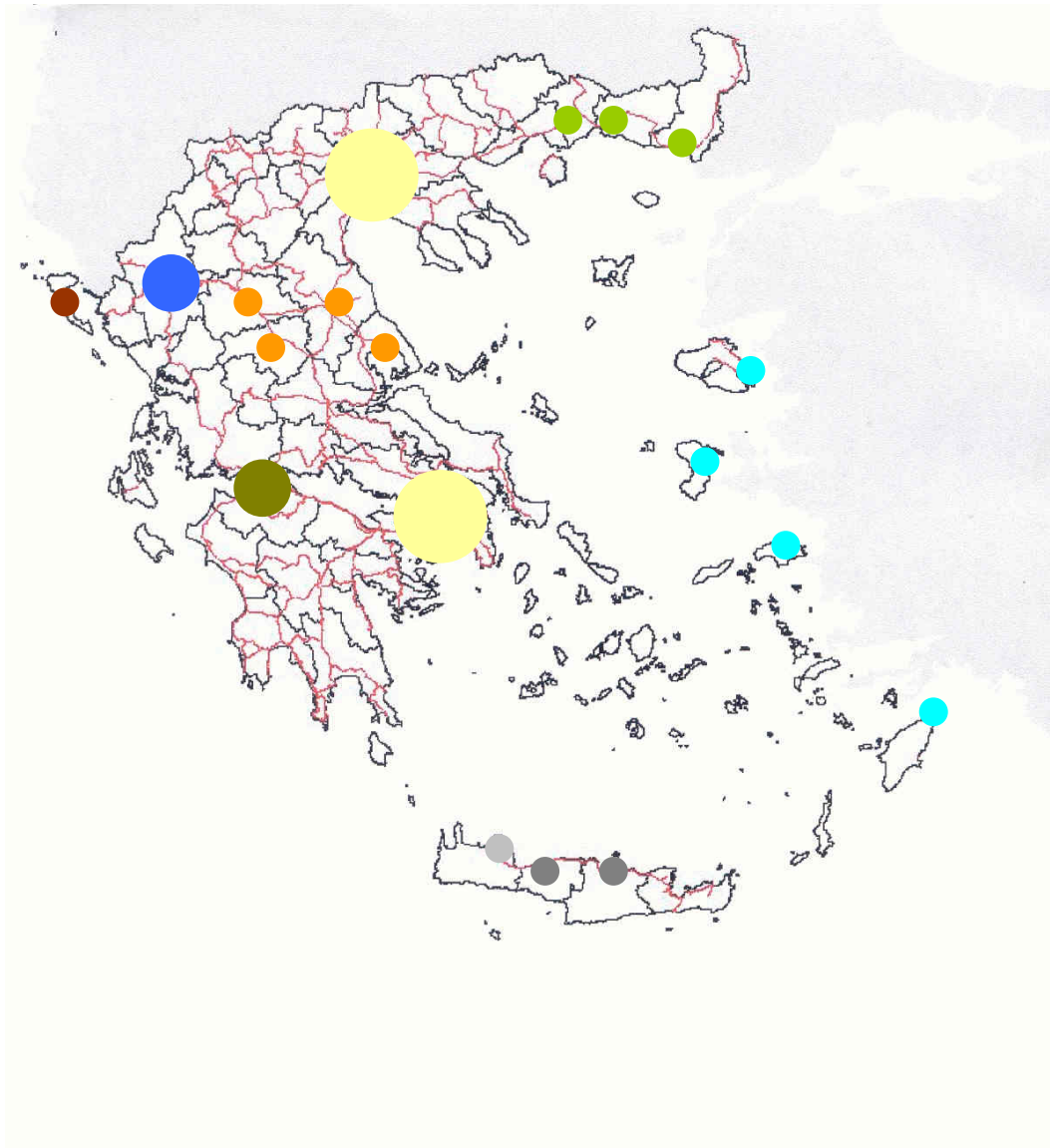
This policy should approach matters relating to the modernisation of higher education as “*a system*” and the “*building*” of its internal organisation; the clarification of basic notions / relations / roles; recognition of the universities’ different character as “*entities*”, “*functions*”, or “*investments*”; Clarification of their regional / local role; the setting-up of a reliable *communication/information network* between the academic and extra-academic sphere; Finding new alternative sources of financing, and reviewing “*academic autonomy*” thus allowing universities to decide on the policy and range of their activities, according to their own needs and the needs and potential of their areas. Moreover, the same policy should not ignore issues concerning the location selection for *regional universities*.

University education policy should, on the one hand be part of the greater framework set by the development and education policies, and by the local socio-economic components, and on the other hand provide incentives for the establishment of cooperation relations

between the academic and extra-academic sphere. Within this framework, it is important to: a) set city selection criteria, b) address local character and international matters so they can complement each other, leading to the recognition of *regional universities* as “*national institutions*” rather than be considered as *local entities*, c) clarify their public character to operate as “*autonomous entities*” and not as “*carbon copies*” of *central universities*, and d) develop a “*national education, research, production charter*” enabling the more effective utilisation of higher education in the framework of the development process.

The decentralisation issue is never out of date. Especially now that it appears that every region in the country will soon host a university and almost every city- capital of prefecture will have at least one university department. Such questions though are characterised by major dynamics preventing generalized conclusions. Thus, the need emerges to review constantly the outcomes based on the specific prevalent conditions / conjunctures, to ensure the monitoring of potential changes through time. The objective of this research work, then, is not to give a response to the problem of using higher education as a “*means*” of development, but rather to introduce a new reflection on the way of investigating it. This work, as a major “*data base*” of the Greek reality, could be the “*starting point*” for further research in the town planning scale through “*case studies*”, so that *regional universities* may become essential “*catalysts*” for the development of the regions / areas of Greece.

Map I : *Distribution of Greek regional universities at national level: 1960-1999*



LEGEND



Central Universities [Athens & Thessalonica]

Regional Universities



University of Patras
[Patras]



University of Ioannina
[Ioannina]



University of Thrace
[Xanthi, Komotini, Alexandroupoli]



University of Crete
[Heraklio, Rethymno]



Technical University of Crete
[Chania]



University of Thessaly
[Volos, Larissa, Trikala, Karditsa]

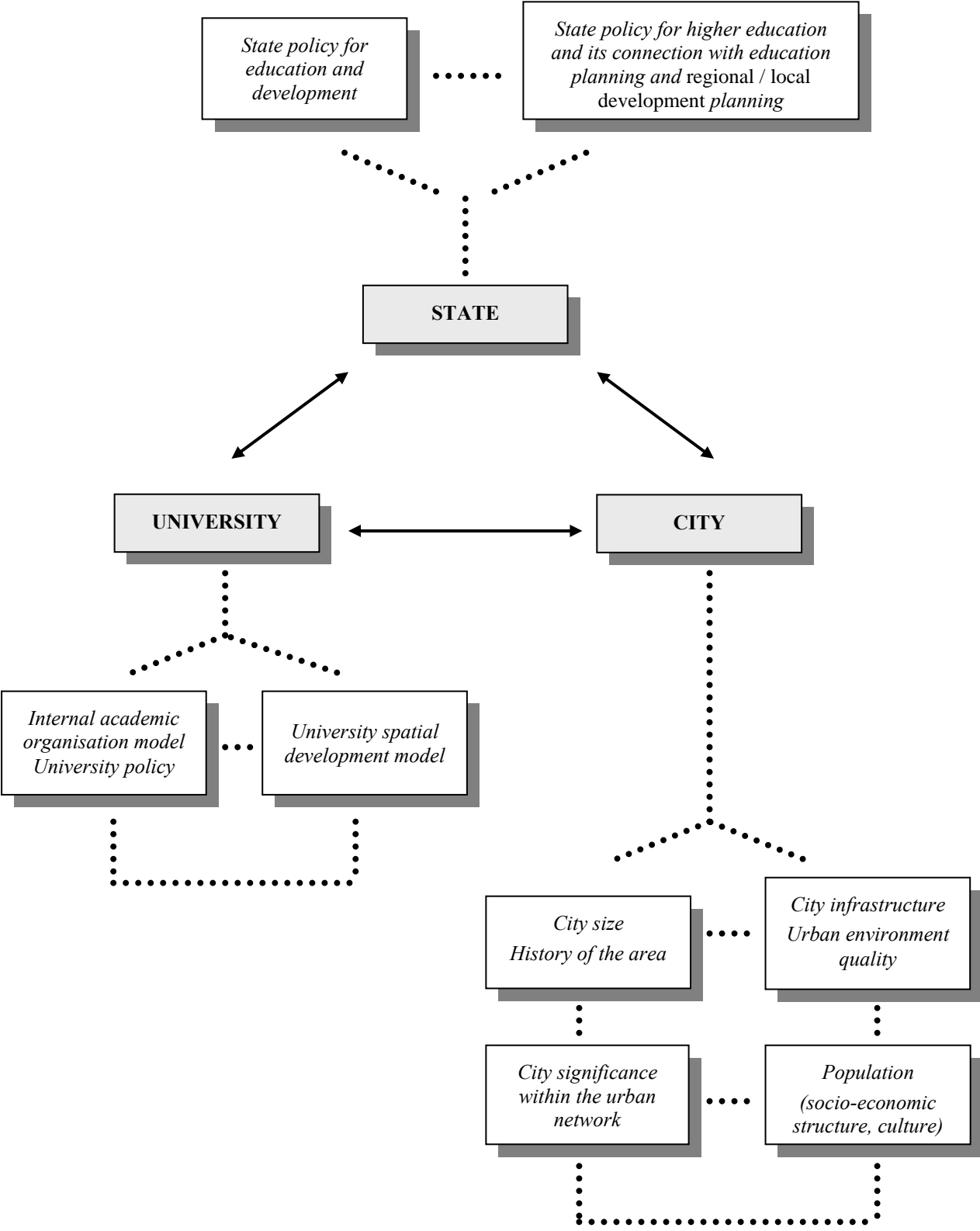


Aegean University
[Mytilene, Chios, Samos, Rhodes]



Ionian University
[Corfu]

Chart 1: Axes of investigating the functional university-city interaction factors



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