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Les défis de développement pour les villes et les régions dans une Europe en mutation

FROM URBAN REGENERATION TO URBAN COMMONS?

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Résumé / Summary

We live in a rapidly urbanized world, where more than half of earth's population lives in urban areas. While cities are dynamic systems undergoing changes regarding infrastructure, demographics, culture and institutions, the changing process seems to be accelerated given the overall context; that is a highly globalized and interconnected economy, where capital moves in a blink of an eye, production has gone overseas and property markets promise flourishing (Harvey, 2012). Under that dictum, physical improvements, mainly through public or public-private funding, of deprived or abandoned urban areas were more than often a preferred strategy in order to regenerate them and by extension to promote economic growth through the attraction of capital, business, quality workforce or even tourism. Nevertheless, there seems to be only limited evidence about the precise impact and effectiveness of those kinds of regeneration projects, especially when it comes to issues of employment, property values or land use intensity (Ploegmakers and Beckers, 2015) and in accordance to programmatic policy goals.

On the other hand, the broad publicity of Ostrom's work on institutions and the management of the common-pool resources (Ostrom, 2010), has driven research towards possible connections with human and technological resources - "new commons" - such as knowledge (Hess and Ostrom, 2007), the language and culture, and cities (Borch & Kornberger, 2016). The term "urban commons" was included in the broader category of the "new commons" (Hess, 2000) and is a question of increasing interest to scholars and activists (Huron, 2017). While the debate is pretty much in its infancy, the respective literature demonstrates possible strands of research regarding issues such as perception of the "urban commons", mapping, common urban economy, social - cultural capital, democratic innovation and governance. In any case, the underlying concept is that the urban commons and the practice of "communing" could potentially facilitate

structures and institutions capable of confronting the pressing issues of a highly urbanizing and unevenly developing world.

Under the prism of the current economic crisis and the possibilities that commons can offer, the paper examines the processes and actions of urban regeneration undertaken in the Palea district of Volos, during a period of more than 30 years in order to evaluate its results and effectiveness. In methodological terms, work proceeds in three steps. First, historical-institutional analysis is used to delineate the chronicle of regeneration and to identify those projects that have shaped the profile of the area. Second, it examines the effects of the regeneration projects and the changes they brought to the socioeconomic characteristics of the residents in the area. Third, drawing on the concept of urban commons it explores possible directions for urban regeneration on the basis of the prospects of collective management of urban public spaces.

Key words: urban regeneration, institutional analysis, policy evaluation, urban commons, public spaces

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